

S01 - E58 - Rooted & Unwavering - Hylke Faber & Alex Gendzier

Presenter 00:00

You. Welcome to rooted and unwavering, a podcast and radio show which features leaders from all walks of life in conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged, what becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others greatness, also when we don't feel it. Join host Hylke fauber, transformational coach, facilitator and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering

Hylke Faber 00:48

and welcome. Welcome to rooted and unwavering broadcasting live today from New York and Seattle, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, loco Faber, and today here with Alex ginger, who is an author about of a beautiful book that I'll talk to you about in a second, and also a general counsel in a private equity firm. Alex, how are you today?

Alex Gendzier 01:16

I'm fantastic. Hylke, it's great to be with you. Thank you.

Hylke Faber 01:20

In staying here, I feel honored. I feel I'm sitting more upright as I speak with you, and that will become clear. Why? Because, to me, this podcast, as I've been preparing it with you, is all about commitment and dedicating ourselves to something bigger and rude and unwavering. Is this is episode 58 is about the commitment and being committed to what's most important to us, and staying more and more true to that, and becoming more and more aware of that, and leading and living from that place. If I put this in time, this week was an important time for many of us. Juneteenth was yesterday, committing to and celebrating commitment to people, to end slavery, finding ways to work and live more in harmony together. For me, this was a moment as we personally became a citizen of this country, committing not only to the welfare of the United States, but the welfare of every single person in this, in this world, which to me, is something that gives me energy and thinking about, like, how do we take a stand for that? And I want to, I invite you, as you think about commitment, what does commitment do for you as you think about your own life and leadership, and what happens when we leave our commitments? Like, what's that like? You may notice, and I noticed myself an inner weakness. When I leave my commitments, I I become not as strong. My spine becomes weaker. And when I'm dedicated and committed, there's a is a market difference, and I want to talk to you about this market difference today, in this podcast today, where we're looking at a transition going from army life and the military life to civilian life, which we're going to discuss with Alex ginger. Alex ginger is, as I said, a general counsel.



He's a Chief Compliance Officer in a private equity firm called sycamore tree Capital Partners, and he's also the co author of the book together with Rob Sarver, called warrior to civilian, the field manual for the hero's journey. Now, how does Rob get to that? He has a very broad renaissance man background, as far as I'm concerned, he studied ancient Greek philosophy, literature in place which he continues to do to his day. He is has a deep commitment to veterans. He has provided pro bono legal services to veterans and their families for over a decade, including having led his prior law firms, efforts to assist Argan allies and friends. He has no military experience, but he has a deep connection with veterans in in their transition from his from their military experience to civilian life, and he draws from his own journey of overcoming the odds, healing from painful losses, reflecting on successes and failures and making life changing transitions. His core desire is to make a contribution to service members and their family members, and that has led to his collaboration with Rob Sarver again in their writing of the book that is called warrior to civilian, the field manual for the hero's journey, which, in their research, which we've been doing for years, makes them together, one of the experts about veteran transition in the United States. He and Rob Sarver often speak about this transition to come. Chinese veterans groups, government agencies, foundations and universities. And I've had the privilege of getting to know Rob a little bit over the past weekend. One thing that I strike that struck me about him, that strikes me about him is is to the bone dedication to a higher court costs and that I find very inspiring. So I'm very, very grateful to sit here today with with Alex today. So Alex, welcome and tell us about what have you learned about connectedness in your life and leadership? Tell us about that.

Alex Gendzier 05:33

Hylke, thank you. I think, I think in your very gracious introduction, I mean you referred to rob. You probably meant to refer to me, but that's totally cool. I think, I think the themes of connectedness and leadership and the courage in these things, which is, which is the theme of your podcast, is really fantastic. I think connectedness can be understood in a few different ways. I think connecting with other people and seeing, even if they look very different than you, the humanity in them, our common humanity that we all share, is the most essential the first place to start as a leader, as a leader, being able to call upon the life skills, to encourage the commitment and devotion, to invite people you work with by your own example of putting yourself on the line together in service of something bigger than oneself, in service of other people, especially when one can least afford to do that because of your own life circumstances. Had a bad day, you've had a tragedy. You've had great difficulty. That is leadership in a way that is rooted in connectedness,

Hylke Faber 07:03

beautiful. I love that. Tell me about this, Alex, and I think I probably confused names sometimes my brain. That's cool. So Alex, or previously called Rob, let's talk about how have you learned about this in your life. So how did you get to feeling connected to this, this whole topic of of helping people to find this calling, even this whole idea of thinking about veteran transition to such a specific topic like, how does one land on that, also given that you haven't been a veteran. So that's like, how did that happen?

