

First Responder Fitness: Rethinking the Work-Life Balance

Voiceover

00:00

Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

Jennifer Donelan

00:16

Hello, everyone, and welcome to *The Beat*. I'm your host, Jennifer Donelan. We're really excited about this topic and our guest expert, because it's really all about work-life balance, and it's something that we all forget about very easily with the type of schedules that we lead. So, I'm hoping that you can take a moment, and pause, and really listen to this podcast and our presenter, because he's got some really useful information. So, without further ado, I'd like to introduce to you Marc Hildebrand.

Now, Marc has been in law enforcement in California for 18 years. He's a sergeant with the Los Angeles Police Department, but he also has what some of us refer to as a side gig, but I'm actually going to say it's a passion of his, and he really wants to share it with the rest of his brothers and sisters in law enforcement. He has spent the last nine years with this deep-seated passion for helping other law enforcement officers with balancing their health, their families, and their career. His program is called First Responder Fitness and it provides mindset, fitness, and nutrition solutions for those who have to navigate the unpredictable and chaotic lifestyles that come with being a first responder. Marc, thank you so much and welcome to *The Beat*.

Sergeant Marc Hildebrand

01:24

Thank you very much, Jennifer, for having me here, and I hope everybody's prepared, because they're going to hear things they've never heard before.

Donelan

01:29

I am truly excited, because I think that, in this day and age, we are so focused with COVID-19; everyone is so focused on staying healthy, right? And mindfulness is a huge piece of that, and really, kind of having that 360-degree view of ourselves, not just our job. So, could you start off by telling us a little bit about yourself, who you are, and how you even got into law enforcement and policing in the first place?

Hildebrand

01:53

Great question. So, like you said, I have about 18 years on the department, but prior to that my father was a police officer. He was also with LAPD, and so, growing up, I was just really excited. I would always hear the stories that he would tell me about things that were happening on duty, and from an early age I

was that person, was like, “You know what? I'm going to be a police officer when I grow up.” And it never changed, to the point where I became a police officer in 2002 and have been really loving my career for the last 18 years, but there was a lot of struggles that were in there too. I'm sure we're going to get to a lot of that today. And what I like to tell people is that a lot of people see me now and they think that there wasn't a lot of struggle that was going on; however, I had to screw up everything that we're probably going to talk about here today, and I had to do it repeatedly, until it got me to the point of what I would consider my own rock bottom.

And that's when I started to actually make a change and get my mindset on point, because so many times I was focused on—when I had lost track of my health and fitness—I was focused on the activities, like the tactics of what I needed to do, the kind of workouts and all that kind of stuff, and I was really off base. And so, really, a lot of it has to do with mindset and that carried over, not just into my health and fitness, but also my career and the connection with my family, because I truly do believe that those three areas—our career; our physical, mental, and emotional health; as well as our family—are all interconnected. When you can lift up all three of them, that's where you actually can see the best results in all of them.

Donelan

03:10

Absolutely; and I am really looking forward to talking about the failures, because from failures comes success, and I really do think that that's going to be really key, because people feel like, “Well, if I'm not perfect, if I'm not doing everything right,” then they just throw everything out the door, right? When in fact, there are things you can do, and I think that that's sort of the best news. So, I can imagine when you first started, you were working overnight, overtime, weekends, and that you really had to just sort of adjust to the stressful world of law enforcement, as we all know. Let's talk about some of those issues that you personally faced that made you sort of start this quest in the first place.

Hildebrand

03:47

Great place to start, and I'll even start before I became a police officer. So, what I noticed is that my father, even though he really loved the career, he was always present there, too, and I did not see much of him. I guess it was kind of built into me that when I became a police officer, I kind of started to duplicate that as well, where I was giving it all to my career, much like you said. I was working overnights. I was into what's called our Gang Impact Team. I was working Gang Enforcement detail, and I was just the court-qualified gang expert. I was everywhere and people were calling me on my days off. I was constantly there doing search warrants in the morning, and at nighttime just stopping people on the street. It was this constant... just like hamster wheel, I guess.

