

Chris Powell Opens Up About 'Extreme Weight Loss,' Drugs, And Divorce

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SUMMARY

David, a 630-pound man, received a grim prognosis from his doctor, prompting him to reach out to Chris Powell for help. Chris, a fitness expert and former host of "Extreme Weight Loss," emphasizes the intertwined nature of physical health and mental well-being, advocating for small, sustainable changes rather than strict diets. His journey includes overcoming his own struggles with addiction and finding purpose in helping others transform their lives through movement and mindfulness.

- *Obesity-related health issues are a leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.*
- *Chris Powell founded Move One Million, a program promoting daily movement and mindfulness.*
- *The program is inspired by Japan's Radio Taiso, which encourages collective movement for health.*
- *Chris emphasizes the importance of addressing both physical and mental health in transformation.*
- *His personal journey includes overcoming addiction and navigating a public divorce while focusing on co-parenting.*
- *He advocates for taking responsibility for one's actions and the importance of hope in personal transformation.*
- *The program has gained international traction, reaching 71 countries and various demographics, including schools and senior living facilities.*

- A gentleman named David, who was 630 pounds at the time, and the doctor had just left his house and said, "You're not gonna see 30, you'll absolutely die before then". And he just wrote me this long letter saying, "I feel like I'm made for more. I feel like my life it can't be in vain". - It's been said you can have all the riches in the world, but if you don't have your health, you don't have much.

According to nationwide data, obesity related health issues such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer, are the second leading cause of preventable death. At 45, with three generations of type two diabetics in my family, I'm especially worried about this for myself. 50 years ago, the rate of obesity among Americans was 13% for adults and 7% for children. By 2020, the rate of obesity had risen to 42% for adults and 20% for children. And that was before COVID lockdowns shut down parks and gyms.

I know my fitness has declined big time over the past three years, and the impacts extend to

our mental health as well. A recent Harvard study found that running just 15 minutes a day can reduce the risk of major depression by 26%, given the adverse health issues associated with obesity, what can we do as dads to keep our kids healthy? And how can we improve our own health so that we have as much time with them and our future grandchildren as possible?

Well, today's guest, Chris Powell, was host of the popular TV show, "Extreme Weight Loss" on ABC, where he helped numerous people overcome obesity. Today, he's the founder of Move One Million, a daily broadcast that connects the world through movement, and co-hosts the, "I Needed That" Podcast. Chris has dedicated two decades to helping severely obese people achieve their weight loss goals, and found his life's purpose in the process. He's also struggled with his own mental health and had lots of helpful insights into that struggle as well.

- It got so clouded so fast when I was stuck in my own world and my own misery and just my own darkness, you know, how could I have possibly fallen into this rut of, oh my God, I'm a drug addict, I'm an opioid addict. How did that happen? And pulling myself out of the darkness, I found my happiness in service. I have knowledge and a passion for exercise and for movement and also for mindfulness now, because I've gone through this incredible mental journey and I realize it's all intertwined.

So what could I do for everyone who's suffering right now? - Chris is a great example of how helping others overcome their own personal challenges can bring deep meaning and fulfillment to our own lives, and maybe even lengthen them in the process. (upbeat music) All right Chris, welcome to "Dad Saves America". - Thank you. It's good to be here. - I'm really excited about this 'cause this is our last shoot of the year and that means we're coming up on New Year's resolutions.

(person laughing) - My busiest time of year for sure, yes. - So you are the guy for this. So I guess my first question is, we were talking about this before we started, I just turned 45, you're coming up on it, you're in amazing shape and I am a mess. (people laughing) - Well, hold on. This is job security for me, so you gonna get outta jail free card there. - So, but no, seriously though, like we were saying, it's kind of before we got started.

I'm 45, I'm, you know, just,
I'm actually coming down. I was 203, I'm now like 190. - Okay, good. - But I should be like 175. I'm especially concerned about this because I have a long history of diabetes in my family, and so this is like this moment for me where I'm like, okay, my dad got diabetes when he was 44, right? And I'm 45 now, I don't have it yet. My sugars are fine, but I'm really concerned about it and it's really hard.

(person laughing) - I get it. - And I'm 100% Italian and food is like a religion, and every kind of thing that's tasty is a treat for me. So help me. - Oh, okay, well first of all, the scale's going in the right direction, so I wanna give you kudos for that, that's amazing. And so if you can keep that trend going, obviously it's only gonna be beneficial for your journey, for where you wanna go. And then on top of that, you know, here's the thing, my approach and what a lot of people have seen me do before in the past it used to be very, very strict.

And if I could go back and I'd do it all over again, I would be so much more lenient because the thing is, you know, strict can work for a very short period of time. But at the same time, we need to honor and respect culture and traditions, and like ultimately food, it does need to be enjoyable. You know this as well as I do. And so the thing is like you start depriving and restricting people from the foods that really make them feel good, then down the road if we don't have other mechanisms in place, that can be a big problem.

Here's what I would do as far as you go, I don't wanna take anything away. This might sound a little bit different, and it's the whole concept of adding and not removing. So I'm not gonna come in here and say, and take away your desserts or anything like that. I would definitely want to start exploring what we could add to your meals that are going to, number one, be high in fiber, higher in protein, higher in water as well.

Things that are gonna keep you fuller longer that would then prevent you from overeating subconsciously later on in the day. So like there's all kinds of different things and it certainly required you and I sitting down and saying, okay, I want you to just share with me everything that you love to eat during the day. I would go through the entire week because we love variety, right? And I'm sure especially

being full-blooded Italian, I'm sure all the different pastas and the desserts and everything like that.

- I'm getting rid of dairy. I find, you know, we made this film about the way animals are raised for food and my wife is mostly vegan, and I've been occasionally vegan, but man cheese. (people laughing) - So here's the thing, well, especially for diabetes you don't necessarily have to give up cheese because it's the sugars that you really wanna watch for. So let's tackle dairy, let's push it down the road. Why give it up now?

You know what if you made some other changes and you saw your biomarkers improve significantly without removing dairy? Would that sound good to you? (people laughing) I feel like this is a commercial or something, but. - I'd be willing to buy that, sign me up. - For sure, for sure. That's the thing. There's all kinds of different solutions we can do, but they'll be so beautifully unique to you and your lifestyle. And that's what the thing is like, when I'm gonna work with somebody, I wanna come in and I want them to literally just paint their entire lifestyle for me.

You're the artist and I'm gonna have you literally display everything for me and we'll just go through and make tiny little changes. Because if I came through and changed it all in one fell swoop, which I've done that a lot before in the past, I might be able to get you very fast results in a very short amount of time, but I would lose and you would lose in the long game. And that's what this is really all about.

It's not just getting you, you know, incredible biomarkers into 165 pounds and a six pack by March. No, I wanna to set you up for life. And so, and in order to do that, it's so important to make one small change at a time. And I can't stress that enough. And this is where my approach, I'm a perpetual student, I've done a lot in the past and there's a lot I would change. And the more I learn about human behavior and the psychology and the emotional and the psychological aspect of it, it all boils down to making small, tiny, sustainable changes and then stacking those in order to really create a sustainable lifestyle for someone.

- So I wanna take a step back to that learning process. So take me to where you first found this passion for fitness. You know, this is your life, is fitness and in wellbeing and health. So where did this start for you? - So, it started, I'll give you a little backstory behind it. I was the smallest kid in school growing up, from about fourth grade to seventh grade that's when the bullying started. I was an easy

target 'cause
I was such a tiny little kid.

- And where is this? - I grew up in Salinas, California. So born in Arizona, I jumped around a lot. Arizona, Washington, Idaho, went to California. Really spent a lot of my elementary school years and early high school years in California. Then moved back to the Pacific Northwest. So fourth to seventh grade, Salinas, California. Beautiful part of the country. Yeah. Like it's absolutely gorgeous, nevertheless, school is school, and when you're the smallest kid in school you're an easy target.

And so that's when it started. And so it was the fourth to seventh grade really, really rough on me. - Well, in middle school, my son calls middle school "The Hunger Games" (people laughing) And I think that's right. - I think it's pretty. - If you can survive it, you might be okay. - [Chris] Yes, no, kidding. - But surviving it is not guaranteed. - It was brutal. It was a time in my life that really started to shape some of my own beliefs about myself because it was during that time I certainly felt powerless.

I felt like so much was taken away from me. You know, when you're growing up you might think a certain way about yourself and all of a sudden the bullying starts and you don't know how to handle a situation. And these bullies, a lot of them, they're significantly larger than me and I just felt powerless. - Were you overweight? Did you struggle with weight when you were a kid? - No, I was just tiny. I was really, really tiny, in fact.

- "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid" about you. That's what it really is. - And then we ended up moving from Salinas to the Pacific Northwest. And I tried out for, and this is my first time I was a sophomore at this point, and I was still really small at the time. I thought, okay, new school, reinvent myself. I'm gonna go out for the football team. I'm gonna get out there and I'm gonna show them how tough I am.

