



Episode 349: How to Be Your Best in High Stress Situations With Former Army Ranger and CIA Agent Jeff Banman

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Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com, my new line of completely natural and safe personal care products that work, as well as conventional alternatives. And in this episode, we're going to talk all about how to be your best in high-stress situations, which probably a lot of us are experiencing now and over the past few months. I am here with Jeff Banman, who is a former firefighter, US Army Ranger, and CIA Counter-terrorism Operator. And he has dedicated his life to discovering what separates people who are successful from those who aren't. He's conducted operations and missions all over the world, including in combat zones and high threat environments. And before you sit and think, "Well, what does that have to do with me?" I have always maintained that parents have a lot in common with special forces and we're gonna go into that today. In fact, I would put moms up against special forces, at least mentally, quite often, but we're gonna talk about that and how you can use lessons learned from people who operate in these really high-stress, extreme situations to be

better in your own day-to-day life. And Jeff is a parent as well, so we also talk about how to foster this mindset of resilience and strength in your kids from an early age, focusing on what he calls the three Cs of this: comfort, confidence, and creativity. Super fascinating episode and I know that you will enjoy it as much as I enjoyed recording. Jeff, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Jeff: Hey, thanks for having me, Katie. I really appreciate it.

Katie: I am so excited to chat with you because I have listened to a couple of podcast interviews that you've done with other podcasts and gained some really useful tips on things we can learn to be our best in high-stress situations. And I feel like modern life certainly has no shortage of high-stress situations these days, especially right now. And so I think this is gonna be a very practical and helpful interview. And for anybody who just heard your bio and is thinking like, "Okay, this guy is amazing. He was a ranger and in the CIA, but what does that have to do with me?" I just wanna preface to all of my parents listening by saying that I actually think I would put moms up against Special Forces in a lot of scenarios. And I've joked about this for a long time, but I think there actually are some similarities, not just the joking ones about sleep deprivation which, to my understanding, they actually stopped using as a form of torture but moms still endure.

But just the leadership role of running a family, managing a team, all of the daily challenges that we face and the inability to step back from that as a mom or as someone in combat. You don't get the option to just walk away and take a vacation. And so I think that there's a lot of similarities there. And I think that the parents listening can learn a lot from your research and your mindset because of that.

Jeff: Yeah, I appreciate it. I mean, it is. There is a stream that runs through all of us. And for me, I've always kind of come to this place where it's like, it doesn't really matter what the situation is or whether you're overseas and doing crazy stuff or running into a burning building or trying to, you know, manage three screaming kids. It's a matter of fact. I've, you know, I will tell on myself. It's like easier to be in the world than it is to be home some times. So I'm in complete agreement with you that you could take a lot of parents and you could definitely take a lot of moms and you can put them up against some of the "best of the best" out there and they'd probably come out better on the other end because of the complexities they deal with on a regular basis.

Katie: And I think there was something interesting I learned from you and I'd love to kind of delve into is the idea that hopefully many people listening have never been shot at or been in a really like combat type situation. But from what I've heard from you and read from you, the brain doesn't necessarily know the difference between that type of stress and other types of stress that we encounter daily. Is that right?

Jeff: Yeah. I mean, I think, what we've learned over time is the perception of stress is so individualized that you can't come with, "Oh, they have it harder than I do," right? You can't come with this mentality that somehow, you know, but I'm just gonna use the example. Somehow life as a mom trying to run a household and manage kids and do everything they need to do and sometimes probably trying to keep their husband in line or vice

versa, or whatever it may be, whoever really kind of runs a household. You know, that that is somehow less stressful or less important or less, whatever than, running into a burning building or chasing bad guys down or operating around the world. It's not a point of comparison in my book, right? How you perceive and how you process is always so, so individualized.

And so we've gotta approach it that way. We've gotta give ourselves a little bit of grace to that, you know, and stay away from this, "Well, you know, I only do this." No, that's a huge lift every day. That's a huge accomplishment, a huge task. There's a lot to that. And, you know, I think sometimes as humans we don't give ourselves enough credit for what we do and how we do it and the things we have to deal with along the way.

Katie: Yeah, I agree. And there's a lot of memes and jokes going around in the mom community about like, you know, I kept the tiny humans alive all day. But that speaks to the fact that we have these people who are completely responsible for us, that we do have to keep alive just like in a combat situation and the team is responsible for keeping each other alive and safe. And so our brain, especially as moms, those are very much high stakes, very real world stakes. And so of course, there can be stress that goes with that. I'm curious what you found in your research of what separates those who tend to do well with stress from those who struggle more in such stressful situations.

Jeff: Yeah, it kind of goes into this what I call the operational mindset because of what I do in the community I now serve and what I get to...how I get to contribute now. You know, and I had the opportunity to really dive in and do some deep dive research, look at human behavior in high-stress environments. I tend to say I was doing biofeedback and mindset stuff before they were cool. So you were talking quite some time ago. And, you know, as I began to look at kind of the traits and postures of people, there were three things that I kind of came to and it was very interesting and it came from data and interviews and looking at kind of who, you know, the top 1% of performers in my world.