And what I didn't notice is the same thing that happened to my dad, which is I sort of lost connection with my family. I sort of lost connection with my health and my fitness and, really, I started to use sort of the career as a, I would say, an excuse. An excuse to not take care of the other areas. Because I had this

belief that well, you could only really go all-in with one of these areas, and because I was born to be a police officer, I had to give it all there. And so that ultimately is what stemmed me down the wrong path in terms of thinking that I could only succeed in one area, as opposed to all of them.

Donelan

04:57

I can totally identify with that. Your job is a priority. There's X amount of hours in a day. You spend or feel like you're spending all of your energy that you have in you on the job, and you ignore everything else in your life. So, how did you make the switch? You talked about the fact that you had failed a few times. It took you a couple tries. You know, you had to hit that rock bottom. Can you talk more about that? When was your, as Oprah would say, your "aha" moment?

Hildebrand

05:24

Right, right. Well, at the time when I was... I think it was maybe about eight to nine years on the department, a lot of people thought that I had my health under control, but I definitely did not, especially when you think about my mindset at the time. I was not open to learning new things. I was kind of like, "Ah, this is what I've always done, so this is the only way to do it." And it was at that point that my son, Andrew, was born. He was born three months early. He was one pound, nine ounces, and he had to spend 73 days in the NICU. And it was very traumatizing, because, you know, I had my first baby, my wife had our first kid, and we, basically, were told, "Hey, you got to go home, and we'll keep the kid here until, you know, your son can start breathing on his own." And I was not prepared for that physically, but I really wasn't prepared for that emotionally or mentally, and I had a breakdown.

And so that was the time when... You know, because things had been bad for a while. Things were not the way I wanted them or that I had this great outlook of my life, but it wasn't like... I guess I hadn't decided that that was going to be my rock bottom at that point, and I needed to get lower. And so, at that time when my son was born and I felt like I wasn't able to show up for him, because I had given into my excuses, that was what I defined as rock-bottom moment. What's funny is looking back at it now... so rock bottom is, literally, just a thought. It is a decision that you make, "Hey, this is my rock bottom, and from here I'm going to make the changes that I need to take." And here's the thing: At any point, you can do that. You can decide that today is rock bottom. You can decide that, you know, 10 years is, from now, is rock bottom.

So for me, I decided I was going to make that day my rock bottom, and I wish I could say that the seas parted and then within a month, I was, you know, I had lost the hundred pounds that I ended up losing. That didn't happen. It was just a matter of, a process of understanding that, basically, either whenever I try something, either I succeed at it or it teaches me lessons on what to adjust and what to change so that, eventually, I'd succeed at it, and that's really how I define success now. It's not a matter of whether or not you fail; it's a matter of are you learning from it, or is it trying to teach you something that you're bumping your head against because you're not open to change? And that's kind of where that rock-bottom moment was and actually led me down to path of where I am today.

Donelan

07:28

You know, I think it's really eye-opening to define rock bottom as something that you can say, you can define, you can set your limit, and say, "You know what? This is my rock bottom." I think when people think about rock bottom, it's the bills aren't being paid. They're in some kind of trouble. There are failures and that sort of thing where, physically right now, you can kind of stop and take a look at your life and decide, "This is my rock bottom. It doesn't get... I move up from here." And that's really empowering. That's really insightful. Thank you for that, Marc.

So, I want to go back to the policing thing, and I can understand that experience with your son, and the baby, and having something that was completely out of your control, and really forcing that issue for you. In policing, you know, before you started your career, now that you've gone through this, what's one thing that you wish you had known?

Hildebrand

08:11

So what's one thing that I wish that I had known? That really has to do with... It is, ultimately, all about mindset; kind of like what you said earlier, in terms of defining rock bottom as sort of a thought. It's a conscious decision that we can make at any specific point. And the reason why I believe mindset was such an important part of my life is because I had a closed mindset, meaning I thought that either you were born with it or you weren't. The way that things were in the past is the way that they always have to be in the future.