Smallest kid on the field. And let me tell you, I was in training camp for a week, and they made it really clear that I was not gonna be a part of that team. They would push me out of the huddles. They wouldn't let me drink water at the fountains. Like, it was just, it was a really difficult situation for me. And I was the new kid, my parents saw. We had been living in the Pacific Northwest for a couple weeks at this time.

And school's just starting and they just saw my spirit break even more. 14 years old, I came home, I

ended up quitting football. And it was one of the few things that I quit and it haunted me to this day. (people laughing) - You're gonna be all right. - Deep down inside. - Trust me, those high school football players are very jealous of you. (people laughing) - You know, it all turned out. - It all worked out.

- Because it steered me toward my passion. What happened is I came home from school, my parents saw how it hurt me. Just again, it was my stature, feeling broken. And I came home from school one day and they had cleared out the living room furniture, and there was a weight set in the middle of the living room floor. - So paint the picture for me. 'Cause like, so what was your house like? Did you walk right into the living room?

Like what was this experience of coming in and was it a surprise? - Yeah, so basically like right through the front door, living room is right there on the left hand side. And you kind of walk through into the kitchen. So I walked to the door and I looked to the left and everything's cleared out. And there is a beautiful, one of those like universal style weight sets there with the bench press, the butterfly chest, the pec deck, it's got a lap pull machine.

They had the bicep curl, the preacher curl there on, I mean, it was the whole thing in one. And it was sitting right there in the middle of the living room. The only other piece of furniture they actually kept in the living room was the entertainment center and the TV. Thank goodness. - It is America. (person laughing) So these were all the pieces for your future were in place. You got the wait set, the television there.

- Yep, in full disclosure. For the first couple weeks, I didn't really know what to do, like exactly like how to mess around with this thing. So I would sit on the bench and watch TV, and I would sit there because the couch was gone. So I'd sit there, you know, and just start flipping through channels. And then eventually I'm like, ah, I'm just gonna lay under this thing and, huh. Okay, so I could do the bar.

Throw some fives on there. Okay, I could do, that's kind of cool. Ooh, that burns. Ugh, you know? Racked it. And it became a thing every single day I would come home from school, put a little bit more on the bench press and I felt myself getting stronger, and sure enough, what was difficult wasn't difficult anymore. I could wrap out a few more. Get into some pec deck and maybe do some preacher curls. And I started playing around with it.

- Did you get any magazines or anything to like, help you? Did you go, you went down the rabbit hole? - Not yet, I was just

playing around with it. This is me just discovering it for myself. My parents just kind of let me do what I needed to do and they let me just find it as I was ready. And then sure enough, about three months in, I'm in the bathroom, close the mirror, like the cabinet open, I'm looking for something, I close it and I'm like, huh.

Hold on. Mom, mom, come here. - Then here come the magazines. I mean, it was Flex Magazine, Muscle Fitness. I'm like, yes. Oh, this is it. And it was like, I felt, even now chills, I just, it gave me my power back. And I felt, even though I was still small in stature, I felt strong again for the first time since fourth grade. And I was like, this is the answer. Like, I might not be the biggest kid out there, but I can be the strongest and I can be the fastest, I can be the.

- Are you fast? - I got pretty darn fast. I'm almost 45 also, so. - I mean, I could take off fast, I could probably pull a hammy right now. And so I was fast, and that before you know it, I'm just knee-deep in every muscle and Fitness Flex Magazine you could possibly imagine. I was absorbing as much as I possibly could and it was feeling so good, and I was applying the routines, and all the different programming.

And it was like that be, I was obsessed. And then actually to the point where I only worked out at my house. I mean, I was still worked out whenever I could, but then I was so confident after a few months of doing that I started working out in the school gym. And so like, I would go to the school gym after school. - Now you were confident because you felt like you weren't gonna get judged by the other guy.

Like what was the reason that was a confidence move? - When I looked in the mirror, I saw muscle and so I don't know what everyone else saw, but I saw the difference. And so I walked into the gym, I was like, hey ladies, you know what's going on guys? But the thing is, I remembered all the things that I would read. Before I knew it I was in the gym and I was giving other people advice on how to do their bicep curls, oh, you wanna take that to failure.

You know, like aim for 10 to 15 reps on that set. Hold on, I'll be right over there with you. Okay, good, that's looking really good. Hey, you bring your elbows in just a little bit. Drop those shoulders back. And I'm just like, before I knew it like. - You were training. - I'm not kidding. This is like, I should have been paying attention then because it was ingrained in me. It made me feel so good.

It gave me my power. I was so excited to share this with other people. And if I knew better, I would've said, "Okay, this is my path in life". I was forcing a slightly different path at the time, but nevertheless, like it was clear as day, it was right there in front of me. - So you studied, I understand exercise science. - Exercise science, yes. - So what is that? (people laughing) I saw this and I'm like, exercise science.

- Yeah, like what is it like, just jumping jacks, what is this? - So the concentrations of physiology and biomechanics. That was what I studied in school and nowadays they call it kinesiology, much fancier name. - Yeah, so gotta get the Latin roots in there. - Absolutely. Yes, and it actually was considered a pre-med degree, which is awesome. So it satisfied all the requirements to go pre-med. - Oh, interesting. - So because it was heavily science-based.

My love was biomechanics and physiology, just the mechanisms for how it works. How our body works in motion. And it's a beautiful thing. I mean it's the most incredible gift we've ever been given, and if we just learned to appreciate it for what it is and how it works, we can change it. And because it's made to change. - Is there a thing about the way the body works that you think is most misunderstood that you learned both from your study and from your sense of doing this work, and being a trainer and helping people?

- Yes, I did not learn this lesson until probably over the last 15 years. What I didn't understand, and what I'm constantly just seeking to learn more and more and more about was the human behavior side of it. The psychology and the emotional aspect of transformation. Because I mean, I spent 20 years writing programs for people, exercise programs, nutrition programs. They don't do any good unless you can get through this part first. And we're still trying to crack that code.

And I mean I could just take a number 'cause I'm one of thousands, tens of thousands of other professionals out there who are trying to figure this out too. But when you throw in just the human element of it and the human behavior and the psychology and the emotions behind it, that dictates everything, and it makes everything that much more complex. - I have found myself drawn towards psychology in the past several years in a way that I never was before.

And oh, we had Dr. Drew on talking about things like therapy and I've never had therapy. So this is like a whole new world for me to think about psychology in a more formal way. You come outta school, what's your first job in this space? What happens

next? - So my first job was actually as a flight instructor. (people laughing) So as I had mentioned before, like early in the story, I was forcing a different path.

My father's a pilot, he's a great guy. He was my hero. He was a fighter pilot in the Navy actually and so. - That's pretty awesome, top gun dad. - He was the head of an aggressor squadron at Top Gun in Miramar. - He was literally top gun dad. - So you remember Viper and he flew those the camouflage A-4s. My dad flew the camouflage A-4s against the F-14 guys. And so he was just a badass dude.

And his call sign, like everyone's got a funny call sign. His was gunny, and gunny that's what they used to call the marine drill sergeants because he was just so rigid. It was just, it's gotta be done. Like he's just a hardcore dude. Nicest guy ever but like when he's on and when he's doing what he needs to do, he's as serious as it gets. And he's a phenomenal pilot. So a bad dude. I mean, just like hardcore hero, right?

- Is your dad still alive? - He is, yes.

- That's great. - Oh, I was just with him a few weeks ago. He lives up in Gig Harbor Washington now. And just a great dude. So he went from the military into the airlines. He actually ended up retiring as the most senior captain at Delta Airlines. And now he's actually one of the head flight instructors for Alaska Airlines. 74 years old, still going strong. Sorry for the little tangent there.

- No, that's fine, it's Dad Saves America. So Top gun dad takes the cake I think. - Yeah, he is. - Dad literally saves America. - Yeah, exactly right. But he was my idol, so I always thought, I was like, I'm gonna be like my dad. I'm gonna fly. So when I turned 17, that's when I got my private pilot's license. 'Cause that's the age of which you can, and actually, when I was in college, I was getting my other ratings, my instrument rating, commercial rating, my multi engine rating, my flight instructor rating, and so when I.

- So you were doing this alongside of the exercise science - I was, 'cause I didn't see a future in exercise science. - So then were you just taking it out of passion then? - Yeah, I went to college initially and I was in engineering, because I was like, well, I'm gonna be a pilot, might as well understand the engineering side of things. I couldn't pass math, I couldn't get past statics, dynamics, calc three, I mean, or calculus integrated physics.

I mean, it was ridiculous. The airlines, they require a four year degree. I'm gonna do something I absolutely love, switch to exercise science, physiology, biomechanics, and I just rocked it, it was fun. - So it was like, I can graduate with this and not hate myself and

maybe not have it happen. - Yes, and I was blessed with some of the most incredible professors, you know, Dr., Dr. Wayne Willis. Like, man, they just instilled even more passion in me on like how the body works.

