

E63 - Rooted & Unwavering Podcast - Oct 17 - Hylke Faber & Rob Sarver

Presenter 00:07

Matt, 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 Faber, 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

Welcome to rooted and unwavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host. Hylke Faber, delighted to be here. This is episode 63 and I'm here today with Rob Sarver, who comes to us with a lot of experience from the military active duty, as well as all kinds of other parts of life, including running a security company, other things that we will hear about shortly. But before we do that, I'm going to check in with Rob. Rob, how are you doing today? I'm doing great and thrilled to be here. Thank you. It's an honor to be with you, Rob. I got to know Rob will be in preparation for this session, and I'm going to say some things about him in a moment. One of the things that really struck me about him was a sense of deep, deep integrity and purposefulness. And look forward to learning about that more Ruth and unwavering before every podcast, we've always take a moment to center ourselves into why we having this conversation anyway? What are we having these conversations? And for me, it's about helping us, each of us, including myself, get more connected to what's most important. There's so many stimuli that come to our brain every day about what's going on the world, what's going on our country, what's going on our family, what's going on our business, what's going on our body. How do we stay centered in the midst of that and at the end of the day and at the end of our lives. Say, you know, this is something where I feel peace in my heart and pride my actions when I look back at this moment. How do I do that? So as we in this podcast, we learn to listen to other people, because I find that mind is like a dangerous neighborhood. It's better not to go there by ourselves. It's good to actually do that together with others, and be inspired and say, Hey, how would rob, or somebody else that's been on this podcast, or somebody else I admire approach this so Rob comes to us with tons of experience. He served and in the army. He graduated from the US Naval Academy in 2004

Hylke Faber 03:03

he initially served, served as a Surface Warfare Officer and ultimately as a Navy Seal, assigned to Seal Team Three, completing seven deployments during his service. He completed three tours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and two tours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, he got awards,



including the Bronze Star Medal with combat V device and oak leaf cluster the combat action ribbon with a gold star device and various additional personal unit accolades. He's left the military in 2013 and he's held various leadership positions and executive roles. He learned he earned his executive MBA from the Wharton School of Business. Currently, he is the co founder of Servius group and also of heroes journey LLC, coaching and leadership companies. He also runs a security company. He's the father of an eight year old and a person that I think is, for me, very inspiring in terms of everything that he does. So Rob, welcome, and let's dive into our first question. What have you learned, Rob, in your life, about connectedness?

Rob Sarver 04:21

Well, first of all, thank you for having me, thank you for the kind words. So being connected, I think, is being true to self and having the power and confidence to control your own narrative, and that is only learned through success and failure, because those leave clues.

Hylke Faber 04:37

Love that. So tell us about your own journey, because you said, we learn connectedness to true self by failure and success. So tell us about how you have learned about that in your own life. Tell us a bit about your life,

Rob Sarver 04:56

I think at first, so I'll go back 21 years, maybe 25 Years trying to get in the Naval Academy. That was not an easy feat for me. It took me two times to apply to get in, you know, I learned at that point, at a young age, that I everything, that I thought, that I had built up, and everything I've done up to that point in my life that, you know, I measured up. And then it was, it was a huge knockdown in life to knock it in. So I went to another military school, and all I did was study. I got my grades up, reapplied, and I was accepted at semester after getting really good grades in electrical engineering and then, but once I got to the Naval Academy, I defaulted right back to my patterns. I thought that, well, I'd already been through an indoctrination. Program at Virginia Military Institute. I could do what I want, and that did not serve me well. I spent a lot of time on restriction. I'll never compare myself to stature accolades of Senator John McCain, but he and I do have something in common, and that was I could probably walk from Annapolis to Baltimore and back with how many penalty tours I've done. So we share that in common.

Hylke Faber 06:07

So, and this to be clear, that I understand and we understand what penalty tours and restrictions are. How does that

Rob Sarver 06:13

work? So you have an infractions, or you get in trouble at the Naval Academy, you get demerits, but you also get assigned penalty tours, or marching tours, which one hour of marching with a rifle, you know, equates to one tour. So I feel I probably accumulated enough to walk to Baltimore and back. So



yeah, life lesson, don't get in trouble. Keep your nose clean, but, but there, you know, my my struggles so somewhat continued. 911 happened when I was a sophomore there at the school. So I mean, yes, that defined my purpose, solidified why I wanted to be there, service to country and all that, but all the other things that I wanted to go do, whether it be jump school or dive school or trial for the Army's combat diver qualification course. I just got met with setback after setback, and then finally getting into my senior year and going in and screening for seals. You know, I didn't measure up again. All my conduct problems had caught up with me that I had. There were many more guys to my left and right that were much more qualified, that did not get in trouble, had better grades, that got selected to go on, and I had to go out to big Navy and prove to everybody, again, that I should be in the SEAL teams. So constant setbacks, but again, I learned more and more about myself with each failure.