And really, the idea of an open mindset—which is what I was able to develop, because I did not have that—is just a matter of thinking of it this way, and that is you have a struggle or you have something, a difficulty, that you're faced with right now, there is a solution out there. You may not know it. You may not be connected yet to the person who's going to teach you it, but there is a solution out there if you're willing to put in the energy and effort to go and find it. And just even thinking about that, in talking about that out loud right now, that is a great feeling to know that there's a solution out there. And when you have the belief that that's actually the truth, because I've yet to find that there has never been a solution out there. Whenever I have this open mindset, I find it. Maybe it's not the first time. Maybe it's not the 10th time, but if I'm willing to get out there and work for it, then I'm going to find that. And I wish that I had known that before I got into the department. That, you know what, you've got to have an open mindset and thinking that just because that's the way we've always done it, or this is just the way that you've always seen it happen, or you're either born with it or not born with it... It felt like I was hitting a concrete wall, and I wish I had known that before I started.

Donelan

09:35

That makes sense, a huge amount of sense. Now, I think a lot of people feel like things happen to us: "My job is like this." "It's happening to me." When, in fact, you make things happen and you can turn things around. Again, like that whole ability to decide, "This is my rock bottom," or, "this is the worst it's

going to get, because I'm taking it forward from here on out," or, "I have this open mind that I don't have to accept things the way they are. If my schedule's crazy at work or if I'm not balancing enough," that you can, physically, correct those. That, again, very empowering.

So, let's go back to... You mentioned that you lost a hundred pounds, and I want to talk about that with our listeners, because if you're not taking care of yourself—which is very easy to do, especially in this career—your health can go. It's usually the first thing to go. You once weighed as much as 267 pounds. You had that moment when your child was born early, and you couldn't do anything about it. You had to leave the hospital without him. Talk to me about how you came out of all of that. How did you turn into somebody who ran towards opportunities?

Hildebrand

10:34

So, a couple of things. Number one is: It didn't work out the first time. It was a matter of like, "Okay. I'm going to try and find a way. I just don't know what that solution is." And what I ultimately ended up doing was connecting with other people who had come before me who were succeeding and who would be open to pushing me to consistently grow and to show up for myself. And so, it was really just, I guess you can kind of describe it as a mastermind. It was like a collective group of people that I started to hang out with, because you know that you're the average of the five people you spend the most time with. That was from Jim Rohn. Well, that is such an important piece. Number one is the person you spend the most time with is you, like in your brain where you... We have these 50,000 thoughts, right? And so getting those on point is extremely important.

But when you start figuring out who it is you're hanging out with... So if you're like, "You know what? I want to be the best police officer I can possibly be," then how would you hang out with people that you would describe as being the best police officers? Or if you were like, "You know what? I want to really be able to connect better with my family, have a better relationship with my wife," then you should probably not be hanging out with people who only value the career and don't give to their family. Because what you don't realize is when you start hanging out with those people, you start to take on the same persona as them, you start to take on the same level of growth as them, and it's only natural for you to improve. And so, when I started hanging out with those people, it started to open my eyes to new, different opportunities.

And yeah, like I said, it wasn't the first or second or the third thing that I did that really, truly changed it for me. It was, eventually, working through that, you know what, struggling through it, this isn't working for me, and not beating myself up, because it wasn't me. It was just that thing that I was trying, and then just being open to learn from it, and then finally finding what works for me, and of course, that's stuff that I share with my own team right now. But really, ultimately, it's about you being willing to try until it's going to work. And really, if you have that mindset instilled, it doesn't matter if you're doing CrossFit, you're doing Keto, you're doing intermittent fasting—you're going to find the thing that's actually going to work for you if you are willing to put in the work to find it.