Alex Gendzier 07:45



Yeah, it's a great and obvious question for a civilian like me. So about six years ago, I began to work with Rob Sarver on our book, warrior to civilian, the field manual for the hero's journey. And we didn't begin to work on a book. We were working together. He had been very generous in helping my older son, I have two boys, find his way from a civilian college to the US Naval Academy, where Rob had graduated, and that caused us to become friends, and I felt an obligation to him. But really it's one of those things where, if you have any kind of conversation with someone who's been around the block in life, who has seen things, has endured difficulty, has grown, has used that as the basis and the fuel for making a contribution to other people, then you can find commonality like that. And so because of our different backgrounds, me, the civilian, Rob, the veteran, the combat veteran, despite that, and because of that, we found a very easy way to speak about life transitions. And initially I wanted my older son joining the military, and wanting that as a career was cause for me to reflect that a few times in my life, I had thought about serving, and I never did, but I wanted my older son to have a manual, a three page memo on what to do when he gets out of the military, because, in my estimation, at the time, he's going to be committed, this is his cause. This is his calling. This is everything he stands for, such that he'll be in way past the time when I'm alive on this earth, and I want him to have something. And so I enlisted Rob in this, and we started interviewing veterans and looking at books that were out there. The short version is, is that we decided, we determined that there was no book, there was no road map for this enormous life transition. There's a lot of books about veterans and combat stories and the VA and psychology and how to do a resume, but nothing that's a road map for every element. Of this, both very practical things, and there's a world of them, but also profound things healing from the wounds of war, whether visible or invisible, the shift and loss of identity and what it means to find new purpose. We saw in these themes. Worlds, that we could bring if we harnessed all of our backgrounds, all of our own life experiences and our sense of skills, and what I've done in my professional career, what Rob has done to veterans, and we thought this is a way to serve other people. So the initial small inspiration from my family and Rob's devotion to veterans, which is profound on his side, led to a much bigger sense of mission. And we began to interview veterans. And we did so in a way, in hindsight, that was the way Brene Brown, as a social scientist, has worked on her books, which is you come up with a theory, you come up with a common set of three to five questions, so you're systematic and disciplined in your approach, and then you change your theory based on the data. So over five and six years, we developed a theory of veteran transition. We interviewed several 100 people, more than 200 veterans, about 100 other experts of all different walks of life for each of the phases of this transition. The book is called the field manual because it covers the whole waterfront, but the heart of the book is it's a field manual for the hero's journey. This is a story ultimately talk about connectedness. This is a story. This is a book about life transitions. And frankly, based on the data and based on interviews with incredibly moving stories, I'd like to mention one or two Hylke When the time is right, this is an area where there are better and worse practices to master life transitions, and this is what we've been devoted to. This has become our calling and our passion. Beautiful.

Hylke Faber 12:09

You mentioned to me that the it was the thing in your family, like the thing with your son. I've gotta give him some guidance for when he comes back and then Rob's combat experience and your friendship



that all brought it together. I want you to I'm curious about your own life transitions prior to that point that maybe you've been reflecting on as you wrote this book, in terms of your own hero's journey, you talked about some very profound things like loss of identity, which can be so jarring and maybe also liberating. So can you talk a little bit about maybe a transition you've been through in your own life, what that was like, both on the as Joseph Campbell says, The the belly of death and facing your dragons and then the liberation. Can you tell us about that?