Hylke Faber 07:40

I'm struck by your focus, and there must have been something that you really wanted to keep going. So what was that? Why? Why do you want to do it so badly?

Rob Sarver 07:54

I have a relentless determination. When I tell myself, I'll do something, I will stop at nothing till it gets done, and I it's holding myself accountable and holding myself honest. So I told myself, as I should probably be 1213, years old, I told myself, I want to be a seal, and I internalized it and kept it quiet, and I learned more and more about the SEAL teams. And to me, it was this lifelong mission. But when I finally had the conviction, was like, okay, in high school, this is what I want to go do. It took me nine years just to show up to the doorstep of SEAL training to say, this is it took me nine years to get there. Wow.

Hylke Faber 08:37

So what was it about that 13 year old? Why did you decide to be a seal. I'm, I'm, I gotta admit, when I was 13, I did not know what that was. Of course, I didn't grow up in this country, so that wasn't available to me at the time. But tell me, why do you want to be a seal?

Rob Sarver 08:51

Something, something in my mind click. So my father did 28 years in the military as a B 52 pilot, and we were stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. And you know much about some of these large air force bases. They do conduct air shows for the public, and they let everybody in. Well, I would always go out early because all when the planes came in, my father would take me on the flight line and let me play in all the aircraft and just I had a blast. But over in one of the hangers under old camouflage netting. There's a bunch of guys with camouflage face paint on, and they were literally rubbing sticks together to make fire. And I asked my father. I was like, Okay, who? Who are these guys? This is 1992 1993 he's like, Well, they're Air Force para rescue. They're part of Special Operations Command. And my whole life into this point has just been seeing airplanes with my father. I was like, Well, what, you know, what is, what is that? And he explained a little bit about what special ops were, and that was intriguing. And then, I'm not gonna lie, you know, a life probably too early in.



Adolescents watching Stallone and Schwarzenegger and the movie Navy Seals of Charlie Sheen, kind of, you know, grand a size, you know, that lifestyle. So, yeah, that was the drive. It was to go do something. And then the constantly hearing people say, that's the hardest military military training in the world. Like, okay, I think

Hylke Faber 10:25

because you wanted to do something that was really, really hard, you like that. And you liked seeing those guys with the making this the fire, with the sticks at that air show. And just think that I want to be, I want to be, that I want to be part of that.

Rob Sarver 10:40

To me it was, yes, it's primitive what they were doing, but the same time, that's real survival. That is when you when you now, I can define this much better being on the other side, having gone through this training, when you're reduced to every and every human behavior has been exposed to you. You know, sleep deprivation, hypothermia, you know everything. You know the living on the fringes and experience with it. With combat, you get reduced to one instinct, survival, and it's a humbling, humbling experience.

Hylke Faber 11:16

Tell us more about that. Maybe tell us about you when you were in a combat zone and you were really reduced and in touch with that deep survival instinct. What's that like? What was it like?

Rob Sarver 11:30

It's euphoric. Is the wrong word. But you everything, kind of, if you've ever read the book stealing fire, everything kind of comes into a flow state. And everybody that you've worked with for two years to your left and right, you're all performing at the highest caliber you can, and you're giving everything for that moment of success, and in that there's chaos going on around you. So you have it's a vulnerability state, because you're letting go and trusting everybody around you said left and right, but you've worked so hard together that you're in this flow state of just moving through the target and moving through the situation, the scenario in front of you, and in on the other side of that. It's, it's, it's this gratification, it's self reassurance that you know you lived up to what you had trained to. You lived up to the mission, and more importantly, you earned the trust of people to left and right.

Hylke Faber 12:32

I'm struck by this. So we're, we're, you experienced this sense of flow state. You You work all you work this really deeply beforehand. You you prepare and you prepare together. So you're prepared with the team that you're out in the combat zone with. So it's not random people around you. You know these people you're in the combat zone with? Yes, yes, that, right. Okay, yes. Extensive. Extensively. How long do you train with these people around you?

Rob Sarver 13:03



So if you go from, you know, beginning of SEAL training to buds, all the way through to a SEAL team, you could be two and a half years of training, if not 18 months to two years with that platoon before you step into combat. Wow.

Hylke Faber 13:19

Okay, okay. And what does that do? Tell us about that experience for you.

Rob Sarver 13:24

I mean, it just, it gets everybody on the same page, the same alignment. You just, you know, bought you. You can just read people. You can read the rooms you have. It just, essentially, just builds trust within a cohesive unit. I mean, you're talking about 18 to 20 guys that can rely on each other to do anything, and you feel very empowered after completing all that training, that you could go do anything.

Hylke Faber 13:48

Yeah, okay, all right, what demons did you have to slay within yourself to stay in that? Because that training does not sound like a cakewalk to me.