And you heard it in their language, in their stories and really it came down to three kind of key points. The ability to be highly comfortable in extremely uncomfortable situations, right? And that's not a model of complacency. That's like a place of, okay, I'm good and yes, this isn't maybe a great situation or this is uncomfortable for me, or this is a new experience, or this is just stretching me, but it's kind of a reminder that me, I'm okay. I'm good here. I can manage this. Which bleeds to the second point around competence, right? So comfort and incompetence. And that's not arrogance. That's not like I got this, I can handle that. It's stepping back to what I call...refer to as like your own power, right? Settling in. Okay. Again, that's a reminder, I'm good. I can deal with this. I don't necessarily like it. I don't necessarily wanna be dealing with this right now, but I'm okay and I have the self-confidence. I'm gonna rely on my own skillset and my own emotional control and my own points of stability to create the competence I need to kind of work through or manage through whatever it may be this kind of high-stress moment in time.

And then the last one is creativity, right? And this is like, I don't know, but I surely will figure it out. You know, and mothers, I feel like mothers do this far greater than fathers. I've watched this, I watched this in myself. They have an instinctive ability to redirect or move or be creative in a moment or find a creative solution. And,

you know, that's one of the key things that I've spent years training operators to understand how to bring a unique level of creativity to the environment because nothing is ever gonna go the way we planned it. Nothing is ever gonna happen the way we want it to happen. And if we're not stepping up our game in that level of flexibility and being adaptive in those situations, you know, then it starts to avalanche, right? It starts the downward slide of I don't know what to do. No, I don't know what to do. And then I start beating myself up and then I'm frustrated or I'm anxious for whatever else and I'm not gonna get anywhere at that point in time. So really, the three kind of mastery traits I've seen are that comfort, confidence and creativity. That's what we try to achieve in a lot of ways.

Katie: I love that. That's so easy to remember and to focus on. Do you have any practical tips for both learning that as adults and then also for fostering that in our kids as a mindset? Because I homeschool my six kids and I've basically written my own curriculum because I realized that the school system, I didn't feel like it was preparing them for whatever the future of technology makes their adult life look like, which would be highly adaptive. And so we focus on core values of creativity and critical thinking and connecting the dots and thinking outside the box so they get rewarded for those things. And so I've kind of learned how to do that in a school environment. But I love what you're saying and I'm curious, how can we as parents learn to do that in the moment when things get stressful and also help impart that to our kids?

Jeff: Yeah, I think, you know, this is Katie, this is always the fun stuff. It feels like there's a lot of complexity behind some very simple things, right? And so at the end of the day, you know, whether...it doesn't matter when I'm working with my kids or my, you know, I've got a two, I've got the gamut of 16, 14 and two and a half. So I went back and did it again, which has been spectacular. We operate very much kind of in the conscious parenting zone in raising the children, pay attention to a lot of things. But at the end of the day, here's what I feel like we don't give ourselves or give our kids or give our families a lot of time. And that's just space.

And so how do we create space, right? The freedom to learn, the space to actually like be present and digest what's happening. And that to me, the best tool for that is breathing, right? And there's a million and a half, you know, options for breath work and all kinds of things and different times to use for different things. I always teach people, it's like, find what works for you. You know, maybe it's just that four in, four out rhythmic breathing process and maybe it's 30 seconds, maybe it's a minute, maybe it's five minutes, right? But it's just the breath actually does a couple things for us. It gives us the opportunity to ground ourselves, to anchor in the present moment. You know, you'll see me, I'll stick into a breathing cycle and I'll look around and hear a bird chirp or what's actually happening now, right? And get hyper present to what's actually taking place. I'm able to connect with my kids that way, what's going on for them.

Because when I do that, it settles me, settles them. And then there's actually this calm space in the environment. My go-to word, and, you know, I say it on my podcast all the time, but I feel like my world, our job and parents' job is, it's our commitment to bring calm to chaos. And if we're not the calm, we're the chaos. And so that's like the...that's the metal check I do, right? And am I creating the chaos or am I the guy bringing the calm to the chaos right now? And so when I use that mental check, I can step back. I can just kind of trigger into an easy float breath cycle and then my energy settles and when my energy settles, everyone else's

energy settles. And then we like, "Okay, what do we need to do now? What's the next step?" And that has been true, you know, in a burning building, that has been true in combat. That has been true running operations around the world and looking for bad people and all kinds of things. So I feel like that's like the universal anchor that we can apply.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. That's such a simple but really, really practical thing we can try. And I feel like another thing that I've read or listened to from you is kind of the idea, and you touched on it a little bit, but that people are typically better at handling like direct stressors or things that we identify as stressful or like a lot of people say like, I'm great in crisis mode. And my husband and I even said that like, we're great in crisis mode, but what's tough is those little like kind of paper cut annoyances that build up. And I know for moms that's usually at the end of the day like that 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. that's when the stress hits and you have that just kind of like overwhelming kind of sense of stress and overwhelm. And it's because of all those little miniature things that have built up all day. So any tips for dealing with that when it's just kind of nothing huge, nothing massive, nothing cataclysmic, but that like buildup of small annoyances?

