How Addiction Stole a Mother, And Recovery Brought Her Home

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Transcript

[00:00] [music] Jody Netherton.

Sir,

thank you for joining me on the Warriors Heart podcast.

Ready for this?

Absolutely.

Yes.

Absolutely.

Uh I've known you for a bit. Uh you're a bit infamous around here, but in a great way. In a great way. Uh you came in, let's just say a bit rough. Of course I did, too. But uh your story of how you came in here may take the cake, but I'll let you tell that story, right? However, the theme of today's podcast is Mother's Day, right? Uh now, I I feel it. You know what I mean? I feel it. I know your story. Your daughter's here in the studio with you. She's going to have a chance to talk for a moment uh in a little bit. Um but the the story is just is heartwarming and we want to try to give encouragement to others who are facing kind of the similar things that we did. You know, our stories mirror a little bit in that we were separated from our children at some point. We fought like hell to get back to them. Yes. And your story illustrates that. So, I I appreciate you being here with us today.

[01:05] Thank you for having me.

How was the drive down from Oklahoma?

It was amazing. I got to nap, Chey, and drove. Was entertaining.

Uhhuh.

Oh, it was greatly entertaining. We had a great little trio with I think about 20 pounds of crappie in the back of the car that he brought for a fish fry.

Yeah, we got to figure that out tonight. I don't know where we're going to do it. We're going to do

the lodge. We have the kitchen. We have the client kitchen there.

[__] right. Yes.

And Mr. Steve has the keys to the real kitchen.

Oh, even better. We interviewed Steve the other day, too.

Did you?

Yeah.

I love him.

That was a great story. And Kleenex were needed.

Really?

100%.

We're all going out to eat tonight.

Yeah. Where at?

Um, Trail Boss. Trail Boss.

His favorite restaurant.

May have to join you on that.

I would love for you to.

Yeah. I may bring Ingred. I I would love for you to

we'll see what we can do.

She will always always always be a special woman to me.

She put up with a lot to for me to be here. I exposed her to meth. You know, [laughter]

we're we're definitely going to get into that. Well, let's start a little bit about your your background. Uh you were a Navy Corman, Greenside Marines, right?

[02:10] I was. I was.

Tell us about that.

Um I was active duty at Camp Pendleton and then at um Arizona. We were one of like four corman. We had ambulance duty like every 4 days. It was the best time. I loved being active duty.

Mhm.

I loved it. And then I got discharged when I was diagnosed with uterine cancer.

M

and um since then I've just been just been a disabled vet. [clears throat] And then soon thereafter is when I got into um because of the cancer I got addicted to pain pills.

Mhm.

And then I switched over to meth.

Well, let me ask you about the uh military service. How long were you in?

Two years.

Two years. Okay.

Yeah. Just under two years. Well, I mean that's no small feat, you know, two years as a corman and then Did you deploy any with the Marines? Did you get a chance?

Didn't get a chance. I was always in the c I was always in like the desert.

Yeah.

At Camp Pedleton and then um in Yuma.

Mhm. Um how how old were you when you got that diagnosis of cancer?

I was um 26.

26. Did that run in your family or was it just out of the blue?

[03:11] No, we have a lot of cancer in our family.

I gotcha. I I can imagine the transition from what you thought was going to be your career to processing out was difficult.

It was I did not want to get out. I felt like I was being kicked out.

And then I was more resentful when I got out and had a hyctomy and was completely cured of all cancer.

Oh wow.

But I was no longer in. I didn't want I wanted to stay in. But when I was active duty, the military doctors didn't want to give me hyctomy because I was so young.

That makes sense. Well, I mean, yeah, and I was just I was angry even back then. I was an angry person and but I loved the military. I loved the discipline. I loved

oddly I loved being told what to do and what was expected of me. I knew every day what was expected of me.

Mhm.

And so I didn't have to think.

If that makes sense.

No, it does.

And then when you get out, you have to make all the decisions for yourself. And when you're when you're in, a lot of people don't like that. I love being told what to do. Like this is this day, this is that day, whatever the next day. And I loved just knowing what I had to do. I didn't have

to think about anything other than doing my job. I didn't have to make any big decisions. That was all made for me. I loved that.

[04:22] No, it makes sense, you know, and and it kind of reflects uh sobriety a little bit in some ways, right? Because in sobriety, uh so many things come back into our life, right? And it just we want somebody to tell us what to do so that we can not really think.

Yes.

I guess

making decisions is still hard.

It's still hard, right? Yes.

It's still hard. Yeah. Um, now obviously you had kids back then. What was what was your personal life like during that time frame when you joined up and when you were in the uh the Navy?

Um, I had I left my children with my mother

so that I could join as a single person.

Mhm. How many kids did you have?

I have two.

Two.

I have Cheyenne and she has an older brother, Luke, who is currently deployed right now.

Oh, wow.

In the Navy.

Yeah. Okay. Uh, married at the time or No.

Um, I was divorced.

Divorced. Gotcha. The kids stayed with mom

and you joined up.

Yeah. Um the diagnosis uh what year was that?

96.

1996. It's the year I graduated high school. That makes me feel old, but I hope it makes you feel older.

[05:24] It does. [laughter] Absolutely does.

Uh where So you went home, got discharged, went home, got had a hyerectomy, and then didn't then

I started trying to go to nursing school.

Yeah. But unfortunately, um, I picked up a really bad addiction to opiates

from the surgeries

or just having access to them. Honestly, I think I don't necessarily know that it was it was being given them and feeling an altered level of consciousness that I absolutely loved for the first time ever. I'd never tried marijuana in school. I never tried any type of illegal drug, but these were given to me readily and easily at the VA at the time, and I loved them.

And I loved them.

Yeah. We won't reminisce too much on that. which is what that was the beginning of my downfall.

No, I get it though. I mean, uh, when I had the stomach surgery, you know, the first time I broke my back in 01,

they gave me pain pills, but it wasn't

wasn't an issue. I mean, I moved right past it. But the second time in ' 06, and then with the stomach surgery,

it it just kind of happened. But, you know, when I when I would take them, it'd be like a just a warm fuzzy blanket.

[06:29] Yes.

And all was well with the world, you know. No, just recently about four or five months ago, I had pancreatitis, which I get occasionally from the medication I take and um I was hospitalized for 5 days for pain management

because I wouldn't take any narcotics home with me

ever. But I have a doctor that's kind enough that like understands it and I was hospitalized just for pain management and fluids for 5 days.

Mhm.

And then I don't take it. I won't have any narcotics ever handed to me.

Can't say I blame you. It's a slippery slope.

Uh so the narcotic addiction, how long did that last before it transferred into other stuff?

Um from about 26 to 30,

so about four years.

Yeah. Then the uh progression into meth was next. Tell us what life was like during that time.

Absolute insanity.

Yeah.

Absolute insanity. I discovered meth um working nights in a in a hospital.

One of my nursing preceptors had it.

Mhm. And she was the fun nurse, the one that was always made up, that would bring in potlucks. And here I was like going to school during the day, leaving my kids home at night by themselves to go to school. I'd had [clears throat] a fight with my son the night before before that at right before I'd gone to work about a tomato on his hamburger. Like literally a tomato on

his hamburger. And when I tried to call him to apologize, he didn't answer. And then this nurse had that. And I was like, I want to be happy again, too.

[07:53] And from the And I thought I was too educated, honestly, and too old to be addicted.

Mhm. And I was addicted from the very first time I tried it.

Never will get us right.

No, absolutely not.

We're too smart. We're too educated. I'm too old. I'm too 30. I'm 30. I'm way too old to get addicted to drugs.

Yeah. So it from that first hit, you were addicted. Yes.

And then But you were a nurse. You were educated.

No, I was a paramedic.

Paramedic.

I was in nursing school, but that never finished.

Okay.

And within um four months, my children were technically in foster care.

Wow.

Within four months, my kids were in foster care. Mhm.

I'd lost my home and I was literally on the streets, motel, finding apartments, you know, um going to jail, going to prison.

Mhm.

Couldn't stop. Didn't know how to stop. Didn't think I could stop.

Now, I've heard you share your story on main campus before, and there's stuff involving cartels and

Yes.

illegal activities and

Yeah.

[08:53] Just depends on how much you want to go in.

Absolutely. No, no, it's fine. Um I well I became addicted to meth really quickly. I um before meth I was very shy. I was very quiet. I had

like I didn't love my my mom we had a horrible dynamic growing up. And I was [clears throat] like

shy and quiet.

Yes. I was terrified of everything and everyone. And for some reason meth was my catalyst.