Rob Sarver 14:04

No, you know, we lost a lot of friends along the way combat the constant question of, here's this tremendous person, just an incredible individual that I would that I would look up to and revere. And, you know, he was killed in combat. Why? Why him, not me? Why this incredible human being and not me? Like, why? Why take him? Those are, I think, are demons that I think anybody who's been in combat has lost a comrade or friend teammate. Ask those questions. You know, it's the survivor's guilt side of it, and it's, you know, when you look at it, it's kind of it's a Venn diagram. It's depression PTSD is in the middle. Survivor's guilt. If you've been over there and you've seen combat, you've been exposed to this, and the more repetitions, the more severe. So you live within all three of those at some point in this until you have kind of full integration, you go back and you get help. So some people, you know, live fully, you know depression, but they bleed over to PTSD. Survivors, guilt bleeds into PTSD. And that's what people understand. They just say, well, you, you're, you have PTSD and Okay, clinically, I hit four things out of 10. Okay, yes, you can check that box, but I also have the survivor's guilt, and it's, it's an underlying system that works within our body and who we are. And I guess my message, and just saying all this, is that, you know, there's get help if you've been over there numerous times, because there's no way you can navigate this stuff by yourself.

Hylke Faber 15:45

One of your organizations is called hero's journey. Why do you call it that?

Rob Sarver 15:52

Hero's Journey? My co author, after hearing my experience and he kind of lived through his own. You know, his wife died, and he raised wife died, excuse me, of cancer, he raised two boys on his own. The Hero's Journey is every veteran's story. It is. It's this departure from the known world. You know being a



civilian and you know the call to adventure, having self doubt, finding a mentor, and crossing that threshold into the unknown world, the unknown universe. And we go through countless trials of training, deployments and all this. Something happens to us during our service, this death and rebirth. It could be physical injury, moral injury. It could be combat. It could be a loss, and we depart that, and we're supposed to go through this atonement. We're supposed to go through all these things, and we're supposed to come back with something that the gods refer to as the Elixir. And that was the, you know, this gift, and it's sometimes, it's, you know, a gift of knowledge, or, you know, the rebirth of self. And we're supposed to come back to this known world, but a lot of veterans physically come back, but mentally they cannot make that change. But they cannot make that adjustment. They're still holding on to this old purpose that they no longer serve anymore. They lose their identity. And what we have to learn is, you know, we can refine purpose, we can, but we just we can. We can take some of this, but we still can have the same mindset. But a lot of those things we have to come to that, we have to cope with, that, we have to have self recognition, we have to find a mentor. And Joseph Campbell's hero's journey for the 1940s is a perfect framework for veterans. For every veteran,

Hylke Faber 17:47

I hear you, I hear you in that and I hear about the universality of that, of that framework and of that, that sense of journey, hero's journey, that Joseph Campbell described in this beautiful book here with 1000 faces, yes, and that you talk about this coming out with this elixir, whatever that is. And I was very struck by you saying, you have to learn to let go of that old purpose and in in the known world, because it's no longer there. So how did you make that transition?

Rob Sarver 18:26

I struggled. I really did. I struggled. I you know, our Why is defined for us on that journey, the hero's journey. Everybody's Why is the same in the military, you're serving the Constitution. My why wasn't being a Navy SEAL. That was the how and the what, the why was service to the country, the Constitution. And, you know, I chose to go into investment banking and go from being a seal to sit behind a desk with power, you know, PowerPoint, Excel and screens going and I thought that was the right transition. And people gave me warnings. I said, There's no way you can come from that world and go directly into this and be and be yourself and be refined yourself. And they were absolutely right. It took me two years, I think, to refine balance and to refine my purpose, but I still struggled a little bit after that. I came to terms of the loss of identity, the loss of purpose. But I didn't slow down. I still felt I was in this, in the platoon teams, or in the SEAL team, excuse me, where, you know, I still had to act a certain way, speak a certain way. I didn't understand the new terrain that I was in, and I failed repeatedly, over and over and over until I finally went back to business school, learned the language of the new terrain and learned how to navigate it better. And I'll say this, that finding service group and starting down that path it I look back. On it. It was like almost walking through the desert for nine years just along the way, learning some things, learning a little bit more about self, or having vulnerability to go learn true leadership or the true self, but then ignoring it right, defaulting back to compartmentalization, what I was trained, but finally, landing in what I feel is, is my right path.



Hylke Faber 20:27

So and what, how would you describe is your right path? How would you

Rob Sarver 20:31

describe that? I think my right path is continued service. Service is a verb, right to be in the service of others, but also being in a small, tightly knit team where there's trust and I can provide other people a soft spot to land that continue to serve. So we do a lot of work within state governments. For the states we are working on our way to working in the federal government. So these are all. I described the company as a three legged stool. You have prior military special operations. The center leg, I would say, is probably every three letter agency you can think of in that third leg, the differentiator is the Applied Science, the human behavior of coming in and looking at the indicators within a community, or what are the stressors that would cause something to happen within a school, a significant event, a violent act. Putting all three of those together, we've built amazing human capital, an amazing team, and that, to me, is purposeful. Is giving other people purposeful work, being in the service of them, great.