Jeff: 100%. So this was probably one of the catalyst points when we were doing research. So we were able to really look at minute shifts in heart rate variability, which is the measurement tool for stress on the system, on the body, right, internally. And we found a very interesting phenomenon. So what we did was we divided up stress into three key categories. So direct stressors, those are things that come at us that we're kind of prepared for, we train for or we expect to maybe happen throughout the day or throughout the environment. Then we have indirect stressors. Those are things that could happen, but tend to blind side us, right? I often compare it to like you're driving down the road, you know. Yes, there's always a possibility being an accident, but you just, somebody just ran a red light while you were in the middle of the intersection totally sideswiped you. You didn't see it coming. And that's a level.

And then there's this third category, which I call indirect or I call satellite or peripheral stresses. These are like annoyance things in the environment. These are I can't find my keys. These are, you know, the kid stuff the cell phone under the cushion and you can't find it, right? And what I have found through a variety of things were we watch performance drop minimally a direct and indirect stressor, but we watched performance drops significantly when we really ramped up the satellite or peripheral stressors in the environment. And this was very curious to me because we started to see where the inability to recover from small moments in time created what we call the stacking effect.

So literally, it was a nuanced stress, didn't recover kind of annoyance factor, continued to operate or continue to work. Another one raised the bar, another one raised the bar, another one raised the bar and there was a failure to recover along the way. Or like I talk about being recoverable, like it just exists in you 24/7 where you can actually feel anxiety creep in. You can feel frustration creep in. You can feel the sensation in the body start to build, which is the trigger point to go, "Okay, I need a point of recovery." And that may be a half a second, you know, behind a piece of cover while you're getting shot at. And that may be setting the kids in front of the TV for a second and going in the other room and do it, you know, a quick just sit on the bed and okay I'm breathing now and settle down. It could be any number of things, right?

So you have to create what works for you. But really the essence is how well can you recover from the small things and not to let those things compound because it will then result in something significant. You find you almost create the direct stressors yourself down the road if you allow that to just build over time. Does that make sense to you?

Katie: Yeah, that does. That makes total sense. And I can see that in my own life. Just the difference between days when you'd like, you just feel that point and then everything seems just unconquerable at that point. Like you have to cook dinner and it's the end of the world. And also, it's a good reminder too, because I think our kids feel that as well. You know, when you have a young child who hits that just complete meltdown point, that's probably exactly where they are as well. And so remembering, you know, they're not being a problem, they're having a problem. And how can we help them go through the same thing and reset, like that's a great reminder.

Jeff: Yeah. And that's it, and that triggers back to if you...it can be very easily, like you end up in the chaos without even realizing it sometimes. And that's the checkpoint. It's like, wait a minute, I'm actually, I'm being the chaos right now. Maybe and as a parent I'm bringing it cause it is my response. I just read a great book where he talked about energetic consent and so how to be responsible for our own energy in the space and the impact that can have on everyone around us. You know, and I know from my world that was huge. You know, if I'm walking into a high-risk meeting or I'm coming into a space in time, or we're running a fire or things aren't going well, how I respond, not just in words but in energy, makes a significant difference in the people around me and it does with my kids, right? How my energy bleeds into the environment is significant.

And so I have to really, you know, I can, you know, lock into command and control Jeff, right? Because that's just how I've lived my life for 35 years. But I have to be really responsible for that and understand and match my energy to the needs of the situation, you know, as it is unfolding rather than fall into the trap of frustration or anxiousness or, you know, whatever it is. And so that's a... and that's a daily practice. I mean, I fail at it at least once or twice a day, if not five times. Some days I'm great, some days I'm awful. You know, this is nothing that you're going to like zen out and be the master of. This is a daily practice of life really.

Katie: Absolutely. And it goes back to something that has been a lifelong journey for me and that I always remind my kids of as well is that we always have the ability to choose our own reaction and our own response. And at least in my own life, I've noticed I am infinitely happier to the degree to which I focus on the things that I have the power to change, which is almost often always just my own emotions, my own response, how I'm reacting to any stimulus versus trying to focus on all of the things out of my control that there's literally no way to impact like current world stuff that's going on. Or you know, even the behavior of my children. I think a lot of parents, it's easy to get in that stressful loop of like, why can't I make them do this? Why won't they do this? And truly any parent knows.

Jeff: I never do that, Katie. Never do that.

Katie: But you have no control over it, do you? Any parent who thinks they have no control. Try to go to control two-year-old, you know. But going back to that idea that, and I tell my kids all the time, like as a parent that I need to be an example of that, but that also we are all happier to the degree that we focus on that which is in our control. And from a parent as a leader versus kind of like a dictator perspective to touch on conscious parenting, I tell my kids you've heard the phrase, "With great power comes great responsibility," but in our house it's reversed. It's "With great responsibility comes great power". When you take ownership for yourself or the things in your control, that's when you earn freedom, you earn power because you're showing that you're responsible and capable of that.