Donelan

12:30

It's interesting, too, you know, this is going to sound rather simple, but when I'm listening to your last response, I'm thinking about the fact that when I was younger and coming up, I was never afraid to go and seek out advice from others, but as I got older and became an adult, you tend to arrive at this place where you think you know it all, right? And you stop doing that. You stop seeking out advice. The other piece, especially in law enforcement, for first responders—and the game is changing on this considerably in recent times—but it's that just willingness to hold up your hand and say, "Hey, I could use some help here." You know, there was a day when you wouldn't dare show any "weakness," even though it's not weakness as far as I'm concerned; it's strength. What was the reception you got, say, from others in law enforcement when you went and sought out their advice?

Hildebrand

13:20

Ah, man, this is something that kind of keeps me up at night to be honest, because you are so right. It's that mentality that we are the helpers, so we should not need help. And it is something that I had to personally struggle with on my own, because sitting in the back of the room, not raising your hand, thinking that you from the outside can do it by yourself, was a quick way for me to fail, repeatedly, over and over again. I think what really helped me the most is seeing that once I did reach out, and once I did feel uncomfortable, like just how much growth I was able to experience, and reflecting on that, going, "You know what? First off, I didn't die. These people don't think anything less of me."

As a matter of fact, it's actually quite the opposite. And I remember the first time... I'd personally been through a lot of different struggles where I had to go seek a police psychologist, and I remember the first time telling other people about it. That was the most nerve-wracking thing, "What are people going to think of me?" And now, I say it all the time because, you know, we have people on our team who experience very traumatic incidents, teams of police officers, and I'm like, "You know, the first thing you need to do is you need to go see a police psychologist, because some of the things that I can coach you through are awesome, but there are some times you need professional help." And realizing that that's the case, and then me being so open to it, has given people sort of the permission to go ahead and do that themselves.

I think that that is something that really helps is just for us to all be open. Now, there's still a lot of stigma around it, and I can tell you that I come up against it all the time with people who, basically, they're doing something that is not working for them, but when they're presented a new opportunity, they push back against it, and they don't take that as an opportunity to grow, and I wish I had the solution behind that. The only solution that I really have is modeling the behavior, meaning when I ask for help, I make sure I let people know that, too.

And me being a coach, losing a hundred pounds, getting into this great shape, having a better connection with my family, and then also being a sergeant now for LAPD, and being able to make the true impact that I want to make there, not just with the other officers and the citizens—I think

people seeing that, it gives them that feeling like, “You know what? If he screws it up, then I shouldn't be so hard on myself when I screw it up.” And I still screw it up to this day, and I still go out there, and I connect with people who can teach me something new, and I at least try and do that every single day.

Donelan

15:26

It's interesting. You went from being solely focused on your job, things, you know, falling off, everything else in your life sort of falling away, because you're focused on your job, and now, like you said, it's always a work in progress. It's nothing where you just sort of arrive and you've made it, and that's really important. But the fact that you're now doing more than ever before, you know, you just talked about “I'm connecting with my family. I'm focused on my job. I'm in great shape now.” And now you have this other gig. And to think that when you were only focused on the job, you didn't have all those things going on. So, how are you doing it? And tell me about First Responder Fitness.

Hildebrand

16:00

Everybody listening right now is going to have the key to the universe when it comes to time management. So, there's this principle, and the principle is the 80/20 rule. It's the Pareto Principle, and what that says is that, basically, 20 percent of the action that you take produces 80 percent of the results in your life. The other 80 percent of what you do produces only the leftover 20 percent, so let me give you an example.

Donelan

16:24

I was going to say, “Give me an example.”

