

THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW

EPISODE 518

Use Adversity To Your Advantage & Develop An Unstoppable Mindset

With Guest Inky Johnson

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Welcome to The Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. I've got a question for you. Do you know how powerful you are? Every single thing you've ever been faced with in your life, you survived. You are here today to tell the story. Now, there's a lot of things going on in the world right now, but you are fully capable to not just survive, but to thrive in these conditions. And what I've been wanting to do is to seek out some of the most incredible teachers on planet Earth to help you, to remind you of how powerful you are, to rekindle that fire of empowerment within you, for you to truly, not just... Again, not just survive, but to thrive in these adverse conditions. And so, on my adventures, I traveled down to the ATL. Me and you. I went down to Atlanta, and I got connected with one of the most inspiring people that I've ever met. He is an absolute testament to the human spirit. He's an absolute testament to our capacity. And today he's here to remind you again of how powerful you are to effect change in your life... Not just in your life, but in your life and the world around you. So, get ready, listen with your inner ear, listen with your heart, and get this infusion from our incredible guest.

Now as I mentioned, I traveled down to the ATL. And I've got some adventures to share. I'm going to be sharing a lot from this trip coming up here in the future episodes. But one thing that I do even when I head down to the ATL because it would be ludicrous without doing this, is that I'm making sure that I'm bringing my most vital nutrition along with me. So, even in my hotel room, with my family, every morning, I'm whipping up my little special recipe, and the highlight of that recipe is featured. Now, I'm going to take you through studies that look at a plethora of different animal models and human models to show you just how remarkable this source of nutrition is. A study published in the International Journal of Molecular Medicine found that fruit flies given Cordyceps medicinal mushroom lived 32% longer than the controls who didn't receive the Cordyceps. 32% longer in fruit fly years? That's basically another lifetime. That's like doubling it up for the fruit fly lifespan.

Now, let's take this up a notch. Let's jump from the fruit fly universe to another animal model. A study published in The FASEB Journal found that mice that were given Cordyceps lived several months longer than the control group that didn't receive the Cordyceps. Do you know how long a few more months is in mice years? That's like the mice getting access to some of that Ninja Turtle ooze and the mice becoming Master Splinter. It's expanding their lifespan. Now, they're like out teaching little turtles how to do Kung Fu. It's incredible what it's doing as far as lifespan is concerned. Now, what's going on here as far as we're concerned? Well, a study published in the American Journal of Chinese Medicine found that Cordyceps literally protects our mitochondria by scavenging reactive oxygen species. So, these free radicals that... These

are kind of a component to aging. If we want to think about metal rusting, for example. Like the human body itself, we're made of a lot of minerals as well.

So, if you want to make the analogy of aging being like rusting, these reactive oxygen species can accelerate that process of rusting. What if we had something to come in and defend the body against that? To come and scavenge and scoop up these free radicals so that our cells can age more gracefully. Because right now, we're seeing an epidemic of accelerated aging diseases. That's what diabetes is, for example. It used to be called adult-onset diabetes, because it tended to happen later in life. Now, people much younger are developing diabetes to the degree that many children today... It's an epidemic of diabetes in children. This is an accelerated aging condition. And so, how do we turn back the clock on these things? How do we help to defend our body against these accelerated aging diseases? We've got to address this component of free radical activity. Now obviously, through our nutrition, we can bring in foods that create more free radical activity. We can bring in things that help to slow that process down, and Cordyceps is one of those things.

And several human studies have also found that Cordyceps improves cardiovascular function, VO2 max, and insulin sensitivity as well, all in humans. Now, what was I sipping on in my hotel room in Atlanta? Well, and also for my wife and my youngest son. He's got his hot cocoa Cordyceps mix, organic dual-extracted Cordyceps, and my wife and I had an organic Cordyceps coffee from Four Sigmatic. And why is this coffee blend so incredible? Well, another fascinating connection between coffee and metabolism is highlighted in a brand-new study featured in the journal Scientific Reports. And scientists from the School of Medicine at the University of Nottingham... Shout out to Robin Hood. Shout out to the Knights of the Round Table. Well, researchers from the University of Nottingham discovered that coffee appears to influence the activity of your brown adipose tissue. This is a type of fat that actually burns fat for fuel. The researchers used thermal imaging and found that drinking coffee lights up brown fat dominant locations in the body, indicating increased thermogenesis. Remarkable.

You take organic coffee, and you blend it with dual-extracted Cordyceps medicinal mushroom, you got something really special. So, that's what I had in my hotel room. Again, I don't travel anywhere without it. If I'm going to be traveling to a different city, I'm bringing my Cordyceps coffee from Four Sigmatic along with me. Go to foursigmatic.com/model. That's F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model. You're going to get a special discount. At least 10% off their incredible Cordyceps coffee and also their Cordyceps hot cocoa. Hot cacao. Real cacao. Real chocolate elixir as well, which the kids really love. Now, here's the other thing, I don't just have my Cordyceps coffee by itself, I also blend it with high-quality fats, and again, this is something that I bring with me, because I just love the way that it makes me feel, it's just a part of my nutrition regimen, and what I'm talking about is emulsified MCT Oil.

And researchers at Yale University published data reporting that medium-chain triglycerides can readily cross the blood brain-barrier and directly be utilized by our brain cells. And also, a remarkable study published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences sought to find out if these MCTs could have an impact on improving the condition of patients with Alzheimer's disease. So, this is well-noted cognitive decline that, according to most peer-reviewed evidence, there isn't much you can do about it but try and slow it down, but reversing it, seeing any improvement, is incredibly rare. But here's what the researchers found. They uncovered that, the consumption of MCTs in the clinical trial directly led to improved cognitive function in mild to even moderate forms of Alzheimer's disease and cognitive impairment. We can make our brains better at any age.

So this combination of my Cordyceps coffee plus my emulsified MCT Oil from onnit.com is my go-to every morning. Go to onnit.com/model, that's O-N-N-I-T.com/model. You get 10% off their incredible... Again, it's emulsified MCT Oil, which is like a coffee creamer. They also have their original sustainably sourced MCT Oil as well. They're sourcing things and processing things the right way. These are the companies that you want to buy from to support and also to support your own metabolism and overall nutrition. Go to onnit.com/model for 10% off. Now, let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five-star review titled, "Mr. Shawn Stevenson Speaks It" by So Charming. "Shawn is easy to follow and understand, as he educates and shares from a genuine space of concern for humanity. Listen to his podcast if you want good knowledge and a refreshing perspective. Keep it coming, Shawn."

SHAWN STEVENSON: That review is so refreshing. Thank you so much for sharing that over on Apple Podcast. I appreciate it so, so very much. And on that note, let's get to, not just our special guest of the day... And on that note, let's get to, not just our special guest and topic of the day, but I've got something really special for you. Our guest today is truly world-renowned. He's one of the greatest speakers, motivators, educators on planet Earth today. As an NFL-bound superstar college athlete, what would seem like a tragic injury taking place on the football field has helped to create, again, one of the greatest speakers on the planet today. So, before we get to this powerful interview, I want you to hear from the man himself, Inky Johnson.