It gave me a voice. It gave me strength. It gave me power. And power

was my huge addiction

that feed Yeah. I was about to say there's something

fed my power. And the more people I knew that I could do whatever I was doing with, the more the larger the quantity of whatever I had meant I could control you

and I could control a lot of people. And that was what when I got here, even though I wanted to be sober, I thought I was going to still be able to like control people, bully people. And I didn't realize I was bullying people until, you know, I was here in therapy for a while. And then I had to look in the mirror and realize I'd become what I hated the most. And I was an absolute bully. And I used drugs in my benefit for that. And that was so hard to look at.

[09:55] Yeah. Now it let's talk about getting here because it it wasn't an easy task. You know, just the other day at, you know, at work here at Warriors, uh we were looking for VA community care network success stories, right? People that had reached out to the VA, gotten the community care authorization, you're doing good. I consider you one of those people because the VA uh community care network did eventually send you here but it was a fight.

It was a huge fight.

Now at some point we were talking about this just a minute ago. You had more cancer diagnosis. Correct. Yeah. Let's let's talk about that next diagnosis.

So um I was diagnosed in 2015 with leukemia

and it was an accident that I was diagnosed with leukemia. I was being arrested and I ate a drug a bag of drugs in front of the police. They took me to the hospitals been medically cleared and the cop came in the room and handcuffed me and he said good luck to me and walked out of the room and I'm like what just happened? And the doctor came into the room and told me I had leukemia and I was like there's no way. Of course I'm I'm on drugs and I'm thinking they didn't do a bone marrow biopsy. They didn't do it stuff I'd seen on commercials growing up. And so that didn't stop me until I had like you know a crisis. But then when I decided I wanted to start coming to treatment and I went to the VA for help, they got me accepted into seven different domicillaries.

[11:19] Even in July, in January, I was supposed to go to um I want to say Anchorage, Alaska, and I was excited about it. I didn't care. I'm going to treatment. Two days before I was supposed to leave, they're like, "You have leukemia." I'm like, "I told you that when I called because everybody kept saying, "You can't. You have leukemia. You can't. You have leukemia."

They're worried about your health.

And so I'm a medical liability. And um they kept telling me, "Well, get your cancer in remission." And I'm like, "That's not going to happen." Like it's easily managed, but um so I kept getting denied.

Mhm.

And I was initially denied here.

Mhm.

And then I um saw a congressman. And um the VA in Oklahoma, my oncologist, Dr. Parker, I got to love him. He agreed to maintain care over me while I was in Texas for a year.

Mhm. And then I tried to come to Warrior's Heart and my friend, I only had one friend that I trusted to get me here. Of course, we were both on drugs [clears throat] and we wrecked her car 10 miles outside of Oklahoma City.

And I had no identification to get on a bus, to get on a plane, to get on anything. And so I had like four more days to be here. And then my bed was going to be taken closed again. I was going to have to start all over.

[12:29] But you not only were you fighting with the VA, you were kind of fighting here as well, right? because you know we wanted to make sure I say we the staff at the time wanted to make sure that this was the appropriate level of care for you because

first and foremost your safety is of top priority your health is of top priority when you hear leukemia

right

but you can't be both a cancer patient and a drug addict one's going to win and drug addict always won

now if I remember correctly uh the I think they they they pulled your care if uh somebody did maybe I'm thinking of somebody else but it's like when's going to kill you first. Either leukemia or the meth. You choose which one's going to kill you. You have to choose which path. Are you going to get treatment or are you going to uh so that we can treat the leukemia or we're just going to let the leukemia kill you.

Right.

Yeah.

But then when I decided I wanted care, no one wanted to take me because of leukemia because that's scary. That's a big scary word for a lot of people.

It is. And that's when you called the congressman.

Yes. Actually went to Yes. went to the capital and they put pressure on everybody and then Warrior's heart my the director of the VA in Oklahoma City got involved and or like some big wig and then Dr. Parker agreed to maintain care of me and then they accepted me and I still have a screenshot in my favorites. You've been medically cleared from Ingrid.

[13:45] Yeah.

And I was doing drugrelated things and I saw that and I just started crying and I was around people who had never ever seen me even think about crying and they're like, "Oh my god, what's wrong with you?"

What? I'm like, I'm going to rehab.

Well, to me, it illustrates the fight. You know, we were talking about this a minute ago. Now, we just kind of touched a little bit on your background as far as the the addictions and the criminal

activity and stuff like that. That's not Jod. It wasn't Jod. It wasn't Jod before the addiction set in. And it's damn sure not Jod now. Right.

Right.

But when you realized that you had to do something to save your life, nothing was going to stop you.

No.

Not a [__] thing was going to stop you. You went and talked to the necessary people and you were going to get here by God. You were going to heal.

So [laughter]

I did.

I definitely I mean it's an epic story. So I definitely want to talk about how you physically got here. But you were saying you and your friend wrecked your car to wrecked her car. Wrecked her car 10 miles outside Oklahoma City.

Right. Well, she had to stop by the casino cuz she wanted to gamble. I don't gamble. I was like [clears throat] whatever. I've got four days to get there. And it was only it's only 8 hour drive. So we'll get there. And she wrecked her car and I had four days to get here or it had to been six days because it took me five to get here once I left. And so I just went and um got an angle grinder and went to a U-Haul return place and took the lock off the key return and got me a 26ft U-Haul.

[15:06] Now I don't know the statute of limitations on that, so we won't name any specific locations.

Oh, no, no, no. I don't if you're aware of this or not, but Warrior's Heart

the amazing people that they are made that U-Haul not stolen when I returned it.

Nice.

Yes. That was a Ingrid. That was a Ingrid. That was an anger thing.

We turned, she made me, of all the things I've done in my life, that was one of the hardest. She made me go to the U-Haul place here in Bandera in this stolen U-Haul that was full of drugs and stolen stuff and take it to the U-Haul place and meet her there. And she'd already talked to him and said, "Listen, she stole it, but she's giving it back." And the guy was like, "I'm just glad you used it for something good." And we love And they love Warriors Heart here in Bandera.

When the universe comes together. Yes. You know, so it's no longer stolen.

But you cut the lock off. You stole the key. 26 foot U-Haul.

That's the only key there was.

Yeah.

That's the only key there was.

And you drove down?

Yes.

How long did it take you to get down here now?

Five days.

Five days.

It took me five days. Yes.

You made a few stops along the way.

I did.

Yeah,

I did. Committing a few crimes. I mean, just doing wild crazy stuff. Yes.

[16:06] So, the back end of it wasn't empty

at all.

What was in it?

Um, a brand new vacuum in a box, a quick set electronic key door or a a doorork knob in a box. Mhm.

Meth, drugs, jewelry, clothes, um the grinder.

I believe the lock that that came off of the U-Haul was still in the back cuz I had my fingerprints. So, I just threw it in the back to come with, you know, can't leave that behind. Um everything. It took [clears throat] her car, an SUV, and a flatbed to get all my stuff from the U-Haul place here to get it here to Warriors Heart.

I heard. Yeah. It took a bit to inventory all that stuff. Um, I believe it took five people 10 hours.

Yeah, that's a lot.

And now that the not the statute of limitations, but now that the rules of I've passed through your sobriety and I'm friends with some of the employees. I have pictures of them going through my property.

Really?

Yes.

Wow.

Yes. Not a magic eightball. The Yes.

Not not a meth ball, but

[17:07] No. No. And a magic eightball. Yes. I'm

wonder if that's the one Inger still has in her office.

I don't know. Maybe.

Maybe. So, but you didn't obviously it took you five days to make an eight hour drive. So, were there still some nerves associated with this?

Yes. And I had I had brought plenty of um whatever to make sure I could go back if I didn't like it here, but I didn't get a chance to see the facility. I thought I was going to get in my head. Here's what was going to happen. I was going to drive onto the facility, look it over from the U-Haul, unload my stuff, and then leave and take the U-Haul back. Or really, I was not going to take it I was going to dip it off on the side of a road someplace, keep the key in case I wanted to leave.

Makes sense.

I mean, that's what was going in my mind. Yeah.

Well, let me ask this. Why warriors heart? You've been to other treatment centers before. The VA wanted to send you to other places before. Why Warri's Heart?

Do you know this answer?

I want to hear it from you. Um, when I was still in active addiction, a gentleman and I had really bad, really bad beef and he paid two guys to kidnap me and kill me.

[18:10] A previous warrior.

Wow.

Who um I was tased. I was unconscious. I was zip tied. I was kidnapped. And within 45 minutes, I was uncidnapped. A combat veteran was now my friend. And he told me about warrior's heart had saved his life before he fell back into addiction.

So that guy came here, relapsed, did that, and then told you about the place that saved his life?

Yes.

Wow. I'm getting goosebumps right now. I didn't know that part of the story. I really honestly didn't know.

That's how

Wow.

That's why I fought so hard for him to be able to come back here.

Yeah.

He literally saved my life when he was paid to take it. That is just unfathomable. I I

God. I believe it's God.

It is.

And you couldn't have convinced me when I got here that there was a God.

Yeah.