Hildebrand

16:26

So, you're a police officer, right? 80 percent of the time you're driving around in your car; you're doing those kinds of things, right? You're on lunch. 20 percent of the time, you're responding to Code 3 radio calls; you're helping somebody out on a traffic accident; you're doing some kind of enforcement action. That 20 percent is the one that makes the biggest impact. Let me give you an example of like with your family. So, 80 percent of the time, you're spending time at home; you're watching in front of the TV; you're doing laundry; you're making food. 20 percent of the time, you're disconnected from all of that. You're playing a board game and you're asking your daughter, you know, how Unicorn Princesses were earlier in the day. That 20 percent is what's going to make a true impact in her life, not the 80 percent of watching Netflix and just sitting in the same room. And so, when I realized this, when I figured that out, I thought, “Okay, how can I really utilize this and see amazing growth in my life while giving me extra time?” And so, that's what I did. I started to identify that 80/20.

So, what are the 20 percent activities that I'm doing, let me say for example, with my health and fitness that's going to produce 80 percent of the results when it comes to my health? And that is exercising for 45 minutes a day and getting out and moving, like moving around. The other 80 percent of my day is just

sitting around, you know, whether it's doing police work—I'm Investigations now, so a lot of times I'm in front of a computer—or, you know, just traveling, because I'm in Los Angeles so it takes like an hour and a half to get to and from work, but that's the 80 percent, and the 20 percent is exercising and moving. And so, being able to identify that, what you can do is you can take those 20 percent—those most important activities that produce the biggest results for you—and you can double down on them. And then the other 80 percent of the activities, you can prune those down, meaning you do less of them.

Now, there's going to be certain things that you cannot remove. There's going to be certain things that you can outsource, and there's going to be some things that you may think are important, but in reality, they're only moving the needle a little bit, and if you had more time for rest and recovery and for sleep, especially for us police officers, you would be better at that other 20 percent. And so, I, literally, did this for everything. I did this for my health and fitness. I did this for my family. I did this for my business now. I did this for my police career. And so, I doubled down on those 20 percent, and by doing that, I produced more results than when I typically would, and I have more time to do things like just play Fortnite with my son or do something that is just what I would consider filling up my own cup, because I've been able to fully maximize my time.

Donelan

18:45

So, maximizing, you know, that 20 percent, I love that. So, you're talking about really just hunker down on that 20 percent and make that 20 percent count. You talked about that 80 percent and sort of spending less of that sort of non-impactful time and making it impactful. This requires a lot of thought. I mean, it's really being aware, so you talk about mindfulness a lot. It seems to play a massive role, like we all go about through life, right? We go to work. We come home, just all those things you described, right? But a lot of us do it blindly. We're not even kind of hyperaware of what we're doing, and what you're talking about, this 80/20, it sounds like you really have to be aware and present to realize, “Ooh, I just spent, I don't know, two hours looking at the TV. I didn't even realize that two hours had passed.” How much does mindfulness play in this?

Hildebrand

19:36

Ah, that is such an amazing question, Jennifer, so a couple of things. Number one, you kind of talked about this is a lot of thought work, and here's the thing: I have what I consider what's a law enforcement mastermind team. As a part of that team, what I help people do is identify what those 20 percent of those activities are, and once you do that, that's all, really, the work you have to do, because what I do is I help them design a way to track it. And so, basically, once you've done that, you have an ability of, whether it be some kind of checklist or some kind of thing that you write down on the refrigerator, whatever it is, you can make sure that you are spending that intentional time in those areas, and then, you also have intentional rest time. I'm not just saying you have to be constantly moving. As a matter of fact, I don't want you to do that.

When people see what it is that my list looks like and my schedule, they're like, "How come you have like three or four hours here where you're not doing anything and you're just scheduling time in front of the TV, or scheduling time to go on a walk with your kids?" And it's because that downtime is actually an important part of the process, even though sometimes I don't want to do it, I know that it's an important part to rest and recharge. But when it comes to mindset, like making sure that you, let's say, start the day off on the right foot when it comes to fueling your mind so that you do have that ability of being intentional.