And I think it's a lesson for parents as well. And it's a hard one that certainly it's not easy to just every day wake up and go, okay, I'm only gonna focus on the things that I can control and I'm gonna stay calm today, obviously. But that's one tip. It definitely really helps me when I'm able to keep that focus.

Jeff: Well, you know, and the other thing that we find is we are rarely ever present to the conditions, right? We're rarely here now with what is happening. And, you know, it's so interesting being able to go back and do this again and watch little man grow up, right, and have this little amazing rad human being running around. You know, he's not forecasting things. He's not thinking about, "Oh, am I gonna have playtime this afternoon or what's the lunch gonna be?" Or, you know what I mean? He has no forward look. It's all right now. And as parents or as leaders, you know, we get locked into future casting. We just get stuck there and it's always trying to get somewhere or always trying to go to the next thing. Or, you know, what do I need to prepare for? I need to make sure lunch is set up. I need...it's always coordination and preparation for something to happen. And rarely do we give ourselves the opportunity to enjoy the moment or be present with what's going on or be connected to what's actually happening. And, you know, we get stuck way out.

And so I feel like, you know, and that's true. Listen, I would have not been successful. There's times I probably wouldn't be alive if I had not had the or something or someone bringing me back to what is actually happening right now. And for my world, there is so much freedom in that space when you can actually just calm down and be like where you are with who you are in that moment. There's like, "Oh, wow." And just all kinds of new stuff arises. That's where you get to be comfortable. That's where you get to be confident. That's where you get to be creative because you're actually in it with the people around you and especially your kids.

And I do think that's a disservice that we create in our children is this future stuff. If we're always jamming forward, if we're always like planning and prepping and gotta be this and gotta be that, that's what they know. That's what they grow up with. And then so they grow up worrying about like what's next or later this afternoon or scheduling or this or that. I'm not saying, you know, don't be coordinated. You can't, you know, you can't not be coordinated. You can't not plan. But being responsible for our own connection to the present moment I think is a game changer for a lot of us.

Katie: I absolutely agree and it surprises me sometimes and fingers pointing at myself as well, but as adult even how hard it is for a lot of people just to be too comfortable, to be quiet. And, you know, there's all these great books and quotes from all of these philosophers and Stoics about how that's one of our great works of life is to learn to be just still and how there's a great book called, "Stillness is the Key." And just, I feel like that's a lost skill in today's world because there's constant stimulation. There's always the next thing going on. And perhaps recent events have actually been a great teacher of this is when all of that's taken away, we have to just focus on what is and just learn to be and to be present and how hard that's been for some of us, me included.

Jeff: Yeah. We don't like to be with ourselves. We don't like to be quiet. Because then it starts this uncomfortable feeling of, Oh, you know, I should be doing something or, you know, what do I need to be doing right now? Or, you know, we're just, we were working up society and a culture and a life now that has become about what we're doing next, not what we're doing now. Listen, I have the opportunity to train some amazing people and develop some amazing people who are doing things well. You can even pay me, you know, a billion dollars to go do a year. Like no, thank you. And the only way they're ever successful is when they understand how to be there in that moment.

You know, if you're thinking about, you know, how am I gonna work this guy? What intelligence am I going to get from him? How's this going? You know, there's a time and a place to do all that. But then when you step into the world, when you release into the day, you know, when you start getting breakfast together for the kids and the day has started, that's your time to be hyper present. You know, we used to have a running joke in the military, which was, you know, the plan never survives first contact with the enemy. You know, you can get up in the morning, here's the day, this is what we're gonna do. And then I wake the kids up and plans plain shot, right? But you have some framework top right under, you gotta be flexible with it. And it's, you know, it's just all, this is why I love it, right?

This is why I love kind of normalizing this idea of life in the extremes and normal life, right? Because there's so many similar patterns to it. There's not, like I kind of said at the beginning, there's not a judgment back and forth. It's not like, "Oh, well I have it easier than they do" or "I'm just, you know, a stay-at-home mom." Nope, sorry, take that out of your language completely, you know. All of those things come into play because, and life can be stressful in any context, in any moment, in any situation. And, you know, the tools and the techniques and the way we look at it, it's all the same at the end of the day. It's all the same.

Katie: I agree. And I think to another parenting point that probably has a strong tie in here. So I love that creativity is one of those core things. And as a parent that's always been a top of mind thing for me is how can I foster that in my kids? Because what I realized both from my own life and now working with all of my kids is you can't really train creativity nor can you structure creativity obviously. And if anything, boredom seems to be the best teacher of creativity. But so many kids today don't get the opportunity to be bored. They don't get the downtime because there is that constant stimulation and the constant desire to learn more and be better in extracurriculars and so much is on their plate so young. So I'm curious both what you've seen and if there's any research on this and then how you navigate it as a parent of helping to foster creativity with kids if you let them be bored on purpose or how that works.