INKY JOHNSON: Every day, I'm chasing something different, every day the way I operate, it's totally different, and it's not about the product for me as much as it is about the process, and what I mean about the process, the process saved my life. You see, my mother had me when she was 15 years old. Over on the east side of Atlanta, we came up in this neighborhood by the name of Kirkwood, drug dealer on every corner, gang members in the neighborhood, two-bedroom home, 14 people, used to sleep on the floor. I got the opportunity to sleep in the bed

one time out of the week. There was six of us in the bed; three at the foot, three at the head. And I came up with this dream pretty quick. I said, "Man, I want to go to the NFL," because I had eight uncles in that house, all eight of which were still going in and out of prison. And so pretty quick, I said, "Man, I want to go to the NFL." So I went to my big cousin, tomorrow one night. I said, "Man, listen. I want to go to the NFL, so we got to work for this thing, so the thing we're going to do every night is we're going to be patient, we're going to engage in consistent action. Every night, we're going to race light pole to light pole with no shoes.

So, every night, we would get out in the street, race light pole to light pole. One night, a coach came down the street, he signed me and my cousins up for organized sports. First time being in organized sports. We get into organized sports. The thing was, after practice, everybody would leave to go home, and I always had to sit on a bench and wait on my mother, because she worked at Wendy's. And so, when my mother would show up in the park, it will be about 10 o'clock, 10:30 at night. So, I'm sitting there, and when my mother would pull up, she drove an old Buick Regal, hubcaps off the car, seats torn up, the car was all beat up. And she would pull up in the park 10:30 at night. I would jump off the bench, I would sprint over to my mother, I would say, "Mom, if you don't mind, can you please sit back in your car and turn on your car lights? I have to do some extra drills. I have to go to the NFL, so you would never have to work another day in your life." And I knew my mom was tired, and every night, my mother would sit back in that car, and those car lights would hit that field and here you had a seven-year-old kid doing backpedaling drills, running sprints, running laps, chasing his dreams to go to the NFL.

But just beyond those car lights, I could always connect with my mother's eyes, so it made me dig a little bit deeper, it made me push myself a little bit further, it made me work a little bit harder. It created a certain level of sweat equity in what I was doing, it created a certain level of pride in what I was doing. And you know why people quit? People don't have pride in what they do. You know why people stop? They're selfish, and it's just about them. When you have a bigger purpose to why you're doing what you're doing, and you want to honor the sacrifices that others have made for you, it's nothing for you to keep going when you hit adversity. If every decision and choice you make is just about you, at a certain point, you're going to hit something that's a lot tougher than you, and it's going to make you quit, because you don't have a driving force for why you do what you do. But when I got up to the University of Tennessee, it was simple. It was simple for me to give everything I had. My freshman year, I played special teams. My sophomore season, I broke the starting lineup. I had a really strong sophomore season.

The summer heading into my junior year, I still remember the day while I was sitting in our film room, and I was watching film on the California Bears. My defensive backs coach, Larry Slade, came in the room. He said, "Inky, I've got some good news for you." I dropped the clicker. I said, "What is it?" He said, "Man, you're a projected top 30 draft pick, sir." He said, "All you have to

do is play the next 10 football games, you're automatic a multi-millionaire." I went out of the room; I called my mother and my grandmother on a three-way. I said, "After this season, there will be no more struggle." I said, "We would never miss another meal." I said, "We would never experience another Christmas where we had to stand on the side of the curb and just be grateful," and I hung it up. First football game, I went out and played great, got an interception, shot Cal down. The second game, we're playing against Air Force, got late in the game, fourth quarter, guy dropped back, he threw the ball to a receiver coming down my sideline, me and the guy, we went head on. Soon as I hit the guy, it felt as if every breath in my body left.

My body went completely limp, I fell to the ground, and I blacked out. It never happened to me before. When my eyes opened, I'll never forget it. My teammates ran over, they said, "Ink, get up. Let's go." I said, "I can't." I said, "I can't move." They said, "What do you mean you can't move? You're our lockdown corner, man. We need you. Let's go." I said, "I know, man, but this time, I can't move." I flipped my head up to the sky and said, "God." I said, "Surely nothing has happened in this moment that can alter my life?" They got me over to the hospital, they took me back, they ran CAT scans, they brought me back into my room and all in a 15-second time frame, the doctor came running in from the opposite side. He said, "Hey, get in there. We got to rush this guy back to emergency surgery, he's about to die." I said, "What?" He said, "Son, you have a busted up subclavian artery in your chest. You're bleeding internally. We have to rush you back, take the main vein out of your left leg, plug it into your chest in order to save your life."

When I opened my eyes from recovery, the same doctor was over me. He said, "Son, I have some good news and some bad news for you." I said, "You got some bad news for me after telling me I was about to die? I'm still alive. How bad can it get? I'm still here?" He said, "The good news is, we saved your life." I said, "Thank you, sir." He said, "The bad news is, Ink, you have nerve damage in your right shoulder." I said, "Okay, cool." He said, "But son, it's a strong possibility that you probably can never play the game of football again in your life." I said, "No way." I said, "No disrespect to you, doc, but I've been working for this ever since I was seven years old." I said, "No disrespect to you, doc, but you wasn't in a park with me and my mother when I was seven years old and she was sitting in that Buick Regal after she got done working at Wendy's. No disrespect to you, doc, but you didn't come up in that two-bedroom home with 14 people sleeping on the floor. No disrespect to you doc, but you didn't miss those meals and stay focused and never made an excuse. I never cheated. I never cheated."

Like my conscience, still until this day, won't let me... Like, I can't cheat. I can't look myself in the mirror and say, "Ink, you did a good job," knowing that I cheated. I can't cheat. One of the greatest pieces of advice that my mother gave me was this, "Son, whatever you start, you make sure you finish." And the problem with the world today, people get involved with things, and if they don't like a certain person, if they don't like the process, if it's not what they thought it

was, they quit. And what they don't understand about quitting, quitting becomes a habit that doesn't just affect you later on in life when you get a wife and you get some kids or you get a family, it's going to come back to haunt you, and it will one day affect them. That is why I tell you the process is more important than the product. It's not even about the outcome for me, it's about, can you take pride in what you do as an individual when every night when you look in the mirror, knowing that you gave everything you had to it?

And we have to get to the point where we're willing to impose our will on certain things. Impose your will on it. My life totally changed. And they gave me an opportunity to stop. And most people, when you give them an opportunity to stop while they're chasing something, they take advantage of it because they feel as if, "Man, why does this have to happen to me?" I felt as if why not me? This is the perfect opportunity to use this to be a blessing to somebody else, and you know what? It's not even about me to be truthful, it's not even about me. Now, it's about repaying the people that invested in me and saw something in me when I couldn't see it in myself. At a certain point in life, it can't just be about you. And the moment that we understand that and every day we wake up, we understand that life is a blessing and life is a gift, and if you were to checkout today, how would you want to be remembered? It's bigger than you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My man, Inky Johnson, it's an honor. As mentioned, when I first met you, man, it's such an honor to have you on.

INKY JOHNSON: It's a pleasure, man. I got a lot of respect and admiration for you, man. So, it means a lot. Greatly appreciate it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you, man. So, when you were coming up, man, did you think you would be doing anything like you're doing today? Did you think you had any kind of preconceived notion that you'd be doing this work that you're doing right now?

INKY JOHNSON: Not a clue. Not a clue, man. And my coach in high school, he was the only one that mentioned something to the extent of what I'm doing now, but I didn't give it the least bit of attention. Because he mentioned it in joke form, but I never thought I would be doing what I'm doing now at all.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So, what did you think you'd be doing?

INKY JOHNSON: Playing ball, and then sail off into the sunset and become a coach. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So, was that just the template that you had, in being in the environment that you come from, was that kind of like the way to success, was through sports?

