The Gift of Sobriety: Thanksgiving Ultimatum

Show: Warriors Heart Podcast
Episode: 2
Guest(s): Josh Lannon (co-founder)
Published: 2025-11-30
Duration: 50:48
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-tagGlBjDI
Apple Podcasts: not found
Spotify: not found

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Transcript

[00:00] [music] This is episode number two of the official Warriors Heart podcast. Sitting down with co-founder Josh Lannon. Thank you very much, sir, for sitting down with me. It's uh it's an honor. It really is.

Awesome. I appreciate it. And I know you've been a podcast superstar for about three, four years now with Chicken Feed.

Absolutely. The Hotspeed Chicken Feed podcast. We are surpassing Joe Rogan's podcast.

Wow. That is amazing.

Yeah. I mean, don't look into it or anything, you know, but yeah, something like that.

No factchecking.

No, none at all. Yeah.

You know, I wasn't invited as a guest on that one, so I guess we had to set up our own worse heart podcast to have you interview me. And so, I'm just really grateful to be here.

That's the best way to get to us. It really is.

It really is.

Yeah.

And this is Ona. This is our dog. Uh she's been with us for about six months. We've uh rescued her and now she just kind of likes hanging out. So, if you see her walking around, that's what's going on.

Gotcha. And she is a beautiful girl. I love love and owner. She is very warm and friendly. Reminds me a lot of baby in a lot of ways.

[01:04] Yeah.

Yeah. We got to introduce them to a little bit better.

I think so. Yeah. I think they'd be good good buddies.

I think so. So, we're coming up on Thanksgiving, man. Just a couple of days away, right?

It's a wonderful time of year for a lot of people, but of course, not for everybody, which uh you know, my own journey kind of goes up and down around that time of year. Uh but your journey definitely goes up and down around that time of year, right? And I mean, we're coming up on, if I got the numbers right, 24 years of sobriety. Is that correct?

Yeah.

Congratulations on that.

Thank you. Appreciate that.

Truly an inspiration for those that are coming up under you and those that you have helped along the way. Uh, it's something for us to achieve and I'm very grateful for that.

Well, thank you. As I say, as idiot like me can achieve it, I think just about anyone can. [laughter]

I think you're far from an idiot, but I understand what you mean.

Well, I mean, if you hear about my past, I think you might go, "Oh, well, this wow, this is a miracle."

Yeah. has some bright moments and some dull moments in there, right?

I think we all have that kind of story once you kind of dig into it and figure it out.

[02:04] But the journey makes us who we are.

Yeah. Right.

It does.

It really does. And I wouldn't trade a minute of it.

Yeah.

I wouldn't.

Yeah. There was definitely times I didn't like or want or um you know, I hit my knees a number of times. I cried. I mean, all that stuff. But looking back, it's like, man, what a blessing just to go through it and survive and to learn from it. Because I've seen friends go through just struggles and not learn from it. And it keeps repeating and repeating. It's like, bro, come on, man. Like, get the lesson so we can move on. And some some people don't. So hopefully this podcast and what we're doing where it'll turn on the lights to someone. They go, you know what? Okay, I'm ready to make a change. I

I think it will. And I think your story specifically will do that. One of the things that I tell people, you know, I'd worked in admissions for two and a half years. And one of the things that I tell people is the people who founded this place, they're not just some corporate exec that has an office somewhere in Bale, Colorado, and they never really visit the facility and don't really know anything about sobriety. Your story and Tom's story marketkedly different from that from that.

[03:08] Yeah.

And I want to get into that story a little bit today specifically because we're coming up on the holidays. It's a rough time of year for people. rough time of year for people in the warrior community or just people in general. And your story is no different than that.

Yeah. Because there's a lot of there's a lot of expectations for the holidays. Mhm.

Um, a lot of just ideas that we're supposed to go along with, like, you know, uh, from Thanksgiving dinners to the Christmas presents and shower everyone with gifts and my worth is how much I can provide and give to everyone and show up and it's like sometimes like, hey, man, that's not the best way for me to show up because a lot of times it's superficial if because I'd be drunk or I would be disconnected like I might physically be there, but I'm not mentally, emotionally be there. It's like, "Yeah, man. Enjoy this gift." But outside of that, it was very hollow. So, between the expectations of what we're supposed to do and what's really going on on the inside, like holidays are rough for a lot of people.

They are. You know, most people put it in the context of what I'm grateful for. You know, I'm grateful for the turkey. I'm grateful for the friends, for the house, for the family, and everything,

[04:16] but we got a lot more to be grateful for in our world, right?

Absolutely. We got a lot more that we have seen that we could lose,

right? So, let's jump into it, man. Let's jump into your story. 24 years ago is when things change for you. Take us back to that day. Tell us.

I think I continue to avoid it. Don't taking us down different avenues because we should be grateful every day. Like that should be part of our ritual. And

we should.

Yeah. You know, not just once a year. like um but on a daily basis cuz that truly is a gift that you know not everyone has a a a roof over their head or food every day or clothing like I think a lot of times we take things for granted and just be grateful for that on a daily basis you know and then giving back and supporting people being there for our family being sober like there's a lot of things to be grateful for and for a long time and I'll get into the story

sure

it was I was just grateful for not spinning and puking, you know, it's like, "God, just God, make it stop." [laughter] Holding on to the toilet. That's when I would pray, right?

[05:20] Yes.

And uh so now it's like, "Okay, hold on a second. Let's just step back." And there's a lot of things to be grateful for. All right. So rolling into the story, that's that's where you want to go with this, right?