Jeff: Yeah. I think, you know, it goes to the, it's all going to draw some similarities here, right? So if I have a leader in my environment that's always telling us what to do, how to do it, how to get things done, you know, I go back to my days in the fire service, I would tell people, listen, you know, if you're driving the truck for instance, you have a pretty critical role and one of those roles just to get a ladder to the second floor. Because if I'm taking the crew inside, I need to be able to exit the building, right? If it's on fire, we have a problem. I gotta get out.

And, you know, in the driver outside being alone, kind of out in the outside space there are controlling the exterior environment. And, you know, ladders are not light and they're not easy to manage. They can be cumbersome and then given the situation and the slope and everything else, and I would just tell my guys, say, "Listen," tell my people, "it doesn't matter what it looks like, I just need it done." You know. Yes, there's technique and yes, there's proper way to do that and there's the correct way to do things. But if I don't give the freedom and flexibility to my people to operate, right, the ability for them to see what's going on, make their own choices, navigate their own roads, knowing the result we need to produce, then I'm really failing them as a leader.

And the same thing goes to my kids. If I'm telling them when I need them to do it, how they need to do it. It's like the girls, you know, the girls were there back to online school. Things are kicking back up this week. There's a little bit more requirements now in place, even though they're not physically in school. And we talked about it, how do I support you? What does that look like? And they both said to me, "I don't need to be micromanaged. I don't need you to tell me when, you know, what to do. But I do need support in like you being the dad saying, 'Okay, we're all gonna, it's work time now. You guys go work on school and I'm gonna go work, you know, on the business.'" "Okay, cool."

So creating the parameters and kind of the left and right limits to accomplishing something rather than structuring out what they need to do. And then, you know, did you do this and did you do that? You know, one of the things that we do with little man is we really try to just, again, create space. It's like, "Do you wanna go play in your room?" "Yeah." "Okay, cool." And that's it, right? I don't need to go any further. Do you wanna play with this toy or this toy? No, I think we tend to over options are kids, right? What was the book "Apathy of Options?" Have you ever read that?

Katie: I haven't.

Jeff: Yeah. We tend to over options our kids and then they don't know what to do and then they don't have...they don't know how to make their own choice. They're making a choice based on what we're providing them. And it's the same in adults. It's the same in this place. It's like how do I foster creativity? I give the space for creativity to unfold and that is individualized, that's not directed, that's not staged. And I actually take options away from them rather than put more options in front of them. And it's feels kind of counterintuitive. But when you do that, they really start to like, okay, wait a minute. You know, okay, I need to figure something out here. And they begin to satisfy themselves, not satisfy me as the parent or me as the leader. And that's a unique space that I've seen unfold pretty well, if that translates or make sense to you.

Katie: Yeah, no, that's...I love that answer. And another like parenting note that I have a feeling has a pretty good tie in here is I'm so curious your approach in what you've seen in research on letting kids take risks. Because this is another thing that I think has changed really drastically even since I was a kid and certainly since my parents were kids, is kids being able to do activities that are considered risky or play unsupervised or ride their bikes more than, you know, without the seeing distance of their house. And I've written about this a little bit.

Like, my opinion is that it can be a disservice to our kids if we overprotect them and they don't get those opportunities for learning to work through things on their own for minor injuries, for taking risks and failing because a lot of kids get to adulthood, haven't had to face actual failure or any really severe natural consequences of natural failure. So I'm probably on the one extreme was the mom who's sending my kids out to climb trees and encouraging them to climb things and jump off things and whatever. But I'm curious, A, what the research says, and B, how you navigate that?

Jeff: Yeah, so I think the one of the research papers I read, I don't know, maybe a couple of years ago, came out where they did a whole study on like rough housing and the development of emotional intelligence in children, right? And so, which was, and it didn't, you know, sex wasn't, not, doesn't matter, boys or girls. But really more, you know, timely and proper kind of rough housing play with children actually begins to build their resiliency process, begins to build their decision making skills. They actually begin to establish the boundaries of what's okay and not okay for them. You know what I mean? And so there's this listening dynamic and I see this, you know, this is part of like growing up over 12 years, right, between my last one and then, little man, you know. I can see what the girls where I was definitely over protective.

I was always, you know, trying to catch them. If they fell I'm like rushing over, are you okay? Are you okay? You know, and all these things and then it creates this timidness in them, you know. I see where they're a little bit more anxious and I've gotta be responsible for that if I've created anxiety in them by me overreacting to them or not giving them the space to kind of sort it out. Whereas today, I only come to the, you know, "come to the rescue" when Decklan's hurt, you know what I mean? Or the possibility of that. And even then giving him a little bit of space to sort himself out. If he like, I don't know, falls or something, it's kinda like I instinctually, I don't fight my instinct and kind of pause back and wait to see, let him process through what just happened. Do the self-assessment, am I hurt, am I bleeding? You know, there are any leaks going on right now about what's going on for me right now. And then what do I feel about this?

