THE PATH TO AUTHENTICITY

Episode 228: Conquering Hard Things
Therapist and Podcaster Eric Bricker

**The following is an AI-generated transcript.*

Tom Gentry

If this is your first time here, thanks for checking it out. If not, thanks for coming back. I'm Tom Gentry, and this is *The Path to Authenticity*. Episode 228 for January 1st, 2024. So, this is the last of four episodes that I've been sitting on for a while and banged out over the last few days.

As I sit here, it is New Year's Eve. And this is going to be the last episode of The Path to Authenticity, at least for a while. I don't want to say I'll never pick it back up. But I definitely am going to stop producing episodes for a while and work on some other stuff.

I've felt bad for holding on to this audio for so long. So, I was really relieved to get these last four episodes done at the end of the year so that I could go into 2024 with a clean slate. And I'm also really happy that if this is the last episode, it's with my friend Eric.

And I really love this conversation that we had. We talked about how we met, the beginning of our friendship, all kinds of stuff. And probably most notably, just what... creating podcasts has meant to us each as individuals and how for both of us, this endeavor has very much been a growing process. Yeah.

So, I want to wish you all a happy new year. I want to thank you for listening. I'll definitely be publishing more content on this feed I'm working on another podcast, a video podcast, shorter episodes. I'm going to be collaborating with someone, and that'll probably start rolling out in the next couple of months.

I'll publish a trailer on this feed so everybody can find it, but I think we're probably going to We're going to do live stream video and then also publish the recorded audio. Like I've done this podcast for several years now since 2019. So, it's been a great ride.

And like I said, this probably isn't the end, but it's definitely the end for a while. And probably the most difficult part of this for me over time has been editing the sound. It's a lot of work for someone like me who isn't a sound engineer. And I don't really want to pay someone else to do it.

But, you know, maybe in another time I'll be ready to do that, and you know, I have missed putting out content every week. And I have published written work on Substack pretty much on

a weekly basis, usually more than once a week, sometimes two or three times a week. So, in the meantime, before

Anything else comes through on this feed, you can find me on Substack. Again, there'll be a link in the show notes for that. And be sure to check out Eric's podcast, Good Counsel. And again, have a wonderful new year. And enjoy. Here you go. Eric.

Eric Bricker

I'm sitting in the backyard. My dog, Marty, is going to town trying to dig a hole back here.

Tom

You have two dogs, right? They're still relatively young.

Eric

Yeah, about a year old.

Tom

Marty and who? Ruthie. Marty and Ruthie. Are they brother and sister?

Eric

They are. Okay. We named them from the show Ozark.

Tom

Oh, I think you told me that. I haven't kept up with that show. I need to, don't I?

Eric

It's pretty good.

Tom

Yeah.

Eric

All the way up to the end. And then it's not? You didn't like that? No, no, no. It's good. It's a good, like, yeah, it's a good show all the way through.

Tom

All right. So, Eric, thanks for coming, man. Thanks for making the time to do this. I know you're a busy guy. Of course.

Eric

Of course, when the path to authenticity calls, you got to be there, you know? Right, right. You got to drop what's going on and jump in.

Tom

Well, I'm glad you think so. I'm glad you feel that way.

Eric

I think so. Marty thinks so.

Tom

Marty. Yeah. This is good, man. You brought your sense of humor tonight. Not that you don't always have your sense of humor. You do, but. So, the last time you were on the show was to talk about your podcast that was forthcoming at that point.

So why don't you catch everybody up on where you are with that right now? You're in the middle of season two, right?

Eric

Yeah. You know, it's funny. I, um, I don't even know that I'm really doing seasons. I go about it in a pretty unconventional way. I just release episodes whenever I do, and that's... I know it's like an odd way to do it, and certainly not the prescribed way for building a show, but...

It’s really more of a kind of like a hobby and an interest. So, when people come along that I want to talk to and the stars align, I'll interview somebody, then I'll edit it. And, you know, at the appropriate time, I'll put something out. And, um, it gets, you know, some attention.

I started recently doing a little bit more with video as far as promotion. And by started, I mean like someone came and shot a video today. So, you know, I'm going to try that to do some promotional stuff.

But...

Eric

But, yeah, I just kind of take it person by person, you know, as people come along, when I think it's the right person that I want to talk to and, you know, and put it out there. And there are some people, you know, because it's really mostly like South Florida behavioral health.

So, I have like 17 episodes out. So, people around here... like in the community of therapists and people in the treatment center community here in South Florida, they definitely know about it

because... They might have heard an interview I did with someone that they know or something like this. And there are some people who subscribe.