Well, to to give people hope and inspiration, right? And to let people know that they can change and why timing is important when it comes to bringing about that change.

Yeah. Sometimes the choice is made for us. Other times we make the choice. So tell us what it looked like for you.

Yeah. I wish I was smart enough to make the choice for myself because I had literally years of broken promises to myself. Like, oh, I'm not even telling anyone. Just to myself, I'm not going to do that again. Oh, man. Okay. No, I'm I'm not going to I'm not going to drink anymore like that. Or you know what? I'm going to clean up this time. I'm serious. And I would keep having these broken promises myself over and over and over.

And that actually really started to take a toll on myself. It's like, man, if I can't even keep a promise myself, how can I keep a promise to anyone else? So like a broken trust and um that hurt as as me as like, hey, I want to be a man of my word. And it's like, I can't even keep my word to myself, let alone my wife or, you know, my family or my boss. like it's all It's all lies. You know, I want to I truly do, but I know when that that I get the itch or the bug or like like my wife would say, she would say, "I can see it in your eyes." Like you'd be telling me, "Hey, I'll be home at 7." Like I knew just by the look in your eyes like something's got a hold of you and I'll see you in three days.

[06:57] Yeah. And uh like when that would take over, I would run the the uh the scenarios or I' I'd run the story, but I knew like I wasn't going to be there. I wasn't going to show up. Like I'm going to disappear. I already got it planned out, but I'm trying to convince everyone that every everything's okay. So going back gez 24 years ago, so right now 24 years ago, I was on this bender. I disappeared for three days living in Las Vegas. My wife is Las Vegas Metro. I was running nightclubs. So, the joke was I'd get him drunk and she'd book him in jail. It was a full circle.

It's a good business plan.

It Yeah, it kind of was

for law enforcement, especially, [laughter]

right?

Never ending clientele.

Mhm.

And a revolving door, unfortunately, at times.

Yeah.

So, this is a country western club in Las Vegas called Dylan's Dance Hall and Saloon. We were the number one country club because how do we know? We we took a vote and we said it. We're the number one country club. not only in Vegas but the world.

[07:57] Yeah.

And uh

it was

but I mean we'd pack 1500 people through there a night like it was the place to go for country western dancing in the late 90s and early 2000s.

And matter of fact that's where I met Lisa. She'd come in and do the line dancing and she would say I stalked her. I would say I did a little market research on her before I actually introduced myself. Uh and I got a referral. So, as a good business person would, the referral was her friend that was a a Las Vegas uh cheerleader. I said, "Hey, uh you know, because she liked me and I was like, "Can I meet your friend Lisa?" So, I got a referral from from her and met Lisa and that's a whole story there. But, uh we were we were together for a number of years. So Lisa's working Metro, I'm running clubs and uh I'd been gone for about three days. And she and I because I knew her routine.

Mhm.

She'd work 410s and I knew when to come home, when to leave, when like I I just knew it when I could slip in and out and all that stuff. So ran ran it out, come home. Um there's a lot of stuff that happened, but the the kind of gist of it is is that I'm on the couch and uh just completely broken spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically. Like I burned it all down.

[09:23] Let me ask something real quick. How long had you been doing this? I mean, because my drinking career, you know, last x lasted x number of years. How long did your drinking career last? How

Well, I started when I was 15.

Oh, wow. And now I'm I was 25 at the time and it would go in waves. I you know um in my 20s it definitely increased especially in Vegas working in nightclubs. That's when it really ramped up.

Uh but I was a binge drinker. I'd hit it hard and then I'd dry up for a couple days and I'd hit it hard again and oh my gosh I got to stop doing this and sober up for I wouldn't even call it sober, just dry two, three days and go back at it again. I give an example like I promised Lisa that I wouldn't drink on our honeymoon. So all of our honeymoon pictures, we went on this cruise through the Caribbean and I was angry, you know, just smile, you know? So all my pictures are like, you made [clears throat] me do this. It's like what an [laughter] you know? She's just like, hey, just don't ruin our honeymoon by drinking. So like, all right, I won't drink, but I'm gonna You didn't say I can't act like an

[10:28] You don't have to be happy about it. [laughter] Oh

yeah. So on and off for I mean years and years and I was I was pretty good. I figured it out right. I was a professional alcoholic.

Professional alcoholic.

Damn straight.

Yes sir.

Looked good. Outside world looked good. Middle class family. Got a middle class car, middle class house, but behind closed doors it was a wreck. And we kept it secret.

You know we didn't want to bleed that out. We didn't want anyone to know that the me marriage is falling apart. I'm burning money like crazy. Like, no. It's like, oh, no. Everything's fine. It's good. You know, it wasn't. So, when she came home that night, she looks at me in the couch

and she had spiritual awakening or what? I don't know. But she was done. She was done that night. I look up at her and what I saw was a woman I fell in love with. because over the years of my drinking and broken promises, she had lost her power as well.

Mhm.

[11:28] Um enabling codependency, like it was the the perfect spouse for me. Um she Oh, where's Josh? Oh, he's at home. Or, oh, he's busy. She knew exactly what I was up to, but she covered for me.

Good wives do that. Right.

Right.

So, here we are and I look up. I'm like, oh the gig's up. I could see it in her eyes. this time was different. There's no sweet talk and there's here we go.

It's judgment time. And um she goes, "Josh, either go well," she goes, "Josh, that's it. I'm done."