One of the major things we've committed to with him is we never tell them it's okay. Like we've extracted, we just completely removed that from our vocabulary because we don't know. Well, maybe he's not okay. I don't know. He can't articulate that yet. And I think as parents we often...we wanna come to the rescue, we wanna protect our kids, we wanna create safety for them, but we're actually not, we're creating spaces of questionable, I don't know, am I okay? Is it okay to not to be okay right now? All these fundamental things that go into, you know, what I believe creates confidence in a human being, which is the ability to self-

regulate, self-manage, self-assess, and then speak, you know, in some ways speak our truth, if you will. And that may be crying or maybe upset or, and that may just be like, Oh.

I mean, I'm amazed at this kid given the space from a fall that I would be like, Oh, this is gonna be a major one. He gets up, brushes it off, like, you know, trucks onto something else. But I gave him the space to sort it out and the freedom to experience whatever he was experiencing there. And if he's upset or hurt, then I come over. I give him a hug. I'm like, "I got you bud. You know you're safe. I got you." I don't ever say you're okay because he's not. And then if he's done something and he's upset at something that I don't...that doesn't really have a framework for it or like an anchor point for me, it's like, okay. And it causes me to now be curious about his experience or what's going on for him. And that's an opportunity as a parent to help him maybe begin to navigate things for himself, not through my view or my lens, if that...yes, if that answers your question.

Katie: That absolutely does. Yeah. I think that's a helpful strategy to have on hand and a good reframing of not trying to tell them that it's okay or to frame the experience for them, but to help them learn the tools to work through it themselves. I think that's a really, really important point.

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This podcast is brought to you by Wellnesse, a new company I co-founded to bring the best personal care products from my family to yours. Our whitening toothpaste is based on my DIY formula that I have been making and perfecting for over a decade. Now, after almost 100 rounds of tweaking the formula and thousands of positive reviews, I could not be more proud to share this with your family. Have you ever read a tube of normal toothpaste? I did when my older kids were little, and I found a warning that said, "Warning, keep away from children. Do not swallow. If ingested contact Poison Control or seek medical attention immediately." That seemed a little extreme for something that I was putting in my mouth and my children's mouth multiple times a day. And I didn't want my kids using something that often that I would need to call a poison control center if they accidentally swallowed. I set out to create a truly safe and effective alternative. And the Wellnesse Whitening toothpaste is just that. It's designed to support the oral microbiome and the natural process of saliva and teeth so that teeth can stay white and strong. This dentist approved formula is safe for the whole family and will leave your teeth shiny and your breath fresh. You can check out our toothpaste and our completely natural hair food hair care products at wellnesse.com. An insider tip, if you

grab an essentials bundle or try autoship, you will lock in a discount so that you can try everything at a great price.

I've also heard you mentioned in past podcast a couple of things I'd love for you to define and walk us through those being the 10-foot rule and the 30-degree rule.

Jeff: Okay. Okay. Yeah. So this goes back to presence, right? This kind of all goes back to absolutely being present, not getting too far out in front of each other. So, you know, I talk about like the 10-foot rule, which is, that's kinda my span of control. If I get past 10-feet in any environment, you know, I have no control over that. And, you know, if I'm going into a burning building or I'm dealing with a crisis or I'm dealing with things as they are, that's about the span I've got around me to really kind of deal with what I need to deal with. When I creep past that, now I'm in...I can, but I need to be aware that I'm creeping past it. I need to be aware that I'm really now getting into a more predictive state, right? I'm future casting. I'm dealing with things that have not happened or may not happen yet.

And so if I do that too much, if I live outside of 10-feet, then I'm never really present to what's actually happening and I'm not dealing with the conditions as they exist. I'm dealing with them in some idea of how I want them to be or how I think they should be or how they might happen or how it might unfold. So I'm really dealing with false data at that point in time. When I can stay within kind of my 10-foot rule, then I'm actually present to what's actually taking place. And then this goes to kind of the 10-degree or 30-degree rule, which I say, you know, you move into the environment and I'm adjusting 10 degrees left or right based on the conditions as they exist.

So for instance, I use this example in my teaching because it was relevant. If I go to a house fire, I show up, I've got a two-story single family home, heavy fire from the second floor. I kind of do my walk around. I look outside, I see what's going on. I collect as much information as I can, but I know the minute I stepped through the front door, the conditions have changed. And now new information coming at me. I now know how hot it is or you know where the fire may be located or how far it may be progressing. I began to really get in touch with what's going on in the sensations of the environment, what the environment is telling me.