So, the episodes themselves average about 150 downloads per somewhere in that neighborhood over like a three-month period. So again, you know, not Joe Rogan type of numbers, but enough to where I know it's getting heard. But anyway, the theme of it, it's the Good Counsel podcast, and it's really themed around people in the helping professions,

people who are professional helpers, interventionists, therapists, life coaches, all different sorts of folks like that. And we talk about the methods behind what they do, why it works, and who these people are. And why they're doing what they're doing.

Tom

And, you know, I will say you're being a little modest about it, you know, because there definitely is the local aspect of things that you, you know, you've built an audience there mostly because you're there and most of the people who you've interviewed are also there.

But you've also talked to, I mean, some of these people are the cream of the crop. They're people who are seasoned therapists, who have developed their careers at world-class places. Not unlike yourself, honestly.

Eric

No, thank you. I appreciate that. You know, it's interesting. It's kind of like, if this was LA and the thing, you know, we were trying to, uh, interview people who were like in the entertainment industry, you know, um, it's South Florida. And one of the things that we have here is like this really big behavioral healthcare industry,

because there's all these like, uh, residential treatment centers and, um, you know, it's just so much built up around that transitional housing and all these different things in substance use disorder recovery care and now mental health as well. So, there are so many accomplished people in that space, and it's the space that I work in.

So, I just, like over the years, I have access to them because they're people that I know. And I've been fortunate that these people were willing to take the chance of coming on and... like recording something that's going to be produced and made public about them where, you know,

You have to be weary of your reputation and things like this. But it's cool. Like, I just happen to be involved in the industry and be... wanting to talk about something where it's, it's pretty robust. So, there's like a lot of really talented and like accomplished people to talk to.

Tom

Well, and again, I'll, reiterate that you're being pretty modest about it because people respect you and they actually want to talk to you. And you're good at this. You know, the first episode you did, you came out of the gate with a fantastic episode and people have sort of clamored for it from the get.

And I'm just happy for you. It's something that's been really cool to watch and to be a part of with you. And just as someone who's been your friend for a long time, it's been really cool to

Eric

watch this unfold I appreciate it and um you know obviously like this just wouldn't have happened if I didn't know you because podcast was just something that I listened to you know on my phone and whatever um on apple and uh

but you were the person who made me believe that they were like accessible to regular people who are motivated to try to, um, have a presence in this way. And I saw what you did and the fact that you were willing to take all this time with me to, uh, show me how to do it. You know,

I'm not, I'm not like, um, I don't have any kind of like background for recording digital media. And so, you had to kind of walk me through it. And now I'm at a place where I'm relatively self-sufficient with it all, can record, can edit. I kind of enjoy the process of doing it.

It's like I said, it's kind of like a hobby. And looking at it that way takes a lot of the pressure off of it, of creating deadlines and things like this. That could be a lot to deal with. I just kind of, when I have the time to do it,

I'll invest and try to maintain consistency with it. I've got 17 episodes out now, which is pretty good.

Tom

Yeah, you found a way to make it workable for you and sustainable for you. We've talked about this over the course of the last couple years, a lot of I think there's something out there. I read that if you get to episode 11, you're doing great and you're probably going to stick around.

But if you don't, for whatever reason, that's kind of the magic number. And there are a lot of people that just kind of don't realize how much work it is and they kind of stop and start again. And it is, it's a huge commitment. And this is, you know, as we have this conversation with

I just uploaded my 213th episode. Oh, wow. Which is the first of season two, which, you know, I did an episode a week for three and a half years and finally had to take a break. Just because, you know, it was getting kind of stale, and I was overwhelmed, and I was trying to do other things.

And it just felt like too much. So, I kind of hit reset and have the first episode of Season 2 coming out tomorrow, which I'm really excited about. I read some of the artwork and chose some different music for the intros and outros and transitions. You know, just...

took a little break so I could have fun with it again, but I had to sort of reorient myself and find a way to make it work for me again because I had other priorities. Speaking of which the same has taken place for you with this project, the trauma studio,

which is why I really wanted to have you come back on to talk about what you're doing with that, with your partner will. And, uh, you know, so tell us about that.

Eric

Yeah, this is a really exciting thing. We started doing it in September and we've had some really great traction with it. So, for any of you folks that are out there listening, like we do, if you're familiar with the idea of like therapeutic intensive workshops and

The kind of thing where you might go to a place for three days or do a few consecutive days doing a themed workshop around particular issues. Myself and my partner, William Schleifer, do that with something called the Trauma Studio. And those are three-day trauma intensives that we do here in Boca Raton,

themed around different issues that people have in seeking resolution for past traumas, whether it be like things from your family of origin, childhood, abuse, neglect, trauma. and what we refer to as moral injury. You know, there's still abandonment. There's lots of different things that people go through.