You could not have convinced me there was a God when I got here. But looking back on that, I mean

Yeah.

Yeah. It was God.

[19:11] I kind of wanted to delve into that a little bit more, but we're gonna

We can

Well, I mean to protect his privacy. I don't know. But

No, he's proud of himself. He is. He's doing really good now. Well, that's kind of what I was [laughter]

Oh,

that's kind of what I was gonna ask. He's He's doing good, though.

He is.

That's fantastic. I'm elated to hear that.

Uh the it's it's a difficult fight. You know, when those demons get a hold of you, especially those meth demons get a hold of you, they want to keep you where you're at. They want to kill you. They want to take you out and take as many people as they can with them, right? And that story illustrates that. So, it's a hard fight to get away from it. It is.

And for him,

you know, he came in, it it didn't work the first time. He relapsed, but he got back in the fight.

It shows the strength and tenacity of the warriors that come through here. Yes.

Whether they got to steal a [__] U-Haul to get here or or what, you know, it it that fight for survival is real.

It is,

you know.

But so, you came to Warriors Heart. got here and I remember Ingred telling me the story about when they were when they were inventorying the vehicle and they like found all kinds of like meth crystals in the carpet and stuff like that. She got some of it in her eyes.

[20:25] Yes. [laughter]

It's the craziest story, you know.

It is. And you know, once I got I I hated her for because she once she sent me the rules um and it said, you know, there's a dress code and I was like, I'm not following that dress code. Like no one's going to tell me what to do. And so I've been here about two weeks and I had a really like emotional session in counseling and she was walking from the clinical building back I don't know where she was going back back toward the kitchen essentially and I ran up to her and she stopped and like braced herself and I'm like can I give you a hug? She's like yeah but she told me later she's like she didn't know if I was going to beat her up or what

because I was [clears throat] so disregulated, unregulated. I was horrible but I have been appreciative of her forever.

I can relate. I came in here just

But she also never was never a counselor. She never had me in groups. She never tried to challenge me once I got here.

Right. Well, she was a catalyst to get you here.

Yes, she absolutely was. But once I was here, I had no reason to be angry at her anymore, even if she sent me a dress code that I didn't want to follow. [laughter]

But um yeah, she said the first few times I came up to her, she was a little intimidated. And I'm like, I hate that. Especially now that I have worked so hard to not be sober. being sober once I went through here and went to IOP being sober was easy for me honestly but learning how to become a human again learning how to be a human again and um I recently got a job and when they we had to do this introduction at our company meeting and they asked you know what do you want to be known for when you die and I was like for being kind and I'm so behind the power curve there like I've only done it for a couple of years but I want to be seen as kind and that was not at all what I represented here

[22:04] well neither was

the struggle is real.

It is. But that person that you were supposed to be was inside there. We just had to bring it out. Right.

And I am so thankful. I thank God every day for Where's Heart.

Oh. So you got here, they inventoried the stuff, they got the U-Haul back so it wasn't stolen anymore. You dove into the program, and you you completed the 42 days, and then you went in straight.

I stayed for 60.

60 days.

I stayed for 60.

You needed a little extra help.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

Absolutely. did that two week extension. Then you went into sober living. Yes.

Yeah. So tell us about that. Tell us about that sober living.

Of course. Um

am I allowed to say Vonnie's name? Of course. Vonyie being the uh leader of the lodge, if you will, had heard about my antics.

Yeah.

And she basically said, you know, you're calling a clean slate here, but we'll be watching you.

And I was like, fair enough. Um, and of course it wasn't so much that I was acting out or being I was being unruly but didn't even know how to act any other way.

[23:07] Like if someone said something I like and I would just have meltdowns and fits because I didn't know how to respond in a in a healthy way. And so I don't know what y'all pay Vonnie but

she earned it. [laughter] She earned her money. Everybody here that helped did that was me earned their money. Yeah,

but um I stayed for IOP and then I decided that I wasn't long enough for me even though I had not relapsed and and so I did IOP again.

Michael Odell helped get me funding for the second IOP and um then about two weeks before it was over, Vonnie started telling me, "Okay, there is no clinical indication for you to do it again. [laughter] You can stay here as long as you want, but there is no clinical indication. You can still get therapy whenever you want. You come to my office. We'll talk. There's no clinical indication. So, we're not kicking you out of the nest, but it's time for you to stand on your own. And I did. I was They gave me anxiety.

And then I of course, Jody, I know best. I got funding through the VA to do it again. And Bonnie was like, "No, we told you no. You're going to have to learn to do this yourself."

But by that point, I was imshed in AA here, going like four or five times a week. I had my little AA friends. We have dinners. We went thrift store shopping. you know, I'd become like I had started to become a person that people wanted to hang out with.

[24:20] And I think that's when I officially met you because, you know, I came through here before you did,

right?

I was here in 2020. You came in in

2023.

2023. Gotcha. And I came to work here in April of 23. Right.

So, it was probably then that I met you in so um or in the meetings, right? you know, the Tuesday night meetings here, the Great Vine meetings, and you know, got to know you and got to got to love you from that. Uh, but I saw you work in the program, right? In AA, they say align yourself with the winners. Now, first time I heard that, I was kind of put off by it. I'm like, I'm in AA, I just been to rehab. I'm not exactly a winner. Who is

right?

But it just means align yourself with somebody who has something that you want. And you had happiness. You had joy.

Yes.

You were working the program. You were going to meetings. You were doing all the things that you were supposed to do. And it appeared that you were doing it for you because at that time, what did you have in your life? Were your kids there?

Not at all. 13 years no contact.

No contact for 13 years.

[25:22] Wow. And as a mama, I know that hurt.

It was the hardest thing ever. Um, golly. I'm glad you put fake eyelashes on me. Um [laughter] um Bonnie Bonnie had to help me prepare myself for life without my kids.

Yeah.

Because I had to be willing to carry on my sobriety and find happiness even if that meant I couldn't have them.

Yeah. That is essential in recovery. [snorts] You have to do it for you,

right?

And from a parental standpoint, kind of the same thing,

right? You align yourself with somebody that has something that you want, right? In aa and your kids, it's a program of attraction. And your kids, same thing,

right?

They want to see the best version of you possible. When they see that, then they want to come back to you.

They can't demand because we're their parents, right? They have more than earned the right to say, you know, f you. I don't want to be around you

for life.

Yeah. Because of what we've done. Cheyenne had told her children that I was dead because she didn't want me to be bop in and out of their lives like constant hurt, constant turmoil, constant is she alive, is she in jail? Is you know, is she ever going to come back? She wasn't going to allow me to do that to her kids.

[26:37] And as a mother, she has that right.

Absolutely, she has that right. And she she was a better mother than I ever was.

There you go.

But it didn't really make it hurt any less. And you can never go back and undo. But um ever since I've had her back in my life, from the day I've had her back in my life, she has never one time said anything to make me feel bad. She has shared with me recently that she had nightmares about them coming to her door to ask to identify me and she wouldn't know what I looked like anymore. You know, I put her through so much, but since she's been back in my life, and it's been less than a year, [snorts] she has never ever said one thing to make me feel bad about her. I have a key to her house. I can pick our kids up from school. I'm the favorite grandma. Um, honey, I'm the favorite honey. Honey,

this Wednesday, um, I have Wednesday, Thursday off at work and I got a a message from her middle [snorts] child and she's like, "Where are you, honey? Where are you?" I said, "Baby, I'm at work." She said, "But it's Wednesday. and I'd forgotten that she knew my days off and we were supposed to. We didn't have plans but she did [snorts] and so I will never work on a Wednesday again.

[27:48] How old is she?

Nine.

Nine. Yeah.

Never again. Will I work on a Wednesday?

Well, being as how this is, you know, the Mother's Day episode, let's talk about being a mother again. How did that come about? Because I remember when it was time for you to leave the nest, so to speak, because you were here in Bandera in the meetings, sober living, everything for how long? 22 months.

22 months. Two months shy of two years.

Yes.

Yeah. That's a long time.

I needed That took a long time for me to be a drug addict.

You know, I tell people that all the time. It It takes a while sometimes for us to get all [__] up. It takes a while for us to get unfucked sometimes.

I mean, really, it took 22 months of me looking only at me, dealing with only me, healing me before I could even think about doing anything else. And I want to make this point abundantly clear for anybody that's watching and thinking about coming in for treatment. I got to leave my kids and everything else. I make this abundantly clear. You put in a lot of hard work. Was it worth it?

Every day.

Yeah.

Every day.

Every day.

Every tear, every fit, every struggle, every nightmare, everything. I mean, it was It's a lot of work to heal.

[28:58] It's It's so easy to be sober. I mean, I shouldn't say that. To me, once I got sober, like this was I didn't know anybody here and I gave myself 365 days. I was going to commit 365 days to being sober. And then on 366, I was gone if I didn't like it.