And so I was just like, I got to soak it up and I rocked it, it was great. Got my degree, and then I was like, okay, well I'm gonna go continue flight instructing, build my hours, I actually, I mean, I've got 1,280 hours flight time, which is more than enough to get hired now. I had a resume that looked amazing. I actually had an airline. - You probably do pretty well right now because the airlines are really.

- I know, right? Seriously, I mean, that was a good time. But my career wouldn't be so long. I'd have a 20 year career and I'd be out, so mandatory retirement at 65, so I actually, I had an airline interview, I had friends there was at Mesa Airlines back in the day, it was called Mesa Airlines. - So set the stage, when is this? - September 13th, 2001. - So two days after 9/11, you're interviewing to fly airplanes.

- I was supposed to interview to fly airplanes. Needless to say. - All right. - So September 11th changed the course of my life. Here's the funny thing, I've talked about this a little bit before, but I never loved flying airplanes, I never loved it. I never trusted myself fully, I had some awful experiences. In fact, we're in Texas right now. I lost an engine over Loveland, Texas, way out west Texas in the middle of a bunch of oil fields.

I ended up landing on an oil field. I've had so many terrifying experiences at the controls of an airplane. I didn't trust myself, I didn't like it anymore. I can't tell you how many times I would land. I would sign my student's log book, pass it off to them, wait for them to walk out the gate and go like. I made it again, I made it through another one. Oh my gosh, I don't know how much more I could do.

It was not the path I was supposed to go down. And the whole time, I'm like, how does my dad do it? My dad just, he wakes up and he lives and breathes this stuff. Like he can't talk about flying without lighting up. And I'm like, I just, I don't

wanna go to the airport. All I want to do is I wanna go to the gym and I wanna teach people how to train. And I was like, but what am I gonna do?

Be a personal trainer
for the rest of my life? I was like, it sounds amazing, but I don't know how I
could raise a family. - I think the retirement
age might be earlier than 65 on that job too, right? - Yeah, for sure. And it wasn't about doing what I loved. It
was about how can I
raise a family on this? And I didn't know how I
could possibly raise a family as a personal trainer.

And it was like, it's a difficult,
it's a competitive space. And so, you know, September 11th happened, I woke up that morning and
I was just like, oh my gosh. I mean, first of all, how horrific. - [Speaker] Yeah. - And then I'm watching it all go
down. And then it dawned on
me, I went, oh my gosh. Like my suit is being tailored
for my airline interview. I've spent six years building my hours. The airlines are gonna, they're gonna fire and
furlough
for the next two and a half, three years, I gotta figure something out.

September 12th, I called the local gym. I walked down there and said,
I have a degree in exercise, science, physiology, biomechanics. I want a job, they hired
me there on the spot. And within a month I had
a waiting list of people waiting to train with
me because I was just, I was the trainer in the
gym who was so excited. I would literally, like every session was an experience and it was lessons, and before I
knew it, people were like floating
around listening to as I was training with my client.

And before I knew, it was
like I had a waiting list and I was like, this is
what I'm meant to do. And I was loving every minute of it, and it was fun and it
just took off from there. So sorry for the little
tangent there, but. - I mean. - Life has taken me in all
kinds of crazy twists and turns. - I mean, one of the things I love about what we do with the show is exploring
people's path, right?

Because I think as dads, when we think about our kids and the path they're gonna take, we do this thing which is
weird, right? Which is, we personally took a crazy path, and yet we want our kids to have like a linear
path, to like have a sense of where they're gonna succeed. And yet we know that that's
not how it worked for us. - No. - So I love sharing these stories because it's so important

for people to see like, oh, here's a successful person.

And they had no idea. They didn't even want to do the thing that they set out to do. You have a transformative experience with somebody that reaches out to you named David, right? - Yes. - So, but how does that happen? Now you're in it, you're starting to do training. - Correct. - How do you get to a place where somebody would reach out for help? - I got really popular as a trainer. And then in the training world, when you're working in a large gym and you build a large clientele, the first thing you do is you take your clientele somewhere else because you realize, they're paying the gym.

And it's so funny because on the flip side of the coin, I ended up growing to a certain point where I bring on trainers. Sure enough, when they all build their clientele, they're gone, it's the nature of the beast here. So I built a large clientele. I ended up moving to a separate gym, partnered with another trainer that also had a large clientele as well. And so we ended up buying out the training rights of a world gym and we're just smashing it.

And then. - So now you were an owner, one of the owners of the gym? - Correct, yes, yes. - [Speaker] Entrepreneur. - Yeah, in fact, my business partner, just the greatest dude. We ended up taking two completely different paths. He ended up going into the Navy Seals and he's actually, he's one of the senior officers of Seal team eight right now. - So he's more comfortable with the planes. - Yeah, yeah, exactly. He jumps outta planes I used to fly them, so.

- Well, actually that would be a good combo. You can be worried you're gonna crash and he's prepared. If it looks like that's gonna happen. - Yes, exactly. - All right. - I ended up landing this gig, we're both owning, the training rights of a world gym in Tempe, Arizona. A friend of mine who's worked for Hugo Boss, and he's like, hey, we're gonna do a segment on the news. Why don't you come in? I'm gonna throw you in some really nice Hugo Boss stuff and just model it for me.

So, as I got in through those doors, I just thought, what a great opportunity. I would love to be able to share my passion for fitness. So I asked for a producer, just when I was in there, I'm supposed to be modeling clothes. And they're like, there's this guy, ask for a producer. They pointed me to a woman at a desk. I walked over there

said, you don't know me, but my name's Chris Powell. I have a degree in exercise science.

I'm passionate about fitness. Here's some ideas I was thinking about for fitness segments. And she's like, well, no one just comes up and asks me to be on TV, but all right, come back in two weeks, let's give it a shot. So the thing is, if you don't ask. - Great lesson. - If I walk outta here without asking. Like, what's the worst that could happen? The worst that could happen, I'd walk outta here just the same way I walked in, best that could happen, I could walk outta here and actually have a gig on the morning news.

Sure enough, I landed a gig as the Good Morning Arizona Fitness guy. And I had that for eight years. - And were you thinking like, were you thinking like this is like advertising, this is exposure for the business. This is great. - Absolutely, and exposure to a lot of people that I could share my passion about fitness with, so for me, it was just always about how can I help people? How can I share with them?

How can I help them take the first few steps? But I also didn't understand how the TV worked and the audience worked. And I wasn't exactly sure who I was talking to. So I was talking about glycogen depletion and super compensation, bigger bench press and a faster 40. And then the producer pulled me aside one day and she's like, look, people really like watching you because you're super excited, but no one knows what you're talking about.

And she's like, why don't you just bring it down to like the best top three button thigh exercises, here's four things you can do to lose weight in 2003, right. And I was like, got it. So I changed my segments and as I changed my segments, letters started pouring in and letters started pouring in. And what was really surprising about the letters it was the individuals that were 400 pounds, 500 pounds, 600 pounds within the state of Arizona.

But this is back in 2002, 2003. And so there was only like one or two documentaries that you could even see on TV for individuals that you saw that were five or 600 pounds. They were writing in, I mean, they would literally. - This is early days, there wasn't the reality TV that you're obviously like been a part of. That sort of brought this to light in a different way. - And I realized there's a lot of people out there suffering and they just don't know

how to get out of it.

They've got a huge mountain to climb and they just, a lot of them feel like they've just given up. They pride themselves on being invisible. And I was thinking about it and my heart just hurt as I was reading like these letters. And one in particular was from a gentleman named David, who was 630 pounds at the time, I was 24, he was 25. - 620 pounds, 25 years old. - And the doctor had just left his house and said, you're not gonna see 30, you'll absolutely die before then.

And he just wrote me this long letter saying, I feel like I'm made for more. I feel like my life, it can't be in vain. I want to get married, I wanna have kids, I wanna do all these things. And it just like, my heart just hurt for him. I couldn't stop thinking about it. But my producer even told me, she said, you can't answer all these letters. You can't save everyone. I couldn't stop thinking about David and it was just what he wrote really resonated with me.

So I drove to his house one day and I was like. - Did he send his, how did you know where he lives? - Yeah. I wrote back to him and I said, I just wanna meet with you. That's it, no promises. I just wanna meet with you. And he hadn't left his house in two years, so I knew he was gonna be there. So I was like, Hey, look, I'll see you on Tuesday. Right, and so I showed up and we hit it off.

I mean, we're sitting there, 10 minutes in, we are laughing, we're talking about South Park, we're telling jokes, we're just having the greatest time. And I'm like, look dude, I don't know where this is gonna go, but I'll see you Thursday. And I showed up every other day for two years. He ended up losing 400 pounds, became one of my best friends in the process. And that's where I realized like my passion is helping people through the massive journey of transformation.