Alex Gendzier 13:03

Yeah, facing your dragons is a good one good way to put a pin in it. So in the preface of the book, which is really our own personal versions of this, I tell the story of how the context here, by the way, is this book became our passion, our commitment, our sense of service and dedication to each other and to this cause very early on, and that caused us to have to and we love our day jobs. We have we both have jobs, and we are incredibly devoted to them. And I love my day job. I love my work. You hmm, but working on this book every morning and every evening for the last six years, every weekend, I'm sitting at my desk, it's late at night, I'm probably tired, and I say, Holy cow, this is really a book about the guy who loses his wife to cancer when his children are very young, that was disorienting for him. He didn't know why he was still here, but he had a mission to complete. It was a sacred mission, and when you have children, that is a duty, in a sense of sacred commitment that is hard to give words to. What happens when these two little buggers decide to grow up and decide they want to have lives and go to college, like, Are you kidding? You get to have your own life after all this, and that is an enormous shift. What happens to this guy? He's been through these things, and then he has to change jobs. He decides he's got to move careers, orientation, focus, huge life transition, because each of these things are part of one's identity for this guy. And. And I say to myself, I guess I'll be careful about my choice of words. I said, Holy cow, that guy's me. And so how do I bring these major life transitions and the lessons I've learned and the things I failed to learn and master, and put them in service of a higher a higher cause, a cause transcendence to oneself and my feeling was however imperfectly I attempted to move through those periods that if I didn't put the lessons to work for other people, I was failing myself and a calling that could be mine to serve others if I didn't put to use these lessons. And I want to be very careful here, because authors of books, people that are on stage have enormous egos, like they think they have something to offer in the world of leadership lessons and not about you, but about the world of coaching and leadership, and we're not leadership coaches. And there's very impactful ways to do this, like I think you do, and there's ways that are run of the mill. And the last thing we wanted to be was first time authors that have an ego about look at our book. Aren't we special? So we had to make this. We had to make this bring the best resources from ourselves, but from the country, and we became assertive about going to get the best resources in every phase of this transition. And the transition aspects of healing identity, finding a new purpose in life, are the biggest so how do you do that? And what? What makes you think you can do that? Well, if you thought about the major disorientation, the tears, sense of failure, sense of survivor's guilt, sense of how to deal with loss and grief, and you have spent some time researching those things in your life, as I have attempted to do. And then something else happens. You speak to people who have been through the most amazing life experiences, truly the slaying of dragons, in their own hero's journeys, touching the radiance of eternity



in these stories. And you hear stories of selfless service and sacrifice, and we're not political people. We're not in favor or against certain military actions. We're talking about the service of others at the highest level. And when you have a conversation with those kind of people, it's a 20 minute discussion some of the most famous Four Star admirals and generals of our time to you know, the most junior enlisted folks who speak their souls, who bear their breasts to you. It's a two or three hour discussion where there's amazing, moving, inspirational, tearful stories, and they are giving those stories to you. You have an obligation to make the best of it. So this is the this is the end of my very long summary Hylke of a sense of personal journey, attempting to recover from loss and grief and find meaning and purpose in it, and then seeing these stories in the humanity of others. There's a don't mind. Can I keep on going for one minute,

Hylke Faber 18:42

30 seconds. Let's do it in 30 seconds, because I do have

Alex Gendzier 18:46

a quick and I'll come back to it because I won't forget. But you, this is your show, so you move to the next one.

Hylke Faber 18:52

Well, it's our conversation. So the thing that I'm dying to think about, to hear from you about, is you talked about your own life transitions, being a young dad, losing his wife, then having two sons, and thinking about, wow, we talked about touching the radiance of eternity and the sacrifice we talked about. Now these buggers want to have their own life. What's happening with this man over here like that. Can you tell us a little bit about maybe one of those life transitions in yourself, and be very specific about what were your own feelings? What did you go through? What were your doubts and and how did you move through that? Because you know you, I can sense you, like you being weathered and molded, and the wisdom that comes from your pores, that's I feel that in you, and yet, how did that happen? So can you tell us about that? Because I think that'd be really helpful for me. And for the listeners to hear, how did you tell us about a specific period there time?

Alex Gendzier 20:18

What comes to mind is, I'm at the graduation from high school of my younger son, who, by the way, has been core to this book. It's not just my older son, and it's also a woman in my life who is core to this book. I'm at the graduation from high school of my younger son and thinking about him going to college, driving down to North Carolina where he was going to go to school, and it is beginning to hit me, probably after a cocktail at a graduation party. And for that graduation, I had written letters of appreciation and gratitude to probably 10 people at his school, his prior school, other people. It was a huge moment, because I knew, without articulating it, there was a movement inside of me. There was there was things coming up, and I didn't realize it, because the world of emotions has its own language, its own way of being. It's not a mental, analytical thing, okay, I'm going to have to prepare for when he goes to school, a series of analytic, linear steps to take and how to anticipate this. And in light of earlier