And in my mind, she had her hand on her gun and she's going to shoot me. [laughter] And I actually welcomed it at the time, like appropriately, like just put me out,

right?

But what she said next changed my life. She goes, "Either you go to rehab tonight or I'm going to divorce you." And [snorts] she was dead serious.

Drew a line in the sand.

I drew a line because I couldn't do it for myself,

right?

[12:28] I drew a line and changed it. Drew a line, change it. Drew a line, change it. We drew lines together, changed it. This time was like, "This is it. I'm done." And years later, and I'll I'll come back to that moment, but years later, I asked Lisa about it, and she said, 'You know, the the one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make was being okay with the decision that you were going to make because I didn't know if you're going to go or not go. Meaning that if you didn't go, you'd probably end up dead or in a penitentiary,

right? more than likely dead

because the the games and the the lifestyle I had and fast cars and you know I just I was reckless and uh she said that was so hard on me but I had to do it because I wasn't going to sit there and love you to death which is an important distinction for those that love us. You know sometimes we feel like we're being punished this person who loves me is making me go and do this thing that I don't want to do.

That's love. better than love. And I saw it in her eyes.

[13:32] Yes.

It was strength.

I recognized that looking back in my own life when my wife, you know, she was done with me. She didn't give me the ultimatum that you did. She just put me out. But it was exactly what I needed.

And I know that it hurt her tremendously to split up the family like that. So, I can empathize with what

Lisa was going through at that moment. But she she gave you that that ultimatum.

Yeah.

What did you do? Well, I was I'm I'm grateful that I had someone to give me the ultimatum

because I couldn't do it for myself, right? I tried broken promises again. And I'll share with you is that [snorts] that night earlier, I ended I was in the bathtub with a rifle. Like I was going to end my life. Like that's how bad it it got for me. I was ashamed of myself, you know, and the shadows were coming for me.

Mhm.

And uh like that shit's real.

It is.

And uh it it was real. It was coming. So when Lisa came home and gave me the ultimatum, like divine intervention, what? I don't know. But I was ready. I'm like, okay.

Have you ever been that ready?

[14:33] No. No. I had been to programs twice as adolescent.

Mhm.

Charter hospital twice, adolescent CD. I learned what not to do, how not to treat people.

Right.

Like my training in this industry of behavioral healthc care started when I was 11 and 13. And uh I man I learned what not to do of how to treat people.

Um little did I know that then I was just pissed, you know, behavioral issues and all that stuff. I didn't like going to school. I just Yeah. I just thought if you just leave me alone, I'll be okay. Problem with that is I ended up being alone. And then I was like, well this sucks,

right?

It's like yeah, but you won the prize, man. You're all alone. You push your family away. Hey, you pushed your wife like good luck. You're on your own. It's like okay, no, that's not. So, here a teammate, my wife that I love. I'm her protector. Like, all this like we joined hand in hand in marriage and in life. And she says, "That's it. I'm done. Either go to rehab tonight or I'm going to divorce you." And it was a lifeline that I needed. And that's something that, you know, we share our story because hopefully that other people can see similarities and gain strength and hope from it. It's like, hey, if you're the loved one and you're watching your your significant other, like go down the drain, like call it, step in because like I didn't have I wanted to, but I didn't have

enough strength to do it for myself. I had to have a teammate do it for me and my wife was the teammate. Mhm.

[16:13] Um or if it's your buddy like, "Hey, I see man what you're doing. Like it's time to calling like, "Hey, bro, enough. Like, let's get you some help."

And with that help, did she have something ready to go for you or she just said, "Go get some help."

No, she had a plan.

She had a plan.

She did. Um there was a treatment center in California that was lined up.

So, we got in her Trans Am Ram Air.

Oh, yeah. She She was a hot rod.

Yes. As a matter of fact, yeah, [snorts] that was her car. Went and bought it herself, like her whole thing. So, we jumped in her car and we headed from Las Vegas to California.

Drove uh just about all night. And the closer we got to the treatment center, the more sober I got and the more scared I got.

Yeah.

And then like the the addiction started to take over again and said and I said, "Hey honey, why don't you pull over to this gas station?" She goes, "Why?" And instead of going, "I'm going to go to the bathroom," I just told her. I said, "I'm going to get a fourack." And I don't know why. A fourack of Bartles and James Wild Berry coolers.

[17:21] Right.

I'm I'm going to leave that one alone for the [laughter] moment.

Yeah. Yeah.

I don't even know what that means, but I was going to pound four of them. Okay.

Just to take the edge off. Right.

It wasn't even like beer. It was just

Not even close. Yeah.

Yeah. Something I drank when I was like 11. Right.

Right. Take you back to your high school day or junior high days.

I think so. Yeah. Yeah.

So, I was going to pound four and then uh take the edge off and go into rehab. And she just looked at me and she goes, "If I stop and you get out of this car, I'm driving away." O

like, "You've already said yes. Now take the edge off." Mm- Okay.

Yeah.

And she held me to my word that I was like, "Okay, let's go." And then there was one other time she held me to my word where [snorts] 21day mark in the program. I called her up. I said, 'Hey honey, uh, man, I got just about everything I can out of this place. It's really good place. U, but I got everything I can. Why don't you come pick me up? And she's like, are you freaking kidding me?

[18:24] She goes, you committed to 28 days and you can't even do that? Like, how are we supposed to build a future together if you can't even do that?