So I always, in the morning time, number one is I will read for 10 minutes a day, and it will be something that fuels me. It will be something that pushes me, that basically tells my mind where to go. Just like how you have a schedule and you tell your time where to go, well, for me, my mindset, I have to tell it where to go or it's going to go down the wrong path, and it still does on occasion go down the wrong path. And so how I do that is I read 10 pages of a good book, something that I'm either connecting with, something I want to learn from, somebody who really fires me up, not just because somebody else told me to read the book, but because it actually connects with me, and then I review that tracker that makes sure that I know where I'm going to be and what I'm going to be doing throughout the day.

Now, the goal is to stay there, but the goal is never hit by me. It's a constant thing where I'm just reminding myself. At the end of the day, I will look at it and say, "What did I do really well?" I always start off with that, like I never start off with, "Man, what did I screw up, right?" I'm always like, "Hey, what did I own today? What did I do amazingly well? And you know what? If I could do this day over again, what would I do differently?" And the next day, guess what? You get to do it over again, so you get to just continually rinse and repeat. And those items change, like as we get older, as our kids get older, and they want to spend less time... I mean, mine is 10 and 12 right now, so they still like me until—I hear the teenage years might be difficult—but for right now, you know, I'm in the season of spending as much time with them as I possibly can, but that's going to change, and so when it does, those activities, those 20 percent, is going to change.

And so, making sure that I'm as intentional as possible... Like they say, you've got to be present there physically and mentally at the same time, but it's like I said, always a constant battle. Sometimes I find myself I'm with my kids, and I'm thinking about what I got to do at work, an interview that I have to do at work, or I'm at work, and I'm thinking about what I'm going to be doing at home or where we're going to be doing for the weekend, and just being able to snap myself back into it and going, "Okay, you know, I'm a human. I have a human brain. This is just the way that it works," and realizing that I'm not there to beat myself up, but just to get back on track as quickly as possible. It just really, it changes your mindset, so you're not beating yourself down, because I know for me, personally, I used to do that all the time, which is why I talk about not doing that so much. But it's just really a different mindset than what most people have.

Donelan

22:52

I love that you, at the end of the day, you start with a positive, like, "What did I do well today?" I think we tend to beat ourselves up a lot, and we look at the negative. You're like, "Start with a positive. Look at what you did right, and then go to the things that you can work on for the next day," because every new day is a new opportunity. And while that all may sound like fluff, it sounds like it's really working for you. I'm also very appreciative of taking downtime is okay. You actually need to schedule it in. I think that disconnecting is also a problem and leads to all sorts of physical and mental issues. You know, we just get stressed out. That can land you in the hospital in heartbeat, and I'm also going to call my college roommate who used to make fun of me because I put "take a nap" on my to-do list. So, yes, I was right to schedule my naps. So, I know that people... We talked about the weight loss, and I know listeners are like, "How did he lose a hundred pounds?" How did you lose a hundred pounds?

Hildebrand

23:55

So, ultimately, because I connected with an online system that helped me get my fitness under control, be able to do it at home, being a busy parent, having all those things. Like my job didn't go away, I had to figure out a way of doing it and saving the most amount of time. So I connected with a system that actually let me work out from home. That gave me more guidance when it comes to nutrition, but didn't make me feel like I was handcuffed to only eating certain foods, and then it also connected me with a mastermind group where people kind of collectively shared their wins and their losses with each other, and that's kind of, ultimately, how I created my businesses around these three areas.

You know, doing the right fitness, focusing on nutrition that it doesn't feel like it's restriction, and then also surrounding yourself with the right people is that trifecta that kind of fell into alignment with me. And it wasn't something that happened overnight, like I said, but I did end up losing a hundred pounds, and I've kept it off now for almost 10 years, so it's not something that was a fluke. And so, it's equally now my passion to help other people who are the previous Marcs and struggling with that, to not only get their health and fitness under control, but also, their career and their family.