transitions in my life, including the loss of my late wife, I knew that there's moments when the oceans waves of grief will hit you. You can't plan for it, and when they come and they hit you, and they knock you on your ass, and you feel disoriented. You feel like you're being thrown into the deep end of a pool, and you have to find out how to get up. But before you get up, you better not let this moment pass, even if you are in tears of what is this moment in your life? So it is a difficult thing to get through because, and I'm not trying to say that my story, somehow is the only one or the biggest one of tragedy and loss. I'm not saying that. I'm saying this is a microcosm of everyone's life experience, and I'll come and tell that vignette that I was going to in a moment, because it ties into this. So how do you find with a sadness that is gripping and you don't know if you have control over because successful business people, lawyers, professionals have a sense of wanting to control their destiny, which is an illusion and and how do you at that moment when you're knocked on your ass because you're feeling loss and grief? What do you do? How do you breathe, what at that point? What are the things that matter in life? And it is a stark reminder. And this is true very much in the context of veteran stories, it is a very painful, powerful wisdom, making series of lessons about remembering the things that matter in life. They differ for many people, for everyone, but honestly, there's a commonality in them that can come to you in these exact moments, which is, I'm trying to answer your very, very simple, very complicated question, what are the things that matter in life? Well, okay, I'm not losing my sons, but it sure, sure as hell feels that way. This is loss. We all share a sense of loss. I stumbled upon a video, a two minute video, of Colbert and Anderson from CNN speaking. Anderson has made a career out of talking about loss and grief, because he was bowled over by the loss of his mother, and Colbert sends him a letter. And in this in this moment in the studio, Anderson's reading his this letter in tears, because he can't hold back the tears. And he said, you told me, Colbert, that you had not wanted these tragedies to come to you, but you were grateful for them. How can that be like? What the hell does that mean? And Anderson Cooper is in tears. He's not in control of himself. His heart is coming through his face. And Colbert answer. Characters, because I could see the humanity and other people in a way I never was forced to or able to before. And that humanity in me gave me a sense of being a part of something and having a purpose. These are my words that that you spoke of so when you were when you are not on the canvas, before you get up, you have a moment, even if you're knocked over like this, in a way that is not mental, find some things to hold on to, the things you stand for, honor, integrity, living a life of decency and contribution. What does it mean to serve others in a cause bigger than yourself? Because for every veteran going through this transition, every person going through a major life transition, Services is a component of healing, and with healing, what is the role of healing? Well, it's the first purpose. It is a way of coming to peace inside yourself. And if you have a spiritual component, which you don't have to have, but it's deeply rooted in ourselves and my life experience, it is fundamentally a way to connect with something far deeper. And what did things mean in terms of your role here? So Rob, my co author, found amazing things in his going back and looking at his own studies. And there's a theory from a second century AD stoic. And by the way, the Greeks and the Romans figure prominently in our book, The ancient Greeks, Romans and and it is a way of finding purpose in life from ever widening circles. So how you relate to yourself and your family can be extrapolated to your community and your country to common humanity. So it's a very simple question you asked, but that



the answers lies in how one lives through ultimately metabolizes painful moments and whether you use them as fuel in service of things bigger than yourself.

Hylke Faber 27:21

Alex, thank you. The phrase you used somewhere in there, when the heart comes through your face, will stay with me for the rest of my life. Because what you're talking about, the way I hear this, is what these transitions that nobody wants but most of us, and most of us get at some point they, as I hear you speak about them, they put us on the ground. And in a way that I hear you talk about waves of grief that we don't control, and in that sense of being out of control is something that most of us are really scared about, and yet, in those ways, to find something that is the ground underneath the waves, whether that be our values, sense of service, breathing with a sense of common humanity, whatever that is, that is part of the path of healing, to find that stable rock underneath our feet when everything's shifting. And I hear you speak about that so clearly and having lived through it so clearly, we're going to take a short break in a moment after the break, I would love you to reflect on and tell us about this, this transition, because I think that's where so much of the richness is from. Where where you discover something about service. How do you help yourself that now to become an ego trip, where now I'm becoming better separate or missionary zeal, which are things that I've noticed in myself in that transition? How do you work with that? And then also, in terms of your the research with the veterans, how do you work with the the loss of identity, which, as a little boy confession, I would stop be being a military man or a king or a baker or something. I'm from, coming from a farm, felt so good, because it's like that's who you are, and then suddenly you step out of that, or in your case, being a dad or being husband or all that. Then. How do you find a sense of groundedness in that? So we'll be talking to Alex ginger, a warrior spirit who helps us connect more deeply to the ground of what's truly important. He's also the co author, together with Rob Sarver, warrior to civilian, the field manual to the hero's journey. We've been talking to him about service and healing through life's hero's journey. I will be back after the short break

Speaker 1 30:39

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Hylke Faber 31:05

Welcome back to rooted and unwavering speaking with Alex ginger about the hero's journey, particular, going from warrior to civilian. So Alex, tell us more about how do you make that transition into service without getting lost in yet and other ego, identity or image like now, I'm this server. How do you do that?