But even then it was, I was still so science-based, it was like, this is how we're gonna do it. We're gonna structure the

program this way and we're gonna take you through a progressive overload. And it was all that, I didn't realize that emotionally and psychologically, he needed a friend, he needed that, the accountability was of course extremely helpful, but it was just, there was so much that was happening on the emotional and psychological realm that needed to be fulfilled in order for him to actually take these steps, that's in hindsight, but as we were going through it, it was an amazing ride as he's losing all this weight and we're just hanging out as buddies every other day for two years.

So he ended up losing 400 pounds. - Where did you start? How did you even know where to start there? Because that's a such an extreme situation relative to like probably what you were dealing with with your, you're coming into the gym, you're not 630 pounds. - Right. - So where do you start there? - I tried to take a common sense approach because he hadn't moved, really moved his body for years. And so I thought, okay, why don't we teach him how to move again?

And I'd want to teach him how to move through his environment. He would actually move from his couch to his room. They did have some stairs, and for the longest time, he was stuck in his basement. 'Cause he didn't wanna go up the stairs, but he made it up the stairs, and I was like, if he can make it up the stairs once, he could do it a couple more times. So what we had, we literally had a couch and we had some stairs, and so we started with the basics and it was literally just get up off the couch however you need to.

And it was, he'd kind of throw one leg, throw the other leg, kind of get a rocky motion going and then kind of reach down and start lifting himself up. And for a while I would grab his hands and I would help him up. And then we'd sit him back down and we'd get him up and we'd get him back down. And my goal was simply applying sets and repetitions and progressive overload. 'Cause that's how the human body changes, right?

That's how we can develop muscular strength and endurance and everything, just to get him to move through his environment. Because if I can start to do that, okay, well then now we can transition wherever. Then before I know it, he was going down the stairs and he would actually use, he had such a huge abdomen, he would push it up against the wall to break him as he was going down. There was actually, there's a massive like streak along the wall that was like gray 'cause he would push it up against the wall.

But that's okay because it's what we did to get him to move again. And he would use that as a

break as he was going down. And then he'd turn around and he had a couple rails and he would pull on the rails and he'd get up the stairs. - It's funny because I'm just realizing something that I haven't really thought about before, which is when you're heavy in general, but when you're that heavy, you're like probably having muscle atrophy and you're also really heavy, so moving is hard.

- It is. - So he's gotta move a 630 pound body with legs that haven't been getting exercise. - They hadn't, but he still had to get up and down a couple times a day. And have you ever seen anyone who squats 600 pounds a couple times a day? Like guess what? There was some muscle atrophy, but you'd be blown away at how much muscle he had on him. The physiology side of me. I was just like.

- It's kind of amazing. - Let's go, I'm licking my chops, the thing is, muscle is the most active living tissue on the body, right. So that's where the majority of your metabolism, your resting metabolic rate is due to the amount of muscle mass that you've got. He was sitting on a V12 engine and he didn't even know it. His glutes, quads and hams were freaking massive. And I'm sitting there, I'm like, I'm looking at his legs and they were huge and I'm like, let's go, he hasn't even revved these things up yet.

I can't wait to put him in motion and to feed him properly. Right, and put some fuel in there and like get this guy going like he's gonna drop like a rock. And he did, this is the thing, like I know a lot of people had known me for my work with individuals who might be in the super obese category, which is, they might be 100 to 300 pounds overweight. But the thing is, all those individuals out there who are thinking, oh, my metabolism is shot.

You're sitting on a V12 engine, your legs, which is the largest muscle group of the body, again, they're massive. And so like all we need to do is just stimulate those suckers for growth a little bit. Put them in motion and you can drop so fast. That's the beauty of it. It's like all the potential's right there. - What did you do on the food front, on the diet front? There's a lot of nonsense out there about diet.

So how did you approach that then? - Right, I'm glad you brought that up because the thing is, I'm not a registered dietician. I'm a personal trainer. My degree and my specialty

was

physiology and biomechanics. Again, it was not dietetics. And here's the thing I should have known where my scope of practice ended and I didn't because there was also a friendship there and everything, I went far. It was just like we were buddies at this point.

So we went far beyond

that and I was like, hey, I ended up creating a plan for him just talking him through like what it is that he really liked to eat. He loved pizza, loved ice cream. We did remove ice cream, but I was like, hey, if you can't have pizza today, what would you say if you could always have it tomorrow? And so I created something, it was a carb cycling approach with him. And again, that's outside of my scope of practice.

I cannot prescribe meal plans. But nevertheless, anyone who comes to me that's like, well I don't know what's gonna work best for you. Could be high carb, could be low carb, could be keto, could be vegan, it might just be your regular diet and making a couple little tweaks to it. I don't know what's gonna work best for you, and guess what? They all work, they all work. There's no one, I'm no zealot now, you know, before I was just like, go carb cycling because carb cycling was big in the body building world.

And so a lot of bodybuilders

would carb cycling. - What's carb cycling? - Carb cycling is basically, it's creating a pattern of high and low carb days throughout your week. So sometimes you go two low carb days followed by a high carb or refeed, drop back down into low carbs, and as you carb cycle, you calorie cycle. So high carb days coincide with higher calorie days, then you drop into lower carb days. So that's what I did with him.

So we would say like,

do two lower carb days where he could enjoy lots of chicken and green beans and cheese and he could have bacon and higher like fattier foods, but still stay at a calorie deficit. Then we'd do like a higher carb day, like where he could have his pastas, speaking to your, yeah, And he loved his refried beans and his Mexican food. So you have his beans and rice and all that stuff. - [Speaker] Yeah.

- Then we would have another, a bigger reed where he could have his pizza and everything like

that, it worked for him. But I'm not saying that that approach works for everybody. But I came from, again, it was about the manipulation, it was the science of it. But now you ask me like, what's the best approach? Depends. - You sound like my buddy Jeffrey Kane, who for a time was the CEO of CrossFit, he's a buff guy, great guy.

And he was like, all diets work. He's said the same thing. you gotta eat in moderation. - That's, bingo. That's it, create a calorie deficit. Find something that works best for you. Like whatever it is that works best for you, that's the best diet that you can possibly follow. - You were talking about psychology earlier and you've developed this friendship with David. - Yes. - How did he get to that place? How did he get to a place where he's in his basement at 630 pounds?

What was underneath the surface of that? - David, he was molested when he was younger by one of his childhood friends, who was an older kid. And it was just something that he never shared and he harbored that. And he ended up turning to food to deal with his own shame and feeling like it was his fault and all of that. And so that was the beginning of. - When did you learn that over the course of your relationship with him?

- Early on, he shared with that with me in like the first month of going through the process. And that made a lot more sense to me. I was like, okay, even not understanding fully the psychological side of transformation, I was like, okay, I did understand that especially, for so many of the individuals that really struggle with using food to numb those emotions. So many of them come from sexual trauma. And especially in the work that I've done, I'll tell you straight up is, with the individuals I've worked with, more than 50% have had some severe sexual trauma in their past, usually from childhood.

- So I mean obviously that is a violation of your body. - 100%. - What have you learned about what's happening there that that would lead people down that road? I mean, like, I can pop, but what the hell? I don't know anything, so. - I was blessed to work with some phenomenal psychologists in my day who have actually helped people through their trauma. And they always said that, you know, an individual's first common sense reaction is to, okay, I'm going to eat and I'm gonna protect myself because the thing is, if I make myself more unattractive, then it won't lure this individual to me, especially the people

that are going through chronic sexual abuse.

And so they'll try to protect themselves. - And is this something that people are doing consciously or unconsciously or both? I guess, who knows? That's a good question, who knows? It could be both, and then so, but typically that's the response. And then there's a saying, and I did learn this from the psychologist, they were saying like, every 50 pounds is like, it's another layer of protection. But at the same time that's as they're putting it on, but as it's coming off, something very traumatic starts to happen.

I've helped a lot of people through the journey of significant weight loss. And as they begin to lose a lot of weight, a lot of these past traumas start to come off because they start to feel like they're losing the protective layers. And so it's really important to have those psychologists there to help them deal with the things that come up that they don't even realize are buried underneath. - So you've got a top gun dad who's kind of a drill sergeant.

- Yeah. - You're kind of a gym rat. How did you interact with this therapy psychology stuff? Because this is soft, open-hearted stuff you've gotta navigate. - [Chris] Yes. - How did you do it? - When I started to realize the intricacies and how the everything is like, the approach needed to be holistic. I've always been open to it, I'm way softer than my dad. I definitely, I got that from my mom's side for sure. - Were you ever called a girly man at the gym?

- Not that I remember. - Between fourth and seventh grade, yes, I was. - For the young people, that is a Schwarzenegger reference. - Yes. And you have to say it in your best Arnold voice, right? (people laughing) Yeah, no, I've always, I've been open to it because the thing is, helping David through, but also like helping a lot of individuals and running up against walls where no matter how hard I was pushing the science of it, I could not get them to comply or to adhere.

That's what I realized, I was like, I'm missing pieces here. I'm missing a major component of this overall puzzle. And I'm still trying to figure it out because the thing is, like, everyone's puzzle, everyone's code is different. And so it's like, it takes a lot to learn about an individual to try to crack that code. - You had your own trauma

that you've been through. Tell me about that. - It's been a wild ride. I would say probably one of the first real canyons that I ended up going through in my life, it was actually David and David's family who helped me out.