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, I just felt like in terms of my situation and my circumstances with how I was growing up, that this was my quickest vehicle in order to make it happen in terms of helping my family. Coming up, two-bedroom home with 14 people, mom having me at 16, working a double shift at Wendy's. And so, I wanted to change my family's situation, and I felt as if sports was the vehicle that would help me do that the quickest because of what we were going through. And so, that's why I viewed the platform the way that I did, and I felt like the skillsets that I was blessed with could help me make that happen. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I know that you're... Just even talking with you, man, you're very aware, like you're paying attention to other people's moves, you're kind of paying attention to their motivations. Did you notice early on that you had a different mindset about how you approached sport, how you was dedicated in a different level?

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, I picked it up probably around eighth grade in the summer heading into high school. Because some of the things that were more serious to me, it wasn't as serious to some of the cats that I was coming up with. The time, the dedication, the sacrifice, it wasn't that deep to them. When we would lose, man, I would cry. They would have to come pull me out of the locker room. Other cats would be like, "Alright, bro, we're about to roll out." And I would be in there like, "I can't believe we lost." And I'm talking about... Shawn, to be real with you, we was winning like two to three games a year. So, we would lose a lot, but my mindset was like, I couldn't process the fact that some cats were beating us, man. But other cats were so used to it that it was just like, "Oh man, it's another L." But to me, it was like the end of the world. My mom would have to come into the locker room sometimes. Like, "Ink, alright, let it go." And I'm in there like...

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's a lot of teams.

INKY JOHNSON: I need therapy. You know what I'm saying? For this L. Like, I can't lose, man. But I started to... I started to realize it then.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's powerful, man. So, being that you had so much dedication and the success... You start to see some success with that.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And eventually, you got the opportunity to... So first of all, actually, let's talk a little bit about that high school experience. Eighth grade is when you start to notice and with high school, you had an opportunity to kind of elevate out of the circumstances you were in, that particular school and go to another school. Let's talk about that story a little bit.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man, so I grew up all Atlanta public in terms of the school systems that I attended. And so, I was at Crim High School, southeast corner of Atlanta, people weren't really going to college, one of the lowest performing public schools in the state, and people would see my talent level and be like, "Hey man, this kid got it. I think he could do something." And nobody in my family had been to college, and so quite naturally, my father was coming back into the picture at that point, and they were talking to my mom, and so my mom was like, "Hey, you know, I think I need to put him in the right situation so he can get a chance at college." And it was a school across town, a great school, and she knew people that were connected to it, and so they would just tell her, "Hey, if you bring him over here and let him play ball for us, we can guarantee you, we'll get him a scholarship to Georgia."

Because the school had like a pipeline to the University of Georgia. And so, when she approached me, I understood her perspective, because she's looking at it like, "Man, I can give my son a better opportunity." And so, when she said it, she was excited, she talked about my father like, "Hey, take him over there." But when she said it to me, I was like, "I hear you, mom, I respect it, but I think I can make it from Crim," where people weren't going to college, where the drop-out rate was higher than the graduation rate. And my mom was like, "Huh?" I was like, "Yeah, I think I can do it from here." And so, we had some resistance for a while, and she eventually transferred me... When I got to the school, Shawn, I was like, "Nah, man, I'm not going to class." I'm not trying to be just a bad dude, I just felt so strongly about what I wanted to accomplish and what I wanted to do, and so I'll never forget talking to a cop in front of the school one day, and he was like, "Man, why won't you just go to class, you can play ball, go to college. Man, you could be good."

And I was like, "But I don't want to be here." He was like, "But just play ball, go to college, and you'll be good." And I was like, "No, you don't get it. I don't want to be here. I don't live on this side of town." And eventually, my mom came in, and she was like, "I can't take it no longer, I'm transferring him back." When she transferred me back, people were asking the question like, "Man, why do you want to go back to that school?" And I was like, "Because if I make it to college from across town, and I come back into my environment and I speak to my cousins that have to attend Crim High School, not the school across town, the kids I sleep on the floor with, my friends that live next door to me, if I come back to them and say, 'Hey, bro, you can make it just like I did.' They're going to be like, 'Ink, you went across town, man. I hear you, but your words don't resonate.'" And so, I wanted to take the same exact journey they had to take and go to

college, because I felt strongly about it, and I felt like I had some people in my corner that can help me do it, and we did it, man, and we did it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I don't know the answer to this. Did any of your other family members... Did you help to change that pattern? Because I do know that a lot of your other family members, very similar with me, found themselves in jail, found themselves getting murdered, and just seeing this as kind of the conditions of the world that we live in. But I was the first person in my family to go to college to get a four-year degree, breaking that pattern, and then coming behind that, my kids going to college, it's breaking that pattern. So, did you see that happen?

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man. Three of my younger cousins that I came up in the street with, all of them went to college. From the same situation, the same circumstance, the same household. And so, once I saw that happen, I was like, "Man, I made good on it. It meant something to them." If I just would have made it, they'd be like, "Alright, it's cool." But when they did it, I was like, "Yeah, man, my sacrifice didn't go in vain." And so, watching them do it, it was probably more exciting than when I did it, because I told them, "Hey, man, when I go to college, you are guys going to get the opportunity to go." And when I went, all of them, man, coming behind me, all three of them went to college.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's powerful, man. That's powerful. So, you did execute, you executed there at Crim. How did you decide which university to go to?

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man, I used to deal with people just in life in general, Shawn, based on how they handled adversity, and so my situation coming up was all adversity. I hadn't passed my Georgia High School Graduation Test and recruiting, I didn't have the right SAT/ACT score, it was coming down to the end for me, and so I had talent, but I was in an environment to where we just didn't know the requirements at the time, and nobody had told me. I was just thinking, "Man, I'ma go to college, I'ma play ball, I'ma give it to them on the field, and somebody going to see me, they're going to offer me a scholarship." I knew nothing about the sliding scale until I started meeting with college coaches. And so, when I started meeting with these guys, some coaches would come in and be like, "Hey, man, you got talent, but I don't know, man, you might have to end up going to JUCO or Georgia Military Academy." And I got it. I understood it because my stuff wasn't in order.

And when Phillip Fulmer came to see me, we met, and he said something that resonated with me in terms of how I grew up. Even though my situation and my circumstances were what they were, I had this certain belief that, "Nah, man, I'ma do good. I'ma make something of myself." And so, when he saw my situation and circumstance, I'll never forget it, I met with him in my high school coach's office, Darren Miles, when we got up and before he left, he looked at me,

he shook my hand and he said to me... He said, "I believe in you." He said, "I'ma see you in the summer, right?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "My guy, I'll see you in the summer. You go handle your business," and he left. And when he said it, I was like, "That's my type of guy." But it inspired me to do what I had to do so I can get to college, so I can make good on that scholarship, and that's why I chose Tennessee, because I felt as if he wasn't unshaken by what I was going through. He believed in me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, that's powerful too, man.

INKY JOHNSON: My guy, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So now when you got to Tennessee, what was the environment like as far as... How did you get a different level of access there? What did you notice about access to amenities, that kind of thing, versus where you were coming from?

INKY JOHNSON: Oh man, it was like... It was like coming into Mayberry, man. I'm talking about like... Shawn, it had everything. Everything. And all the college programs now, man, they got so much stuff. And it was like, man, from training table, to cleats, to gear to resources. It was just so much stuff. I wasn't used to that. And so, whereas you got some kids that come from high school programs, sometimes, where when they come to a college program, they're asking questions like, "You don't have this? I had this when I was in high school. I had this. You all don't have this?" And they're talking to the college program like that. When I came into that environment, I was like, "Man. Unbelievable." We got unlimited resources. Somebody washes your jockstrap. I couldn't understand how somebody can come into an environment like that and not be successful. Not talking NFL, I'm just talking about education, whatever the case may have been, because there were so many resources. That was the first time I slept in a bed by myself. Cats was trying to take me to a sorority party. I had been on visits, I had been to different schools, but I would always be in a room with my mom.