Yeah. Oh, she's right. I didn't want to hear it. Like, all right. So, I continued on the path. But it's having that strength for your loved one to just hold the line and hold the line and hold like be very consistent with it because the addict in me wanted to manipulate like not like, oh, I'm going to like just it just was fighting to survive. [snorts] It's you know that addict alcoholic brain. And it really like it's not me. It's it's something that takes over me and it's like I'll lie right to your face and my my spirit's going, "What are you doing?"

Yeah.

And I can't stop it. So it's like I don't even want to crack the door open on that. I want to have one drink. And that's I think how I've been able to stay sober as long as I have is that it's that first one that's going to get me.

It's the fear for me as well.

[19:26] Yeah. I just fear go. Yeah. I mean, I've even run out the scenario with Lisa. It's like, yeah, but think about this, honey. This is when I was still in treatment.

Years from now, let's just let's think about this. Years from now, we're in a log cabin up in the mountains and having this beautiful romantic weekend, this getaway, and there's fireplaces going and this uh this rug, you know, this bare skin rug and just a couple glasses of wine. It would be beautiful. It'd be romantic. She's like, "Yeah, it probably would be like thinking,"Okay, I can do this, right?" She goes, "But what I'm concerned about is the next day

100%."

What's going to happen the next day and the next day? Like, that's going to wake it back up and here we go again because I've heard the story before,

right? It's

like, damn. Okay. Yes, ma'am. You know,

and there's a couple of important distinctions in the story thus far, right? She gave the ultimatum and you responded and she acted immediately.

[20:27] She did. She had a plan and she acted on it and she stuck to it.

Absolutely. She stuck to it, but she had a plan. It's it's one thing to say, "Hey, you need to go get some help." And then you're left, you know, where do I go?

I was incapable of making those decisions.

Most people in that phase are,

you know, uh we would get calls in admissions all the time. people calling up and saying, "I want to talk to my husband, my significant other, my family member, whoever about getting treatment, and I want to have something in hand to hand them when I present them with this ultimatum,

which is a key distinction. One, you want to act while they're they're ready to go.

Have a plan lined up, get them in the car, and get there, 6.6 L Trans Am and everything down the interstate." Right.

We got there fast. Yeah,

I bet you did.

But having a place to go in mind is extremely helpful. Maybe even some options.

Absolutely. And you know, I don't even know if she had backup like cuz most my friends weren't really my friends. They were my drinking buddies,

acquaintances.

And I learned that when I got out of rehab.

Mhm.

It was like, "Hey man, let's go hang out." I'm like, "Bro, I I just can't anymore." Like, "You're more than welcome, too, but I'm going home."

[21:31] "Oh, what are you, Mr. Aa now?" I'm like, "Bro, really?" Like, I almost killed myself. Like, really? So out of all the friends I had, just a handful if that were actually my true friends. So the rest were drinking buddies.

Yeah.

You know, and I don't know if she had any of my true friends lined up or not. I never really asked her about that. Just thinking through it.

Well, the one that mattered most was there.

Exactly.

Cuz the others they may have said, "All right, man. Let's turn around and go home." Or, "Yes, stop and get that fourpack of bottles." Bottles and James.

Good point.

Yeah.

Maybe that's the risk. It was like, "Hey, man. She was convicted. She had her plan. Let's roll out.

So, this is Thanksgiving.

What were Thanksgivings like before

with my mom on mom's side of the family. I'd drink. Um I wouldn't always be an but I would say things that I probably shouldn't have. Just poking at the bear,

right?

You know, and um I do that kind of normally, just poke at the bear. And so when you take away the filters with drinking, then it's like, bro, like really, is that appropriate? when I thought I was funny, but I wasn't. Um, I I'll give you an example is that my sister got married and uh, great event for her. Family's there. Well, I used to run nightclubs, so I know how to get a party started. That's my mindset,

[22:55] right?

I'm working with the DJ. Hey, play this song. Do this. Let's get the band. Like, because I did that in the nightclub. This DJ is like, leave me alone. Like, I got this. I'm like, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no. I know how to throw a party. You don't." So, I start poking at him while I'm drinking. And the guy starts mouththing off to me while I was smoking a cigar. And I was getting it nice and hot while I was blowing smoke in his face. Well, that got him pretty agitated at me while I was blowing smoke in his face. Whether he made a move or not, I don't know. But there's ashes all hit him in the head with it. Cigar and ashes all over red hot ashes. He screams. I have to leave cuz the police are coming. Like that's the kind of stupid stuff I do when I drink. It's like in my mind guys should have threw a party. It's his fault.

Exactly.

And it's like really that's some pretty distorted thinking, man. That's your sister's wedding.

[23:58] Yeah.

But that kind of stuff. So, holidays, big events like that, like now is the time to get sober. Like, quit waiting for when it's going to get better. Even New Year's, I don't know how many times I said it. Uh, okay. New Year's, I'm just just let me get through the holidays. New Year's, New Year's resolution. Well, hell, how many times have I done that just for working out or, you know, setting goals? You look at it everywhere. You may buy the fancy clothes, but are you really hitting the gym come March?

Oh, exactly.

Yeah. the second week of January, like all of that stuff is gone. So,

a lot of us view the holidays, Thanksgiving, uh Christmas, etc., you know, as as a party in a lot of ways.

Let's get the party started and go and have a couple drinks before lunch, you know, to to be sociable, to tolerate families sometimes, you know, to to be part of the environment. Uh but sometimes when we look back on that, we realize the mistakes that we made, kind of what you were just talking about there. uh just trying to fit in, trying to be the life of the party, right? A lot of us when we think of the holidays, we think of the family, we think of the social gathering, but we don't think of the consequences from our actions. Sounds like there were some in your past as well, right?