Alex Gendzier 31:32

Yeah, it's a very powerful again, you're asking powerful questions. Hylke, I think that. I think that I would answer your question probably in two ways, and let me know if I'm being responsive to you. There are



through the millennia, through the last few 1000 years, particularly in the stories of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and the way that Joseph Campbell talks about in his book, hero with 1000 faces, the the common patterns of these epic stories, which he describes as the hero's journey, there are patterns by which people can adapt to major life transitions, including the major Life transition of leaving military service to civilian life. And you know, the immediate background or context here is that in any major life transition, and for us, in our focus in the book on veterans and military spouses. And by the way, the transition for military spouses is, to us, a co equal part of this equation equally important as any veteran, and that is that it is like stepping off a place of the known world, the comfortable world, even if you have a tough job in the military, it's like stepping off a cliff into an abyss of uncertainty. That abyss of uncertainty can be dark and frightening, and that is true for the most hardcore combat veterans. It is true for civilians. In fact, a brilliant quote from one of our inspirations and guides in this book, former commander of Seal Team Six, called his name is Kurt Cronin said, you know, we don't warn our veterans about this transition. And the fact is, even for combat veterans, it is no less challenging. It's just changes on a very different terrain, and that has to be adapted to, and you have to prepare for that. So in thinking about this topic and to get practical, what are the essential components of a successful life transition? And that includes lessons from ancient times as well as modern psychotherapy and modern life discussions and evolution, it is something that one has to prepare for and anticipate. It is no small thing, a life transition, changing your identity, taking off your uniform for the last time, where for many, a sense of identity is entirely connected to the uniform, as General Petraeus said, it tells the story of my life. It told the story of my life. It said, what, what? What theaters of combat I was in? What did I do? What did I earn? How have I progressed over a 30 plus year evolution, all in what I'm wearing and that comes off that is both a symbol and an actual component of identity, and realizing that and preparing in advance for this next world you're in is critical. Preparing in advance, I think the concept of the power of choice, I. Is essential here as rich that touches on how to set one's intention. If you want to go back 40 years to Gary zuka book on the seat of the soul, and how setting an intention is everything in terms of the manifestation of life choices, thinking about the power of choice in terms of your own self narrative. What is the image I have of myself? Tony Robbins would call it a blueprint of your life. How is that a guide, whether I'm conscious of it or not? How do I become more conscious of the blueprint that I somehow set for myself at a time when I was not quite aware of it, in terms of how I measure who I am and success or failure in my life, movements, my jobs, the people I'm with, my family, how to become more conscious of this, which is very much engaging in a self narrative. What is the image that I have of myself? Is it one rooted in the hero's journey? And for this purpose, I can summarize the component of this as an essential part of this, this movement in one's life, the hero's journey is really a theory or a framework for looking at the most amazing epic tales of all times, ancient and modern, East and West, with common frameworks that fit them all. It's quite and in that common framework, it is revealed that we are all sharing again in some common humanity in our life, evolution. And Joseph Campbell popularized this about 40 years ago, although he was not the only one, and his theory was that all these tales involve a leaving, a call to adventure, this experience of tremendous life, challenge, loss, sacrifice, service of others, adventure, and then you come home, and what do you do when you return? And if you've been successful in these journeys, the gods, the ancient Greek gods, give you a drink, a magic potion. It's called an elixir, and it's the thing you get on return. It is a reminder. It is a flow



moment, opportunity to touch hold on to those life experiences which were transformative in a positive sense. Therapists were talking about post traumatic growth. How do you hold on to those things and use them your current life, when you're back, your first week out of the military, your first week out of a life transition, a new job, a divorce, the loss you're sitting on the couch. And how do you hold on to these two things when, in a civilian world, sometimes the most important things that you think you have fought for is people right to go to the shopping mall and buy a new pair of white sneakers. Is that what you really fought for? I don't think so. I'm exaggerating, and there's much more to it than that, but this can be alienating and jarring, and how do you hold on to finding a meaningful way to move forward in this civilian life while holding on to these major accomplishments, these moments of growth and healing and tremendous purpose and service from your time in the military? And that is the challenge of the return that is the heart of the hero's journey. And if you can combine these things, then you have magic to deal with. You have magic to deal with to lift up those around you, to be a leader at your work. Whether or not you have a badge doesn't matter. To be a leader in your family, to rise above challenges in a way that brings all of these different parts of your life together. These are the essential lessons of these life transitions.