Hylke Faber 21:39

So really a sense of service. That being a verb, you serve the Constitution when you were navy seal in the platoons, and now you are of service still, but in this case, to the people that are with you in your team, giving them a purposeful life, helping them with that and also being of service to the institutions that you serve, the schools, the organizations, the governmental organizations that you serve. Yes, okay, very clear. So you talked about this walk in the desert, because I think that's so important for us to hear about, right? Because we can read about the years journey, saying, Okay, well, you know, there's the call, and then I go down, and I go into resistance, and I face my demons, and I find get to a place of acceptance, and I find my teacher, and I come out on the other side with more knowledge. And I bring this back to the known world. Off I go. It sounds great, in a way, yet, while we're in the desert, we may not notice that we're on this journey. We might think we're in the desert forever. So tell us about that experience. For you, of those nine years in the desert, what's that like? What was that like?

Rob Sarver 22:54

So, okay, no. Great question. So some of it was, you know, coming to terms with the loss of identity, the loss of purpose, having to refine this, being lost in this new terrain of not knowing what I wanted to do. For the first time my life, I'm now. I'm 33 I'm out, out of the military. I've experienced nothing in my life but military. 28 years with my father and then my nine years of service. So I'm 33 I you know, it's, you know, we try to self medicate. We there's alcohol. We try to recreate what we had in the military. It's not possible. There's aspects of it, absolutely aspects of it, but you cannot fully create that environment. So we search for that. And when I my searching led me to essentially, kind of job hop, you know, every two years, keep trying something, you know, I didn't like that. I didn't find fulfillment, or, you know, exposure to bad bosses, or, you know, you don't like the com structure, whatever it is, yeah, and you go and try something else. And then, you know, I gave entrepreneurship my first crack, and I picked the wrong business partners, and it just over and over and over. But all the long all that time,



that failure left nuggets of clues, and it was really having this self awareness of truth to realize that I've made all these mistakes and some I've repeated I'm not learning. One of the critical thing from the SEAL teams is just don't make the same mistake twice. And here I was catching myself like I'm making the same mistake twice. I'm not. I'm too interested on getting on. You know, I'm on the fastest train to the wrong station every time, slow down. What is the right just take a moment what is the right decision. Just takes the extra time and, and it's little bit trite, but it's also powerful, and that is, you know, Dante's Inferno. When you think about the lowest level of hell, it's it's not reserved for the. You know, the murders, the rapists, any of that it is reserved for lies the liars, but it's reserved for the lies that we tell ourselves. That's the true power of Dante. When you read that book, it is the lowest level of hell is the lies that we tell ourselves, not being our true form, not being our true self.

Hylke Faber 25:24

And how do you know, or how did you notice that you were telling yourself lies? I think it's such an important thing that, and something that we all do in some way. I think everybody spends some time in the lowest house of Dante at some point in their lives.

Rob Sarver 25:37

I was struggling. I was struggling mentally. I was struggling with not coping with the loss of many friends. I was struggling with not having fulfillment in my job. I was struggling in my marriage. I was failing at everything across the board, and here I've been through all this stuff, and I just kept telling myself, well, wait a minute. I've done all this. This should be the easiest steps of my life, and they weren't. They were now the hardest in that paradigm shift, finally. Finally was my former wife that said, you know, can you please go sit down with someone and get help for, you know, not just for yourself, but for our son? That was the wake up call. That was all the mistakes leading up to Okay, I need to go get help, because if I'm going to have any influence over this human being who I want to be tied to the rest of my life, and I want to be the best for him, and I want him to have a better life than I have, I have to fix myself.

Hylke Faber 26:42

Sounds like a very important moment between you and your wife, where she gave you very clear feedback, yes, held up the mirror in a clear way. It's like Rob some things to work on. This needs to this needs to change. What did you discover about yourself as you were work, as you were getting some help, what did you discover about yourself? Maybe share a little bit about that. What is something that maybe a pattern, or something like that that became like, Oh, this is why I keep repeating the same pattern. Why am I doing this?

Rob Sarver 27:16

Yeah, I think what I discovered, and I'll think, in a couple of different buckets, right? So professionally, you know, we accomplish these great things, and we want to get out, and we feel we have this we should be rewarded in some way, right? Well, in the military, our reward, our currency, is our reputation. On the outside, it's nothing but monetary, right? Some people might look for a title on the door, but