[25:07] Absolutely.

So now you're spending Thanksgiving in treatment.

What was that like for you?

It was actually a blessing.

Yeah. You know, it was um because what was the best gift I could give my my family, even myself, is a gift of sobriety

100%.

So, I started my training because I I'd never been trained how to live life on life's terms.

Mhm.

You know, I was the heavy metalist, the anarchist, like

do you think the world there's something wrong with the world, it's not me.

Yeah.

You know, and that was my identity. As I got sober, learned the serenity prayer,

I was like, maybe I'm the problem in a lot of this stuff because I can't change anything else,

right?

But I can change me.

And that's what I did. Just started working it one day at a time and really dove into it.

And next thing I know, I got a 30-day chip and then a 60-day chip and 90day chip, one year and two years. Like, how could a guy like me actually make it? And it's like by just doing it one day at a time, working the program, being around the right environment, you know, I had to change my environment. I I no longer worked in the nightclubs after that. It took me about six months, but I finally left that industry. I was like, I just can't do it anymore. I can't be part of a problem.

[26:25] Good choice.

Because it wasn't a matter of if, it was just when when am I going to drink? When am I going to have a bad night? like when are we going to have like something stupid go down? I just want a shot just to take the edge off

because I could justify all of that.

So it's like man I I had to change everything. Now it didn't happen overnight. Uh but it happened just like recovery one day at a time just keep moving towards the goal being building a a happy healthy life.

So the stage was set. Anything worth having takes a little bit of effort. You were putting in the effort.

I can relate that to my own journey just a bit. You know, I came here in August. Um, many of us in the warrior community, we've spent plenty of time away from family during the holidays, deployed, working shift, you know, doing whatever, and we don't want to sacrifice that time.

But like you said, the best gift that you can give your family is is a sober Josh, a sober Robert or sober person, right?

Yeah.

Uh, I spent Thanksgiving and Christmas over at the Sober Living Lodge.

[27:26] And looking back, you know, at the time, I was I was really wanting to be around family. However, I've been around family most of my life and

I'd messed it up, you know, for the past several years and I was ready to start getting it right. And if I only had to sacrifice that one holiday,

I was good with that.

Absolutely.

Because the holidays that come after that can be so much better. And for me, they have and I know they have for you as well. Correct.

Very much so. Yeah. Because even working the nightclubs, the holidays were amateur hour.

Mhm.

Like New Year's all the amateurs came out. Oh, yeah. like the professional drunks that like okay they're partying but it's the amateurs that really come out and they act stupid and it's like this sucks. It's like okay so where would I rather spend my time? I'd rather be in rehab working on me getting better and being a professional at my life instead of being a professional screw-up, you know. And uh man, so a lot to your point like with military, law enforcement, like you guys work holidays.

Mhm.

Like you work it. So this is a different type of work. Now it's actually working on a life that matters

[28:32] right now. There's some signs that people loved ones, you know, can look for uh when it comes to does my family member need the help? Do I need to push them towards getting better to getting treatment? Were there some in your life? I know there were some in mine, but were there some in your life that were kind of the the warning signs?

Well, like I mentioned, broken promises.

Mhm.

Just as simple as can you keep your word on what time you're going to be there,

right? It's

like, okay. Uh the other is like, hey, um I'm not going to drink this time or you know, I'm only going to drink beer. The next thing you know, you're doing shots. Like again, broken promises. Um that's a big one. I think that really comes up. like, hey, if I can't even hold to something that we've agreed to, there might be a problem,

right?

And the other part of that is like, if you're even thinking, well, does my loved one have a problem? They probably have a problem.

Probably have a problem. Yes. [laughter]

Yeah. Either you know it or you don't. Like you you know it.

If they have to drink or use just to get through the day, if they keep disappearing, if they're irritable, if they're distant, if they're

[29:35] pulling away from everybody, those are a lot of the signs.

Like I know guys that wake up and first thing I do is smoke a joint. It's like, right, bro? Really? Oh, yeah. Just I I have to do that to start my day.

Yeah. Wake and bake.

Really, man? No thank you.

No. No. And if you have somebody in your life that is like that, hold them accountable. It's not mean. They may not like it at the moment, but it is showing them love, which was true in your life. At least help put you back together. Right.

Absolutely.

You you got back on with life

and uh losing my train of thought here.

Well, it happens a lot with you. That's okay. I'm here with you.

Yeah. You're here. Yeah, I appreciate [laughter] it. Yeah, maybe some of that TMS stuff will help fix this.

I've done it twice now, so it actually has helped me as well.

There we go.

I I would I'll just share with you is that with TMS, like years of partying, there were words that I would like I'd have a sentence in my head and I'd start saying it,

but then I couldn't connect the words together and I'd pause right in the middle of sentences. It's like I just couldn't get it out. So TMS, brain treatment stuff, like that stuff works. Yes.

[30:40] Done it twice. I know Tom's done a number of times. A number of our guys have done it. Like it helps. Um, yeah, it's helped a lot. So, I'm with you.

I appreciate that. I appreciate that.

You know, I don't want to get lost in the weeds on the big book, but there's a section, a chapter called to the wives, and I want to I don't want to use the language that they use 80, 90 years ago, but no nagging, right? You want to give positive reinforcement, but hold somebody accountable for their actions. Point it out. It wasn't until the very end that somebody did that for me

and I was grateful for that. It was difficult at the time but I was grateful for that and it can bring about positive change. Now obviously there has been some positive change in your life, Lisa's life and your entire family, right?