So, we kind of structure it around dealing with these issues and giving people an opportunity to do a lot of group therapy over a three-day period. And, you know, we believe that there was a demand for that here. and it really has turned out to be the case. And so, we've done four of them.

So, we go every couple of months. We've done four of them so far, and we have our fifth one coming up in June. So, it's really exciting.

Tom

Yeah, and, you know, the demand for it there, it's not a surprise to me, and it's something that, I felt like has been missing from that community for a really long time. And something that, you know, I kicked around some ideas with people over the last few years about different possibilities, uh,

regarding helping people work on sort of second, third stage recovery issues, uh, you know, there's a lot of help for people to learn how to achieve abstinence from mind-altering

substances. There's a lot of help for people to learn how to maintain abstinence. But, you know, that's kind of it.

It's a community where people converge from all over the world, really, to find recovery from an addiction. But, you know, as two people who've worked in this industry for a long time, I mean, we both know that's just the beginning, right, of recovery is learning how to achieve and maintain abstinence and then

That's really kind of when the work begins. And aside from individual therapy, there, you know, has never been a whole lot. So, I'm glad that you sort of seized the opportunity to create something like that. And knowing you personally, I know you're the right person to do something like this. It's really cool.

Eric

I think Will and I both discovered in working with the population of people with substance use disorders in these treatment settings that underneath all that for a lot, I think even the majority of people, there were these unaddressed traumatic experiences, you know, whether it be like conditions of growing up in an alcoholic family or abuse, neglect, abandonment,

You know, non-nurturing experiences from parents or caregivers. You know, it's... The menu of things that, you know, no one gets through life unscathed and the menu of opportunities to, you know, experience everything from the unthinkable to the unimaginable. You know, it's all there and people are going through these things. And for a lot of folks...

With substance use disorders, there is some history of unaddressed traumatic events that really are like drivers for the conditions themselves. And so, it's hard for some folks to stay sober. if they don't address those issues or they end up engaging in a lot of, uh, you know, people with unaddressed trauma that gets sober,

end up engaging in a lot of what we call process addictions, which could be like issues with shopping and spending, uh, gambling, sex addiction, porn addiction, uh, you know, all these kinds of things. So, it gets complicated for people, but, um, you know,

That’s a big part of how Will and I got involved in this was just really recognizing that these traumatic histories for a lot of these folks had gone unaddressed. And while they're getting sober, the quality of life as a sober person is in some way limited by unresolved trauma.

Tom

Yeah, well, you know, as a sober guy who got sober young, and, you know, I mean, if people haven't heard you on my podcast before or listened to us have these conversations, they don't

know, but there's no friend who I've had longer in recovery than you. There's some guys I met before you, but

not too many and none who I've maintained friendships with, let alone a good friendship. Like I feel like you and I have, so you've known me since the very beginning, you know, a couple of years in and, um, you know, when, when I got help, I really wanted to understand why me.

And as someone who's worked with that population, you know, that question comes up a lot. Why did I have to be this way? Why am I this way? And the message I got then in the mid-nineties was, you know, it doesn't matter why you're an alcoholic. That's not going to help you stop drinking.

And I accepted that because I wanted to stop drinking and I focused on that part of it. But it also sort of invalidated something in me. You know, it's not like that curiosity or that desire to understand what happened to me. It didn't just go away.

But it took me a really long time to wrap my head around it. And you're right. You know, none of us go through life unscathed. And I know now that given my history, the atmosphere I grew up in, the belief system, in my family, like just – everything about my life, looking back on it now,

It would have been a miracle if I didn't become an alcoholic. It would have been amazing, right? It just, of course it was going to happen. But one of the things that I, I really, makes me happy for people now finding recovery that They're not getting, well, there's more available for them now, I think,

to sort of unravel the knot of what the hell happened to me. It's a more open conversation. There's less just shut up and read literature or shut up and go to a meeting or, you know, it's not like that anymore. Yeah. There's a lot more conversation about adverse childhood experiences and, you know,

just family of origin stuff and even just basic codependency education. So, people are more educated about what makes them who they are now, I think, when they get good addiction treatment. Do you agree with that or? I mean, you've seen a change, right?

Eric

I think it all has evolved, which is kind of cool. And I think it evolved through trial and error. You know, it's funny. You don't realize how much you know about the process until you meet another clinician who doesn't work in that space, who has this sort of more like...

1995 idea about what's going on because it's evolved so much. And in that process has created all of these different professionals and power professionals and, and even people in the recovering space themselves to, uh, provide you with different looks and meet different needs.

And I think one of the most disturbing and frightening things that could happen to anybody is when you are experiencing a phenomenon for which you have no explanation. Because there's a tendency to believe that I am the only one who's experiencing what I'm experiencing, and I may be the only one of my kind.