And you know, maybe my job is to locate with seal fire or do a search for victims that that doesn't change. My mission doesn't change, but how I go about accomplishing that task will depend upon the conditions and the allowance that I have in the conditions of the environment. Does that, you know, so I'm able to kind of more flow through what's taking place rather than like, Nope, I gotta do this and I'm gonna push through and I'm gonna drive through and I'm going to own this thing. It's, if I'm not present, then I can get myself in trouble significantly. In my world, you know, trouble means serious injury, possible death, you know, and then I'm not... and effectiveness is dropping significantly. So if I get outside kind of the 10-foot span around me or the three-foot span around me, depending upon what's going on or I'm not present and I'm not kind of like, okay, I can go left, I can go right. Minor adjustments. I'm not coming off my mission, I'm not coming off my cast or my

purpose or my intention, but I am available to what's taking place and now I'm working with the environment rather than forcing an outcome.

That's, I mean I had, so that's a daily practice with the kids, right? I mean, working with them and not trying to force an outcome. That's like the...that's the translation for me. And that's the, again, kind of the checks. And you can see the reaction of them. I think you see this in your own kids, right? When you step into that place, the more rigid you become, the more resistance you have back at you. At least that's what I tend to experience and I'm sure, with six, you do as well.

Katie: Absolutely. Yeah. Another thing I think you've touched on, but I've got on my list to ask you about is the top five fractures in performance that are relevant across the board. So walk us through that.

Jeff: All right. So first one is always and definitely has been a perception of my own abilities and this is a huge breakdown point. This is a place where we often drop the ball almost right off the bat. You know, and if you look from like my world, if you have an operator, you have somebody going out operating in the mission and they're questioning themselves, right? They're unsure of themselves, then that's going to begin to break down their ability to perform, their ability to see things, read the conditions, be open to what's taking place along the way. And really then, you know, we start to see kind of this fracture and performance.

I mean, I think we all...I've never met a person, I don't care out of what community they've come from, whether they're, you know, a dev group, guys, seal team, six guy, Delta operator or, you know, the best of the best out there. There will always come a point in time where they question their own ability, right? They have a lingering voice in the back of their head. They're just not 100% sure of themselves in that moment. And that is huge. Just a huge breakdown, right?

Number two, we see fall into complacency or what I kind of call the common state. This is where we take our foot off the gas. We really stopped paying attention to things. We start making a lot of assumptions about the situation or the environment or the people around us. We really kind of just, well, we basically check out of what's going on.

The third one is always interesting because the third one deals with fear. And so I classify fear that fear can't exist in the present moment. Fear doesn't exist. You know, in a firefight, fear doesn't exist. In a working fire, fear doesn't exist. I may have excitement, I may have a state of arousal, but it is not fear. Fear only shows up as a future point in time of something that may happen or may not happen.

And then when I allow that fear to collide in the present, I can end up in a point of panic. You know, I don't make solid decisions. You know, I often related to this and this is I think relevant to all of us. You know, and you too, it's like, have you ever been woken up in the middle of the night by kind of the noise, right? You wake up, something, somebody banged on the front door just...or it's a bad dream. You don't really know what got

you up, but you are more alert, more aware, like more ready, you know what I mean. If you're a mom, you're like, you know, mama bears coming out of your dad or you're like me. Like you're grabbing a gun and clearing the house, right? You're in it. And there's something that drew you into that moment that is a, what they would classify as emotional, you know, fear-based response, which I hate this word, but that is a high state of arousal. Your body's moving into action, giving you what you need in that moment in time.

Now here comes the question. After you validated that there wasn't anything, everybody's safe. Everybody's good. You go crawl back in bed. How quickly can you go back to sleep? And most times we're kind of stuck. Now, we hear every little creak and crack and noise and we're hypersensitive the environment. And what we're doing in that state is we're generating this kind of fear response. We're generating this physical response of preparedness in ourselves. And if something then were to happen and this is, you know, relevant to my world, but then if something were to happen, I've kind of already put myself in a weird condition and I'm inhibiting my body from doing what it needs to do and then panic collides and then I'm incapable. I can't function in that space. And so I'm not working with my body.

Number four is not being open to the idea, right? This is a lack of openness. Openness is a huge component of really carrying a powerful mindset or whatever you wanna call it. Open to the idea that things could happen. You know, I say if you're, if you get in the car and drive down the road and you have no expectation and no idea that you could ever get in a car accident, that's just like not in your frame of reference. And that'll never happen. And I'm not worried about it. You know, and then if it does happen, what then physiologically causes, you know, it is a new event. It is an unfamiliar event, and you were unprepared for it. And so you're caught off guard or your reaction time slows or your decision making slows or your perception of that slows. So just simply, you know, the lack of openness in this space and open to the idea that things could happen or might happen without generating fear is really the fourth one.

And then the fifth one is, and this is true across the board, it is how I allow the influencers or stressors of my day to impact me. And it goes back to what we talked about earlier, the lack of being recoverable, the lack of, you know, literally being disciplined enough that when I can't find my car keys and I find them, I actually allow myself to settle for a minute and be like, okay, I got my car keys and then transition to the next moment. Not, I can't find my car keys. Where is my car keys? Okay, I got them now let's keep going, right? It's that control mechanism. And when I give up that control mechanism of how things were impacting me, I fall into the stacking effect. And then, you know, things compound and I find myself kind of in a crap show at some point in time. I find myself in the chaos rather than, you know, being calm in the chaos.