Yeah. Well, she ch she saved my life. I mean I I owe that woman my life and I'll never forget that.

Do you remember the moment where it really clicked? Like a hard click reset. this is the direction I'm going in now.

Actually, there there's been a number of moments like that. I mean, when she gave me the ultimatum, that was a definitely a a major choice that I don't know if it clicked, but it was like, hey, there's a fork in the road here. Which way you going to choose? Cuz choose wisely. The other was after I completed the program, well, going through the program, I actually became friends with the owner.

[31:59] Mhm.

Uh he came to me and said, "Hey, are you the guy with the nightclubs and your wife's a cop?" And I said, 'Well, what are you, Mr. Bulletin boardman? [laughter] I'm like, who are you? Like, get away from me. Well, I found out that was the owner of the facility.

Mhm.

Like, ah crap. I mean, I had other couple other choice words for him because I was pretty raw. Like, you know, maybe 3, four days into it.

So, I came back to him and I said, "Hey, I apologize. Just uh I was in a pretty rough place and apologize for being rude to you."

Mhm.

He said, "No, no." Oh, he goes, "Um, [snorts] when I was drinking and using, all I wanted to do was open up restaurants. Now that I'm sober, all I want to do is open up treatment centers. Maybe you'll be the same."

Interesting.

That's what I thought. I'm like, "Who really?" I said, "Well, again, I because I didn't know what he's talking about." I'm like, "Well, again, I apologize." He goes, "That's fine. Just don't do it again." Yes, sir. And we ended up hitting it off. One, I think no one really talked to him like the way I did. uh and then owned it so fast and uh we just we became friends and we're actually still friends to this day and uh he was my sponsor for a number of years and um we hit we hit it off. So he he planted the seed which I didn't know at the time but he did. So fast forward that I get out of rehab. I'm working New Year's on the floor working security. Got my earpiece in calling in stuff and uh I was like I just can't do this anymore. I can no longer be a part of the problem. I want to be part of the solution. So wife [clears throat] and I talked the next day about it. So I called up Spencer and I said, "Hey, uh you know, you asked me about open up rehab centers." I said, "What'd you see?" He goes, "Well, you know, that's all I want to do. Maybe you'll be the same." I go, ' Would you teach me?' He said, 'Absolutely. Be in my office Monday morning and I'll start teaching you. And I go, "Why are you doing this?" He goes, "One alcoholic helping another alcoholic."

[34:05] Yeah.

One day you can do the same

spiritual principles.

It's like, because you think about it, it's like, I'm going to open a competing business. And he didn't see that at all. One alcoholic helping another. Holy crap. I've never seen that level of

genuiness and love, you know. So, went down there, showed up, he gave me all of his policy procedure manuals, connected me with a couple of his guys, and he said, "Teach them the back end of the rehab." Because I knew what it was like going through the front door, crawling through the front door,

right?

But I didn't know how it worked with licensing and compliance and policy and procedures and all that stuff. So, I learned it and uh my wife and I, we opened our first treatment center in 2002 and uh Salt Lake City. First, we were going to open one in Vegas, but during market research, we learned that not very many people would fly to Vegas to get sober.

No, I think it's the other way around.

Yeah.

Made a few movies about that, I think.

[35:06] Exactly. Yes.

But this is like a year later.

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Wow. That's moving fast. Well, it was the time was ticking because what else was I going to do? I wasn't going to work in the clubs, right?

So, I needed something else. So, he's provided this avenue. I'm like, why not? I'm all in.

So, I resigned from my position in the nightclubs. Lisa stayed on the PD so that way we still had income. So, we could still survive. So, it's like, hey, I trust you. Like, let's go for it. Take a shot. And uh went out and raised the money. this that's a whole another story but raised at the time 1.5 million bucks and um there's a little piece of that uh the in angel investor said you're not going to stop are you because he had thrown me out of his office twice and the third time when I met with him I brought Lisa he's like your plan still sucks but you're not going to quit are you [laughter] go no sir I'm not go because of that I'll loan you the money wow

[36:08] it's like again one of those clicks like why why is this happening? It's not supposed to happen to a guy like me. Like why are they giving me a shot?

It was like I better be a man of my word then and deliver and if not I clean it up the best I can. [clears throat] No more lies, no more like this variety thing is another level of life. So loan me the money and he was smart about it. He he secured it with real estate and you know so he hedged his bet too and in uh a year we paid him back.

Wow.

Through refinancing the property and what I mean we we did it. I think why is because we built it from the end user's point of view. We didn't build our first company journey off of academics or books or we built it from hey what is it like to walk through that front door scared to death? What is it like to check in and not knowing what the place is all about? What is it like to eat the first meal? What is it like to meet your counselor? What's it like to sleep in the bed? What's it like for the loved one at home going, "What the hell's going on? Let's build it from that point of

view." And we did. And it was successful. We we ended up with six locations uh in Utah and in uh Arizona, six different uh facilities. And uh in 2013 we sold to a private equity company. We had never sold a large company like that before. We had a little over 100 staff and uh again just kind of like how's this happening? Like so and prior to that is when I met Tom Spooner and Lorie Spooner because I like military type trainings. I've been a lifelong martial artist. I wanted to be trained on close quarter combat and how do you get into rooms and you just all that stuff and uh so that's how I met Tom. Him and I hit it off and uh so we sold Lisa and I sold Journey and there we knew that there was a need now that we're around Tom like hey man 22 veterans a day commit suicide.