Donelan

24:55

That's pretty amazing, and you've said it a couple of times about how you need to find what works for you, like understand who you are. It sounds like you've found a program that worked for you. You were able to be at home. You have a family. The nutrition program worked for you. It wasn't super restrictive, where other people, they may need to go to a gym. They may need to have a strict menu provided for them, because that's what works for them, so it sounds like it's that whole, "be really aware of who you are and honest with yourself and find the things that work for you," and then just be really mindful about it. So, do you consider yourself a fitness and nutrition consultant, a life coach, a motivational speaker, or a family and professional counselor? What pod would you put yourself in?

Hildebrand

25:33

My answer would be, "Yes. I'm all those things." And the reason why is because everybody, I feel... When people first started to reach out to me, it was because I lost a hundred pounds. They saw the before and after pictures, which still make me feel uncomfortable posting pictures of myself like that, but a lot of times that's what people think they need. They're like, "You know what? I want to be able to lose weight." And, ultimately, when I connect with them, being able to help them to grow, like the outside is the smallest change that I ever help people make. It's always the inside. You know, they always say that your outward success is a reflection of your inner growth, and really, when I'm focusing on helping people grow, whether it's through their fitness, through their nutrition, through life coaching, through any different aspect, maybe helping them connect better with their family... I meet people, really, where they're at.

And that's the reason why I've gotten so many different certifications and really learned as much as I possibly can, which you know, certifications are great, but if you haven't, you know, not been through it yourself, it's kind of difficult to help coach people through it. And so, really, I just meet people where they're at and help them with whatever it is that they're focusing on. And with that being said, the important thing for me is not just to live my core values, but to help other people who have similar core values to me, and here's what I mean by that. We have a lot of people on our team who want to lose weight, but primarily for me, I want people who also want to connect better with their family, whether it's their husband, their wife, their kids, who also want to make a lasting impact with their career.

And I really do feel like those three areas do lift each other up, because when you feel more connected with your family, you're going to be able to show up more present at work. And when you're taking care of your health and your fitness and your mental/emotional health is under wraps, then it's much easier for you, not only to leave work at work, but leave home at home as much as possible so that you're not interchanging and pulling some of those stuff home. You know, you never want your significant other to ask you why you're treating them like a suspect, right? And so, it's this constant holding up of those three pillars, and however I can help people do that, I'm ready, and I'm ready to jump in.

Donelan

27:31

And just talking about first responders, in particular, the sort of 360, the family, work, the health, all of that, specifically for first responders, those three areas, whether they were to focus on something with First Responder Fitness or just, you know, take a stab at it on their own, however they were to do it, what specifically do you feel like first responders, based on the work, the job, do you think that people really need to focus on, no matter how they go about doing it?

Hildebrand

28:01

Right, that's a great question, and it's something that I ask thousands and thousands of police officers constantly, and the reason why I ask them is because the answer is inside of you. When you just hear that question, like which one should I focus on, there's one that's going to be speaking loudest to you,

and I don't even have to ask you. Like maybe it's your physical, mental, emotional health. Like right now, you're like, "That is number one," or maybe it's like, "You know what? I just feel like I'm a stranger at home." There's this adage that you don't want to come home with a pocket full of money to a home full of strangers, right? Maybe that's where you're at, or maybe you're like, "You know what? I'm just not showing up for work like how I truly want to show up."

And so, usually, what I'll do is I'll ask a series of questions, like if there was one area right now that you think you could improve that would help you improve the others, where would you focus on first? And I know that we always have an all-or-nothing mentality that we have to do it all at once, but let me tell you, having changed thousands and thousands of people's lives... and it's not me changing them, it's just me showing them the options that are available and then them taking it and actually getting out there and working for it... but after helping them, it all starts different and it all starts with baby steps.

