THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW

EPISODE 981

From Opioid Addiction to Becoming the Fastest Marathon Runner in the World

With Guest Ken Rideout

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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. There's a quote that says, success is how high you bounce when you hit rock bottom. And this quote was from General George S. Patton, and it really is a testament to what you're going to discover today. We are so much stronger and so much more capable, so much more durable and resilient than we could ever possibly imagine. But oftentimes, life doesn't require us to really unlock our capacities, especially in our society today. And here's the thing, whether we like it or not, whether we intend it or not, we're going to go through difficult things.

But what if there was a way to train ourselves to be ready by leaning into the discomfort and by acknowledging all of the difficult, troubling, sometimes destructive things that we've been through in our lives, and we are still here to tap into this awareness today, you're going to hear a story that is flat out crazy. It's crazy and amazing and beautiful, and it's a story of a human life and the conditions that we might find ourselves in and find a way again and again to figure things out. And today, my hope is that this story will inspire you to acknowledge how strong you already are for overcoming what you've already been faced with, and to remember how powerful you are to create the life that you truly desire and deserve.

And this story really had a huge impact on me. So much of our special guest story was very similar to my life. And you know, maybe one day I can unpack what some of these things are, but it's just it was so familiar hearing some of these crazy things that he has had to endure. And again, this is about inspiration and education, but as well, it's just an incredible journey that I think that you're really going to enjoy.

And with all that said, let's go ahead and dive into this powerful conversation with our special guest, Ken Rideout. Ken Rideout is the fastest marathoner in the world, over 50 and a former prison guard, wall Street trader, and opioid addict. His life story has been chronicled in such publications as a New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Outside Magazine. Since getting sober more than a decade ago, he has won some of the world's toughest races, including at age 52, the Gobi March, a 155 mile self-supported race across the sweltering Gobi Desert in Mongolia. A few months later, the Master's 50 plus Marathon World

Championships. In addition to his many running victories, he's completed more than 10 Ironman triathlons, and today he lives in Nashville with his wife, Shelby, and their four children, and he's making a huge impact, inspiring others to use the adversity in their lives to transform their emotional and mental resilience. Let's dive in this conversation with the one and only Ken Rideout.

Ken, welcome to the show.

KEN RIDEOUT: Thanks for having me, brother. I really appreciate it having my own podcast. I know the decision making process of having guests on and you know, this is your baby, and you welcoming me into your house and allowing me to share my journey and details of my book with your audience is not something that I take lightly. So thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course. Yeah, I mean, that means a lot. I mean, as soon as I went into your world, man, and I told you this. I was in tears just looking at your story and looking at the things that you're accomplishing today. And most importantly, looking at your family. And you know, we're gonna get into all that. But first I want to ask you, what made you decide to put your story into this book? What inspired you to share your story with everybody in this form?

KEN RIDEOUT: No, that's a great question. And I think that real quick, I think that it resonates with you because I think having spoken to you now for a little while, it reflects a lot of your own story. And we don't have to come from the same exact places, but to go through the same dynamics and the same thought process and the same type of struggles, it resonates with people. And I can always tell when people have a certain reaction to the book that they know. I always think okay, he knows too much, he's been there. And that's immediately what I got from you. But why I wrote the book. I really wanted to give people an example of how to do the things that I've done that I know that have been challenging to me. And rather than me creating like a self-help book and I'm gonna tell you what to do, like so many of these like held gurus slash bullshit artists, I was like no, I'm not gonna tell you what to do.

I'm gonna tell you how I got sober, changed careers, left a career where I was making, and it's not about money, but I was making millions of dollars and I gave that up for the freedom that I have now. Sometimes you have to take a big step back if you want to get to the promised land where you want to be. And that was a very difficult decision. So for guys or girls that are looking to make a career change, get sober, take on some really audacious physical challenges, start a family, adopt a child, I don't tell you how to do it. I show you how I did it in the book and you know, writing a book is a difficult decision, especially a memoir 'cause it feels like a bit performative and narcissistic on the surface.

But the truth is, whatever you think about yourself, it's true. If you think you're an idiot and you don't deserve to share your story with the world, then you're an idiot. But if you think that you have something of value to give to people, then you have to like quiet that like beta voice with the alpha voice that we all have and say, no, there's something of value here. And I believe in myself and I believe in my story. And I can tell from the reaction that I've received from people that the book is being well received. And it's very relatable talking about a very average person doing extraordinary things. At least they've been described as extraordinary by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, muscle and Fitness.