But I made myself a promise no matter what cuz it was so hard to get here that that was what I was committing. And by 4 months, I knew I wasn't going back to drugs. But it was so hard to look at me and see like this power-hungry, egoomaniacal jerk that I was, it was hard to tame that back. And it didn't. You know what, Jod? That's a really bad look. You're going to start being nice to people. That doesn't work. I mean, it's literally hour by hour, day by day that you have to heal and learn to God, that's a bad look. You don't really want to be that person.

Mhm. Yeah. Now, it it was a lot of hard work. We did it for our careers, right?

We did it for our addictions.

But are we willing to do it for ourselves so that we can be the best version possible for our family? That's when the real warrior comes out. Right.

Right. So, 22 months into this, you decide it's time to go home. What What made that decision for you?

[30:04] Um, I felt stagnant here. Honestly,

I wasn't working. I wasn't going to school.

By your very, very small town. It gave me everything I needed. When I got here last time, I'm like, I told Shy, I'm like, I'm home. And she's like, this isn't Oklahoma, but this is this is home in my heart. But I was stagnant. I wanted to do more than go to meetings and hang out with my sober friends. I wanted to have a life. And I knew if I didn't go back to Oklahoma and start seeing around being around people that could, you know, get messages or tell Cheyenne or, you know, we live in a really small town. I thought I would bump into her.

Mhm.

Before the extra year that it took for me to get her back in my life. Never happened. I would go to the Walmart that I thought she went to, but it wasn't the right one. And go get pedicures every week thinking I would see her at the checkout at different times a day.

Yeah.

I mean, like sometimes I get them four days later just to go sit at Walmart to see if I could see her. Yeah, that

because I knew I couldn't I knew where she lived,

but I also knew that she would see that as a threat and not appreciated. So, I was never going to impose, but I got a lot of pedicures.

[31:06] It's the right way to go. You can't force yourself on Absolutely. force a relationship.

Absolutely not.

Right.

Uh but deciding to to go home, it we we get comfortable in a way. Yes. Right.

Yes.

And I I I just made a post about this on Facebook as far as my personal journey is concerned. Fear controls us a lot. We're scared to take a step out because we know what happened last time and that should hurt really bad, right?

So, we're scared to take a step out, but we never grow. We never flourish. We never have things in our life unless we're willing to take a chance and go out there and get it. Whether it's a job, whether it's a truck, whether it's a relationship, whether it's

educa, anything, we have to take a chance. We have to be courageous enough to go after it. So you felt like I'm not I'm not growing here. So it's time for me to go home and try

more comfortable.

Yeah.

I knew everybody in every meeting. I knew everybody at the lodge. I knew almost everybody that was in RTC all the counselors. And I I got to the point where I was almost to the point where I could be friends with them. But and I did want to be friends with a lot. I want to be y'all's friends so badly. But I was too comfortable. And

[32:16] yeah,

I wasn't I wasn't done. I wasn't ready to be finished growing. and I didn't know what I was going to do when when I went moved to Oklahoma. I talked to the VA about opening up a sober house. Got there and realized that's going to take a lot of it's going to take a lot of work. I haven't given up on that dream, but I um to get the grants and stuff, you generally have to have like a stable background. So, in December, I finished with my associates in addiction counseling unless I fail math, which I don't think it's going to happen, but I haven't taken it yet. So, that's a possibility. But in December, I actually graduated with my associates in addiction counseling that I've gotten since I've been sober. And um and then starting in January, February, I'm going to start working with the VA to open up a a home to place like transitional warrior um warriors veterans in in Oklahoma where the VA needs a house to house them

because right now they what they have is really unacceptable.

That's that's awesome work. That is taking your failures and making it your strength, right? your your pain becomes your cure. Your story becomes somebody else's survival guide, right?

[33:19] No better person than you to do that.

Uh let's jump back into finding your daughter.

Okay. So, um there's a gentleman that we know that she's considered her uncle

for years and years and he kept telling her, "Hey, your mom's sober." And she would not care.

And um then finally he messaged me. He was like, "Hey, Tuesday night, me you shy and Mexican food." And I'm like, "Deal, deal."

Mhm.

Like I was nervous. I was sick to my stomach. She wasn't super receptive that night, you know. She told me I'd never meet her. I wouldn't if I ever met her kids, it would be for a long time. And she was angry. That was the only time she ever she wasn't rude rude. She just was like big boundaries. Big big boundaries.

Huge walls.

And so I decided she gave me her phone number though.

Yeah,

she gave me her phone number. But I was so afraid of these boundaries, I didn't call her. And then like two weeks later, she called me. And like I said, I was in the I'd gone to the hospital for like five days. And she was like, "Well, are you well enough in the hospital? I can bring Corey and Dax to meet you." Children she's had since she's had me cut off.

[34:25] Mhm.

And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm not even sick. I'm just here."

Mhm.

And she brought Corey and Dax to meet me, but at the time she told them that I was her friend.

Fair enough.

Fair. Right. Um, but apparently Corey, the nine-year-old girl, was like, "Y'all kind of look alike. [laughter] Y'all are both the things she kept singing on. So, y'all are both loud." [laughter] And within like three weeks, I was over there every day. I spend the night over there. I Yeah.

Yeah.

I spend the night over there. Sometimes I sleep with Corey, which was really hard with her and Ben in a twiniz bed. But

Ben, the service.

Yes. Yes. Service dog not not too big for a service for a twin size bed. Um

yeah, it just from like day one when they realized I was their honey and then Charlie, her older daughter who's 15, she lived with me until she was two.

Mhm.

And she didn't remember me at all.

Yeah.

But I had pictures of us.

[35:27] Yeah.

She was like, "Oh, you look so young." And I'm like, "Thanks. So do you."

[laughter]

So, but literally from day one, they've just they've accepted me as the kids have accepted me as their honey.

Mhm.

They um I'm kind of they have phones. I got them phones for Christmas. And so, whenever I didn't know until this weekend, so it's as bad as it is, when their mom tells them no, they just call me. And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm on the way." So, but Cheyenne doesn't even um fault me for that. She lets me be honey. She has told the kids in a joking manner that I'm not who raised her

and I'm not for a lot of reasons.

Well, that's fair.

I didn't have Chick-fil-A money back then.

Well, yeah. [laughter]

But, you know, we got to give them that space and Yes. And we

I've seen a lot of warriors come through here and, you know, they have that dad guilt, the mom guilt, whatever, and they want to be back in their kids' life

and they almost demand it. You know, I I went to treatment. I'm good now. except me.

[36:28] Absolutely. You cannot do that.

That's not the way that it works. It's not. And with the walls that were built, you gave her the bricks and mortar to build those walls.

Absolutely.

You know, um so you have to let her take them down piece by piece.

You even when she gave me her phone number, I was like, "Oh, I'm going to call her. I want to call her." I'm like, "Nope, nope. Don't do it. Don't do it." And then I was I was almost scared to cuz I was afraid. I was so terrified that if I called her and said something that tried to push the the walls or on a bad day and so I didn't even call her. I waited till she called me.

Yeah.

And because I was afraid I would mess it up.

Yeah.

And as I've learned in this program, time heals all and there's nothing like some time and space.

Yeah.

And so it didn't even take two weeks and she was calling me. So

sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. It seems slowly as you were healing as you were going through all that and then when she came back in your life it was kind of quick in some ways

right and it's only it hasn't even been a year and it's I swear it's like there's never been a day missed like we called each other we have

[37:31] make fun of each other in grocery stores you know we have a [sighs and gasps] an odd sense of humor at times and um it's like never a day was missed

well in a minute we're going to have a chat with her and get her side of it you know which is going to be beautiful I love it

yes

um But if it wasn't for Warriors Heart, if I wasn't And it it's not just a rehab that got me. It was Warriors Heart. It was the people here, you working here, all the people that have come through the program and our sense of family and the fact that this, you know, they don't let you do, they don't let you buck here. They will come at you with three staff and, you know, they don't like beat you or whip you. They're like, "Hey, let's talk about this." And it's kind of hard to debate three different staff members all at one time when you know you're wanting to just do it your way

and the fact that they won't let you give they won't give up on you and they won't let you give up on yourself.

And it was almost like when I what I loved about the military being told what to do again what is expected of you.

You can do it your way as long as you do it on this path.

[38:31] Right.

And I will forever ever love everybody here. even though I thought Tom Spooner hated me when after I'd extended for 60 days and then I was walking the dog that I wanted so desperately and I said I think I'm going to extend again for another two weeks and he said but do you really need to or are you just afraid to leave and what I heard him say was we don't like you here and we want you to go [laughter]

because our brain hears what it wants to hear.

Absolutely. But I mean once I realized like when Vonnie was like, "You're not doing IOP a third time."

Like there's no clinical reason for it. And [snorts] then I, you know, heard Tom saying, "Do you really need to stay?" Cuz y'all will let us stay as long as we need to. But then also, how are we going to learn to fly if you never kick us out the nest?