Hylke Faber 38:50

I'm so struck by your description of the blueprint and how basically, as I hear you, we rewrite the Blueprint we might have a Level Blueprint that later on looks a little superficial, like I thought I was this uniform, or I thought I was this spouse, or I thought I was this job for people that are losing jobs, or I thought I was this age, or this image of my body, or this, this, this position I'm in, and then underneath that, as you talk about it, I hear you talk about the power of choice, and saying, no, no, I have a choice now that I'm sitting on the couch of my life in this moment that's so hard, and ask myself, no, what do I really stand for? What are filling in here, my values? What do I really care about and and start living from that place, and the liberation that comes from from that and I also love your description of the elixir. Mm. That because life didn't stop, we will have more challenges on maybe just every moment or every day or every hour. How do I then bring this elixir as a gift, as grace into this and then life becomes magical. So if you think about your own transition and your own elixir, right? How do you experience the elixir in your or and the elixir makes it sound like there's only one. I'm sure there's more or layers to the elixir. How do you experience the elixir in your own life? And how do you how does that apply itself? How do you apply it?

Alex Gendzier 40:43

Yeah, another powerful question, a short one with many profound pieces to it. I think that from my own life and what I've observed in others, in the journey on this book, which has been cathartic and powerful, or a few are a few parts of an answer to your question. By the way, elixir just means magic potion. It just means the gods have given you something to hold on to and to taste and to touch in the way that Jamie wheel talks about flow moments, just to explain that, you know, I would, with some some humility, steal an expression from the Navy SEALs, which is to realize that you are never out of the fight, no matter how much you've been knocked down, no matter how much you feel the odds are against you, that the situation is stacked, that you're exhausted, you feel weak, that the single most



important lesson is that you can never quit, and you can never quit on your own life, because you will be giving up Something that has been given to you by a higher source, a higher power. It's not up to you to quit. It's not up to you to quit for those around you that are dependent on you for your life, your love, your leadership, your your presence on this earth, and to steal some more expressions, it's not just that you're never out of the fight is that the Sun Also Rises, that tomorrow the sun comes up again, and you have a chance between your feeling whatever you're feeling now and tomorrow morning, sunrise, forgive my language, to get your shit together on an emotional and spiritual on a physical level, one of responsibility and harness that I might be speaking in terms that sound a bit theoretical rather than emotional, but I think these are deeply emotional instincts and moments that come from the way that inspiration touches you when you're walking outside and the wind touches you.

Hylke Faber 43:09

I love that. I I'm so touched by your description of the responsibility to never give up. You have to live. You have a responsibility, and the Sun Also Rises. And that literal transition moment that humans go through every 24 hours of the night, which I know from my own experience and from the people that I coach, like 3am is not just called 3am for no reason. It's called 3am it's for many people, means it's my sleepless moment of waking up and mulling through things through and it may be very dark, and then somehow the next day, I make it through, and I find the wherewithal to give to to lead to love that next day. So tell us about when you're when you are in the depth of that moment, at least, that's the way it feels to me, Alex, I'm not I'm projecting a little bit on you. So the way it feels to me in the last year, how that works for you, is like when I'm in these moments of 3am like I did my meditation. I mean, I've had a great day today, before whatever it is, and somehow the Dragon comes like right in it can feel like that cliff bone you talked about, no hope, no good feeling. It feels like Jesus being accosted by the demons in the desert, the Buddha by all these dragons, and he touched the earth and then, okay, you know, I'm here. So tell us about how you work through those really intense moments, if you have them

Alex Gendzier 44:56

every week. Um. The analogy, the image of a dragon, I think, is a powerful and helpful one, because a dragon can appear in many different forms. A dragon can appear as a sense of shame that I'm not perfect, I'm not worthy. That's a dragon. And you can pick your analogy, whether you want to use a Western analogy of slaying the dragon with a sword from the Middle Ages, or you ride the dragon, you know, in some Eastern stories, you can pick whatever you want to do with that dragon, but dragons appear in many different forms. So what do I do? Well, I usually will have thought imperfectly, what do I need to do to solve these problems? Because I do. I do have a sense that whatever problem arises is dressed up differently, and the dragon or the devil wants to make you think it different and unique and special this time, and now you're not going to be able to solve it, which is, of course, Baloney, because every obstacle is its own challenge that can be dissected and attacked or walked around or jumped over. Every one of these is just an obstacle to be solved.