Who would've ever thought Muscle and Fitness gonna write a article about me? I weigh 165 pounds. You know, like it's the things that have happened to me in the last several years have been crazy. And, it's not without a ton of anxiety that I put this out into the world, but I also know that there's some valuable lessons in there.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yep, that part. You know, just the fact that you're reflective and concerned and even questioning, sharing your story is the story I want to hear.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, because you don't think that you're, you know, so special or so important to do these things, but you did have little sprinklings of those moments and insights in your childhood that you were different.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Coming from the environment that you come from. So let's start there. Let's talk a little bit about that. How, where did you come from? What made Ken Rideout?

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah. I grew up in Boston and I know from speaking to you, you can relate to a lot of this. I was living in a very volatile. Aggressive, angry drug, addicted household. I lived with my mom. My mom and dad were divorced when I was, be my earliest memory, I never remember 'em together. I might've been a year old when they divorced, but they had me when they were 19 and 20. So they really didn't have the tools to be parents. So a lot of people will see in the book, like I'm very critical of them, but I'm also very, at times, empathetic to their struggle.

You have no tools at all to raise children. Not having the tools doesn't, isn't an excuse to shirk your responsibilities. So it's kind of like I'm in this difficult place where I sympathize with them, but I'm also angry. And I lived with my mother in my grandparents, two family house in the inner city and you know, the kind of place where we shovel out our parking spot, put a lawn chair there and no one would dare park in front of it. Otherwise, I was just telling, talking to someone about this, it's so foreign into people that aren't from there that if someone pulled up and parked in front of our house on, in that spot, you'd go out and cut their tires and bury their car in snow. You'd be like, how dare you park it even though it's a city street.

It's, I tell that story just to show you like how kind of different this place is. And my grandmother lived downstairs from us with her son, my mother's brother, who was a few years younger than her, who was a lifelong heroin addict and into punk rock and stuff. I was always into sports, so you can just imagine. The embarrassment I felt about him there. But at the same time, again, this constant struggle. He was a sweet guy when he wasn't jacked up on heroin and could be really kind. And I think at his core he was a, like a beautiful person. But he was handicapped. He had one leg shorter than the other, so he was always limping around, whacked on heroin.

It was just people coming to beat him and his friends up all the time for beating people for drugs. But from my, like I was telling you earlier, from my youngest age, I always felt like I'm not supposed to be here. And I had a brother 11 months younger for context, who became a career criminal heroin addict in and out of prison. When I growing up, I was very much into sports, specifically hockey and I mean, I played with Keith Tkachuk, who's kid? Keith Tkachuk kids, Matthew Tkackuk and Brady Tkachuk just won the gold medal. Keith Tkachuk was my peer for years. We were on all the same teams. There's guys called Dave and Joe Sackle, who played in the NHL for years, Shawn Eckrin.

These guys are all older now, but I played with guys in the NHL like my whole life. And then in high school they just accelerated and got better and I didn't, but it was like one of those things where they clearly just had more talent and they also worked hard. But I mean, I tried as hard as anyone's ever tried to make it in hockey. I get outta high school, I start working as a corrections officer in a prison where my stepfather had been in prison while I was in middle school going into high school. And I tell the story in the book, he gets outta prison. And my mother and my stepfather just kinda casually mentioned to me, Hey, Kenneth, the crazy thing, his name is Ken too.

So he, they called him Kenneth. And my dad's name is Kenny, so it's yeah. So he was big Kenny, I was little Kenny, and then Kenneth was my stepfather. It's, I know, it's crazy. It's like I tell these stories, I can't believe I went through this, but they're like, yeah, Kenneth got a job a really good job. I'm like, oh, cool cool. I wasn't really close to them, so didn't really was unusual for us to have a conversation. More than a few words. And they were like, yeah, he's he's got, he got a job as a janitor with the school department. I'm like, oh, great. At the high school that you are about to enter as a freshman.

I was like, my stepdad is the janitor at my high school. Oh, great. I was literally like, went to my room and cried. I was like, I can't believe this has happened to me. I just felt like I was a prisoner there and I was on a ride, I was on an amusement park ride that I didn't want to be on, like a Turkish twist where I'm like, guys, I want to get off the ride. Stop the ride. And it's just like we, and everyone's screaming and smiling and laughing and I'm like, am I the only

one that thinks that this is crazy? And, put myself through college, working at the prison and then.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But people might not understand why you would be upset about your stepdad working at your school. And it's because you become more of a target.