most, most time, it goes back to that. And I felt like through, after all, I've been and going, getting this education that you know, that I should be further along in life. And that was that was one hard thing that I had to learn was that, okay, in my job, specifically, or anybody serves in the military, you're a black belt, and when you get out, here's your white belt, you're starting over. And you need to go learn the new terrain. You need to go learn this like you'll be a black belt at some point. You'll gain it quickly. But that was me just recognizing that I'm not as good as I think I am in the business world, and I need to go back and do that. So that's professionally in no particular so now, personally, you know, relationship wise, I grew up moving so much, and this is back during Strategic Air Command, the 1980s when my father's a B 52 pilot, you know, Cold War and all that, we moved every two to three years. So I had never grown attachment to, you know, I had a friend group for about two years. Sometimes we move the boxes. Stuff never came out of the boxes. We were there for 11 months, and we moved on. So having that, and then going into the military myself, and then particularly picking the career field that I did in the seals of compartmentalization, and being trained to move through kill and just move through everything. I never learned how to function within a relationship. I could never open up. I could not be vulnerable. And that was a true turning point when the one thing that's supposed to define us and be successful at I failed at, and that was a massive wake up call for me that okay, these, these things that I'm supposed to be experiencing in life, the true meaning of life, like I'm failing at that. So just that's just two examples

Hylke Faber 29:52

for you. Yes, yes, very, very clear. I'm very struck by both. We're going to take a short break in a moment just to. To capture this. This, this first example of realizing that I was a black belt, but now I'm a white belt again. And I think that's such an important lesson for all of us, because life keeps promoting us from white belt to black belt like we we get kids, oh, that's new. We get older, oh, that's new. Our parents age, oh, that's new. We may change jobs, oh, that's new. Or we may retire whatever is going on, like there's, there's always a new white belt moment. And what I'm hearing you say is the attachment to me being a black belt, being a successful person, kept me from actually being a happy person in that moment. And the second thing that talked about your personal relationships, that you were so used to moving around and going for your goal like, I want to ask you about, what is it like to kill people and be trained for that? You know, that's such a deep human thing that that happens. Like, I want to know more about after the break. What, does that do to you, and how do you work with that? Is the this, this in relationships, and then, as a consequence of that, the part of you that is about healthy attachment wasn't developed, or wasn't developed very much. So you weren't didn't know how to do that. Thank you so much, Rob. I've already learned so much. A few things that I've learned from this conversation already is that how important it is to have a sense of purpose. Because I think that unrelenting focus on something can pull us through the desert that hard time. And I'm thinking about all the hard times that you went through just training to be out in the field, and then in combat I can only imagine. And then secondly, the sense of humility. It's like, oh, this is where I'm at right now. And humans love to be successful. Sense of, yeah, things are things are working. I'm good. Like, what we when we say to each other, how are you? Oh, I'm good. I'm good now, as opposed to No, I'm working through something that's not part of our culture. Yet we'll take a break. Thank you so much. We're here



with Rob Sarver, retired Navy Seal and currently leader of heroes, journey and service. See you after the break.

Speaker 1 32:18

You are listening to rooted and unwavering presented by growth Leaders Network, the leadership team and culture development company. If you would like to learn more about working on connectedness for yourself, your team or organization, please contact growth leaders network on LinkedIn and now back to the show.

Hylke Faber 32:43

Rob, Rob, you have me really thinking, as you were speaking just before the break about the humility of what it takes to be going from a black belt and the feeling of that then going back to a white belt. And if I think about that so often, even in meetings, or when we are at work, we may think about, oh, I know this too. Oh, I have no idea how to do this. I realized this when I work with groups, sometimes, sometimes a question comes like, my expert black belt Hylke shows up. It's not very nice if it's the white belt that says, Well, yeah, that's that's a great question. Let's think about how to be of service to this. It's a different energy, a different energy. No, no person, no human. Is the expert on everything or a black belt and everything. So Rob, tell us more about what is it like to train to kill people, and then what is it like? Maybe tell us an experience where you killed people, if you did, sure.

Rob Sarver 33:50

So let's go back to 911 right, seeing those atrocities on TV and being at the Naval Academy and being surrounded by Marines, and now they're protecting me. So I go to class. I mean, that's a lot of that is the retribution to go do that. But it's also, if you show me enough evil in the world or one person, you know, I don't have any qualms with that. You know, it's is, unfortunately, it is a necessary evil. There's people that cannot be reintegrated. There are people that unfortunately were, you know, born on the wrong side of the world. They have been indoctrinized. They have been they've taken up a life of jihad, and all they want to do is uphold the sixth pillar, the unspoken pillar of Islam, which is to read Christianity the Muslim world. That's it, and that's what they live by. And that's all they'll do. Show me enough evil myself or any anybody in uniform, and we will answer that with violent action. So, um. So training for that is in this is after I went and sought help, and after I went through a couple programs, I found a tremendous psychologist who's been doing this for 40 years, worked with Vietnam vets and worked with veterans through every every conflict. And we are trained that way to be desensitized to all this and just continue to move. Because in our mind, it is mission, Team teammate self. Well, it's pretty amazing. It's

Hylke Faber 35:34

mission, mission team teammate self, yeah. Okay. So

Rob Sarver 35:40



ever do, everything we're doing is sacrificing for that, that order of precedence, that priority and in training for that. In a lot of what we do, especially in combat and time of war, is to deliver, you know, precision violence and minimize collateral damage. You know, a you know, a lot of the stuff that I was engaged with, you know, skirmishes on the ground, a lot of airstrikes. I spent five tours over there in Iraq, Afghanistan, you know, every every tour was kinetic, so but, but at the end of the day, you know, I feel very confident that we minimize the collateral damage and the things that we did made that area stable and safer.