And so, when I would go somewhere, they would have the resources, but I'm with my dukes, I'm in a room with mom. That was the first time I had my own spot and space, like a king-sized bed. And cats are like, "Ink, you want to go to this party?" I'm like, "Nah bro, I'm staying in my room." It was like, "Come on, man. Go to the party." I'm like, "Brah, I got my own bed. Got a king-sized bed." And they're like, "You don't got a bed at home?" I'm like, "No, I sleep on the floor." And they're like, "For real?" I'm like, "Yeah man, I sleep on the floor." And so, coming into that environment, it was a certain level of gratitude. Like, "Man, I'm so grateful," but it was also a certain level of, "Oh, it's on." I finally got the playing field level because my whole life, I was competing against cats that had every resource known to man, and I didn't have it. And so now, I feel like, "Oh, it's on." The playing field level. I'm going to give it to these cats. And so yeah, man. It was awesome, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man. So, let's talk a little bit about the prospects of the NFL from your performance at Tennessee, and then let's talk about the unexpected turn that took place September 9th.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely. So, man, when I came into Tennessee, I wasn't highly rated. Under the radar recruit just because of the things I went through in high school. And so, when I got there, I was determined, man. And I had guys around me that were great teammates. I came in with a great recruiting class, guys that played ball, and I was fortunate because it was a lot of guys in my recruiting class that we had a similar train of thought. From Jerod Mayo, who's with the Patriots, Robert Ayers, who went to the Broncos, Ramon Foster, Steelers. Like a bunch of guys... Arian Foster. We just thought alike. We just wanted to come in, work, and earn our keep. And I had a guy by the name of Jason Allen, and he was all-American defensive back. You know, older guy, senior guy. He was in front of me, but he was great. He took me under his wing, treated me like a little brother, taught me everything about the game. We competed together freshman year. Played a little bit special team, played a little bit corner nickel.

Sophomore season, things are going great. Me and Jason are playing together alongside each other in certain packages. Jason gets hurt and he breaks his hip in a game. And so, when he gets hurt, quite naturally, "Ink, you're the guy now." So, it's no more packages. Now, you're the guy. You got to fulfill everything he was doing. And when that happened, he had prepared me so much, Jason and my coaches, that when I stepped into the role, man, I played great sophomore season. Coming into my junior year, things were looking great, and I was a prospect at this point. And the second game of my junior year, man, playing against the Air Force. Tough group. Disciplined group. And the game is basically over, man. Two minutes left, fourth quarter of the game. I go to make a tackle, and I'm thinking the whole time this year... My junior year at this point, I'm thinking, "Man, I'm going to go out have a great season." Coach has already told me... My defensive backs coach, "Ink, you go out, you have a great season, you're automatic multi-millionaire, man. You're projected top 30 draft pick as a corner. Like, it's laid out for you, Ink. Just do what you've been doing."

And so, I'm thinking I'm just going to play ball, I'm going to have the time of my life. And in the fourth quarter, man, I go to make a routine tackle. And the crazy thing, Shawn, I had been in a lot harder collisions, like way harder collisions. And when I go to make this tackle, it seemed as if everything in my body left. And it seemed as if my body just went limp. Fell to the ground, blacked out. Never had happened to me before. My eyes opened. My guys running over to me, "Ink, get up. Let's rock. Let's go. Let's close them out." And I'm like, "I can't." And I had never been like that before. I've always been in collisions, hit the ground, jump up, laugh, even if a guy got the best of me. Man, and got... Gave it to me that time. Like, I'll always pop up. That was my motto. So even when guys are running over to me like, "Ink, let's go." I was like, "I can't."

They're like, "What you mean, you can't? You always get up." Like, "I know, man, but I can't move." And there was a shock going from the crown of my head to the bottom of my feet, and I couldn't feel anything. And the shock eventually left, and it stayed in my right arm and hand. And they brought the spine board out, put me on a spine board, they wheel me off the field, they get me to the ambulance, and they say to me, "We'll get you over to the hospital, run a couple of tests, and then we'll put you in a room."

And they take me over to the hospital, they run their tests, and they put me in a room. And my mom comes in and she kisses me, prays for me, says, "Ink, you'll be good. It's football. Things happen. You'll be good." And she walks out. And when she walks out, look at her exit the room, and I flipped my head to the left. When I flip it to the left, the head doctor, he was jogging in. And I'll never forget these words, man. He said, "Guys, guys, get in here. Got to rush this kid back to emergency surgery. He's about to die." And I thought he was joking because everything had been so calm and cool. And I was like, "Like die, die? Like away from here die?" And he's like, "Yeah." I was like, "What happened?" I said, "Everything was so cool, man. You ran the tests. Everything was cool." He was like, "Yeah, but when we ran the test, we noticed you had ruptured your subclavian artery in your chest. You're bleeding internally." He said, "We got to rush you back and take the main vein out of your left leg and plug it into your chest in order to save your life." It's crazy, man. Crazy. So... Man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Obviously, you made it. You made it.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You came back online after the surgery. And I would imagine, just the personality that you have, that you were like, "Okay. When are we getting back to...? When can I get back to training? When can I get back with my team?"

INKY JOHNSON: No doubt.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So, what was coming out of that process like?

INKY JOHNSON: It was extremely tough for me, Shawn, because I couldn't believe it. Even when I came out of surgery. And when I came out of surgery, man, my body was cut up. Like I had six incisions down my left eye, one across the left side of my neck, one across the right, twice through my right ribs, cut out my right pec, bottom of my armpit to the bottom of my hand. Because when they went in to repair the artery, they noticed I had torn the nerves in my brachial plexus, which were the nerve roots that went from my spine that control my shoulder, arm, hand, fingers. Because when I went to make the tackle, the way it happened, I was in perfect position. But when you slow the hit down, the guy kind of shifted at the last moment.

And when he shifted, his helmet hit me between my shoulder and my neck. And so, it sent my neck one way, shoulder opposite way, immediately ruptured the artery and tore the nerves in my spine, and it paralyzed my right arm and hand. And so, when they performed the surgery, and I woke up and I was like, "Man, what's this?" And it's like, "Man, we noticed you'd torn the nerves in your brachial plexus." And I was like, "Wow." They was like, "Man, you probably can never play again." And I just couldn't recollect that. I had been working from 7-20, and I get basically eight games away, and I just lose it? That was tough for me.

And so, the only thing I've ever known was, man, just work. Just work your way through it. Get back in the groove. Get back in the process. And so, they were saying to me, "Hey Ink, we're going to give you some time off, let you go back to Atlanta if you want. Un-enroll. Something traumatic has happened to you." And I'm like, "No. I'm not going back to Atlanta." And they was like, "Well, you can't play." I'm like, "It's not about a game." It's like, "What do you want?" I was like, "Man, can you get me a DonJoy sling and a velcro strap?" And they're like, "Why?" Like, "I need to get back to practice with my guys." Like, "I need to get back. I need to get back in the groove." Because for me, I felt as if... I really felt like it wasn't over. And they were trying to tell me, like, "No bro, like medically, you're done." But I was like, "No, I can't be. So, I'm going to keep working out. I'm going to keep going to my training sessions. I'm going to keep going to the training room. Whatever you all want me to do for my arm, I'm going to do that. But this can't be over." I couldn't come to grips with that. That took a while. The disappointment was heavy, but it took a while. It took a while.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Man. I believe that... You know, it's really in the face of opposition is when so many of our greatest strengths and capacities come out.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's like the opportunity... We just shared even before the show started something that I went through recently. And even though it was an incredibly trying situation, I'm grateful for it...