And when you talk about substance use disorders and alcoholism, you're not talking about just like one kind of person, right? The population within the population is so vast. It's so many different kinds of people with so many different life experiences that you really can't roll it all down, roll it all into like,

This is what an alcoholic looks like, this is what a substance abuser looks like, you know? It's many different things. And so, I'm glad that it's evolved in the way that it has over time because I think like sort of like the more like the earlier brands of what treatment was,

was kind of something that was good for one type of person with one type of problem and didn't really generalize well to other people. For example, a good half or more of people with substance use disorders probably meet criteria for a mood or anxiety disorder.

So what would happen if you were treated in a place where you were being told things like, psychotropic meds are tantamount to relapse and you just you can't be on an antidepressant or an anxiety medication just for example and that whatever it is that's going on it's just secondary to your alcoholism and that just getting sober

and staying sober working a program whatever it should be enough for you to like manage these symptoms and ultimately there are people like that who continue relapsing over and over and over again while research and more people were investigating this until there was a discovery was made, it was validated like yeah,

Like if you meet criteria for an anxiety disorder or mood disorder and you have a substance use disorder and you treat them both concurrently, you treat your psychiatric condition concurrently with your substance use disorder, your chances of having sustainable recovery are much better. Oh, okay, okay. So now we're addressing that issue because it's more effective.

So, we only know what we know. But I want to go back to this thing that you said about the why me. And I think like... it's wired into the human DNA to believe that we should be able to know or should be able to understand like all things, you know, like we just, we just should know.

And in the absence of the actual information or in the absence of being able to know, we just have a tendency to make things up. And like, you know, to fill in the blanks of what we don't know, we will often make things up. And if you repeat that often enough, that just becomes the truth.

So, like you can end up walking around with some really unexplored ideas that you've created into like your reality. And it's very disturbing, especially when those thoughts like don't reflect positively of you as a person and your own, your own humanity. You know, so like if you're if you're asking the question, why me?

And you ultimately land on the conclude on a conclusion that speaks really negatively of your humanity. That's why I have this problem, because I. have a poor will or that cause there's just like, there's something inherently wrong with me. That's the narrative that we're living with.

And that's what follows us, you know, throughout the rest of our lives. It's very painful and lonely way to live.

Tom

Well, and not to mention, I know you and I have done some similar work in personal development where, um, we learn about just what a monumental effect our beliefs have on our day-to-day lives. And if I believe there's something wrong with me, I'm going to live that out. Yeah. And, and, you know,

We go through life just sort of, you know, living out these oftentimes things, beliefs we're unaware of that we even have that are adversely affecting us, you know? Oh yeah. Yeah. And you know, like I was journaling this morning about some stuff and realized that, you know, in spite of working on myself for a really long time,

there are certain ways that I, still think well I don't deserve this or you know I'm not good enough for this or you know and then that living in that we create that reality yeah the growth never ends you know which kind of goes back to why uh what you're doing with will is really important

where you're doing it and what you're doing. It's, it's, uh, vital, necessary, you know, and, and I imagine it's a project like that. Creating something like this is something that is really, you know, given you, uh, some vitality and enthusiasm and, sort of added some oomph in your professional life, right? Kind of like the podcast.

Eric

Well, I think, you know, for me, some of it comes back to the podcast, right? Because the messaging that I was given myself was, what a cool thing, because I actually consumed them and listened to them. And here I know somebody who's like a good friend, you, who actually does this, like creates these things and, you know,

is on like Apple and Spotify. And to me, the idea of doing it, that you actually did that at that time, that was like magic, right? That was like, if you came into my house and opened up your

hand and like produced fire, like, like, like how do you, how do you do that? You know? And, um, my,

the self-limiting beliefs around that initially where I can't, I'm, I'm not technically inclined, man. I'm never going to be able to learn how to do that. It's too much, you know, like I'm never going to learn how to, I'm never going to figure that out. And like, it's not something I'm going to be able to do.

And, you know, when you walk through that and you actually overcome it and realize I can do it and I could do it pretty decently, you know, like I could do like a good job of it. And you conquer a hard thing. I think it makes you look at yourself a little bit differently because when other

hard things come up that are just like ideas – you tend to think of yourself more as capable of learning, you know? So that when you run into the first obstacle, like the first part about it that's difficult, you don't wilt necessarily because...

You're just like, oh, this is too hard and it's not something that I can do, you know? And I think that that's a really cool thing that happens to people, you know, when you achieve and accomplish something. That's really one of the ways in which the podcast is like sort of important to me.