Hylke Faber 46:14



I want to solve this to take like a yellow highlighter, the dragon devil wants to think that this challenge is special and you cannot overcome it. I love that. That's such a great awareness. That's such a great awareness. Keep going, Yeah,

Alex Gendzier 46:29

and the stakes go up every time, because the more dragons you have slayed, the more obstacles you have blown out of your path. The game goes up. And so you think about how to solve it. You use all of your resources, all of your life experience, all of your insights, all of your energy, all of your bringing in help, all of your setting the conditions for success for this moment, and then to answer your question at three in the morning for me, which is your question, I think. And I'm no guide to anyone on this. I'm just giving my own experience. There comes a moment when I think I can't be thinking about this anymore. I'm driving myself crazy. I don't know what to do, and I have to give a piece of this up and surrender. I have to give a piece of it up, and I have come to believe and experience, sometimes, not all the time, that surrender is no passive waving of a white flag on your knees. No, it is. It is not. It is an active. It is a very active engagement. In a you could say an engagement, or even a a dialog with whatever you want to call it a higher power, with God you there's many words for it, the universe. Everyone can have their own, if they choose. Certainly for me, it's God, and there is a giving up of these things, where you give them up in a way that isn't all of you, but you're not a victim. There's no victim crap going on here. In fact, it's the opposite, because this takes, for me, more strength and more commitment than anything else, but it's only in the giving up of that moment when nothing else seems solvable, of this new Dragon wearing a new dress that is the antidote

Hylke Faber 48:40

new Dragon, Wearing new dress and not giving into victimhood crap, surrendering. I love that surrendering to a higher power, which is not being on your knees with the white flag and surrender. I want this really capture that because of the me that's so important that it's not surrendering on your knees with a higher flag, with your white flag, it is. I saw you doing the hand gestures, giving it up. What's the inner posture in that moment.

Alex Gendzier 49:25

It's just what you did. It's is with the power in all of you, the intention and love and all of who you are and where you've come from. It is a giving of it up, you know, to connect back to the very beginning, 60 seconds. I think the most powerful leaders connect with those they lead, not just by serving them, of course. Servant leadership, yes, of course, but something. Thing far more vulnerable making in talking about their own moments of this, including when they didn't succeed so well, when the ROI didn't meet the standard, whatever it is, because that's when you inspire those around you to want to join together for something much, much higher, which is this spirit. That's when teams really come together. That's when leaders are people for which there is devotion and there is a sense of he or she has inspired me in a way that I didn't know how to do for myself. So if you want to talk about leadership and connectedness and courage, to me, if a leader can do this in public, that's a guy or gal I will follow over a cliff for



Hylke Faber 50:59

and why do you follow that leader over a cliff? I would like to hear that,

Alex Gendzier 51:03

because they have the strength and the vision to lead by inspiration and not about themselves. It's about serving something bigger. And at the end of the day, that's what really makes all of us want to be together and serve something higher with everything we have, so that when on a very micro basis, when you're at a job and you know and you're going above and beyond, when no one's watching you at home, You're doing something you're called upon to serve with devotion and that kind of commitment and sacrifice and loyalty. That's when there's inspiration, and when people discover that, and you didn't go wave it around and brag about it, that's when people say, I want to work with that guy.

Hylke Faber 52:02

So people who are connected to serving something higher and being willing to admit their own mistakes and shortcomings on the way there and like that, to admit their own failures.

Alex Gendzier 52:19

Hylke, forgive me, it's not. It is certainly talking about shortcomings and failures, but it's more and I know you were heading in this way, so I'm sorry to interrupt you, but it's more about it's more about talking about one's own vulnerable moments, and certainly can include lack of success or indecision, but it's more sharing that moment of great vulnerability, which takes the greatest strength,

Hylke Faber 52:44

wonderful to share. I'm repeating, I really want to get this and also for the listeners, to sharing those moments of intense vulnerability that happened because I am in the service of something else. Otherwise I could just hide and run back to I don't care. I'll just do my thing if I'm in the service of something bigger, as in, for example, I want to stay alive, or I want to be loving, or I want to be of service to this team that I'm working on. Then in that moment of vulnerability, that's when the inspiration seems to happen when I

Alex Gendzier 53:22

share it. It is one, one piece of it, for sure.

Hylke Faber 53:29

There's so much in what you're saying, Alex and I am, I'm processing this and processing this because that one of the one of the images that stays with me is, as we're speaking about this, is that the surrender is not grumbling on your knees, it is standing with full devotion, with everything you have, and saying, This is what I have. And I'm hearing it in that I don't know how to do this. I'm giving this over to a higher order, and I'm giving this over because I'm devoted to that higher order in some way, be that service, or whatever that is, and and that's what transformation happens.