That's it.

And I wanted to stay in the nest because I was comfortable.

Comfortable is not absolutely not.

Change never comes from a place of comfort. And that's it. And I'm glad that you that you took those steps and I'm glad that you have your family back in your life. U your son,

[39:34] um Cheyenne has said he's coming around. However, she won't tell me what that means,

and that's fine. She talked to her brother. My kids talk to their to their uncle Luke. But um I have to have faith that it will happen. And I love him and I know he loves me even if he still has boundaries and doesn't want me in his life because of the pain. I get that. I accept that. I don't want that, of course. But of course, I have to let him live his life.

And as a mother, you're never going to stop loving him, but you're also going to do what's best for him, even if it sacrifices your own feelings.

Absolutely. And I finally do that now. Before I when I was high, I was like, well, I'm acting normal. They can be around me, you know. No, just no. And if that's what he chooses, but I mean, unfortunately with him in the middle of the ocean in hostile waters, it might not be his choice to get to come hug his mom tomorrow, but maybe soon. Maybe one day soon.

Yeah. Some I mean, we'll see, right? Uh but he's earned the right to to have that distance at the moment, but he can change it at any moment. But it can't deter you from your path, right?

[40:41] Absolutely not. Nothing will.

You know,

nothing will. I've I've chatted with a lot of guys before that, you know, were upset because the wife left or the girlfriend left or whatever. I'm like, so long as you're heading down that path of healing, self-discovery, becoming the best version of yourself possible, the people who are meant to be in your life will be there,

right?

And if they don't follow you down that path, you still went the right direction.

Absolutely.

You know, you're still heading in the right direction no matter what.

But, you know, [snorts] when um Corey messaged me the other day and she's like, "But it's Wednesday." Her mom was never given that option. But it's Wednesday. Mom, you're supposed to be off with me. It's But it's 20. It's 205. You're supposed to be here this year, you know.

Yeah.

Cory missed out on one Wednesday. She missed out on years because of me, you know, but it's just a reminder that where my life could be right now.

In some ways, we feel like we're making up for that lost time.

We Absolutely.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

I cherish the moments I have with my kids. No matter what, I try to make it as best possible. I hate fighting. I hate arguing.

[41:44] I hate having to correct them or anything like that. I just want to cherish the time that I have with them.

And I love my daughter more than I anything in life. But grandkids are a bunch better. [laughter]

So much better.

I always hear that. I don't have any of those yet. And I'm not in any hurry to get any. But

but once you do

Yeah.

Yeah. They're just precious. But it is like giving me It's like God gave me a second chance.

Yeah. Well, you've earned a second chance.

Thank you.

I think you have.

Thank you.

And by your daughter being here, I think you have, too.

Thank you.

Now, she was also here for the reunion.

Yes.

And she gave a a little bit of a testimonial.

Yes.

For the alumni reunion video,

which again kind of speaks volumes to this place because we've done few a few reunions and we got baptized in the freedom.

We did together.

Yeah.

I love him. He's great.

Does he send you sermons every Sunday?

He does. He still does. And he better not stop. I thought it was just me. No,

I'm just kidding.

Yeah, he changes the names.

He does. He's very good about including making it very personalized.

[42:45] Yes, he is. Now, when Ingred and I make that next step, he's probably going to be the one that officiates.

Yeah,

I love that so much.

Yeah,

he is such an amazing guy.

He is. He really is. Even though he is a Green Bay Packers fan.

He's got to have one flaw.

Well, yeah, we all have at least one.

One. That's it.

I mean, I have none.

Of course not.

Right. Right. Anybody that knows me, they'll tell you that.

Not one. Not one. I mean, you picked an amazing woman. You couldn't have picked a better woman.

Well, thank you.

I love her so much.

Well, I appreciate you chatting with me.

Thank you.

Uh, I think what we're going to do now is swap out and have Cheyenne come up if she's okay with that. [music] All right. Well, now we're sitting here with Cheyenne, Jod's lovely daughter. Thank you for sitting down with us and being on our Mother's Day special episode. Uh truly means a lot to us for you to come down and talk with us. I mean, y'all drove down from Oklahoma. Uh but we just got done chatting with Jody. Uh and we want to chat with you a little

bit about the other side of that, I guess. You know, when from, you know, the the mother standpoint, you're a mother also and you lost your mother and then you got her back.

[43:59] So, I want to hear your side of it. I want to hear your thoughts. So, I want to hear every bit of it.

Um, I mean, it was scary. Um, looking back like she was struggling with addiction from the time that I was about 8 years old.

So, you remember her in active addiction? Yes.

Yeah. You were old enough to to see the the carnage and everything. What was life like back then? Um, I mean, when everyone thinks about being raised by an addict, they think of rundown shacks, trap houses, things like that.

We never not had anything.

Yeah.

You know, running water, electric, there weren't people in and out of the house all the time. So, I mean, that's what people think of whenever they think of addiction.

They think of an absolute [__] show.

Yeah.

Yeah. But I'm not going to say it was like pure stability, but it was a is mom going to go to bed? It's bedtime.

It's like things that you didn't notice as a child, but now looking back, you're like, hey, that's what addiction looks like.

[45:04] Mhm.

Um it was different sporadic mooding. It was not emotional stability at all.

Mhm. Um, and it's like an impressionable age whenever you're being taught, you know, bedtimes, routines, schooling, and it's a, okay, yeah, she got us to school, and then whenever we get off the bus to be home, it's a, where's mom at,

right?

She's at work.

Mhm.

And then some days she'd be gone couple days, come in late, leave early, and we just thought it was work.

Mhm. And then like she wouldn't be around to go grocery shopping, but she'd leave money on the table. So we knew that oh, she was here at some point.

Mhm.

But we were old enough to order pizza, walk up to the gas station,

right?

So we never really went without physical needs, but it was the emotional needs.

Now you you have an older brother,

[46:05] so he probably was kind of Well, he probably remembers more of this than you do because you were eight at the time. Yeah,

we were we're just under a year apart.

Just under a year apart. Okay. For some reason, I was thinking it was a little older than that. Gotcha.

Um I mean, you had friends. Uh you'd probably go over to your friend's house and see the dynamic over there.

Did you compare what was going on in those houses to your house?

Um sometimes. Um I mean, mom still loved us.

Mhm. And it was obvious that she did, but there I mean there were there were differences.

Mhm.

Like the parents were always there,

right?

All the time.

Mhm.

And that was like I mean the main thing,

right? So let's talk about the Jod's exit right from

uh when she was no longer there and what that looked like for you. I mean how'd you find out about it? What take us through that time? Actually, we had a US Marshall show at the house. They took her. She said a friend's coming. We stayed in the house another week before we were picked up.

[47:10] Oh, wow.

Yeah.

Holy [__]

We were still making it to school.

Mhm.

Um my fifth grade teacher um pulled me out in the hallway. Hey, your hair's not brushed.

Mhm.

You wore this outfit yesterday. What's going on? And I just start crying.

Mhm.

Um told her what's going on. She's like, "Okay, let's go back to class." And later that day, we are picked up by social services.

And they had already picked up my brother from his school because we were he was middle school, still in elementary. And uh we ended up going to someone we already knew who was mom's friend.

Mhm.

They took us there,

right?

And that's where we stayed.

And then she's like, "You know, your mom's in jail." And I'm like, "Yeah, I know. We've been at home."

Mhm. Um, and then it was seeing her at the jail and then it's a why can't I touch her?

Mhm.

Why can't I really talk to her? Why is she crying? How long's this going to be? A week, a month? And then it turned into years.

[48:17] And then when she got out, it would say, "Hey, she's out. She can call us. Why can't we see her?"

And you were living with her mom or

No, it was her friend by then. My grandma had already died. I gota gotcha. So that was the person that raised you more or less.

Um, no.

No. Okay.

Um, I stayed with we stayed in foster care in her house. She ended up losing her she had two other children herself.

Mhm.

Ended up losing her kids cuz she also fell in addiction.

Um, and then me and my older brother went to go live with her parents.

Mhm.

And then I left at 16 or 17 and never went back. I got you.

I just couch surfed from friends houses and um I worked at a restaurant and the owner at the time had an older son and let me live in their apartment.

Mhm.

Because I was still working and going to school even though I was a minor.

Mhm.

And I just kind of found my way from there.

Gotcha. And at that point you had kind of written your mom off. I mean she was in jail.

[49:22] Um yes. Um, I didn't think she was ever going to get clean again.

Mhm.

There was a lot of hatred and anger like was I not good enough? I made good grades. I did great in extracurriculars and sports and I felt the need to be perfect because if I was perfect, that should be good enough that she's going to want me.

Yeah.