But it was after he'd gone through his transformation and he and I were like best friends. I ended up herniating a disc in my back, and this is back in 2006. And back in those days, it's like, you know, you pull a muscle, you hurt your back. A herniated disc is something, it's pretty severe. The doctor's like, hey, here, take this for pain. It's called Vicodin. Okay, cool. And sure enough, take a couple of Vicodin. I'm like, whoa, man, I'm feeling good.

Okay, that's a lot better. At that time I was like, I've always been a dreamer and I like to create and build. And so in the process of David going through his transformation, something that kind of helped teach him the process of nutrition. I invented this nutrition system and it taught people how to eat my colors and numbers. And so I ended up going to a colleague of mine, tooled a factory in China, borrowed a couple hundred thousand dollars and made 12,000 of these things and I shipped them over.

- Wow. - Yeah, shipped them over. And I'm like, I'm gonna teach the world how to eat and I'm going to teach everyone and they're gonna have the tool that they need to finally change their life for good. And just this perpetual, I'm a dreamer, but I just didn't understand the business side of anything. And so they ended up shipping this product over and I remember opening up the box, I was at the docks in San Pedro, we shipped it over to a nearby warehouse and a tear opened the box and I pulled the first one out and it like, falls apart.

- Oh. - And immediately, I don't remember all of that moment. I do remember somehow like I was on the ground with my hands on the ground and like I put my head on the concrete and I just, I remember just feeling so much weight and just thinking, I don't know what I'm gonna do now. I was sitting on with a container full of a couple hundred thousand dollars that I had borrowed of product I had saved \$100,000 training people.

So 100K of my own money, 200K on borrowed money. And I just thought, how am I gonna get myself out of this? In the process, like in the midst of that I was, I mean, it was a couple weeks later, that's when I herniated the disc in my back. - You got this like literal, well guess it is not technically literal, but this giant financial

weight and your hopes and it's all wrapped up in this, the abyss moment.

- In the meantime, I'm having panic attacks. So I get a prescription for Vicodin and I get a prescription for Xanax. And I quickly realize that that made the pain go away. And by the way, opioids and benzos, not a good combo. Vicodin quickly turned into Percocet, by the way the doctor wasn't prescribing those anymore. You ask around, back in those days, you could find anything that you wanted really, really quickly. And that turned into Oxycontin.

And before I knew it, I was two years severely addicted to painkillers, to opioids, and I ended up, I mean, money was gone. Everything that I had saved up, I spent two years running from the people that I had borrowed the money from. I was running and running and run. And the meantime though, painkillers, not only did they kill the physical pain, but they also killed the emotional pain. And so it became my escape. So from 2006 to 2008, I was gone.

I don't remember much of that window of time. I really don't. It's interesting even trying to go back and remember and tell the story of it. I'm like, it's a big blur. I ended up moving in with a really, a good friend of mine, but unfortunately this good friend of mine was also severely addicted to painkillers. And so we had a lot of them coming through our place and he owned the condo. He was going upside down like I was.

And we end up, I remember one night he ended up getting something called Suboxone, which it blocks the receptors. And so actually if you take opioids, it's supposed to make you sick. And we were trying to come off of it together. Oh, okay. And so we're like, all right dude, we're gonna do this. So he got some suboxone and it blocked his receptors and he ended up his intestines, it stops the peristalsis in the intestines. And so you get like backed up, right?

Yeah, and so his intestines ended up releasing and he had developed all these cysts around his intestines. So he started bleeding out, like right there in the living room, and I was like, dude, you have to go to the hospital he's like, no, I can't go to the hospital. My parents are gonna kill me. There's no way. - So how old are you both at this point? - This is 2008, so I was 30. Here I had gone through this incredible journey, like helped David changed his life, at this point, I mean, we had been, his story, it was everywhere.

I mean, we had been on 2020
and Oprah and everything, and it was like, I was
trying to keep it together, but people don't realize, even when I was on the morning news, I was popping
Vicodin just to be myself. 'Cause you start chasing that. You have to be high just to be yourself, because when
you're not on it, you're in this severe chemical depression. I was doing that just to get by and it was just this huge
mask of me trying to cover up that my life had completely fallen apart.

It was just, I was a shell of a human. So my, my roommate's bleeding out. I finally, we get him
to go to the hospital and I'm just seeing him
laying on this gurney just writhing in pain
also 'cause he's detoxing off of these painkillers and I'm still high on them
right now thinking, I'm done. I'm done with this. And so I don't recommend this. I should have sought help for
this. But I was like, I'm going cold turkey.

I came back, he owned the condo. He hadn't paid rent on it for
I can't tell you how long. So he is like, in the hospital. He is like, I don't know what to do. You gotta find a place
to live. I'm like, I don't have a place to live. I don't have any money, I'm out. He was letting me live there, rent
free, packed everything in my duffle bag. The next door neighbor saw
the whole thing happen.

He knew what was going on with this. And he said, Hey, why
don't you come crash in my. - So you're basically
homeless at this point. - I got no place to go. And so the next door neighbor, nicest guy, his name was Dave, and
he's like, hey, why don't you crash in my
guest room, you need to, 'cause he knew I was gonna grind it out. So he let me stay in his
guest room for about two weeks while I detoxed.

- Wow. - It was a rough three
days coming out of it. And then from there I was
like, Dave, thanks so much. I don't wanna be a burden anymore. I'm gonna call around and
start sleeping on couches. So that's what I did, started
calling close friends, started sleeping on couches around town, kind of figuring out what I was gonna do. I ran
out to California. I was staying on my
friend's couch in California for a little while.

So I was bouncing around from on couches for about three months. I thought I was gonna run away and like,
solve my problems. At least I don't have to face
the people I owe money to. It was actually in LA when I realized that I
got myself into this. That was the big wake
up call, it was just, it was the fact that I was so busy, especially when I was high on opioids. I was so busy pointing
the

finger at everyone else.

It was, my intentions were good, I did it the right way. Everyone else screwed me over. It's your fault. It's your fault, it's your fault. I was so busy pointing the finger at everybody. And I finally woke up on my friend's couch with a chihuahua licking my face. And she had like three chihuahuas. I woke up and I was like, it's my fault. I got myself here and there's only one person in this world that's going to get me out of it, damn.

All right, let's go pull such a my pants. And I was like, let's go. - This is such a big thing because it's like, this victimhood mentality is everywhere now. And some of it can be useful to understand like, well, what is is going out there in the world that impacts your life? But I've never met anybody who improved themselves by not recognizing that it's within themselves to do it. And instead is always pointing outside. - It's impossible, you cannot, and in fact, that's one of my rules of transformation.

If someone comes to me and they want to change their life, they have to take responsibility for all of their actions that got them there, not for the trauma, but for their reaction to it. And you're right, you cannot change, you cannot transform your life in any sense, by any stretch of the imagination. Whether it's physically, whether it's your career, whether it's your relationship. If you don't take responsibility for your role in it. And you can't change victims at all, period.

I refuse to even take on someone if they cannot get themselves outta that role because I am no good. I am not a coach to that individual. I'm just another person sitting in the room that they can start telling their story to. Looking for some sort of feedback. Like, oh, I'm really sorry. Oh, I'm really sorry. That doesn't help anyone change. They have to own it. - So David, your friend David comes back into the picture, how so?

- So I leave California, on my way out of LA, I stopped at a tattoo parlor, and this is my realization. I said, I need to make a promise to myself. I don't know how I'm gonna do it, I need something to live for. I have to have like that north star. And so I tattooed the Roman numerals one through a million down my side and I said, I'm gonna cross them off as I make a positive difference in these people's lives and that number of people's lives.

And so that's what I did. Roman numerals one through a million tattooed down my side, I got my car, I drove back to Arizona. I was talking to David the whole time. He said, my family said that you can come sleep on our couch and get yourself back on your feet. So just like, and people saw how I helped David. They don't see how David helped me. Like I helped him through his transformation. He helped me through mine and I slept on his family's couch for three months while I got back on my feet.

And when I did, I could finally afford rent. David moved in with me and we ended up living together for like two years, and it was a wild ride. And sure enough, documentary. They did a big documentary on that. And then that was when people saw the documentary, it was the recognition of that. That's what ended up landing the whole concept for the show, for Extreme Makeover Weight Loss Edition. So it was just one thing after another and it all took off.

I'm really grateful. So many blessings have happened to get me to where I'm at. And I'm just, I'm grateful for all the people who stepped in to help me to where I'm at now because at times, I couldn't have done it by myself, you know? So we all, we all need other people. - Why is it so hard for men to do that? - [Chris] Oh man. - 'Cause I think that's true. I think we are really loath to accept that we need help.