You know, one, because I just like it and I like doing it. I think it's like a cool thing and I like just the idea of interviewing these other clinicians about what they do and why they do it, I don't know that there's, I'm sure someone else is doing something similar out there somewhere,

but I'm the only person I know that does that. So I like that I do it, but I also get a tremendous, there's a certain satisfaction I get from being able to do it, and from being able to learn how to do it, Um, and I think, you know, if you trace it back to childhood issues,

I was a person who was transitioned into special education in first grade. And it was really kind of like a very unspecific learning disability. I don't, it's never really been diagnosed. I don't know to this day what exactly was going on, but, uh, they said that I had problems with fine motor coordination. Um, and, uh, you know,

and that I was having difficulty with some of that, just like the basic developmental learning tasks, like couldn't, couldn't write cursive like other kids could. And, you know, things like this, my desk was very disorganized. I had, I guess I had difficulty following instructions and, you know, um, And at a very early age,

The idea of being like limited or can't do or not, the idea that I was like maybe not as smart as other kids or not capable, um, that kind of got in there somewhere. It gave me a thought or a belief that maybe just like, I can't really do things that are hard, you know, to a degree.

And, um, like working with you and developing, you know, doing the podcast from scratch, like learning how to record with a microphone and then edit, you know, through audacity, like edit audio files and, you know, to be able to like record and edit and take this kind of, you know,

and make them sound really good and run them through a filter and then run effects on them to where when you're done, there's this like, piece of you know this hour-long piece of material with a theme music to it and everything else where when people I interviewed listen to it and their families

listen to it and you know their friends listen to it, they hear it and it's like they can't believe how good it is and how well it represents them you know so it's that whole thing about being able to overcome your own limitations and

that are often like self-imposed through your own like negative learning that, um, it's a very exciting thing when you get to do that in life, you know, it's like, it's like being able to put like this, this demon to rest, you know?

Yeah.

Eric

Yeah, I do. And again, like it opens up the door for other things. So now, you have the trauma studio workshops, which, again, is a pretty daunting thing to put together. And when Will and I were talking about it, it was like, yeah, man, let's give it a shot. Like, this is how I think it would work.

And it's a lot to bite off, but I think we could do it. And you just, in your mind, conceptualizes it as... you got a good chance of being successful. Like it's not, it's not, I don't look at things like that as bigger than me anymore.

Tom

Wow. The experience that I've had with this process is, You know, I called it the path to authenticity because much like you, I had this long career of working with people in addiction and I knew plenty of therapists and authors and I wanted to be able to talk to them and bring those resources to bear.

But I didn't want it to only be about addiction. So when I started thinking about, well, what is this really about? You know, what was this really about for me, this whole addiction thing? And what is a way that I can sort of universalize this? It was authenticity, you know, personal authenticity.

Because for me, my addiction was a betrayal of self. I sold myself out. I bought into the ideas that were imposed upon me about what was possible, what I was capable of, and what I wasn't.

And for whatever reason, I didn't have the self-esteem to tell them all to go fuck themselves and just go do

what I wanted to do anyway. I didn't. And I had to learn the hard way, which for me was, you know, sinking into the depths of alcoholism to the point where I had to be stopped, you know? And so, you know, I thought, well, let's focus on that.

Let's interview people and talk to them about what makes them who they are and how they became who they are and maybe in doing so, I can inspire somebody else to really be who they are and really go for it.

And what I kind of knew all along and what has definitely played out is it has been my path to authenticity. You know, being the kid who's the youngest of eight who was basically being told, pipe down, you know, you're just the little brother. Nobody really wants to hear what you have to say.

Just, you know, don't make a fuss. The big kids will be doing all the talking. And here I am, like recording my voice and transmitting it out into the ether for hours at a time. I mean, it's my path to authenticity, too. But to then,

one of the really satisfying things about this has been being able to watch some of the people who are close to me be inspired by it. And to go out and do something that they wouldn't have had maybe the audacity to do otherwise. Yeah. I kind of feel like I fall into that category.

That's what I'm saying, yeah. I mean, it really means a lot to me. And, you know, it's happened with a couple other people, too. I mean, if we're going to talk about how podcasting has changed us, I mean, you know, we're recording this live on Clubhouse, and

I'm looking in the audience and I have a wife now who's in the room who I met. I wouldn't have met her if I didn't do this. The reason she wanted to talk to me was because, you know, she was interested in what I was doing with this podcast.

And just being on this platform, it wouldn't have happened. There's so much in my life. My life is so much richer now. Because I did this because I took this bold step. And I think that's what it represents for both you and I, I think,

like creating podcasts and putting them out there in the world is they were bold moves for both of us. It was a big thing to do and sort of out of character for what our reputations were, I guess, in the profession, you know, it was, it was, they were big moves, right? Yes. And, uh,

And what I've learned about that, those big, bold moves, big things happen when we're willing to just go for it, you know?