[38:14] Like that doesn't even make sense. We're losing more of our our war fighters at home than we are in combat. And Lisa's like, "Yeah, and one cop at the time, I think it was about one cop every 17 hours,

right?"

And it's like, "This is a huge problem that no one's talking about from our protectors." So, it's like, "Here we are. We have the resources now because we sold a company. We have the knowhow. We have the experience. We have the team, Tom, Lori, myself, Lisa. We have from the Leo side, from the mill side, from the business side." And it's like, "Holy crap." Like we can actually lower the national suicide rate of our warf fighters of our protectors if we attack addiction first because typically the guy or gal when they do the final act they're either drunk or high.

Exactly.

That's when you get the case of the fuckets.

Yeah.

What what it was for me um like when I sat in the bathtub I was drunk you know. I was like, "Okay, so let's attack this first and then we'll also treat sub uh not only the substance abuse but the underlying the PTS, the moral grief and anger uh uh the depression, the moral injury, like all of that driving because what's killing them? Don't know. We're going to treat them both

[39:35] because it's a whole person." So that's where Warrior's Heart was formed and um you know here we are today coming up on Thanksgiving 2025. Uh we've been open for just about 10 years now at about 4,000 uh of America's finest come through these doors and to heal with dignity and respect. And that was a big thing for us and our families like we need to treat you guys with dignity and respect. We love you guys. And uh yeah, I'm getting emotional on that. And it's important uh it's important to have a quality program where people can can heal with with dignity and respect because like I don't need someone telling me I'm bad, sick, and wrong. Like I I know that in my head.

Yes.

What I need is that support like, "Hey man, get up. Let's go. I got you." That's what I needed. And I think that's what our our guys need here.

The loving support and most importantly direction.

Yeah.

Fear. We are controlled by a thousand forms of fear.

And we fear change. I think that's what prevents most of us, especially myself,

[40:39] to to [snorts] getting that help that we need. What's next? What is it going to look like? Right. You know,

I'm open to share my journey anytime. When I'd answer the uh phones and admissions, I tell them step by step what to expect. Give them the the backstage tour, if you will. Oh, yeah.

So that the fear isn't quite there, right? But that is what prevents us from making that change because we don't know what's next, especially if we've already lost our career. We've lost our sense of purpose. And you were dealing with every bit of that right at the same time.

Now, the big book says, you know, the promises will come true. You know, these better things will happen to you. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly,

right?

And in some ways, it sounds almost like they moved pretty quickly for you. They

do come true.

They do come true. Absolutely. We don't know the path that we're going to take.

It's scary to take that leap of faith and go to a treatment center that we've never been to before or if we've never been to treatment at all.

I agree. But what could come of that in my life? Many beautiful things have come about, you know, but it started with you

in that day 24 years ago and it started with Alcoholics Anonymous before that obviously, but let's just talk about you and your family for the moment when you made the choice, the turning point. Look at the lives that you have impacted thus far

[41:52] with the journey healing centers that you guys have had and now forming warriors heart right almost 10 years ago. the amount of people that have come through here and the people that have come through here almost 4,000.

Some of those people have done some really interesting things, right?

Yeah. Yeah.

You know, whether it's starting a foundation, whether it's going back into service, whether it's being peer support, whether it's uh running a podcast, whatever it is, and each one of those things has another ripple effect to it.

It does. Absolutely.

So, that bigger umbrella, you know, it just it just continues to spread out. So there's a principle for that. It was I've studied Buckminister Fuller. I'm a big fan of his

Bucky.

And it's called precession.

So the idea is you have a bumblebee going from one flower to the next.

And the bumblebee really the goal for the the bee is to get the nectar to take it back to the hive and create honey so that the colony can survive. But what's the real true purpose of that going after the honey? Is it so the colony can survive? One would think so, but it's really cross-pollination. When the when the honey bee goes from flower to flower to flower, it's cross-pollinating something that the flowers cannot do themselves. They require the bee to do this or a carrier. So they say is what's God's true purpose? You know, for the honeybee, it's cross-pollination. So me getting sober, the first thing you think is, oh, okay, you get sober, you got your family back. Yeah, that's the obvious, but what's that cross-pollination? Is that God's true purpose? And I still don't understand God, but I trust it,

[43:29] right?

And it's like, hey, man, like we're sitting here together because of it. That's cross-pollination. This happened at a 90 degree angle that I never knew would happen. It wasn't planned. Here we are, you know, and the ripple effects it has in your family. And just to your point, like with over 4,000 guys and gals coming through the program, that ripple effect is pretty amazing.

It is. And if you're thinking of taking the leap [snorts] and making the journey, you know that bumblebee when it lifts off, it doesn't know which way it's going to go or exactly what's going to happen, but it knows it's got to make that journey.

Just knows I got to take care of my queen bee.

That [laughter] too 100% take care of the queen bee, right? But it makes the journey and whatever will be will be to uh my sponsor kept putting it to me. uh [snorts] pretty succinctly when I decided to come over here and go to work. You know, if you if you come over here and work for Warriors Heart and it doesn't work out, okay, it does work out, great.

But don't let it threaten your sobriety.

Don't let it threaten your sobriety. 100% don't let it threaten your sobriety. But to sit back and do nothing and wish,

[44:32] that's the wrong answer. No,

you have to take a step. You have to have to take action. You know,

now is the perfect time of year to do that. to to give your your loved ones the gift of sabbat.