And it just never played out like that. I mean, it's it's typical for kids to feel that way when the parent parent isn't around. You know, it's it's it's me that that caused that. I mean, I didn't exactly grow up in that household, but when I worked juvenile sex crimes and stuff like that as a detective, you know, I I interviewed a lot of kids and, you know, had a lot of training in that regard. So, it's kind of common for for kids to feel that way that it's their fault. But, I mean, you understand now, of course, that it wasn't your fault,

but during that time, you felt that way. And that kind of shape did it shape how you grew up and how you approach life?

[50:25] Yes.

Um I have like almost a complex to not just do my best but if I'm not better than the next person

then I'm not going to stand out.

Mhm.

But you know as I've gotten older and it's a it was never about me.

Mhm. Right. I gotcha. And that was like I think the hardest thing to cope with and understand was this isn't your fault.

You were good enough before anything else.

Were you in therapy to reach that or did you come to that on your own?

Um I since I was still in custody of the state, we had to do extra therapeutic counseling and they'd come to the schools and then um whenever I started getting in trouble at school like, "Hey, what's going on?" I was like, "Here's what's going on, but it's okay because I'm better anyways." So then I became arrogant.

Makes sense.

Um, and I didn't really get a whole lot of humbling until I got pregnant my senior year with my oldest daughter.

[51:27] Mhm.

Then it's a oh, party stops,

right?

Um, and then at that point I was talking to my mom again. um and uh actually turned her in because she had relapsed again and US marshalss are coming to the house that I was staying at.

Said, "Where's your mom?" I was like, "It's Thanksgiving. We're supposed to go, you know, see her and they're like, I don't think so." So, I had to take them to turn her in.

That's Was that tough for you?

Thanksgiving.

Was that kind of tough for you or

It was very tough. It was it felt like I was betraying her.

And I felt like if I didn't do this, then what are they going to do to me?

True. I mean, because that's the way law enforcement is going to approach you. Hey, turn your mama in or you're going to go to jail for harboring a fugitive, you know, something like that. You know, trust me, I know the tactics.

Uh, but you love your mother even though she wasn't a huge part of your life and you still didn't want to turn her in, I guess. But was there some sort of do you think there might have been an element of tough love there doing what was best for her knowing if she kept running she may not survive it

[52:40] looking back now yes but at the time it was a you're a coward you turned her in this is your fault she's going back you don't know when you're going to see her again.

Yeah I gotcha. Um what when you were growing up what did you tell your friends and family and everything about your mom because I'm sure they asked you know where your parents were. Um, I kept it a secret for a long time.

I got to stay in the same school district.

So, no one really asked questions. It was a, "Oh, she just moved."

Then it's a, "Why do you have an extra brother and sister now?"

And it's a, "Oh, I'm embarrassed. Do I tell my mom I'm in foster care?"

Mhm.

So, um, if Vi got out, yeah, she's in foster care. Her mom's in prison. And then it's a you're going to turn out just like her.

And I'm like, well, that's not who she is. even though that's exactly who she was.

Now, kids hear that all the time, but they have the choice of if I'm going to be accused of it, I might as well do it or I'm going to show them better.

What was your mindset on that?

[53:41] Mine was pretty 50/50.

Mhm.

Um I got into a lot of fights.

Fair. Um, it was a yeah, I'm better, but also if you run your mouth again and then, you know, kids being kids are going to poke the bear and me having to prove that I'm the bigger bear.

Mhm.

So, it was a very wishy-washy slope.

Gotcha. So, you get through high school, you graduate. Yeah. Um, but you you're pregnant with your first child.

Yeah.

So, what did life look like for you after that? It was not good. Um, I had to work harder because I decided, you know, while I had never done drugs or drank or anything, um, now I'm bringing a baby in and it's just me.

Mhm.

Um, and I was helping support my brother because I worked all kinds of hours.

Mhm.

So, helping him financially, trying to make it through with me and a baby. Um, and I decided, you know what? I'm going to cut my mom off.

[54:46] Was that a tough choice for you?

That was a very tough choice because I didn't know what else to do. But I knew that I wasn't going to take a baby around that. And I didn't have any, you know, really life experience as to stability.

Mhm.

Whether it be financially, physically, emotionally, any of it.

So, I kind of just had to figure it out. Um, the day that I had my daughter, I was in the hospital and I received a phone call and I I forget who it was in the room that answered the phone and they said, "It's it's for you." And I'm like, "It's probably amun medical staff." So, I grabbed the phone and it's my mom.

Mhm.

Like, she found me. So, that was kind of scary. And, you know, she said that, you know, I heard that you had a baby and baby's coming today. Um, I love you. And then I hung up the phone. I don't know if I was scared. I don't know if I was irritated. I don't know if it was just anxiety, but I just hung the phone up.

[55:46] Yeah.

Um, didn't talk to her again until my daughter was about 8 months old.

Wow. Yeah.

So, just a little bit of another stretch of not talking to her. She'd gotten out. um said she was clean and I'm like, "Okay." And then she'd work so much. I'm like, "Okay, well, she doesn't have time to use."

Mhm.

That's what I thought. Um and she did stay clean for a while. Um and then I ended up moving in with her uh when my daughter was one. And uh I thought that this, you know, my daughter being perfect and funny and all the things that toddlers are would be enough to keep her clean.

Right.

And then it wasn't.

Mhm.

So she relapsed. I moved. Um couple months later, she's right back in jail. And I decided

[56:51] changed. Yeah.

Yeah. Mhm.

So then I decided at that point um I'm not going to do this again.

And that's when the 13 years no contact started

from that point.

Mhm.

Now you mentioned something a minute ago that I want to kind of explore a little bit.

Okay.

Uh sometimes our addictions and our bad habits are passed on to our kids. Other times it seems like it skips a generation because our kids see us going through that and they want no part of that. Mhm.

Uh you said you hadn't drank, you hadn't done drugs. So what was your approach or what was your standpoint on drugs and alcohol growing up seeing your mom go through some things?

Um I have a zero tolerance for either one.

Yeah,

I understand that people can drink and have healthy drinking. It's legal, but rarely does it stop at one or two.

Very true. So, um it's hard.

Um especially, you know, being younger, having kids young before drinking age, and all of a sudden it's a hey, let's go drink just one.

[57:57] Mhm.

And then I'm like, okay, well, I can go out, you know, maybe have one, and then it's a okay, well, that tasted good, but what if I have like a problem?

Mhm. And then, you know, flash forward and now it's a I don't have a problem. But I just don't do it because I feel like if you do give into it, it's going to consume.

Yeah. It it can run in the family. It runs on both sides of my family to varying degrees. And my mom, sweetest lady you'd ever meet. You'd love her to death if you met her. And when she told me once that um she intentionally doesn't drink because she loves the way it tastes and she knows that she'd be an alcoholic because you know it runs in her family

kind of surprised the hell out of me. I never would have even pictured her drinking let alone becoming an alcoholic like I was you know but uh she recognized that and she stayed away from it. My dad never saw him have a drink. But me and one of my older brothers both have some

serious addiction issues that we've had to deal with, you know, so it kind of skips a generation. U but the kids, my kids and my brother's kids, uh they stayed away from the things that have torn us down because they saw what it did to us, you know. So I was just kind of wondering if that kind of played into your decisions.

[59:09] Um I didn't let anybody who did anything around my kids. I kept them. I mean, they're still very sheltered.

Mhm.

Um they know drinking's out there. We go to restaurants, cookouts, barbecues, people are drinking. Um, but if I suspect anyone there is going to take it too far, it's a we don't go.

That's fair. Yeah. You saw what happened in your life, you don't want your kids going through that.

So, you know, even us being a mom now, it's a it's hard to either shelter them from that completely

or, you know, are they going to end up being naive and then going crazy whenever they leave the house. So that's kind kind of where I'm at right now.

And you'll find your way through that as they grow older. You'll be able to guide them with honesty, you know, with this kind of honesty.

Um, so the 13 years, let let's talk about that for a moment. I mean, you you said no for 13 years and you just cut her out completely.

Yeah.

And wanted to live your life. How did life go for you?

[1:00:10] It was hard. Um, everyone else had moms. Mhm.

I didn't, but you know, I learned to accept it. Um, it was in a small town that I still live in where everyone knew me. And so, even though I didn't have family, the friends became family. The friends moms were moms.

Mhm.

Um, but it still was like a slight jealousy like, you know, they get to do that,

right?

Um, and it really didn't hit me until my younger two were born. Mhm.

Um, and they're, well, dad has a mom. Where's yours?

And then I had to sit there and think, do I tell them, "Oh, she's off doing drugs.

She wouldn't know me. I wouldn't know her." Or do I say, "I just don't have one." And that just felt more safe because I didn't want any questions, any I felt that they were too young to even understand anyways, which they were.

[1:01:15] Um, so then it was a well, my mom died thinking it would drop in. It wasn't. Well, how'd she die?