- Yeah. - Why do you think that is? Why was it for you? - It's good question, yeah. You know, it's funny, it's, I still struggle with it, And I've asked for help in the past. I mean, I resisted it for so long, then I accepted it and it changed my life for the better. And I still resist it. And it's the funniest thing. It's like, why are we programmed for this? And it's a really good question, I'm still trying to find the answer to it and I don't, perhaps, and this is just an assumption and I can only speak from to my experience with it.

I don't ask for help because I don't want to be a burden on anyone, who knows where that was programmed. Probably somewhere deep in my childhood. I just, I don't like to feel like a burden. And that's something that wears on me a lot. And so that's why I usually just don't like to reach out for help. - So you end up hosting the show where you're doing for America, what you did with David? You're showing people how this can happen.

You're helping actual people in the show. For how long did the show run for? - The show ran for five years. From 2010 to 2015, and it was amazing. We ended up doing 76 transformations in that time. - Now it's TV, so it's weird. So what was the weirdest

stuff about doing this work in the context of a reality show? Because it's like, we've all watched, I mean we grew up on reality television and Survivor. And so what was real and what was weird?

I don't wanna say fake, but yeah, what was fake? - Sure, like learning the whole, the production world of things was very different. Especially because, so my training approach is usually, I'm more of an educator slash cheerleader when I like to train and day one of the actual workouts. We went through casting, got to know everyone, really built a rapport with everybody. And then day one, when we're in the gym, I go out there and I'll never forget with Krista, season one, we get in there, I'm like, all right Krista, so here's what we're gonna do.

I'm gonna go ahead and take you out on the ground. We're gonna go ahead, lay down, you're gonna start pressing, you're gonna start to feel a burn buildup, that's a lactic acid. And you know, as the glycogen is being split into, and I like went immediately back into Good Morning Arizona fitness guide mode from way back when. And I'm going, all of a sudden I hear this cut, cut, cut, cut, cut. And then, the producer was like, Hey Chris, can I go over here.

He's like, we want tears. You gotta turn it on. None of this glycogens, you know none of this lactic acid stuff. - You gotta make this for the masses buddy. Get accessible. - Yes, I want tires slipping, kettlebell swinging, tears, screaming in their face, and I'm like, whoa, what are you talking about? - So were you like, you're racking it. - Yeah, yeah. I was just like oh crap. - This isn't how this works. - That's it.

And I've already built such an incredible rapport and trust and I was like, how am I supposed to go out there and just all of a sudden be mean. In hindsight, I will say, I look back and there are things I wish I had done differently. I also get that there are certain things that you need to do to keep the dream alive for everyone. And that was a really difficult situation for me because I was like, how can I genuinely keep the trust with this individual and not go out there, start yelling at them and have them say, think like, oh I see, this is a game for you.

I see what it's all about. Yeah, like, what happened? And so that was a really difficult time for me 'cause I was like, how

can I possibly do this? Because here's the thing, if I don't, everything goes away for her too. For all of them. And so how can I play the game? How can I then come out there and be the tough, like the mean me. And then I realized, okay, I don't have to be mean.

I can genuinely care, I can be stern, I can lay it on, and the thing is, it took me some time to figure out where that was. So I came out, I came back in that room, I mean, guns blazing and she was, and the response was what I thought it was gonna be like. And I mean, but she gave it her all and there were tears and there was sweat and there was screaming and it was just like one after another after another.

There was some reparation to do after that. And it was definitely something where I felt like I had compromised my own integrity, but then I felt like I also needed to explain to them, I was like, if I didn't do this, it's all gonna go away. Like you gotta understand. And then I literally learned the lesson of production with them, in those moments. And it was like. - Yeah, that's really interesting. - Because there has to be more.

- It's gotta be good television. - Seven million people don't wanna sit there listening to an anatomy explanation. They're gonna change the channel. But when Stacey or Krista or you know, Loronda, they start screaming and they start opening up about these things, I was like, oh, there's some power here and this can be a really good thing. And that was actually the genesis of the name, the Fight or Flight Workout. And then what I would do beforehand in order to, I would just let people know, I'd say, look, you know me as this, I would let them know before we go in there, this is what's gonna happen.

As opposed to just going in there and blindsiding them. Because that's not right. Instead look, I'm gonna turn it on. I'm gonna push you to a place you've never been before. And here's the thing, there's truth to this. When you break someone down physically and they don't have the physical power to defend themselves anymore, emotionally they don't have the power to keep protecting what it is that they're holding in. And really deep things can come out that they've been holding onto for a long time that need to come out.

And so it turned into a really beautiful thing that was born out of something that was

that where I compromised my own integrity and I felt very regretful for. But then it turned into something that actually helped set a lot of people free. And they also started to realize, oh my God, if I could do that, what else could I do? I mean, I took them to hell and back in an hour and I mean it was brutal.

But again, they unloaded some really heavy stuff. Even a lot of times they finish the whole thing in tears. They're like, I haven't said anything about that for 25 years. And I'm like, whoa. And all of us are just like, whoa. And I would always finish with a thank you, you are so amazing and now we can start the healing process. And it turned into a beautiful thing. But it was born out of something that wasn't.

- I mean, it's television, right? And so it's a construction job in a certain sense. Like we have to get these parts so we can build the thing that's going to be good. - [Chris] Right. - And it's funny 'cause now you could do, you could do a YouTube channel with the kinesiology, they exist And they probably get more views than the show. - They could be long form, I can talk for three hours and people would actually watch, it's crazy.

- I wanna bring up something that's kind of controversial. - [Chris] Yeah. - And that is this notion of body positivity. And you know, a couple years ago there were these Cosmopolitan magazine covers with obese people on the cover, with this tagline that said, this is healthy. - Right. - And there was backlash to it and it was obviously trying to be provocative. And I don't think I even necessarily fully understand whatever the motivation was. But this is like a thing now, this sense of like, no, you can be effectively morbidly obese.

And not see yourself as in need of transformation. Are you willing to talk about that? Like how do you think about this cultural meme that's happening? Because this is not healthy. Like technically it's unhealthy. - Right. (people laughing) Warm in here. No. - I mean as a dad, our kids face all these messages, especially on Instagram and TikTok. - [Chris] Oh, totally, totally. - And this is now part of the messaging.

- Fair. - And you and you have spent your life helping people like David. - Yeah, yeah. - And it doesn't seem like it's helping David to be like, no, you're healthy, you're fine. - No, and I agree with you there. Here's my stance on it. I've done a lot of reflecting of who

am I to the individuals out there, period. Then I'm gonna take that one step further and be like, who am I to the individuals out there that actually want to change?

Here's the thing, if you are 400 pounds and you are happy, you win. And by the way, I am here to cheer you on. It's not my job to help people lose weight. It's my job to help people find a purpose and achieve their goals. That's it, and so if your goal is not to lose weight, then I'm your friend, but if you are seeking change, because right now, 'cause you're suffering, in some form or fashion, whatever that might be, I can help you.

And that's what I'm here to do. But here's the thing, the one thing I do ask is that I do ask any individual who might ever be interested in hearing me out, please be honest with yourself. And, and also if you're gonna say, if say you are 100 pounds overweight and you're saying this is healthy, check your biomarkers. Maybe it is, and if it is, good on you, and if you feel good about yourself, if you're genuinely, truly confident, great.

But if you want to change, you can. And if the desire is there and it's a priority for you, I'm here, it's simple as that. - It's fair. - [Chris] Yeah. - It's a good answer. - I know, it's a safe answer, but it's also real, it's real. And I do see that and I just think, okay, I get what they're saying because I also, it is important that we don't place. It's like, oh, you're 100 pounds overweight, something's wrong with you, you have to change, you're unhealthy, it's all about you, it's you.

Believe it or not, maybe you're not, your buddie's into CrossFit, CEO of CrossFit. Have you seen some of those CrossFit athletes? I mean, you throw them on a BMI, obviously they're overweight, almost obese. Some of them are really thick. I mean they've got a decent amount of body fat on, but I mean, they're also the greatest athletes in the world. You can have 20% body fat and be a phenomenal athlete and be insanely healthy. - You're saying 20%, be nice to be 20%.

- Maybe 25, I don't know. - But I do know, the data of the recent suggest though, as your body fat goes up, there are significant hormonal changes that your body goes through and also your risks for diabetes, heart attack, stroke, cancer, all of those are linked to obesity, to the amount of body fat that we carry. And so you understand that the risk factors go up. If you wanna tell me that you're healthy and you're happy, who am I to tell you what you can or can't do

with you, it's your body.

Okay, great. I am here for anyone who wants to change, speaking to that, I do believe that anyone who has a platform, I mean especially a large editorial like that, and if you make like a general sweeping claim, like this is healthy, it comes with a lot of responsibility and that could do far more damage than good. And again, who knows what that is. Show us, I want you to take those models and show us their biomarkers.

Let me see what their A1C is. Let me see what their blood sugar is. Let's see what their cholesterol is. Let's see all these different things. Let's also, why don't we do personality inventory and a mental wellbeing inventory and say like, how do you genuinely feel about yourself? Like we don't know these things 'cause there's gonna be those physical biomarkers. But then there's also like, what is happening on the inside with their esteem and their confidence and everything.