Eric

Yeah, I, I think so. I think so. I mean, certainly, uh, Certainly, you know what I can tell you for sure is no big things happen when you don't make any moves. There isn't a lot that happens when you don't make any moves. Yeah, man.

But even when we were talking about this early on and you had already been doing it for a while and we were talking about me doing it, you had a way – like a very convincing way of making me believe that I could do it because you're like, look, it's really not that hard.

You know, you just do this, this, this, and this, and I'll, I'll help you. And I was like, I don't know, man. I don't, I don't know if you realize like the deficits that you'll be dealing with here, you know? But, um, yeah, it's, it's really cool.

It's really cool to see what you've done on all these different fronts, you know? really like uh kind of taking ownership of your own life and pathway into uh you know something that's definitely by your design you know yeah you know and

Tom

it's uh it's not always been easy it's come with its challenges, but You know, I mean.

Eric

So that's the Casey? That's the Casey, yes. That's the Casey? I'm looking at your picture right now, Casey. It's nice to meet you.

Tom

I heard a lot about you. Yeah, yeah, yeah. She's waving for those of you who are listening. She's virtually waving on Clubhouse here. But one of these days, she actually made it down your way with me. A couple of months ago, it was a short trip, but maybe the next time we can make sure and cross paths.

I know I've threatened to do that with you a few times now since I moved away.

Eric

After you've done meeting up with all the important people, maybe you will swing by, and I'll get to meet Casey.

Tom

Right, right, right. Well, you know.

Yeah.

Eric

never enough time right no I know man how that goes it's always that's always like the um it's always in the equation somewhere like do you have the time to do this

Tom

yeah man we go we go back don't we yeah, I sent you a picture a couple weeks ago of you when you looked a lot different did you got that right

Eric

Yeah, I do. Yeah, I'm looking at it right now. Yeah. Dude, that's like half a mullet I got going on there. Yeah.

Tom

That's not... I can't believe I was ever that young. So, Eric, for me, was... Well, Eric and I worked together, like, really in my first real job in recovery. Yeah. It was definitely, I mean, I, I, maybe it's dismissive to say some of the jobs I had in my first year or two of recovery were not real,

But, but to me, this was a job that I took seriously, and it was a great treatment facility, and it was a big deal for me to have a job there. It was, it was the place where I got help and it was a couple of years into my recovery and so it was, you know, man,

If anybody's listening and you know what it's like to experience that, to find recovery at a treatment facility and then to be able to go back there and work there, it's a very special experience to have. And I feel really fortunate to... not only have been able to do that,

But also, just the staff at that place was absolutely incredible at that time. And I feel like I was trained really, really well. And you were there, and I don't know, you probably started working there maybe a year before I did, but You know, you were already a therapist. You were, you know, new at it.

But, you know, I was a tech and working per diem. And so, you, you know, Friday night was your late night. I had this crazy schedule where I worked Thursday, Friday night, Saturday, Sunday days. And we would have dinner together on Friday night in the cafeteria of this place. And just to give you listeners the,

Just some context to this, you know, how important this person has been to me in my life. So that was around that time when, I remember I was going through some stuff a while back, and I found this packet that I had put together of my writing that I had done for

some newspapers before we met that I showed you, right? And I remember sort of the way you responded to that and that you were impressed and, you know, that you saw something in me, right? And there was a job opening that came up. For a daytime position at this place.

And I remember you asking me if I was going to apply for it because,

Eric

you know,

Tom

I was literally working like from 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Thursday and Friday nights and then back early in the morning on Saturday. And it was crazy. But one of the sort of things that afforded me was the ability to kind of hide out from the daytime suit and tie staff.

And I remember when you asked me if I was going to apply for it, the way I responded to you was, I don't know, you think I could cut it with these things? nine to five shirt and tie guys, like the people who really run this place. And I remember you saying to me, yes, absolutely.

And not only that, you gave me an example of, you know, Steve Millett. If you remember Steve Millett at that time, he was the clinical director, which to me seemed like, I don't know. A senator or something. Like he was the president. Yeah. Yeah.

Eric

Yeah. He was the president.

Tom

You said that I see you being someone like him someday. And it just blew me away. And I needed that. You know, it was a time when I needed somebody who could reflect that kind of thing back to me that I wasn't getting that anywhere else, you know?

Eric

I appreciate that. I had a very different perspective of all of that. So, prior to coming to work at the Hanley Center with you, I was at an organization called the National Recovery Institute. And I started there as a tech, like in graduate school.