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But at the same time, I think that a lot of us shy away from the situations. And sometimes, life will just come and smack you with one. And how much does resilience and mental toughness... Because for you to make that decision right there in that moment, when everybody is telling you, like, "It's a wrap. Head back to Atlanta." Can you talk about the importance...? Because even right now in life, there's millions, hundreds of millions, billions of people who have had their lives turned upside down.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So, can you speak to the value of mental toughness, resilience. How does that play into the success that you're seeing right now?

INKY JOHNSON: I think it's everything. I'm so thankful, Shawn, by the way I grew up. With the opposition and adversity, even though... And that was the best time of my life in terms of my childhood, even though I had challenges, but I'm so grateful for my mother, and the people, and the influences, whether it be coaches, uncles, my father when he came in my life. Nobody ever let me make excuses, starting with my mother. So even if we were going through something... I'll never forget the day my mom told me, "Hey, Ink. The world don't owe you nothing." I'll never forget the day... I had four touchdowns in a game, and I'm excited and I get in the car with my mom, and I'm like, "Man, I just hit them boys for four of them." And that Monday when she was dropping me off, she didn't even make mention of it. It was almost like, "Alright. That was cool. But today when you go back to work, handle your business. Show up. Work hard. You got to prove yourself every day." And so, my mentality... I never knew how to quit. I never knew how to stop because I never had that liberty.

And so, when you talk mental toughness, when you talk perseverance, when you talk resilience, I think it's everything. But I think often times, when we do sports or when we do extra-curricular, we think it's a separate mentality. We think, "If I quit when it gets tough in a sport, that's just a sport." No. That's the mentality we're cultivating for life. And I think the edge that I've always had in terms of when it came to opposition and adversity, I understood the mentality that I was cultivating. This is for my life. This is the individual. This is the man that I'm one day going to become. And so, when I would tell a teammate, "Hey bro, you can't give up in wind sprints. It's a wind sprint." They would be like, "It's a wind sprint." I'm like, "No. It's a wind sprint." They're like, "It's a wind sprint." I'm like, "No. Like that's life. If you quit in a controlled environment and it's a wind sprint, what do you think one day you're going to do when life punches you in your mouth? You're going to quit."

And so, we got to press forward because of the mentality that we're cultivating, and mental toughness is everything. But understanding that it's not a dual mentality, even if it comes to corporate, our marriage, our relationship with our children, whatever the case may be. Every single day, we're cultivating the spirit and the mentality when it comes to opposition, adversity, and challenges. And I firmly believe if we can find room to be grateful for it, we can extract a lesson from it. If we can extract a lesson from it, we can learn from it. If we can learn from it, we can take it and apply it to every environment we go into or person's life that we come in contact with to serve as a source of value. And so, when I encounter something that I don't like or don't feel good, I always think about it in terms of the ability to learn is a gift. Even if pain is our teacher.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Facts.

INKY JOHNSON: No doubt.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You just 10Xed this statement of how you do anything is how you do everything.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so, I want to ask everybody to think about that in their lives when we might be coasting through, fill in the blank, and looking at it as an opportunity. Because honestly, even when I do the dishes, I do the dishes. I really clean the dishes. I'm not going to half-ass do anything that I do.

INKY JOHNSON: That's real.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course, then there's a time for relaxing, but even when I relax, I'm intentionally chilling. But anything that I'm doing, I'm doing it right. I'm doing it to the best of my ability. And so where can we cultivate that in our lives? And I want everybody to think about that a little bit, the small things. Even in the context of... And I love how you transition that over with our relationships. How are you showing up with these things? And again, it's not about being perfect. It's about just showing up and bringing your A game, as much as possible. Thank you so much for that, man. I want to ask you, because for so many people, you're a leader, you're an inspiration, but can you speak to the value of being a student?

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely. Man, I think that's what a great leader is. That's what a great captain is. I think at first, you have to be a great student. And I think you never stop being a student. And I think when we understand that, and we have the ability to learn, and the ability to be open, the ability to understand that we don't know everything about everything. Always say to myself, my challenge to myself is this, always challenge and question what you think you know to be true. The information, the knowledge, the wisdom that may apply to a certain situation, circumstance or person. I have to always step back and challenge that level of information, insight, and wisdom that I think I know to be true. It's like coming up, I was raised different than I raised my children because of my situation and circumstances that I was encountering every single day. Because I had my mother in the household every single day. My kids got me and their mother, which is my wife. And so, the information and the knowledge base that I had, that applied to me, I can take, and I can tweak that a little bit with my children. I always challenge the information, and the wisdom, and the knowledge base that I have that

applies to situation and circumstances, if it's true, if it still applies, if it's current, if it's up the date.

And part of that is the ability for me to be a student, to ask people questions about situations, about circumstances, about marriage, about being a father, about being an orator, whatever the case may be, about my health, whatever the case may be, the ability to be open and to be a student and to suppress my ego, to understand that, man, if you want to be an effective and an efficient leader, you first have to be willing to be a great student. You have to be willing to be a great student. And so, I think it's everything. I think it's extremely important.

SHAWN STEVENSON: No disrespect, but you are an incredibly evolved human, man. I am saying that with no disrespect, because I know you're going to push it to the side, but that's a rare gift...

INKY JOHNSON: I appreciate that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: To be willing to be wrong as well. That's the thing... I've been talking about this, especially over the past year, two years, and encouraging people to think in those terms, to have that willingness to be wrong. And the funny thing is, when you do that, when you try to look at things from someone else's perspective or from a perspective of something you don't even believe necessarily, or for somebody you might think is totally wrong, when you do that and have the audacity to do that, it's so funny how it shows up. You're not even as wrong as much now, because you're taking a bigger meta-perspective, being able to look at things, examine things, because in life, most things at some point, they're not going to hold up in their truth, in some kind of way. I just want to acknowledge you for that, because not a lot of people talk about that willingness to be wrong, to challenge the things that we think. Yeah, man, but this brings me back to... Even talking about this earlier. I even taught it with my son, my oldest son, Jordan, and him doing the dishes. Same thing. He shows up and it's going down. It's going to be spotless. But it's the process. Let's talk about that, because that's where the value is. He's taking this as an opportunity, so now when he's doing the dishes, he's watching Brandon Marshall.

His show, that's how I found out about it. For example, your friend and NFL superstar and so he's using that as an opportunity to grow. He's got his vibe going. He's locked in on his dishes, locked in on his brain food, but it's the process and it's not the product. That's what you talk about.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely. Because I think, oftentimes, we're so outcome and results-driven, and that's cool. If we look at a situation, goals, dreams, aspirations, that's great. But I think, oftentimes, the same thing that drives us, it's like evolution of a person. It's like certain things

that work for us in certain phases and stages of life, if you don't get to a point to where you assess and evaluate that behavior, and sometimes destroy that behavior, the advantage, oftentimes, becomes the disadvantage. And so, the thing that helps you get to a certain point, if you don't stop, and evaluate, and assess that behavior, it's going to become a disadvantage, or has the possibility to become a disadvantage. Let me tell you what I mean. Before I started speaking, I just knew, I never want my children to go through poverty. I never want my children to experience some of the things I experienced as a kid. And so, when I was searching for purpose, in terms of speaking, I never thought I would be doing this. I was just searching for purpose. I was doing this. I was creating leadership curriculums for kids. I would speak, but it was very informal. I never showed up to speaking engagements prior to, when I made the decision to do it thinking, "Man, this is what I'm going to do with my life."