KEN RIDEOUT: Of course, I'm trying to stay under the radar, you know, this is wasn't, this wasn't like the high schools of today where everyone's warm and friendly and like bullying is frowned upon. It was almost like not only accepted, but encouraged at the time, and it was like, but it all, I will say it also taught me resilience because I was not like what I would call a pushover growing up. I certainly wasn't a tough guy, but I had no problem defending myself. And, but it still was not comfortable even if people weren't saying it to me. Just the thought of someone snickering behind my back was like, you know that I can't control this right. So that was my only saving grace, is that I was aware that this isn't reflective of me, but and now I feel even silly mentioning it now because I'm an adult and I'm mature.

But as a 15, 16-year-old kid, I was devastated. So I working in the prison, going to Framingham State, paying for card. My dad helped out with some of it but I was responsible for some of it too, but it wasn't very expensive. It was just still you're accruing debt. And it was like overwhelming to me and intimidating because I didn't want to be like the people I grew up with who only had debt and I, you know, but somewhere in the prison. So I'm playing hockey and football, and then on a few nights a week, around 4:00 PM I'd work the four to 12 shifts. So around three o'clock I'd be walking out of my dorm with a full policeman's uniform on, which, you know, it was a corrections officer, but it, to anyone else, it looked like a cop legit, you know?

And people were like, what the hell? Because I mean, I was a freshman. And so anyway, I worked there. I worked with Mickey Ward, who they made the movie The Fighter about. He was a corrections officer there, and his brother Dicky Eklund, who was played by Christian Bale, was an inmate. My brother would end up being an inmate there after I wrapped up my tour of duty there. So I did that through college and then I moved to New York. I had a pharmaceutical sales job for six months, and then I met a bunch of finance guys and someone

gave me a job as an assistant trader on a commodities trading desk. And that's when my life like dramatically changed.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man, that you share the details. Every one of these stories is packed full of what the fucks. And then also oh my God, I'm glad that he figured this piece out. You know? And that's one of the things that's a very consistent part about your story. And anybody who's been through something like it, it doesn't stop. There's always gonna be something else, another obstacle to overcome. But it's what you become in the process and you become so resilient that the stuff that might tear somebody's life apart doesn't even bother you that much.

KEN RIDEOUT: No, it definitely bothers me. But then I remind myself of who I am and what I've done, and I hate every second of it, but I'm like, okay, no one's gonna help me. No one can help me. 'cause no one understands all the dynamics involved and all the LMNTs at play here. I have to figure this out. And just like anyone else, when shit hits the fan, like my wife just going, I was telling you, my wife was diagnosed in September with cancer, breast cancer, and it was like you, I would've rather signed up for terminal cancer on the spot than have her have curable cancer.

And it was very curable, but that was devastating to us. But the crazy thing is, after a couple of, after about a week, a few days of us, like really crying and feeling sorry for ourselves and thinking it's a death sentence. I was like, I have four kids. Enough is enough. I cannot be a baby here. I cannot curl up in a turtle position and just hope that this goes away. And same for my wife. And I said to a Leo, we have got to toughen up right now. We're in a fight whether we like it or not. And you know, I tell my kids like, someone puts their hands on you. You don't have the choice of being scared anymore, there's only one way, and that's with hands.

That's the reality of life. And if you let someone take advantage of you to a certain point, you're gonna get what you deserve. You don't wanna be in that position, but you have to deal with it. And that's what I thought about the cancer. And I said to her, I'm sick of taking the passive, sissy role here. We have to go on the offense and treat this like a fight. And the

doctors she had were incredible. They told us exactly what was gonna happen, how it was gonna play out, and everything that they said happened, like to a t. Even things like Andrew Huberman reached out and was like, I'm gonna put you in touch with a Stanford oncologist.

And Dr. Dawn from Mayo Clinic called, like, all these beautiful people were like, tell us what you need. I almost felt bad 'cause I'm like, she's got stage one cancer. I don't need to like, bring on the heavy guns. But the people we were with at St. Thomas Ascension in Nashville, I didn't even have a chance to get a second opinion. This is what's gonna happen. And they did everything they said they were gonna do, and they, she was scheduled for a mastectomy instantly. And it was, man, it was life changing because she came out of there with, you know. I just felt so proud of the way she dealt with it. 'cause like I know what I can do, but I don't wanna watch my wife go through this.

And she's tough, but it's a different kind of tough. And yeah, she's cancer free now waiting to get like a reconstructive surgery in April. And I said to her when we were going through it, I was like, listen, you can either be a victim here and talk about how bad sad you are and how this is not fair. Nothing in life is fair. You get what you get and you don't get upset. I said, we have to deal with this. And I said the silver lining in this is you're gonna be, she, today's her birthday actually. I said, you're gonna be, you're gonna be, how old is she? 52 a cancer survivor and you're gonna get new boobs, like jackpot.