So I'm like, now I have to think of a death.

Kids got a million questions. You got to come up with a backstory now.

And I've never lied to my kids, but then it was a Well, here I am lying.

Mhm. So it's like, "Well, how'd she die? Was it, you know, lava or a shark or anything that kids can come up with?" I was like, "No, she just got old and she died. It just happens." And they took it for what it was.

Base jumping off the Empire State Building. Let's go with something fun. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. I'm like, and now we joke about it now. I'm like, I should have said a shark got you or something.

Something cool.

And [laughter] said she just got old and died. Not, you know, they didn't know that,

you know, she's only 18 years older than I am.

Mh. And then I had always had pictures of her, the ones that I did have. I hated her. I didn't want anything to do with her, but I could not get rid of those pictures.

[1:02:15] Mhm.

So then they went from a folder in my closet because now the kids are asking questions to put them in the attic. So they never saw a picture of her, never anything.

And you were trying to protect them.

Mhm.

That was your choice.

Yep. totally in support of that. I mean, it was a a good choice at the time. Um, you didn't want to expose him to that lifestyle and I get it. U sometimes that lie is is the right thing to do. Uh, but I know you didn't weren't exactly comfortable with it, but life continued on, right? Let's let's move forward into how how she came back into your life. Um, we have a family friend

and then even my foster sister and her husband were

reaching out to me. Hey, she's in town. And it was like, good for her.

Mhm.

Well, don't you know where she's at? I don't care.

Had you known anything about what had been going on with her for 13 years, like snippets, news, friends, anything like that?

[1:03:19] A different friend of a friend called me back in 2015 and said, "Your mom's got leukemia." M

and I said, "No, she's got meth." And then hung up the phone.

Yeah.

Never let anyone talk to me about her again.

Mhm.

So, uh, last year it was a, "Hey, she's sober. She's clean again." I'm like, "Good for her."

Mhm.

You've been down that road before.

Yeah. And I'm like, you know, I've heard it before.

How long this time? month, year,

maybe two, but then she's right back in it and I'm not in a position to allow that.

And then couple months go by again. Hey, she wants to see you. And then now I'm getting angry. Tell her where to shove it. I don't care.

Mhm.

And uh finally they came over and was like, "Hey, let's just talk." And I said, "If you mention her again, you can't come to my house." And he's like, "You don't you don't mean that." Yes, I do. And he's like, "I'll be there with you here, her place, anywhere." And I was like, "Oh, if you bring her to my house, both of you guys are dead."

[1:04:34] Mhm.

Um, and he's like, "Okay, okay." Accepted as no. Later that night, I couldn't sleep. I was thinking about it cuz I was going through a divorce.

Mhm. I was alone again. And so there was just so much anger from every aspect. And so I was like, you know what? Push comes a shove, we get in a physical altercation, then might relieve some of my tension.

Yeah. There you go. Get it all.

And that's how angry I was. I'm like, you know what? If it comes to this, it comes to this. Maybe she'll learn.

So it kind of started out of in bad intentions. Um, so I messaged him and said, "Fine. I'm free Tuesday night for one hour. That's it." And he called me so excited. He was almost crying. And I'm like, "Stop crying because I don't know how this is going to end." And we met at a restaurant. My mom was so nervous. And I part of me felt like a little kid. You know, when they're, you know, you pick them up from school, they're so happy to see you. And then it was a instant, but here's what she did. Here's what she's done. How's it going to go this time? Um, so we had dinner, told her, "No, you may not come to my house. Um, no, you can't meet the kids right off the bat. Um, I need to make sure that you're going to be sober and solid and, you know, none of the irrational anythings."

[1:06:14] Mhm. Um, like my kids have perfect stability. They, you know, don't even know what drugs or addiction look like. Um, and I was like, "Don't call me. I'll call you." And part of that was almost setting her up to fail because I knew that she was going to call,

right?

And that would be my easy out. Like, I told you not to do it.

Mhm.

And she didn't.

She respected your boundaries.

She did.

Had that ever happened before? No.

Exactly.

No, I expected honestly a phone call before I even made it home.

Mhm.

Um and she didn't. And I molded over. Molded over. Molded over. Um and then my foster sister mentioned me, "Hey, your mom's been in the hospital. She's not doing too well." And I'm like, "Well, I just got her back. She's going to die."

Mhm. Um, so then I me I messaged her, "Are you well enough for me to let the kids come meet you?" And I told her, "They don't know we're related. You're a friend." And she said, "Okay." So then we went up there and she's crying and my daughter is looking at me and my son's looking at me like, "Yeah, she's sick, but why is she crying?"

[1:07:34] Right? And I couldn't say, "Oh, it's because um that's grandma."

Mhm.

Because that's the first time she'd ever seen any one of them.

So, it was hard. Um and then from there, it was she got out and then, you know, learning more about the leukemia diagnosis and she's like, you know, you can go up there and talk to them at the nurse station. So, I stopped at the nurse station on the way out. uh told the kids stand against the wall so they couldn't really hear me talk. Um I'm like I need to know everything. I want it confirmed. Is this part of a relapse? Is this? And they said no. No. She's got cancer. She's got pancreatitis. There's no drugs in her system.

Was that a surprise to you?

Yes.

Did you Did some part of you want there to be drugs in her system so you can say, "I [__] knew it."

Yep. and wash your hands of it.

[1:08:34] It's fair, you know. It really is. But you were surprised. Yeah. Did that kind of At what I guess what I'm asking is at what point did you think, well, maybe this is for real this time? Was it then or was it later on down the road?

It was later because I am very guarded

and she's stubborn and I think I may be more stubborn.

Yeah.

Um, it was finally whenever I let her come to my house.

Mhm. And then she uh saw my oldest and last time she'd seen her she was two.

Mhm.

And now she's 15. Um and she's so happy. And mom's personality is all over the place. Like you would think that she does something cuz she's just so happy, bubbly, uppidity, loud, jumping around, moving around. And some days it'd be a her phone would ring and she'd get up and run to the other room.

And that's whenever it'd be a I'm gonna follow you.

[1:09:37] Give me your phone. And you know, she'd hand me her phone. And I'm like, either she thinks I'm not going to find something or she's complying.

Mhm.

Um there'd be nothing there. And it's like, who you talking to? Why'd you have to get up and run? Well, I was being polite. And so, I had to take a step back and realize those are normal things.

Yeah.

She's not running to answer a phone call because she's trying to find a hookup.

But given the history, you had every right to believe that. You have had every right to suspect that.

Right now, of course, it from an AA standpoint, from a recovery standpoint, it it speaks a lot to the way that she approached it as well, because hey, here you go. I'm a wide open book. Have a look. You know,

uh rather than I'm the parent and you're the kid. Um

you do as I say, right? So, I'm glad that she was able to approach it from that standpoint, just kind of confirm that she was only up and up with you. Uh but it still took a little while to trust that.

[1:10:43] Mhm.

Yeah.

Yep. And it was it was hard. Um, but at that point it was, you know, the ratio had flipped. Now it's a I want her to do better, not a let me catch her doing something.

Right. Yeah, that makes sense. So, she gradually started coming back around, being around the kids and everything else. And when did it really feel like mom again?

Um, this goes back to our weird sense of humor that we have.

Mhm. cuz she was a friend.

It was mom's friend. Mom's friend's always over now.

If you guys have known each other so long, why haven't we seen her? Cuz I have friends from, you know, elementary school that are now, you know, quote unquote aunts and uncles to my kids,

right?

And it's a we've met all your friends. And I'm like, well, I don't know what to say. And then she's over and my middle daughter is because I was upfront with my oldest daughter like, "Hey, this is honey."

[1:11:53] Mhm.

And she's okay. Glad I don't know what to do with this information, but thanks. And her being 15, she's back in her room. So, the most questions came from my 9-year-old.

Mhm.

And it's a well, you guys look alike. And then my son, why is she loud like you are? Like, well, sometimes people are just loud. It's okay.

Um, and then like, we'll stand by each other. And then my son's like, she's mom's a whole lot taller than her friend.

Mhm.

And I'm like, okay, maybe they're not going to put two and two together yet,

right?

And then my daughter's like, I think we're related. And I said, "Okay, this is my mom." And then they both stood there just looking like you said she was dead. And then mom is sitting there, you know, almost crying cuz she knew.

Mhm.

So, I don't know if it made her felt feel bad, but it made me feel a little guilty to kill her. And then now she's a zombie. She's back to life.

[1:12:58] Mhm.

Sitting on the couch. Um, so then I had to explain to them that sometimes people just don't make the best decisions and we have to distance oursel until things are either made right or you just move on with life.

Yeah.

Um, I never told them what I had gone through, what life was like for me or anything. Um, I mean, one day when they're older, I won't have any problem talking to them about it, but I don't want them to even know that stuff's out there yet.

Yeah.