I just showed up and I would be doing something else, and somebody would come over and be like, "Hey, man, what happened to your arm?" I'd be like, "A football injury." And they would be like, "No, but what happened?" I'm like, "Man, I just got injured." And I'll keep doing what I'm doing, and somebody would press the issue even more, "No, tell me what happened." "Hey, man. I just made a tackle, got injured." And then they would press it even more. And then I would start talking to them, and before long, people would come around and be like, "Oh man, you might need to look at speaking." And I'll be like, "No, I'm cool on that." And we would just leave. I wasn't thinking about it. And so, every door closed of what I thought I was going to do with my life, Shawn. Worked at the rec center. Door closed. Be a coach. Door closed. Every door closed. And I'll never forget the day, I was like, Man... I was praying. I was like, "Alright, God, I'ma speak, I'm going to be obedient, let's do it. I'm going to just be obedient. Send me wherever you got to send me. I think this is it. It feels right. I like it, I enjoy it. I think I get the concept of it. I think I can impact people. Let's do it." I just start speaking. It wasn't about money; it wasn't about anything. I was just going everywhere. You would see me at a birthday party, you would see me at a country club speaking to 70-year-old ladies, you would see me at teen boys and... I was all over the place.

And so, once I started to understand the intricacies of it, I just started going. I came out of the gate running. And then I started to see results. I'm an extremely ambitious person. Now I'm speaking all the time, every opportunity I get. I've been this way my whole life in terms of ambition. It's always played in my favor. It's always been one of those things where I step on the court, not the biggest, not the fastest, not the strongest, but I'm not going to give out before you. That's my gift, that's my talent, I know how to go. I can go get on a plane, go speak, fly back, get up the next morning at 5:00, go speak. I started doing that, started seeing results. Financially, it started to be beneficial for me and my family. I'm at a retreat one day and a guy says to us in small groups, "What's something that you're running from in your childhood?" So different people would start, "Hey, I'm running from this..." I get up, I say, "I'm running from

poverty." And he just says to me, Shawn, "Are you in poverty?" I was like "No." He's like "Well, stop running."

Very simple, right? And so, I got back to my room that night, I was like, "Man, he's right." The very next week, I get a call from the NFL. Now things are ramping up at this point, it's years ago, I get a call from the NFL "We can pay you this, right? There is opportunity here." And at this point, I'm thinking, "Man, this is going to take me to the next level of my career and I've just been speaking." Ambitious, driven. And I go to my wife, and it's on my wife's birthday. Me and my wife been at it since fifth grade. I say to my wife, I'm like "Hey babe, there's an opportunity at the NFL. Man, it can do this, they're going to pay us this, think it can take us here in the career." My wife was like "Oh, no problem. Do it". I was like "I'll just send you and your grandma to the spa." I planned it all out. "Send you all to the spa, I speak that morning, be back in the afternoon. Man, we'll just go have a ball." "Oh no problem, go do it."

I go speak, get in the first flight out, fly back to Atlanta, celebrate her birthday, two days later, it was something small. My wife just blows up. And my wife doesn't get like this much. Blows up. And I knew exactly what it was. I said, it was that trip for the NFL, that's why she blew up. It wasn't what it was about, that was the trip, that was my ambition, that was my ability to stop valuing moments in our lives and missing stuff. Missing a soccer game, missing my son's game, missing a PTA meeting. My ambition, it was taking me to a certain place in my career, but I never stopped to assess my ambition, and so what was once my advantage... Because I never stopped and paid attention to it to say, "Alright, that's cool. It served me well to this point..." Not that I don't have to no longer be ambition, but I got to figure out how to channel it now. Because at a certain point, it's become a disadvantage in the thing that I say I value the most in my life.

And so, getting to a certain point to where the things that we channel and we say is an advantage in our lives, we have to stop, and we have to self-assess before it become a disadvantage. Because talent and skillset can ascend us to a place, but if we never work on our character, we can become public successes, but behind closed doors, we're private failures, because we never assessed the behavior, skillset, and ability.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and people don't realize how often that happens.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I know you see it all the time. And even when he says, "Stop running from poverty," that reminds me of the story... I don't know if you heard this, Will Smith and Oprah were having a conversation. And Oprah says... And Will Smith says to Oprah, "Do you

ever feel like all this, all that we've accumulated, all the success, all the money that... Are you fearful sometimes that it can all go away?" And Oprah was like "No."

INKY JOHNSON: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But he feels like it. He was feeling like at any moment, this could all be taken away, so he has that kind of grind, that kind of mentality. Oprah is just like, "I'm Oprah." And you actually... You had a run in with Oprah too, didn't you?

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Let's talk about that.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah man, it was crazy, man. It was at that point before everything jumped off. I had never been so confused in my life. Because I'm the type of person, I like to be intentional, I like to try to plan out the next steps. And when I can no longer play ball, I'm trying to find purpose. So, I'm just trying to plan it out, "Alright. I can't play, I'm a coach." And the creator was like, "No bro, you don't get it, let go. Let go of the wheel now. You've been trying to control things too much. Are you not aware you planned out from 7 until 20 years old to make it to the NFL and it still didn't happen? Is that not confirmation to let go of the wheel, and you're still trying to plan stuff?" And I was at a point in my life, Shawn, to where I had just moved back to Atlanta. And I was two blocks away from where I grew up, in a two-bedroom home with 14 people. And I couldn't understand how my life had taken me, and the career that had taken me from a two-bedroom home with 14 people to the University of Tennessee, eating steak and shrimp pre-game, all the resources in the world, eight games away from the NFL, career-ending injury, to bring me right back to the same neighborhood, two blocks away to my wife's grandmother's home, and my daughter's sleeping in a wagon that somebody bought her for her birthday?

I'm like, "Man, I went through all that to come right back? Why did you even take me there?" I couldn't understand it. But my whole life, I felt as if the creator had a plan for me. I felt as if, man, I'm going to be the one, like God's going to do something special with my life. That's why I went back to my high school. It wasn't just off my belief, I felt as if, man, the creator got something for me, man. I'm going to be the one in my family. God got me, man. And that was the first time I felt like, "Hey, God, you still... You still hear me, man? Like you still rocking with me?" I know this past year and a half some people probably feel like, "God like, you still... You still there?" I had never felt like that before.

And so, I had just finished my book, my autobiography, and I wrote it because I'm a journal... I journal a lot. But I wrote it because my grandmother... I wanted to get it to my grandmother,

it was something big. And that was the only thing I had, and I was like... I was getting up every day, Shawn, and I would go to different places in Atlanta and try to get a job. People would just say different thing, "Uh, over-qualified, this, that..." And I was thinking like, "Maybe they see my arm..." It's cool, I get it. And I get up one day and I look at my wife, and she was a teacher at the time. And she was getting dressed... My wife had taught for 11 years. And she says, "How are you doing?" I was like "Babe, I'm about to go meet Oprah."