And when I was, you know, I got my degree, they hired me on as a therapist. I was so, like, I feel like I finally made it, you know, like I had the title and the degree and all that. And, like, nine months later, the FBI came in and shut the place down because they were committing insurance

fraud and all that, you know? And in a sense, like, I didn't know who was responsible for all that, but all those people, you know, some of those people that I looked up to, you know, in the administration that were the big nine-to-five people that I wanted to impress when I was attacked—

We're probably in some way culpable for this behavior that got that facility shut down, you know? So, when you and I are talking, now I'm 28 years old and I'm like world weary, right? Because I've already had this horrendous experience, you know? What I'm thinking, because I was affiliated with this organization that got shut down for committing

insurance fraud, that made me like I'm unemployable now. And so, you land on your feet. I landed on my feet. I ended up at the Hanley Center, this really great place with this great reputation. And there I am with you. And you're like,

Do you think I could cut it with the day shift and all the administrative people and all this? And I'm thinking to myself, you know, Tom, don't be overly impressed by people with the suits and all that stuff, you know? Yeah. Don't be overly impressed by it, dude. You know, it's not always what it looks like,

and they're regular people too, and ultimately what it's going to come down to is whether or not you're capable of doing the tasks without giving them something to worry about, you know, which you're capable of. And you went and did it, and it worked out great, man. It was like nothing but forward movement for you.

And the other thing too, like when you were showing me Cause I'm remembering it, but I hadn't thought about this in so long, but like, I'm remembering back and I'm like, you're showing me these, these articles that were like in your, your local paper that you had written. And it was like, you know,

you were covering like high school sports, and I knew that you were from Indiana, you know? And I was picturing like the, like the Gene Hackman movie Hoosiers, you know? Yeah.

Yeah.

Eric

And I'm thinking to myself, like, these high school sports are probably, like, a really big deal. I didn't know about Indiana. You know, I'm thinking, like, these high school sports are probably, like, a really big deal. I was thinking, like, Friday Night Lights, you know. Like, um, and, and there, and you were doing this. And, um,

to me, it was like, you were this, this beat reporter for the paper, you know, even though you, who, who covered like, like the high school sports and, um, I don't know, like a newspaper man, you know, from Indiana. I thought it was like, in my mind, I created that you were like a young version.

And all those guys have drinking problems, too, in the movies, anyway. So, in my mind, you were like a newspaper man. I thought it was cool. I thought it was super cool.

Tom

You know, I will say, I mean, high school basketball in Indiana is pretty serious, you know? It is. Yeah. That's what I thought. You know, the high school I went to, I'm back here now after being gone for 25 years. Oh, that's right. That's right. And my high school was actually – in the state finals of basketball.

It was, it's on TV, you know, I mean, it's like one of the kids who plays here is like top five recruit, you know, he's already got like 15 offers, Kansas, UNC, all these. And he's only, he's going into his senior year now. I mean, anyway, but yeah.

Eric

In my mind, that's what I was picturing. And you were like, you're like a 19 year old kid who was doing like, you know, who was like a tradesman.

Yeah.

Eric

And when you weren't doing that, you were like covering these games for like the local paper. I just thought it was, I thought it was really cool.

Tom

Wow. And you know, the thing is I could write, you know, and I had teachers who were telling me I could write, and he wanted me to pursue that. And, you know, it was my last couple of years in high school. I was going home, and I was getting messages like, what are you going to do?

Flip burgers so you can write? Like they didn't know what was possible for me. They didn't see it. And like I was saying before, I didn't have the self-esteem to say, yeah, screw you. I'm going to do what I want. And so, the reason I became a tradesman, I was literally a union carpenter. Yeah.

It was because they said things like, maybe you should be a plumber. Somebody always needs a plumber, you know, and I did it like I just kind of acquiesced, which was so contradictory to who I am as a human. Like it did made absolutely no sense.

Eric

But when you when you when you don't have the self-esteem. When you don't have it, and I've been there before, when you don't have the self-esteem and you do something and you're actually good at it, there's a tendency to minimize like the value in what you're good at and to start thinking things like, well, you know,

If I'm good at it, how hard can it be? Or this is something that, you know, anyone could do or whatever. And they actually can't, you know, just, there's not, there's not too many people without any kind of like formal training that could be, cover a sporting event,

write about it in a way that an editor from a newspaper is going to say, yeah, we can put that in. This doesn't happen. It's not something that everyone can do. Yeah, yeah. And you were very young, you know? Yeah. So that was part of what I saw, and I thought it was interesting.

And, you know, there was a lot about you that was interesting to me at that time, too. Like you had, you know, like you were kind of like a history buff and had an appreciation for – just things that a lot of people don't pay attention to or don't, you know,

a lot of these kind of like classic sorts of books and antiques and things that, you know, just in modern-wise, you know, in modern times, like, you know, people... don't pay attention to those things I just thought it was it was it was cool well

Tom

definitely not a lot of 23 year old kids I mean you know most guys who were are that age who I meet you know you go to their apartment they don't have anything hanging on the walls yeah like I've never been like well if they do it's a it's a

Eric

Lambo you know right with a really bad like inspirational quote related to like passive incomes and crypto, you know, and it's, you know, that's, yeah, that's not, that's not you. Um, so yeah, man, there was a lot that I saw and, uh, I was really excited. Glad to know you. I was kind of sorting things out.