Like are they really where they want to be? So the thing is like, I think it's dangerous to make those general sweeping statements if you just don't know. Because the thing is you see something, but you're making a claim of what's happening on the inside. And are they healthy? Maybe they are, maybe they are. I don't know, but it's dangerous when you have especially a lot of younger eyes looking at that saying, that's okay. That's okay.

The lifestyle that I'm on, even though I might be smashing 3000 extra calories a day coming from fast food and everything, oh it's okay because that they said it's healthy so it's all right to let myself go in this direction. And that could lead to all kinds of pain and struggling. We don't know. But the research would suggest that if you continue to add body fat to your body, it's going to increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, et cetera.

And of course all the psychological issues as well. - I think it's one of these things where people are coming from this, I think good place, which is there is this psychological, they're kind of starting at the psychology. - They are. - And oh well you have to have a positive body image or you have to have a positive view of yourself in order to make progress. And I think these things can't be disentangled. You can't have the positive vision, the affirmation without the responsibility.

- Right. - Because that's why you need the affirmation. So you can sort of power the responsibility, if you're just like, oh no, you can just have that for free. That's sort of like the cheap sugar candy version of harm reduction, if you will. - Right, yeah. - And I think that applies in a lot of domains. It applies to folks who are suffering with drug addiction and homelessness. Like, oh, let's do harm reduction, let's just give them clean needles.

- Right, right. - And it's like that's, I'm just gonna say it. You don't have to agree, but it's the lazy way out. - Not for the person, if I want to help you, it's lazy to say, I'll just give you a clean needle and now I've helped you, I've reduced your harm. - Right, yeah, no, there it's missing the action component. Like, here's a quick fix, here's a bandaaid on it. Don't bother adopting true lifestyle changes that are gonna improve your quality of life.

- Oh they're hard, so forget it. - Right. No, no, you're right. It's a two-pronged approach. Again, here we are again, you must have the mental and the physical and you have to put your body into action if you wanna make changes. Like it just has to happen. - You met your wife on the show? - I met my wife actually a couple months after I moved outta my car, at a self-improvement seminar. Yes. - 'Cause you ended up co-hosts.

So how did this happen? I met my wife at Nickelodeon, so I can relate to having a work relationship dynamic, which is plays out for everyone else around you. - The way that we met, we were both trying to improve our lives and just trying to figure ourselves out. That was my first real dive into the psychology of it all. 'Cause I was trying to figure myself out after dealing with, you know, how could I have possibly fallen into this rut of oh my God, I'm a drug addict, I'm an opioid addict.

And I was taking responsibility for it. I'm like, how did that happen? I thought I was invincible, as most of us do in our twenties sometimes. Yeah, and I was like, okay, there's a lot more to me than I need to figure out. And then I ended up meeting her at the self-improvement seminar and she and I went through this amazing journey where the whole, the concept, the inception of the show, that's when I engaged with the production company in Los Angeles, ended up selling the show.

And I was the host of the show

for the first three seasons, four seasons, but she was always there helping out. Like we would actually create like an Arizona house, so anyone who was struggling would go to Arizona. And so she made cameos in the episodes here and there. - [Speaker] Yeah. - And I mean, she was always there on set, or she was back home because, we had two, then three, then four kids in the process.

And so we had a growing family, that then in season five, that's when she was like the co-host with me, for the most part, it was really enjoyable sharing the experience with my wife, my then wife at the time. - So my wife and I met at Nickelodeon and like I said, in 2001 and we got married a couple years later and then several years ago we made a documentary together called Out the Fork, where we traveled around the country together.

- Oh, that's cool. - Me as a meat eater and her as a vegetarian looking at the way animals are raised for food and asking questions about what is your comfort level morally with seeing these different systems and how they work. - Sure. - In a very real sense, I was the director, but it was her passion project, which I think was actually a good dynamic. But it was maybe one of the hardest things for our relationship ever, because we would go to like a large scale feed lot.

- Yeah. - And I've got like 40 things like, you know, that I'm trying to accomplish technically, I've gotta ask these questions, I've gotta listen, I've gotta think about, okay, we've gotta get to this next location, for magic hour. All that kind of stuff. So I could kind of, sort of compartmentalize the experience of it. - Right. - And then we'd get home to the hotel room after, 'cause she's having this horrible, visceral experience and she's seeing these cows on this hot dirt and she's like, this is the worst thing I've ever seen in my life.

And then we get home, she's like, you're like a heartless son of a. How are you not wanting to die right now after what we've been through today? And I'm like, oh, we have to wake up at 5:00 AM tomorrow. (people laughing) - Well, fortunately, we were both on the front end of the camera. - Yeah. - There were some exhausting days. I'm not gonna lie, it was exhausting. Because we're trying to solve problems, we're genuinely trying to help these people transform, that's an incredibly energy demanding experience to go through that, to give so much to these people you're trying to take

through this process.

But I mean, at the end of it all, like looking back, you just think one adventure, I'm sure you probably think the same. - 100%. - Think of all the places you went and the stories you can tell and the crazy wacky things that you can did. And it's like, it's all, I mean, you're checking stuff off the bucket list and with someone that you really enjoy spending life with. - But I do know because of Google Reveals that you guys, your marriage didn't survive.

- No. - And that this happened in public view. So how did you navigate this, you have kids. You have a public thing taking place, which is really weird. - Right? - How do you do that and do something that's already hard, which is keep your kids in mind when you've got that stuff going on. - Right. - How did you deal with that? How did that work? - So actually, really things started to fall apart after our time on the show.

It was almost as if the show and us being so busy on it was like a beautiful distraction from what wasn't working between us. And so it kept us so busy working toward a shared mission. That when we didn't have that mission anymore, it put a huge spotlight on our differences and how we had grown apart over those five years. And ultimately at the end of the day, I wish it wasn't this way, but there was a great deal of respect that was lost for each other in the process, the way we started treating each other.

And that, I mean, respect and friendship and like that's a foundation. Those are some foundational components of a relationship. And when you don't respect each other, I'm taking responsibility for my part of this. Some of the things I did, and I said in front of other people, in front of the kids, I'm ashamed of it. From the time the show ended for the next few years, it just got worse and worse and worse. And she was going her direction on where she wanted to go in life.

And I was going my direction on where I wanted to go in life. And at the same time, we got these four incredible children. And so I was doing a lot of reflecting and I saw over the course of five years, seven different therapists, counselors, and eventually a psychologist because it got to a point where I was just so bitter and so angry. There was a part of me that end up coming out that I didn't even know existed.

And it was just, it was angry, it was shameful. And I realized like, I need to figure that out because I was not showing

up as the best me, especially for the kids
because the affection and the respect and everything that I had between myself and my wife, that was gone. She didn't have it for me,
I didn't have it for her. So I was more focused on the kids, maybe that's where things really started to go wrong.

But that's also where we brought, at first it was a marriage and family counselor. Then for me, I started to go into such a dark place, like a depression and anxiety started to emerge. And I'm not sure where it came from, but it started to really take a hold of me. And so before I know it, it went from a marriage and family counselor, a couple of them to a mental health counselor, to then, licensed psychologist, to then a licensed psychiatrist.

And before I know it, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and then they put me on Lexapro and Lexapro didn't work, tried to feed more things, then started Wellbutrin, at that point, and I think it's really important, this is my second journey. - Right, so you've already gone through this prior experience with opioids and with your life collapsing. This must have been actually triggering for you to be going through this again and to be dealing with medications to try to get yourself into a place.

- 100%, I know exactly where the anxiety came from. The anxiety came from the fact that my marriage is falling apart. I have these children, I'm willing to do what it takes to try to make it work, even though I'm miserable, she's miserable. We keep seeing these counselors to try to make it work and it's not working. How could I possibly take this apart and still find peace with everyone? And the anxiety just started coming up more and more and more to a point where I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and I would ruminate and catastrophize about how this is gonna affect the kids and all of this happening in the public eye and how could I do this to them how could everything fall apart?

And so it was for me,
I mean, 2015 to 2018, the second journey into the canyon. I'm climbing the second mountain right now. But the hardest part is that everyone knew us, we were Chris and Heidi. It's Chris and Heidi. Chris and Heidi, the whole brand. - You become one, you become one entity. - And not just, exactly, the brand is one, but everything else built underneath it is one.

And I was thinking,

this is gonna take years to fall apart because what people see in the public, and for me, after a while, like there were moments of hope after you see a counselor, you're like, that's it. We're gonna make this work, here we go. I love you so much and we can do this and things are gonna change, things didn't change. And then we, here we go again. Okay, this is gonna happen. And like, there are moments of hope where I literally thought it was gonna happen and I realized, she's not willing to change.

And you know what? I'm not either, okay. If that's gonna be our reality, how can we find peace and how can I show up as the best me for my kids? - One of the things that, a friend of the show, Warren Ferrell has taught me and and we've talked about and we've had him on the show, is there's things that if you are gonna end up divorced, that you need to do for the betterment of the kids, stay in close proximity.