And she was like, "Ink, you know Oprah?" And my wife knew me her whole life. And I was like "Nah." And she was like, "You know anybody at the studio, Harpo?" I was like "Nah." And she was like, "You sure about this?" And I was like, "Yes, ma'am." She was like, "Go for it." And I took off, driving, I get to Chattanooga, call my buddy Jeff, who is an Attorney. Jeff picks up and I'm like, "Jeff, I'm about to go meet Oprah." And Jeff was like, "Ink, I know how ambitious you are, hang up the phone, call me back when you get to Knoxville, chances of that happening is slim to none. I don't want you to be too disappointed." Call him when I get to Knox. He picks up, he says, "You're still going, aren't you?" I was like, "Yeah." He's like, "Pick me up, man. I'm going to ride with you."

Get to Chicago. Jeff pays for us a room. Next morning, I get up. We go over to Harpo. This is when her last shows were happening. And I get out, and Jeff was like, "Man, I'm going to go up the street to this little shop, I'll see you in a minute. I'm sure this won't be long." And so, it was just people outside the building and Shawn, I kid you not, I was just walking with a book, big suit, and whenever I would see a door open, I would just run over to the door... "Hey, I'm Inky Johnson, drove over from Atlanta. I want to give Oprah my book." And they were like, "Hey, man! Get out of here. We don't do that, man!" And I'm like, "Man, ya'll rude. I thought ya'll give away cars, man. I got a book." And they were just doing their job. And I got so discouraged, man. And everybody had went in for the show, and I sit down on the sidewalk with a guy, he looked to be homeless, and I said, "Hey man, how are you doing?" He's like, "I'm great." Then he's like, "How are you?" I was like, "Man, I've seen better days." Irony of the situation. And I look up and coming down the sidewalk was Oprah and her security guard. And I get up and I start walking toward him, and I'm like, "I'm going to just take my shot." And surely, I'm thinking, "Security's going to come up, move me out of the way, but I'll still take my shot." And as I'm getting closer, they're getting closer.

And they get like right in front of me. And I was like, "Hey, I'm Inky Johnson, drove up from Atlanta. I just want to give you, my book." She took the book, and she grabbed my suit, and she shook it. And she's like, "Nice suit!" I think she was trying to see if I had something in it. I just had on a plain little black suit or whatever. I was like, "Thank you." I was like, "You mind, I want to take a picture with you?" Like, "Sure." And we took a picture. She's like, "I got to get in and do my show." And so, I was like, "Thank you." And so, as I was walking off, her security guard say, "Hey, little man. Come here." So, I come back over to him. He's like, "I'm not saying anything

is going to come of that." He was like, "I just want you to know what just happened, never happens." He's like, "Usually she'll tell me, hey, go move him out of the way. Or they'll send it somewhere and she'll never get it. I'm not saying you're going to be on a book club, I'm not saying any of that. I just want you to know the interaction you just had never happens."

I was like, "Thank you so much, man." And I go to walk off and I got the picture. Put it up on Facebook, sent it to family, friends, everybody's hitting me like, "Bro, you met Oprah? You going to be on the show? You going to be on the book club?" I was like, "I don't know, man. I don't care." It's like, "What you mean, you don't know or you don't care?" I was like, "That moment wasn't about that for me." It was like, "What was it about?" I was like, "Bro, I needed to know God was still walking with me." And so, for me, as great as the picture was, as great as the encounter was, and nothing came of it, in terms of Oprah, nothing came of it. No book club, no show. But everything came of it. My belief, my faith was fortified. I said in Atlanta, Georgia, "Alright, God, I'm going to see, I'm going to leave Atlanta and go to Chicago to try to meet one of the most prominent people in the world." That's how crazy my faith was. That's how much I believed in the creator. "Are you still listening to me? I think you are, but let's see." That's how insane my faith is. I'm going to go to Chicago and say, "I'm meeting Oprah." Everybody's going to tell me, "Don't go, don't do it!" But I trust you enough, and I think you still hear me. Let's do it.

And I went and he put me front and center and put the book in her hand and took a picture with her. And so, when I walked off, I was like, "God, let's go. We can conquer the world, man. Let's go." That was the most powerful moment in my life. Because I was about to lose hope, man. Because my conditions and my circumstances, they didn't reflect the picture that I saw for my life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And she put hands on you, too. She shook that suit, man.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's powerful. The thing that really... There's so much to that story, but one of the things that stood out for me that I don't know if a lot of people get is that moment with your wife and her saying, "Go for it."

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Handle your business... How important is that in your life?

INKY JOHNSON: It's everything. I don't think I could be the man that the world sees and knows, I don't think I would be the husband and the father that I am without my wife. My wife is

everything to me. The way I travel, the work that I do, she supports me, man, she encourages me, she believes in me. It means everything, and we've been knowing each other since we were kids, and so that makes it even more potent. But also, just as a man, she helps... She assists me. I can go to my wife and say, "Hey, babe, am I my looking at this wrong?" And she can challenge me and she's going to tell me the truth, or she'll say, "Hey, Ink. You might want to view this this way, or look at this with this perspective, and that's everything to me, to have her support and to know that the same man that the world sees, that's the same man she knows. It's not like when I go out into the world, I'm a different person, I talk different, I act different, if we go somewhere, she got to act a certain way. My wife can be 100% who she is, because she knows I'm going to be 100% who I am, and we're confident in securing that, and so having my wife's support is everything to me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Fifth grade!

INKY JOHNSON: Fifth grade, been rocking man, been rocking. On and off since fifth grade, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's incredible, man. So, let's actually talk about this more because this is even how we linked up, man, it's a mutual friend who just... These... Some of the best people in the world, man. CJ is just... That's my brother, man. How important are these relationships in our success because truly like, man, we talked a little bit about this, but I definitely had that lone wolf syndrome and just, I'm going to change the world myself, I got this. And that attitude, you end up... That will kill you.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Trying to do everything yourself, and when I open myself up, and sometimes it might be a podcast, it might be some other medium that get you to come out of that comfort zone and to interact with other humans who are on that same level. So, let's talk about the importance of relationships or success.

INKY JOHNSON: I think relationships are everything. Oftentimes Shawn, I think in the world, when we look at relationships, a lot of us think about relationships in terms of whether it be proximity is power, whether it be who we hang around is who we become... Who we run with determines the direction that we run, and that's great, whether it be connections, that's great, whether it be access to certain things, and that's great, but often times, I think the greatest relationships are the ones that we can call and tell anything to? Because oftentimes, we'll call people and we'll tell them about successes, we'll call people and we'll tell them, "Hey, man. I just closed this deal." We'll call people and we'll tell them, "Hey, man. I did this", "I just spoke to this audience and it's awesome," but I think it's equally as important to have somebody that

you can call and say, "Hey, man. I'm struggling with this. Can you pray for me?" I think it's equally as important to have people you can call and say, "Hey, man. Me and my wife are going through it. Can you and your wife come over and pray for us, man, and talk to us?" "Hey, man. I'm struggling, we're going through the pandemic, somebody just lost their job. Man, I'm scared. I'm trying to figure this thing out; can you navigate this thing with me?"

Just having people on the other side of it that we can call and be just as excited and just as secure to share our failures and the things that challenges us as we are about our successes, and so when I think about relationships, they're extremely important, but also, the right type of relationships that are well-balanced, that we can call not only about successes, connections and getting us into certain places, but all sort of people we can call when we're going through adversity and opposition that will also stand in it with us and help us get through it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Speaking of opposition, this past year, year, and a half, especially for... And part of the reason I'm doing this work right now and even coming out here and linking up with you is because of our kids, and it's so crazy that the decisions that are being made around our lives have really put our children in the most compromising situation because, in many instances, they don't have a choice. They're just subject to the world that we create for them.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And being on the ground in California, where schools were shut down and especially minority children are falling behind, a year behind.