Um, but then it got out from other people who were jealous that she was back that, oh, she's a drug addict.

Do you know what a felony is?

And, uh, then it's me having to explain to them, yes, she was a drug addict. Yes, those pictures that they showed you, they are true. But the things we do in the past don't get to dictate who we become later.

[1:14:02] Yeah. So they understand forgiveness and while they don't fully grasp what mom has done or what you know her past looks like to like entirety um the person she was is not the person that they know

and I'm okay with that.

It's an important lesson for the kids on all accounts, right? you're you're teaching them that you're protecting them and making sure that they're not going to be exposed to something that could be harmful to them. Even though they may not know it yet, eventually they'll realize that, right?

But from, I don't know, a parent standpoint, somebody that's been through that, you know, we have a lot of shame and guilt and remorse when we come in here because of what we did to our kids and the negative lessons that we taught them and the suffering that we caused them. And we can let that drive us straight into the grave, straight into jail, straight into a worse life than we ever imagined. Or we can let that be the catalyst to change, to become a better person. And then after we have, what's the more important lesson that our kids see?

[1:15:10] They see that, yeah, we got knocked down, but we kept fighting back and we stood back up again and we conquered those demons. Have you seen that out of Jod yet?

Yes. Um, I see it a lot. Um, she's at my house all the time. She has a key to my house. The dogs, the guard dogs are worthless when it comes to her now. [laughter] She's over so often they're okay. She's not a threat.

Yeah.

So, um, but my younger two are at the age that me and my brother were at when she fell into addiction.

So, now mom will be brushing hair, reading books, and just start crying. And I'm like, why are you crying?

Dr. Seuss is not

It's not like that. And it's a it's like going back and then she gets to see me be a mom and it's a she'll start crying. Well, I wasn't that way. But I'm like, you're here now.

Right. Right. And the lesson for your kids, of course, is

Yeah. Uh she went down a dark path, but she made a different choice. And she is showing you her strength and her tenacity to overcome that. And you can learn those same habits. My kids have learned those habits. And I would like to think that you've learned those habits as well by seeing your mom's journey at least to some degree because I mean you've already shown an amazing amount of strength with just what you've been through in your own life, right?

[1:16:28] But now that strength is coming through in a different way and yeah, crying while we're reading the books, you know.

Yeah,

I get it. I've been there, too.

Um, but it's, you know, it's an amazing story that it just the perspective right now. Now, the people who want to be jealous and tear down that dynamic will point out the negative perspective of, "Yeah, she did this, but it was in her past

and what happened? She's come back a better person because of it."

I think everything that we've been through together separately to where we are now, the biggest life lesson that and humbling that I've gotten is grace.

Grace. Yes.

And if anyone ever talked to me p previous to this about my mom, it's a watch your mouth.

Mhm. Don't even talk about her. Don't nothing.

Mhm.

You bring her up again, I'm going be angry.

Yeah.

And now it's a it's softer. It's a Yes, she's done that.

Now, from an AA standpoint, we talk about resentments a lot, right? Um I hold a res I held a resentment against the sheriff's office when they fired me, right? And how dare they fire me for for, you know, getting PTSD and, you know, being sick. They fired me because I was sick with PTSD. That's not why they fired me. When you work with a sponsor, they show you what part did you have to play in that. And it takes a lot, right? It takes a lot to understand, well, yeah, they didn't fire me because I have PTSD. They fired me because I was completely different from the person that they hired. And it was because of my habits. And when I realized the part that I had to play in that, I was able to let go of that resentment. Right? So with that, stay with me here on this. You had a bit of a resentment against your mother, rightfully so. Now, what part did you have to play in that? None really. I mean, if we're honest, I mean, I think Jody can agree you had no part to play in that. But when it comes to holding on to that resentment, that's when the other person has a part to play, right?

[1:18:30] You have the choice. Do I want to hang on to this or do I want to go to therapy or do I want to show a little grace? Do I want to maybe let somebody in and forgive? And I think you've reached that point where you're letting go of that resentment because you're showing a little bit of grace. Would you agree? Maybe.

Yes. And whenever, you know, I had killed her in my head.

Um, it was a I thought I was healed from it. Out of sight, out of mind. She's dead.

Yeah.

But every so often it was a She's still out there.

Mhm.

I haven't seen an obituary in the paper.

Yeah.

What's going to happen if I get a knock on the door? And then there is a knock on the door and I'm like, "Please be a salesman. Please be a salesman." Cuz I wouldn't know what she looked like.

Yeah.

Um but now it's that resentment feeling got brought back up cuz she's not dead. She's standing in my living room.

Mhm.

Um and then it's a I resent you for this, this, and this. I miss out on things that I'm now doing for my kids. Mhm.

[1:19:36] Um, and then just having to relearn grace and it's a you I like I'm entitled to my feelings, but I can't. It's not fair to her to keep projecting them onto her because she's worked so hard for her sobriety.

Mhm.

That it's not right for me to keep tearing her down. Well, you did this. Remember when you did this? Just move on.

Very true. and and nobody would cast a stone at you for feeling that way. And I don't think she would either because you've earned that right, you know. But that that just illustrates the point in in any situation, not just mother, daughter, sobriety, and everything else with just interpersonal relationships with ex-husbands, whoever else. We can just hold on to that and let it tear us apart and kill us. Or we can gradually begin to let go of it and show them a little bit of grace and forgive. And as you do that, you heal and your kids heal and then she heals a little bit too.

Yep.

Yeah.

And now that you know people see us around in town,

[1:20:40] it's a why are you with her? And then you know a year ago if someone said why are you with her? I'd been like why am I with her? And now it's a that's my mom.

Yeah.

Um I'm proud of her.

Yeah. I'm glad that you are proud of her. We're proud of her, too. I'm proud of her, too, because I've seen her, you know, I've gotten to know her and know her story and everything else. And she exemplifies that work ethic, not just in how she got here, but also in what she's done afterwards. And I'm I'm grateful for that part of her story. I'm grateful that you guys were here to be able to share that. But what do you what do you feel like the future is like now when it comes to mom, honey? Um, well, she texted the other night that she's grandma, and I'm like, "Oh, so now you're grandma now. You're old enough to be that." Because I was a teen mom. She was a teen mom. And, um, I mean, moving forward, it's a mom back.

[1:21:44] Um, we do everything together. It's more of a a mix of having a best friend, a sister, and mom all into one.

Mhm.

It's not just a like I was jealous of my friends growing up that they had a mom,

right?

And I'm like, okay, well, yeah, you have a mom, but I have everything else in one person. And is it because I didn't have her as a mother that I have all these extras now? Um, I don't know. But I'm I'm happy.

I'm excited that you're happy. And it is arguable that you wouldn't have what you have now

if it wasn't for all the bad stuff back then,

right? It could have been just a normal mother-daughter relationship that may be tense most of the time. You know, I'm sure you have friends that are like that with their mothers, you know.

Yeah.

U so I'm grateful that you have that. I'm grateful that she is able to be back in your life. Of course, she holds all the cards in that, but when we're in sobriety, everything at some point has been taken from us or we've pissed it away in some way or another. But so is the one thing that we have complete control over. Nobody can take it away from us from us but us, right?

[1:23:00] We can say, "Oh, because this person hated me, I fell off the wagon." Yeah, but you did that, not her. you know, um, so it's ours to hold on to and it's our responsibility, but we rely on others to hold us accountable. Sounds like you're also doing that as well, holding your mother accountable.

Yes. And at the beginning, it felt like I was micromanaging her.

And then I'd be like, you know, at the end of the day laying in bed, was I too strict?

Is she going to go relapse because of something I said? Um, so it was a hard It was hard trying to find balance,

right? But you work through it and you're finding that balance.

Yeah. And we rely on people, you know, in our lives to to keep us straight and to call us out on our [__] because Lord knows it will pop up from time to time. Uh not because we want it to, but just because it does.

You know, uh sometimes those habits are hard to break. But the dynamic y'all have is great. and I'm so glad that y'all were able to make it down for for this interview. Uh any final words you want to say as we wrap this up?

[1:24:06] Um no, just that I'm I'm proud of her and I'm glad that it took her going through Warrior's Heart to get my mom back, honey back.

Yeah. And heal those generational wounds.

Yeah. And your kids have their grandmother in their life. You have your mom back. That's a beautiful story.

Yeah.

I love it. Outstanding. Uh for anybody else that's watching out there, if you're looking to try to get some help or get family members some help, uh reach out to us, warriorsheart.com. Call us on the phone 855-610003. Help is always just a phone call away. And you know, Jody kind of illustrates that with her story. Uh she has now moved on. She is working at a treatment center herself and paying it forward. Uh which is fantastic. I mean, it it takes stubborn folks like us to help other stubborn folks like us. But thank you for being here and thank you for being a part of this.

First thing that they said was, "Welcome home.