Hylke Faber 36:24

Okay, so tell us about an maybe a time, an experience that you have, like a situation you're in where you were, yeah, maybe felt helped and guided by this sense of true priority, mission, team, teammate cell like, maybe take us, help us see the movie. What's that like?

Rob Sarver 36:47

I remember, and actually, unfortunately, had to go through a lengthy investigation for this one, but so we had Marines to my north and south Marine Corps had been following, and I can't I cannot remember if it was 1718 at this point, but this is Afghanistan in 2012 We had a gentleman maneuvering up to a marine position with a dragon off sniper rifle, and the marine commander was out of pocket. They could not do anything about it. And they've been observing they had pattern of life. So they've been observing this guy maneuvering for about two or three days. Finally, he was maneuvering in. They called me, you know, say, Rob, can you help us out? What can you do? So, you know, I got all the facts, got pattern of life. You know, they threw the drone feed up there for me on the screen, clear threat to force. So I called in the airstrike, which was, which was completely right in what I did, protecting the force, protecting, you know, the Marines, the overall mission of the country, right? The team, my team could be just the overall team, Marines, protect. Those guys are just as much as brothers and teammates as my own guys right there. The problem was I had another critical issue happen on the camp that pulled me out of the operation center, like within seconds of the strike, and I got pulled away to go deal with that, and I did not call my boss right away after the strike. So what happened is, in later video footage we saw this, I went about my day, finally talked to my boss, and when I talked and when I spoke with him, he's like, Hey, Rob, you're under investigation for an illegal air strike. You know, you have, like, no, six is flying in Marine colonel with President Karzai sitting down folks from a war tribunal. Is like, Excuse me, like, what? Like, I just watched the drone feed. What are you talking about? It's like, well, from the strike locals went and took some of the remains, and dragged it through the street and says, women and children. And I was like, You have got to be kidding me. So helicopter came in, shut me down for about three days, and it took us about three days to go back and get the proper footage, have it declassified, have it scrubbed out. And I said, everybody down the room, and I showed him. I was like, Here you go. This is exactly step by step. What happened. And on the video was the locals, yes, coming and grabbing remains, but also picking up the weapons they were carrying and throwing them in to the river, hiding the evidence. And as soon as they saw that footage, everybody got up and walked out and left. So sorry, just a small example.



Hylke Faber 39:46

That's very clear example. That's a very, very clear example. How did you feel when you got the message? Warfare bunalist coming in? I.

Rob Sarver 40:00

Rate. I was like, this is you're going to stop me for three days for I followed everything to the book. I was helping out. You know, my unit to the north, excuse me, marine units in the North had pattern of life, had everything on video. I was, you know, I felt, I felt they were did not have trusted in me. That

Hylke Faber 40:24

must have been very challenging. It was

Rob Sarver 40:30

challenging. It was challenging, but gratifying when I proved them wrong, right? Okay, okay, okay, so,

Hylke Faber 40:38

so, so I get a sense of being very, very focused on mission, on team, on teammates, and then self that gave that gave you the clarity to act what you needed to do and and to also to respond to the when the war tribute tribunal thing came in,

Rob Sarver 40:59

Yes, and you know, obviously, in default, you know, the self defense of others, in the self defense of other US, element in the field, yeah, it's very, very

Hylke Faber 41:09

clear. So you said, you know, we desensitize ourselves, and I understand that, you know you need to desensitize yourself to go through that. Would you say that at current time, you are totally free from the memories that might be difficult, traumatic or they still in your body?

Rob Sarver 41:32

Oh, no, there. It's, it's, it's not a light switch. We can't flip it out. It's more of a dimmer. We turn it down, we learn to have balance. We learn to tell ourselves that you know, or we you know. We retrain the brain. We look at these things, we reflect on it, we don't dwell on it that you know, everything I did was in the service of good right over there trying to provide security, trying to create more freedom of movement for the populace to have economic gains. And, you know, tie together a local security force to a district, to a region, you know, really put a security in there and work with the folks on the ground, the nationals to take back their country. I mean, Afghanistan's been it's not just 911 it's been ripped to hell since the 1980s

Hylke Faber 42:30



Right, right? Exactly, yeah, exactly. I hear what you're saying. So, so you say you that perspective helps you to dim the intensity of it, and so you're able to move through life, and you said, with more balance, with more balance. So today, like in today's life, what do you practice, or what do you do? I'm making an assumption that you practice, what do you do on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, to stay healthy, to stay balanced, mentally, physically, what do you do?