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And not having access... Not even having access in some instances to getting on the Zoom calls and not having a parent around because they got to try and get out here and pay the bills to even help coordinate any of these things. And so, my older son just lost another one of his friends. He just committed suicide a couple days ago. And as I say, another one of his friends, and this was his... In middle school, they were best friends... Of all the friends my son has had, this kid was my favorite, favorite, favorite spirit and just feeling isolated. And often times, we don't even realize, but not having access to social support, this Internet game, the social media being the most infectious virus of them all, but here's the thing, and even... This is why I'm talking with you about, is that I also know that despite the appearances... The trials and tribulations we're seeing right now could be for our children, the thing that they develop those character traits to overcome and be greater. So, let's talk a little bit about that, about the current circumstances, what we can do for our children right now in these circumstances, because you got two kids that you love, you got a lot going on, and... Let's

just keep our eyes on them. What are some of the things that we can do to help uplift those little ones?

INKY JOHNSON: No, man, I think you make a great point and a valid point. Often times, man... There's a quote, I don't know who is it by, but it says, "Be willing to check on your strong friends or just be willing to check on your family, your supporters." And oftentimes with children, what's going on in the world, the pandemic or whatever the case may be, we'll look at them and think, "Oh, man. It doesn't affect them, they're kids, they're just having a ball navigating throughout life," whatever the case may have been. And with our children, me, and my wife, we've looked at it as an incredible opportunity to teach them how to look at adversity and opposition with the right perspective, and when I say the right perspective, I'm speaking to... When we look at things that we deem... That's not fortunate. When we look at situations that happen and we can't do anything about it, and it just shows up. Oftentimes when we look at it, it's like my injury. The average person that comes up and talks to me about it and says to me, "Hey, Ink, I heard you say you wouldn't change it, be honest with me, you've got a paralyzed arm, be honest with me, look at the atrophy, be honest, man. If you could be in NFL right now, you wouldn't change that?" But more so, their thought process is always focused on what did I lose. That's all they think about. Man, he lost a career potentially. Man, he lost muscles in his arm, the atrophy.

Oftentimes, we never look at opposition and adversity and say, "Okay, man, what did you gain? What was the advantage of the time off? What was the advantage of not being able to do things the way that you were normally doing?" And so, challenging our kids with the thought process of, "Hey, what did you learn from this time? How do you view this? I'm just curious Ink, tell me, man, what's your thoughts about the pandemic? Hey, Jada, I'm just curious, tell me, do you feel like this time made you better or worse? In which way? Can you elaborate?"

And so just hearing their thought processes about what they're going through, how they're viewing it, and then editing to some extent, their answers in terms of... "Alright, J, you don't like the time off that much, cool, how can we make it work to our advantage?" "Alright, Ink, you love the time off. You get to run around like crazy, you love it, right?" Sometimes when you sit in front of that computer on Zoom or Google class, that's a challenge for you. Alright, why is it a challenge for you? But more so, man, trying to shape their perspective in how they see adversity and oppositions in moments that show up that they can't do anything about. Because for the rest of their life, they're going to encounter things like that.

And if you always just look at it and think, "Man, what did I lose?" You'll miss so many lessons, you'll waste so many experiences. But if you can look at it with a perspective that's well balanced and say, "How can I use this time to become better? How can I use this time to think about things differently? How can I use this time to become a better person?" You can use

those moments for an advantage for the rest of your life, man. And so just trying to challenge them from that aspect.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Man, I just want to listen to you talk about all the things man. For real, man.

INKY JOHNSON: Nah, nah. You good man, you good.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is so powerful, man, and like I said, it's really an honor to connect and...

INKY JOHNSON: Nah, man. It's a pleasure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I hope that everybody's extracting as much value from this as I am, and I'm excited to see what you do next, man. I know you've been behind the scenes, working on some things and cultivating new skill sets, to take things to an even bigger level. So, what do you got going on right now? Where can people get more information? You just started a new podcast, a new show...

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, man, trying to do like you, man. Put some value out into the world. But man, I got a book deal on the table that me and my wife are working through and thinking about, but also the podcast, man, just trying to find different avenues to put out a content of value and moving outside of my comfort zone, because, to be honest, man, I'm the type of person, I just work, keep my head down, do my thing, pick my head up every once in a while, check things out, put my head back down and get back to work. And so now with what's happened over the past year and a half, it's made me more cognizant to how my content impacts and affects people, and so finding more avenues to put out better content, but also content to where I can learn from people, so that's what made me start the podcast.

But people are telling me, "Ink, you got to talk more on your podcast because I'll do it and I'll just listen to somebody, right?" And I love learning, and so I'll bring people on and I'm just like, "Man, I love this. I love hearing people's thought processes. I love hearing people's strategies, how they navigate, how they do life? I love that, because I feel as if this is going to make me a better person." I'm going to take, extract what I can learn and apply it to other areas and aspects of my life. And so finding ways to put out, not only my content, but I feel as if there's some amazing people in the world in all avenues and aspects of life, and so with my pod, man, trying to find ways to shed light on all the beautiful, amazing people, man, because I feel like I am the man that I am because people helped me when they didn't have to.

I had a guy that was a coach that nobody knew, entrepreneur, had his own company, just did his thing, that saw some kids in the street and thought enough of us to say, "Hey, man. I'll pay for you all to play ball," without even seeing us play ball, and it changed our life. I had a teacher, 23 years old, first year teaching, was like, "Hey, man. I care about you, knuckleheads. I'm going to start coming to see you all after school. Hey, Ink, man, I think you got the juice, kid, I'm going to start picking you up before school, and I'm going to do it until you graduate high school, and I'm going to teach you life, man. I'm going to make you read a proverb every morning. I'm going to put I love you on the right side of the chalkboard every single day, so if any kid in this room is not feeling loved, just look in the right side of the chalkboard every day and know that I love you." It was people like that that impacted my life, that's amazing, that are still doing the same work until this day. And so, finding ways to not only share my content and my stories, but finding ways to share other people's content and stories to add value to the world, man. That's it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. And just how you feel when you're doing that on the other side, that's how I feel right now listening to you, man.

INKY JOHNSON: Man, I appreciate that, man...

SHAWN STEVENSON: So, can you let everybody know the name of your podcast?

INKY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Where they can link up with you on social media.

INKY JOHNSON: Yeah, and so all the social media handles is inkyjohnson except Instagram because somebody hacked my Instagram a while back, so it's InkyJohnsonmotivate.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Damn you, hacker!

INKY JOHNSON: But yeah, they got me, man. I got it back. And my podcast is Serendipity with Inky Johnson. And so, it's just about how we get to where we are in life, the people that the world have come to know, serendipity moments, the things we go through along the processes of life that makes and shapes us into who we are. And YouTube, of course, is Inky Johnson.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Boom. There it is man. I appreciate you so much for hanging out with us.

INKY JOHNSON: No, it's a pleasure, man. And I want to say this, as a man, as a brother, thank you, man, thank you for what you represent, thank you for what you do, thank you for how you

do it, thank you for what you put into the world. It's respected, it's well appreciated, and as a brother, man, I'm going to get you your flowers, bro. Thank you, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I receive that, man.

INKY JOHNSON: I appreciate you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My bro.

INKY JOHNSON: No doubt.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so much for tuning into the show today. I hope you got a lot of value out of this. If you did, please share this out to your friends and family. Of course, tag me, I'm @shawnmodel and tag Inky and let him know what you thought about this episode. Inky is @inkyjohnsonmotivate on Instagram. Alright, listen, we've got some more epic episodes coming your way very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

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