What a gift to give them your life, you know.

I know

like who you are like truly to be present with your kids, your family, like not under the influence but sober,

right?

That they probably haven't seen that in years and years sometimes ever.

Yeah.

What a gift.

We don't want to miss out, right? That's the biggest impetus to to getting treatment during the holidays is we don't want to miss out. But in my family, especially my mom, she celebrates her birthday the entire month of August, not just on the 15th. Right. [laughter]

So we can for Exactly. Right.

We can have Thanksgiving [snorts] anytime you want it. You can have Christmas anytime you want it.

The most important thing is that you're going to be there for the next one.

Right. So anybody that's watching, anybody that's listening that wants to

to get their loved one into treatment, now's the time to act. And if you're thinking about getting treatment, now is the time to act. You don't know what tomorrow will bring. Unfortunately, the uh the channel that we don't like to see light up lit up this morning with my last breath.

[45:43] Somebody that didn't make it out. Somebody that didn't make it to to that next holiday. And if uh my math was correct, I believe he was just uh in his early 20s.

21.

21.

That's a hard reality, but a sobering reality for the conversation here, right?

I know.

Yeah. There's a good chance he wanted to be home for the holidays, too. and his family will have to suffer that loss unfortunately. Um, but for anybody out there that's listening, make the choice, make the change. We have phone numbers, we have websites, there's a thousand different ways to connect with us. Warriorshart.com, warriorsheart.comconnect where you can chat live. Phone numbers 855-610003. And of course, we got a ton of social media out there, not just Facebook, but we got a lot of others out there where we can connect.

Yeah. And if worris is not your place, man, that's okay. Like, just find somewhere and go.

That's the most important thing.

Yeah.

To to make the choice to get help.

[46:44] I play the tape through pretty often. That's something your sponsor will tell you, right? You think about taking that drink, play that tape through.

I play the tape through all the time, especially with things going on in my life right now. If I hadn't made the choice to get sober,

what would have happened? What would happen to my children? What would happen to me?

I can only stand maybe about 10 seconds of that thought process and I have to back out of it and refocus my my thought process on gratitude. And I know you feel the same way, right?

Yeah. I've talked to quite a few of my drinking buddies that stayed in the game.

Mhm.

They're not in places I would ever want to be.

No.

And uh I'm seen as the lucky one. You're the lucky one. and you got out.

Yeah,

bro. Like,

yeah. And you could have, too. And you still can.

Absolutely. You absolutely still can. It's never too late to make that change.

Y man, congratulations on 24 years of sobriety, but more importantly on what you've done for the Warrior community, Warriors Heart Texas, Warriors Heart Virginia, and all the other wonderful things that you guys have done through sobriety. From the bottom of my heart, my family thanks you.

[47:50] Well, I appreciate that. And kind of a funny little note about that is, you know, I I never would have passed a drug screen to get into the military and I never graduated high school. So those are kind of from my own self-defeating thoughts of why one of the reasons why I never joined. So I've always regretted that. So this is a way for me to give back to a community that I really respect and I love. And uh it's pretty cool to go, okay, my time wasn't wasted learning how to build businesses. I'm a student of Robert and Kim Kiyosaki's. I love their stuff. I become real friends with them. And Kiyosaki is a Marine. I can't say former Marine. He was a Marine. Oh,

Vietnam vet, helicopter pilot, went down three times. Just stud of a man. And he's built incredible. He's famous for his book Rich Dad Poor Dad. So he taught me how to run businesses and the financial side of the house because I didn't have that training either. And what was cool is when I met Tom, Tom's like, "Where were you trained?" Because a lot of this stuff is military. It's the structure, but it has, you know, there's civilian, but it's military, too. I guess my point is that um it's pretty cool to be able to look back and go, "Okay, it I didn't miss out." Like there's I can still give back. I can still be part of something. My path was just different.

[49:12] Yeah. You know,

absolutely. I love a quote from Kicker Guard that I heard, I don't know, years ago. Life can only be lived forward and understood in reverse.

So true.

Doesn't make sense when we're going through it.

Hell no, it doesn't.

But looking back, it's like, damn it, I get it now. Right. And your journey is very indicative of that. What would have happened if you had joined the military or been a law enforcement officer? This place probably wouldn't exist.

Honestly, I probably would have been killed because I'm that crazy guy.

Oh, yeah.

You know, I would have been drinking and doing stupid stuff.

Out in a blaze of glory, right?

Right.

Yeah. Something like that.

Yeah, it wasn't wasn't my true purpose.

No,

the crosspollination was

I like that. And we're going to end on that cross-pollination. In some contexts, that can get us in trouble with the ladies, [laughter] but in this context is exactly what we need.

Awesome. Well, you and I can cross pollinate later. We'll do some jiu-jitsu together.

You know, I'm two weeks out from elbow surgery with a torn tendon uh in both elbows. By the way,

I can attack your legs. That's fine.

Yeah. Yeah. Torn tendons in my knees. That's next. Thank you, Josh. I appreciate You're welcome. But I didn't do that. I just wanted to make that clear.

[50:15] Blame you to the Dreskis and everybody else that was there. Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay. [laughter]

Well, Josh, I appreciate you sitting down with us today on your podcast. Uh, but I appreciate the time. It was a beautiful story. We are going to have you on our podcast and tell the full story because we like digging into the the background of the

I look forward to the invitation.

Consider consider the invitation made. We'll just have to pick a date.

All right, sounds good.