It all starts with focusing on one, and growing, and then here's the thing, like for me, when I ended up losing that weight, I was like, "You know what? I was able to do this. I was able to navigate it, despite how I felt, despite how tired I was, despite the fact that I didn't want to work out today. What other areas of my life could use this mental toughness and this fortitude and really help me excel in those areas?" And so that next one was, you know, connecting better with my family, and I did the same exact thing I did with health and fitness. Guess what I did? I signed up for a mastermind team. I started to connect with other men who wanted to become better husbands, wanted to become better fathers. I started to take classes and online learning to become better at it. I started to read books around it, and then just naturally, that started to happen. And once again, it's not perfect, but I always strive to be better every single day.

So, I basically took those principles that I've succeeded in another area of my life and moved them over into the other areas, and that what I highly suggest, is you pick one area, the area that you feel most compelled to jump into right now, and whether or not you join me or you join somebody else is irrelevant, and I could care less. I just want what's truly best for you and for your family, and I know that's, ultimately, putting yourself first, and then figuring out which one of these you're going to fully commit to, and then taking baby steps, because that's what progress looks like. It looks like one domino at a time, and it's not a massive amount of action that's required. Literally, just changing 20 to 30 minutes of your day can be that first domino that will knock down the bigger domino later.

Donelan

30:25

I am a true believer in one good thing begets another good thing, and the opposite is true as well. Sometimes it's just telling people, right? Folks likely know this stuff. You know what I mean? But sometimes you just need to say it out loud. You need to hear it, so I really do hope that our listeners... I know they're going to walk away with valuable information, and really, if it's just that, "you can do this, and start small." I mean, is there anything, as we wind down? And I do want to get your information to share with the listeners here in just a moment so if they are interested, they know how to contact you. but is there anything that we didn't talk about that you want to make sure you say out loud?

Hildebrand

31:02

Yeah, I mean, you just kind of brought it up right now. You said that it is possible for you, and here's the thing: It has a lot to do with confidence, and it has a lot to do with belief. And belief is really like the thought about what you think about yourself. Ultimately, when I first got started, I really didn't have a hundred percent belief that it was possible for me. And so, what I did was I connected with somebody else and rode on their coattails of belief, somebody else who believed in me, until I could believe in myself, and that was a huge deal for me, and so find somebody. It doesn't matter who that is, who you can connect to, who is going to believe in you, who is going to tell you it's possible for you, and learn from wherever they have been able to fail and succeed, as well, because there are so many different answers that are out there, but when you find people who have struggled through the same things that you have, and they've found solutions, like success leaves clues, right? And so just jump in there. I promise you: No matter where you are right now, no matter how disconnected you feel, no matter how out of shape you feel—it is 100 percent possible for you to succeed.

Donelan

32:00

And you're worth it.

Hildebrand

32:01

Big time.

Donelan

32:02

That's awesome. Last, but very importantly, how can people listening to this podcast learn more about what you do, specifically, and the First Responder Fitness program?

Hildebrand

32:13

Thank you very much for that, Jennifer, and once again, you're an amazing interviewer. So, a couple of ways. Number one is I have my own podcast. It's called LEO Family Fitness, and like I said, those three pillars—LEO, law enforcement officer; family; and then fitness—so I have my own podcast. I also have my own Instagram channel called LEO Family Fitness, and on Facebook, First Responder Fitness with Marc, and then, of course, I'm L-E-O-family-fitness-dot-com. [LEOFamilyFitness.com]

Any way that people can connect, any free information, anything that I can ever do for anybody, please don't hesitate to reach out. But here's the thing, and I said this in the beginning: My goal isn't to get you to join me or my team. My goal is for you to take a step today, and it doesn't matter how small. That's the way a journey of a thousand steps begins, right? It's just one step at a time. One domino at a time. And like Jennifer said, you are worth it. Your family is worth it, and you are 100 percent capable. Just take that one step today.

Donelan

33:04

Marc, thank you so much. I would wish you success, but I don't think you need it.

Hildebrand

33:08

I greatly appreciate that. I wish it was all as easy as we just said here, but remember: It's all work, but it's all worth it.

Donelan

33:14

Thank you, and thank you, everyone, for listening to *The Beat*.

Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

33:18

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