Rob Sarver 43:08

No, I still work out every day, from it, from a physical perspective, for you know, mentally, I can, I'm in continuous search of self improvement and growth. I read that. You know, writing the book was another, another part of that for my own personal growth. It's been five years doing the research to write that. So I'm in, I'm in a constant state of personal growth.

Hylke Faber 43:35

Personal Growth is 111, way that helps you work through and, and, and so as you look forward like as you look forward to where from where you are today, what do you hope is going to happen with you in the next 10 years?

Rob Sarver 43:55

The next 10 years, I hope that I raise a very responsible, accountable and purposeful young little boy who will be 18, then, wow, going off to school on his own. So I hope that I've given him enough to where he can go off and serve a purposeful life himself, and that the mistakes and challenges that he runs into, he has learned enough through me, and he has enough, enough to fall back on that he had two loving parents to raise him. Personally, I hope I continue to on the continuous path of growth within the company. I hope that, you know, we're 10 times the size we are, and I can continue to bring in folks from those there's the three legged stool I describe, and give them a sense of purpose to go continue to serve communities.

Hylke Faber 44:50

That's beautiful, that's beautiful. So you we talked about the hero's journey earlier, right in the elixir. What would you say has. Been, or is your elixir, or is there such, or can you define it?

Rob Sarver 45:06

You know, I think every veteran, because of the unique nature the journey that we go on and service the country, I believe we do finish the journey. Some people, some people, their entire life could be the hero's journey. I think veterans have a very clear delineation from finishing service and going on now it could take. We spoke with veterans. We spoke with over 200 veterans writing the book. We spoke with World War Two, Vietnam, Korea. Some folks still have not found that purpose. They're still on this, this continuous journey for me, I think it was fully understanding to be a leader and to have tremendous range and versatility is we have to have this deep sense of truth in self.

Hylke Faber 45:58



And describe that to us, deep sense of truth in self. What does that mean to you? What

Rob Sarver 46:04

it means I got to use another framework, what it means to me. But so the circles of concern by Heraclius, okay, when you look at those circles, the middle one is self. If you don't master yourself, you can never reach that outer ring, which is family. You're never going to be the truest person you can with your family, and you're never going to be able to reciprocate the values they have back to you, which is growth. It's looking at their own lens and feeling this reciprocity of values back and forth and truly recognition of that. And then I would go, well, I'll go one more of the rings. And it's, you know, the nexus of all these families together, how we integrate. That's community. And truly, we are in the service of everybody, our families and everything, to serve the community. We can go very esoteric beyond, but let's, let's just stop at community. Yes, because, yeah, you know John Brene shard, his quotes about fully living the life, and he hopes he's absorbed everything by the community, because that's, that's what makes, that's really what makes, you know, this whole human experiment, what we're doing, beautiful.

Hylke Faber 47:20

So I hear you speak about that, the finding of purpose and mastery of of the work on self that has to do with your true self. You mentioned that in your research of the book, you noticed talking with hundreds of veterans that some of them are on that journey and and still searching, what you found is that part of yourself is to be of service to these outer circles. And was it Heracles, Heraclitus

Rob Sarver 47:53

hair, if I might be saying it wrong, Herakles, circles of concern,

Hylke Faber 47:56

Heracles, Heracles. It's great. Heracles. Okay, so we can, so the listeners can look it up. They want the herakley circles of concern, so that that sense of being in in service to those things that creates learning and also creates an opportunity to help and support others, and that that grows so Rob, what do you do when you notice you, or if you go, if you do, when you go out of truth, when you like you're not quite there for a moment?

Rob Sarver 48:31

Well, one moment, no, that's, that's a great question, and it's, it's interesting having an eight year old observing everything you do now, because they're going to correct you really quick. It's like, yeah, you got me, kid. You need to have mentors in life. No, no one as long as we have lived has not experienced trauma or a difficult moment. And to say that we in if we say that we've navigated this through ourselves and we're still like a whole, intact person, that we're just lying to ourselves, as you said earlier, right? Decoding of the mind takes people. Yeah, we have to have mentors around us, so it's very important to select the people around the law of averages, selecting those people around us to help uplift us and help decode that so we can remain true to ourselves.



Hylke Faber 49:25

So thank you for it. So when, when? Let's say we're, we're, you're, you're about to fly off after this podcast, right? Yes, to another destination, and let's say somewhere on the on the way, you notice you're out of truth. You're out of integrity. You're not the in the ROB that you know is you. What do you do?

Rob Sarver 49:50

So one thing I can do is I can, I can reflect back to have you ever heard the saying that you know our deepest wounds have brought forth our greatest purpose? I. Yeah, I, if I, if I feel out of balance, I can reflect back to the tremendous loss that I've had in my life with all those friends. And I could say, Okay, if every one of those guys would want to have just one more day with family and friends, here I get that they don't. So it's also being in service of them, their life, their legacy and what they sacrificed to rebalance myself.

Hylke Faber 50:28

Okay, great. That's a great perspective. So I rebalance, not just so that I feel good for like my little shell, but actually you're, you're practicing the circles of Heracles, which in your in your community includes your friends who have passed away and have given their lives. Yeah, go ahead.