Don't badmouth each other. There's things that like, kind of everyone's inclined to do. The worst angel of their nature, but it's terrible for the kids. But if you can do these things, the kids can be all right. - [Chris] Yes. - They can have a loving relationship. You can co-parent, you're sort of stuck, you're stuck together. - Right. - So how have you managed that? - Fortunately, really well, and by the way, that was one of the biggest things.

Like once I've said, I can't do this, it's really important that we divorce. The therapist, that was the advice they said, do not badmouth the other parent. They kind of helped us through the process. And by the way, I cannot stress how important it is that you do not badmouth the other parent, it's not that it will make that parent look bad, it will make you look bad. And eventually, the kids will, if they're really young, they'll realize it when they're older, they know better, they'll figure it out.

And so the thing is, you always treat the other parent with the utmost respect because that's their parent. And so it's really important that you still show them whatever love and respect you can. And sometimes if that means just keeping as much distance as possible and then you guys connect when you need to connect, you hand the kids off or to talk through whatever you need to, just do it as respectfully as possible. But that's, I must say, that's been really, really important.

And as you go through the transition, it's really hard at first, but it gets easier, for anyone who might be going through it now. I mean, right as you're going through divorce into like the first usually few months afterward, depending on the situation, it can be really difficult. But then it just gets easier and easier and easier. And now we have a wonderful relationship. I have the most incredible

relationship with Heidi. We get along great. And the thing is, she's got her life, she's got her boyfriend, I get along with him great.

I've actually been rooting for him for a long time. And so I'm like, 'cause he's a good dude. And I was like, all right, let's go. So it's like everything's, it's good. It's good, I'm at peace. She's at peace, and the kids. My relationship with my children is better than it ever was before because for three, four years all they saw was fighting. We didn't spend time with them. We were never present with them. 'Cause we were so busy fighting each other.

And I know a lot of people have their own opinions about marriage and divorce and everything, in hindsight, I can look back and say this was the right thing for us. And it's worked out well and the kids, they're great. - Did you encounter any trouble with the court stuff or the custody? These are things, it sounds like you've managed to navigate some waters that can get really rough for people. - Thank goodness we were both very, she had been divorced before, so she knew how bad it could possibly be.

We ended up negotiating the divorce ourselves because at the moment you start to your lawyer up and bring lawyers in, it can get really nasty really fast. - Yeah, they take an aggressive posture and they encourage it is what I've been told, they kind of get in there and make your worse. - Yes, it's so true. We were able to negotiate that really well. It was the most peaceful separation and thank goodness, everything's, it's gone really well.

- Before we wrap things up, is there a single piece of advice that you would offer to someone in your position who's at that point where they have realized, my marriage is not gonna get better, we aren't gonna come back together here. Like, is there a piece of advice for, here's like the thing to hold your mantra, as you navigate the next steps, especially if they have kids. - This is my single piece of advice. Always take the high road.

I was surrounded by incredible people who told me that over and over and over again when I didn't want to, always take the high road. I can't stress that enough. That would be my single piece of advice. - That's good advice, it's good advice for life. - It saved me from doing some things that I would regret in the long run. - Okay, that's 2019. - [Chris] Yes. - Along comes a pandemic and it brings us up to today.

- Yes. - So you've got exciting things happening. What is this movement that you have built in the aftermath of

the pandemic? - Yeah, so in my search for happiness, after the divorce and really trying to find myself, I realized that there's no happiness in financial gain or anything and I found, pulling myself out of the darkness, I found my happiness in service, in helping people. - It's always been there for you too. - 100%, it was easy.

It got so clouded so fast when I was stuck in my own world and my own misery and just my own darkness and just trying to get out of it all. And it is in service and 100%, I found my passion for helping people again. And so during the pandemic, obviously everyone was isolated and we were seeing the numbers and the statistics of mental health and all of our children, they're sedentary at home and the numbers, the abuse, suicide, everything's skyrocketing.

I mean, so many people struggling. And I was thinking, what could I possibly do? Like what do I have available to me now, I do have a platform, thank goodness, I was blessed with an awesome platform. I've got a team of incredible developers because I've been living in the app space for quite some time. And I have knowledge and a passion for exercise and for movement and also for mindfulness now because I've gone through this incredible mental journey and I realize, it's all intertwined.

So what could I do for everyone who's suffering right now? And I end up developing a program called Move One Million. And it's simple. It's two and a half minutes of movement. It's a top-down warmup, total body warmup. And it takes, again, two and a half minutes, followed by two minutes of mindfulness, of just bringing you here and now. And then it's finished with positive affirmations. You're strong, you can do anything you set your mind to and you're loved and we believe in you, and sure enough, so I took this and the inspiration was actually something that happened a long time ago.

It was inspired by something called Radio Taiso, emperor of Japan implemented in 1928 in Japan to bring his country together and to make them healthier. And this is 1928. He took radio from the United States, every morning at 6:30 in the morning, they would play it in every school, every corporation, every factory would stand up and they would go through the same movements, a top down warmup, total body warmup, for three and a half minutes. Played the same music every day.

Today, 94 years later, 27 million people still do Radio taiso. But what he did between 1928 and 1955, he made Japan, who the average life expectancy

then was 41 years old. He expanded the life expectancy, they become the healthiest country in the world in one generation, he brought his country together and bonded them. Going back to the pandemic and think, there are riots in the streets. More division than ever. Everyone's sedentary in their homes. Mental health is suffering.

We needed to come together and we needed to move and we needed to be mindful. And so this was everything in one. So I created this virtual platform free for everybody, where you could simply log on and we would create a new broadcast every day. And it looks like the Brady Bunch where like I'm in the middle and I open up the whole thing and then we all move for two and a half minutes, it's the same movements, same 13 movements for two and a half minutes to the same music.

And what I'm trying to do is I want to instill it in us because the thing is music and movement, they go together. When I say the Macarena, you know how to do the dance, right? (person laughing) - [Speaker] Yes I do. - Yes, everybody, and here's the thing, and here's the best part, the gift that Emperor was able to give to his people of Japan, he changed his country with three and a half minutes of movement, changed his country.

And now anytime that they hear the music, they know how to take the first step to transform their body forever. What a beautiful thing, it's the music that brings it all back. So forever, I wanted to give a gift to everybody, but especially these children, when they hear this music, they're gonna know the music starts, oh, it's a head roll. And then I'm gonna go ahead and I'm gonna raise my arms out to a Y and into an X, and they'll know this first step forever.

I've spent my life helping people that don't know how to take the first step. And I'm thinking, what can I do? I can give everyone the gift of the first step of transformation and I want to give it out for free. And it took off. And so now it's in all school districts across Arizona. It's in Oakwood Creative Care for dementia and Alzheimer's. It's in the foundation for senior living, in 71 countries around the world now.

And it's just, it's taken off. And we have ambassadors in Belgium and France and South Africa. And there's this school in Kazakhstan that does this every day. And it's so cool because in the broadcast, people send in their videos and we have people around the world moving around me and we share it every day so

you can move with other people. So it satisfies the social health aspect of it. And then there's the mental health with the mindfulness afterward and the two and a half minutes of movement.

It's just a beautiful thing. I'm excited because I actually just yesterday had an incredible meeting with a huge partnership that has over 1.4 million certified trainers, that they wanna actually give this to, to help take this out to the world. And really, really grow this thing. So it's gonna be an exciting few years ahead. - Well it's such a great synthesis of our conversation, right? Because it is, it's bringing all these things together and in the service of helping people transform their lives.

- That's it. - So I asked this of very guest, how do you think of your role in the American story? We're called "Dad Saves America". 'Cause I believe America has something special about it. It's principles, what it can be, even if it doesn't always live up to it. And I think we all have a role to play, what's yours? - I think my role would be to help give people hope. Again, I've been blessed with the platform to be able to do that so I can show people how extraordinary they are.

I can showcase, amazing extraordinary feats that we can do for millions of people so that they can realize the extraordinary within them. And I love doing that. And so I just want to give people hope for a better quality of life, for a better America. - Thanks for being on "Dad Saves America" Chris, this has been a real pleasure and a real journey together. - Thank you John. - I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Chris Powell.

We'll put links to his Move One Million program and I Needed That podcast below. My biggest takeaway from chatting with Chris is the importance of helping others and having the courage to ask for help ourselves. Each of us has unique talents, putting them to use serving others not only helps other people, but brings meaning and fulfillment to our own lives. Chris and David's story of mutual support is a beautiful example of how real community and relationships can provide a loving and effective safety net that no government program can match.

If you enjoyed this video, please share it with your friends and family and be sure to like, subscribe and hit

that notification bell. And now we leave you with
an uplifting dad moment. - Come on. (people chattering) Lock it up. Big air. Drop it up, up, up. You got it, he's
got it, fight it, fight it. Hold it, yeah.

All right, there we go.