I was working some strange hours and looked forward to those Friday evenings where I knew I would see you. We'd get to have dinner together and stuff. I thought it was pretty cool. Watching what you did with it, especially when you kind of leapt forward and joined the business development team there and you were writing for them.

For, like, the Hazleton Foundation. I was like, wow, man. Not bad, you know? And it was all, you know, it was just, like, all onward and upward from there.

Tom

Yeah, that job was the most difficult hiring experience I've ever had. Like, that was... You mentioned the writing and people not being able to just write a story about a sporting event or whatever. One of the things I thought about as I was listening to you is when you really do something like that, and at the time,

It was a morning paper. Now it's not. It's an afternoon paper. But when you do something like that, one of the things that you don't think about is writing. This is on deadline. Yeah. So, I'm going to this little gymnasium, not unlike what you see in Hoosiers. Sure.

Which, by the way, the smaller the school, the more packed it is. Like, they come from the cornfields converge on the gymnasium. But, you know, you drive maybe half an hour away. You got to get back to the paper. You might have 20 minutes to write a story. You know, I mean –

Yeah, and so when I interviewed for that job, I went through that interview process. It was three or four interviews, and the last one was I had to write a press release to announce my hiring, like, now. They really waterboarded you. Well, it wasn't like that, but you know what?

The great thing was that I could do it. Like, okay. Yeah. Yeah. And, and I think ultimately that's what got me the job, you know, like having that ability to, you know, it's, and, and you're right. It was one of those things that to me, even now doing something like that, I take it for granted.

Like the way I think of it is, uh, while you keep the stats, the story writes itself, you get a couple of quotes. It's like, you know, it's not a big deal to me at all, but yeah, not everybody can do that. And what I did is exactly what you said.

I minimize the value of that skill. Uh, if I can do it, it must not be that hard. You know, it's really not that big a deal. Anybody can do it. And it wasn't true. It wasn't true. And, you know, but I went through what I needed to go through with that. And, uh,

When I look back on all of it, like I wouldn't trade any of it. I wouldn't trade my alcoholism. Like, you know, I mean, I wouldn't have wished it on myself. I, you know, it's not an experience that I wish that anyone would ever have to go through.

But I wouldn't be who I am if I hadn't done that. I would have never met you. I would have never met my wife. I wouldn't be a dad. Or if I did, I'd be a shitty dad. You know, I mean... Because you know, that's one thing, man,

You grew up in a family with a bunch of alcoholics and then you stop drinking and you look back and then you become a parent. I mean, I did things a lot differently than we're done with me for sure. Like, like, yeah, I mean, it's anyway, that's that, that's one of those dogs, right? One of your dogs.

Eric

Yeah, man. Like, I think she's, I think like you, she's had it with the bird and now, you know, now they're getting into it. They're getting into it, huh? With the bird. Yeah, that's okay. Barking at the bird. Hopefully, that's Marty. Hopefully he'll just leave the bird alone now.

Tom

Well, anything else you want to cover before we wrap this thing up?

Eric

No, man. I think we said it all. I just want to say to the folks in audience there in the clubhouse, thank you for coming out and checking this out. It's nice to have you guys here and be an attentive audience like that. And, Tom, thanks as always for including me in this.

to jump on one of these guys with you. And it's, uh, you know, you haven't done it in a minute. You forget like how much fun it is.

Tom

It is. It is. Yeah. And, uh, I still, I still think we need to do our own little podcast. If we set aside the time, I'm not goanna, I'm not gone, the name will be a secret between you and I for now, but, uh, One day.

Eric

Yeah.

Tom

One day we'll do it.

Eric

We'll do it. Cryptocurrency and Maserati. Everyone should have a Maserati.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Eric

Exactly. Exactly. We'll talk about Andrew Tate and all that stuff. Yeah, that's it. That's it. That's what we would have to do is pick like... The most uninteresting topic. Like, every week, it's like, what's the worst thing we could talk about right now? And then we'll do it.

Like, your philosophy, your thoughts on the philosophy, more plates, more dates. I'd want to hear, you know what I mean? More plates, more dates. More plates, more dates. Like, I'd want to hear what you think about that. Yeah. All right, dude. Well, thank you again. And have a good night, everybody.

Tom

Yeah. Thanks, folks, for coming. It's been a pleasure. Thanks for listening to the show. Please subscribe, leave a rating or review at Apple podcasts or wherever you listen. You can learn more

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