So those are the five, those are the five that consistently without fail. If I look at a failure performance or a fracture in performance or things not going the way we want them to go almost every time, one of those five or multiple of those five are clearly defined and existing in this space.

Katie: Yeah. That's so helpful. Yes. To just have a framework to be able to work through like that. And I can't believe our time has already flown by so quickly. This has been such a fun interview. A couple questions I love

to ask at the end, the first being if there's a book or a number of books that have had a dramatic impact on your life and if so, what are they and why?

Jeff: Yeah, so, you know, you had sent that to me so I had to go back and look because books for me are like timely really, right? They tend to show up when you need them. But I would say probably some of the more recent ones that I think have really helped me make transition between my old life and the life I now live. One was "Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself" by Joe Dispenza. I really appreciated the way he approached looking at ourselves, this idea of calmness, this idea of physiological response because he took both a very scientific and, you know, almost esoteric approach to how we deal with ourselves. And a lot of evidence-based research in there. I guess his first book about the brain was "Super Brainiac". I've not read that yet. I would probably enjoy it. But you know, from the way he lays it out, most people were kind of like, "Okay, Joe, too much information." But that was a pretty significant, pretty significant book for me in a lot of ways.

And then early on, early on in my career, I had the opportunity you know, big failure leadership I talked about on my podcast and I use it in all my teaching tools. But I read Daniel Goldman's "Primal Leadership" where he breaks down six distinct styles from affiliate of all the way down to the other end of the spectrum of like pace setting and commanding. And at that time I could see where I lived in this pace setting, commanding style of leadership, which we can get into very easily as parents. You know, kind of like, "Hey, we gotta go, here's the deal. This is what we gotta do." And I'm setting the pace and I'm commanding environment.

And, you know, it was funny because I had, I mean I virtually had like a mutiny on the crew. They basically came down to Jeff's a jerk, him or me, we're out. We're not gonna deal with this anymore. And the way he articulated when he laid it down in the book, he talked about the great benefits of the commanding style leadership and the pace setting style leadership and driving to the car like, "I'm gonna turn around, I'm gonna sit everybody down, they're gonna listen to this because I'm right." And then he talks about all the negativity of it and how it should be used in a very finite point in time and how it should be limited. And I just started to almost tear up at like, "Crap, he's right, I'm not going back," you know. And it was a good call out book for me and what I needed to be responsible for and how I needed to kind of shift my architecture.

So those are good. And then like you said, you know, Ryan Holiday stuff, "Ego is the Enemy." And even Mark Manson stuff is really great. So I'm avid reader. I love to read people's research and then I actually look at the research that they found that, you know, built a book around as well. I'm a little bit of a geek that way. But I would say, you know, those are pretty applicable across the board and know those are pretty significant for how we operate in our normal lives as well.

Katie: I love those. I'll make sure those are in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm for any of you guys listening who went to find those. And for people who want to keep learning more or who are curious about your work, where can they find you online?

Jeff: Yeah, so the podcast is "Mindset Radio." It's mindsetradio.com, and that's actually provided by, through the Operational Mindset Foundation. So that's my life now. I really committed to creating a pathway to mentally, physically and emotionally prepare the men and women who choose to place themselves in harm's way every day. I think we've...having come from that community. The conversations you have on your podcast are new to this community, right? I mean they're still stuck in the old school stuff. And my purpose was really bring a new conversation to the table to talk about consciousness, to talk about the struggles that we have. The things we're exposed to, how to deal with that, how to really have a full life both on and off the job. And so now the foundation, is it mindset.org and the podcast is a mindsetradio.com are available on all the platforms.

Katie: Perfect. I love that. And lastly, any parting advice you wanna leave with the listeners today based on anything we've said or any other advice that you'd wanna give?

Jeff: Yeah, I mean I think the way I treat, you know, I run my show very much like you do Katie, you know, very conversational and I have a belief that people that listen to a podcast, need to have something they can do like the minute it's over. And so I try to leave my listeners with like the challenge out of that piece. And I would say, you know, today, presence, right? And really work the breath today. Like be hyper present to your breath and what's going on right now. Be curious, be curious about yourself, curious about your kids, curious about the situation and stay there like just hover there. Just you know, and if you feel yourself getting too far forward, too far to dinner, too far to the next day, too far to the next week, be curious as to why that is, why you need to feel that way, what that provides for you and just no judgment, right? No right or wrong. You're not doing anything wrong, you're not bad, none of that. Just curious. Just be curious, be present and see what shows up. That would be what I would say.

Katie: I love it. I think that's a perfect place to wrap up and I'm really grateful for your time. This has been such a fun conversation and hopefully helpful to everyone listening. Thanks for being here.

Jeff: Thanks Katie.

Katie: And thanks as always to all of you for sharing your most valuable asset, your time with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did, and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

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