Rob Sarver 50:50

No, they gave the ultimate sacrifice for us to sit here and do what we want and to have this freedom of choice to go do the things that we want and experiment and pursue that own personal growth, the least we can do is honor.

Hylke Faber 51:05

That honor, that honor that now hear the word honor. I want to go back to one thing you said, which was that the lowest form of hell is the lies that we tell ourselves and staying in those lies, what is a recent lie that you've become aware of, that you've let go of?

Rob Sarver 51:43

Through some of our greatest mistakes, we can still be a good person.

Hylke Faber 51:50

And the lie was that in the lie was that you wouldn't be able to

Rob Sarver 51:55

be that, not not being your true self. You know, if we speaking of generalities here now, not just myself, you know, if it's, you know, drugs or alcohol or stealing or lying, infidelity, whatever, that that is not being true to self, right, and not honoring that. And then like, like, I think you said it best, what you just said,



Hylke Faber 52:25

even despite that, you are still and still can be a great person. If

Rob Sarver 52:32

you can go, I feel if you can go back, and I think there's again, we've all been through our own traumatic experiences of all, but if we can have self recognition, learn from it, grow, bring back to ourselves, to center with values and good character, we made a mistake. Be recognize it, reflect on it, don't dwell on it and still recognize. You can be a good person, right?

Hylke Faber 53:03

I am very struck by this. Reflect on it, don't dwell on it, and you still can be a good person when you recognize, when you recognize, and don't dwell what would you say to a person who is dwelling on something they're like circling, obsessing, thinking about this thing that they did and that's pulling them down? What would you say to a person like that

Rob Sarver 53:31

you can only control the three feet around you? Sometimes you cannot. You have to let go some of that you can control yourself and the three feet around you, and you have the choice, and you have the power of choice to fix yourself.

Hylke Faber 53:49

That's beautiful. You can only control the three feet around you, yes, and you can only fix yourself, and you need to let go of the rest you

Rob Sarver 54:02

cannot control it. Cannot control it.

Hylke Faber 54:07

The Serenity Prayer grant that they may accept what I cannot control. Yes, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference that sense of what are, what is my? What am I? You said my three feet, not is that three or four feet? Three feet, three feet, yes, it's the three feet. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. I sense, I sense both a sense of kindness in that what you're saying this three feet principle, and also a sense of accountability. This doesn't mean you're going to just collapse and and repeat, but and if you repeat, you're going to pull yourself up by your bootstrap straps and recognize, yes, reflect and grow and you'll be a good person again. Okay, very good. Been amazing to speak with you. We're getting into the final minutes here. Rob, so I learned in this conversation so much from you about the Herakles circles and how that strengthens us. I think about you in the combat zone, with your team, with your mission, that being being strengthened in that as part of that, as opposed to an individual Maverick where you would not have that, I'm sure, the humility that you've shared with us today about the hero's journey and how you practice that daily, on yourself, the focus on



your immediate circle, in this case, your eight year old son. I was very struck by you saying, that's the thing that if what I want for myself, that being that example and helping him for helping them through that is is amazing to hear. And then also the the clarity that the trauma, and this not only true for war trauma, it's true for probably all traumas. Yes, in your case, it doesn't. It's not a flip the switch which it's it's a it's a dimming of it and being able to put perspective on it. I love that you talked about the perspective that helps you. You have the perspective of what happened around you and why you did what you did to be of service to the Constitution, how that helps you in your home. Healing. Final words to you, Rob, what would you like to say, by way of closing our conversation today,

Rob Sarver 56:44

I Well, first of all, again, thank you for having me. For anybody out there who's gone through a traumatic event or struggled or trying to be a better leader, I would say, have true self recognition. Find your True. True, your truth, and remember that you know, our deepest wounds can bring about our greatest purpose.

Hylke Faber 57:04

Our deepest wounds can bring about our greatest purpose and Rob. If people want to find you or your book, where do they go?

Rob Sarver 57:15

LinkedIn, Instagram on there. My name, Rob Sarver, the website, heroes, H, E, R, O, E, S, hyphen, journey.net can be reached through that website as well.

Hylke Faber 57:26

Fantastic. It's been an honor to sit with you today. Rob, likewise, I took so much one of the things, other things I took from you is it's more about your energy, a patient reflection, like there's there's a science sense of I'm taking from this conversation a willingness to look at it all. Be very clear, I'm willing to look at it all. So thank you, Rob for being with us today. If you've been listening, thank you for listening. I hope this conversation helped you to connect more deeply to your own Herakles circles. What am I of service to and how does that strengthen me and bring me back to my true self? If you like listening to this podcast, you can find it in next podcast and previous ones, anywhere you get your podcasts on Apple and Spotify You have been listening to rooted and unwavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host. Hylke Farber, see you next time.

Presenter 58:35

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