Alex Gendzier 54:10

There's no doubt I believe there is great in the humility of that moment, in the vulnerability of that moment, there is necessarily great strength and courage on a micro basis inside of you, there is great recognition that the most powerful things don't come solely from our own effort and burning of calories, however astoundingly important and beautiful, or grit and resilience, which are words that are just terribly overused today, but are true and that in in the walking through. To those steps I've just mentioned is the ability to connect from and if you want to say it this way, receive meaning or power, inspiration or energy. I don't mean power in an ego sense. I mean I mean things that are life affirming, life energy flowing, moments, because ultimately, the biggest source of these things is the touching of these moments inside of yourself, and that's where we can hope. We can put aside some ego, and we can touch something radiant and beautiful and life affirming,

Hylke Faber 55:47

as you mentioned earlier, the radiance of eternity. And what I've heard from you is I need to have strong knees, meaning I need to be able to sit in in that moment, I need to stay with it, stay on my knees while I can receive that. That's how I hear. It may not be the way you intended it. How does that sound to you?

Alex Gendzier 56:14

I don't know about the knees part, but I think that's not the most essential thing in what you were conveying. I think that at the at 3am when you're at wit's end or something, is really transfixing your soul. It is a wrestling these are choices we make. I don't mean to over indulge in the seeking of higher spiritual powers, because I think while that is very true for me, doesn't have to be true for everyone, but ultimately, these are moments of spiritual warfare. These are moments when we all have an infinite number of many small choices where we are called upon to be courageous, and courage is the central virtue that allows everything else. Do I go left or right? Do I fight for something bigger that means something, or do I give in? And these are moments of so called infinitesimal courage, and in that combat, and I use that word with humility, because I'm a civilian here, but it is the most powerful form. Are our life choices? Our life path unfolds so

Hylke Faber 57:46

that in those moments of of deep humility, where we have lots and lots of different choices, that's where we have can find choices that come from or are from that place of infinitesimal courage, last question, last question. And since we are at time, what would you say to somebody who was the middle of that moment and who were big parts like, I want to give up. I don't want to do this anymore. I want to I want to go back to the village do what I what I know well, what do you what do you say to a person like that?

Alex Gendzier 58:28



Never give up. There is hope and inspiration around the corner. It is darkest at night, just before dawn. And today, we have modes of healing and therapy and life transformation that are just around the corner. Never give up.

Hylke Faber 58:52

Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Alex, it's been a true honor to sit with you in the fire of this conversation. Moments of humility for me also, and lots of beautiful lessons when the heart comes to the face infinitesimal courage, being willing to be in that spiritual warfare, um, being willing to let go of those images, even when they're ripped away from you, finding the way to sit in the couch and find your own choices, develop your new blueprint. I think at heart, it is to me, what I'm hearing here today is about daring to be in those moments and having the hope that the light is just around the corner, not just dumb days, but always. It's been such a pleasure. Alex, thank you so much for being here today.

Alex Gendzier 59:52

No, no, it's been a great it's been a great privilege and pleasure to speak with you. I think you're doing good work in the world. Thank you.

Hylke Faber 59:59

I. My honor, humble honor. You've been listening to this conversation, Ruth and wavering. If you like these kinds of conversations, you subscribe to Ruth and wavering on anywhere where you get this podcast, Apple, Spotify and so on. We've been talking today with Alex ginger, who is a remarkable human warrior of the spirit of the human journey. He was also a co author of the book that I highly recommend, warrior to civilian, the field manual to the hero's journey. You've been listening to a conversation about the hero's journey, not only going from veteran life to civilian life, but going from the life that we know to the life that just around the corner you've been listening to rude and unwavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, Hylke Farber, and see you next time.

Presenter 1:01:00

Thank you for joining us in today's episode of rooted and unwavering leadership conversations about courageous connectedness presented by the leadership development company growth Leaders Network to learn more. Subscribe to this podcast. Connect with growth Leaders Network and Hylke fauber on LinkedIn, or read hylkes award winning book taming your crocodiles. Now, take a moment and appreciate something that is great about you. Celebrate the gift that you are and enjoy connecting more deeply to your best self today, see you next Time on rooted and unwavering,

Alex Gendzier 1:01:42

you're awesome, dude.

Speaker 2 1:01:51

Hello. You let's take the witnesses. You.