And she was like, not that she was looking for any kind of cosmetic surgery, but I was like, Hey, there's a silver lining there. You know, we would always joke up. She would joke man, it would be nice to like, have everything tightened up a little. And but she's got a like fantastic body. I never would change anything. I figured I had to laugh about some things and she did too. And we had a good laugh about it. And now she's actually excited. She's yeah, I'm excited. I mean, this is happening. So I don't want to even think anything negative 'cause it's happening. It's like getting drafted into like Vietnam. Like I don't want to go. You're going. Get your gun and get ready 'cause if you don't, you're gonna be a victim. And that's kind of how I've approached a lot of these life challenges is like at some point you're like, well, this is happening and I have no choice and I'm not gonna roll over.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This episode is brought to you by the incredible team at Organifi and their phenomenal superfood blends. Not only does their bestselling green juice blend have the most powerful green superfoods, it also has a therapeutic amount of ashwagandha. A double blind, randomized placebo controlled trial published in the Journal of Psychological Medicine had test subjects with a history of chronic stress to consume ashwagandha or a placebo. Over the course of the month and a half long study period, the group that received ashwagandha exhibited a significant reduction in scores on all the stress assessment scales compared to the placebo group and the serum cholesterol levels of the test subjects were substantially reduced. In the Ashwagandha group, again, this is just one of the ingredients in the Organifi Green Juice blend.

Some of the green superfoods include spirulina, chlorella, moringa, and never sleep on spirulina. A recent study published in Plus one revealed that spirulina has a potential to, one, improve neurogenesis in the brain, and two, reduce neuroinflammation. And right now you're going to get 20% off of their incredible green juice blend when you go to organifi.com/model. That's O-R-G-A-N-I-F i.com/model for 20% off. Plus, you'll also receive their 60 day money back guarantee so you have nothing to lose and better health to gain. Head over to Organifi.com/model. Check out their variety of superfood blends, their green juice blend. They're red juice blend. They're phenomenal collagen that we use all the time. Again, 20% off at organifi.com/model. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is something that I really identify with your story as well and who you are. You know, with your wife going through that situation and all these other people stepping up and saying, Hey, I got you.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's a reflection of you and who you are and the relationships you've been built. And this goes back even to your childhood as well, and just having these inklings of these relationships, and again, they might be wildly dysfunctional, but there might be something a special aspect of it, like your dad taking you for all of those practices and games and things like that. And you picking that piece up, discarding the rest.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, like that Bruce Lee quote. You know, and you know, the same thing held true when it came to getting that job on Wall Street, your first job.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because, you know, you went through a little tiffed, a little battle and I think you were making like far less money and just trying to survive.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah. It were bullying me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It was because of a relationship.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That you got this huge opportunity. Talk about what happened. That puts you in the place where somebody was like, Hey, I got you.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah, no, my finance bro friends like this story 'cause I got a job as an assistant trader on an institutional sales trading desk. So we were trading commodities for clients. So we were an inter-dealer broker, meaning Enron would call us and say they want to do these particular trades. This is before the advent of all these electronic trading platforms. We were commodities brokers. So they'd call and say, Hey, we wanna sell, you know, $10 million worth of these energy contracts in this month, in this year. And we'd find a buyer for them. And the market was very established, like it was, you know, $27 and 10 cents bid. $27 and 20 cents offered. So there was a small spread. They were like, okay, sell that, buy that. But when people, it was an open outcry, meaning it's 10 at 20, you buy it at 27, 10, sell. At twenty seven, twenty people would call and be like.

A 15 bid, I'll buy it in the middle. And you know, you'd stand up and be like, 15 bid for that. And then someone would be like, sold. But this is all happening in real time and fast. So it was incredibly aggressive. And if you were like a split second slowly, you know, then people would

be like, I sold those. No f you, I sold them. It was like what you'd see in a trading pit where they're trading in person with the hand signals. But we were on the phone over the counter and it was so, it was that kind of very aggressive environment. And these guys were like, hazing me. You had to be fast. Like they'd write, they'd yell a price and then I'd write it on a whiteboard.

But there's 20 people yelling prices for a hundred different contracts. And I didn't know, I didn't know my ass from my elbow. They'd be yelling bids, I'd be writing offers. I mean, for the longest time I didn't even know the difference. I was fake it till you make it, personified. And this one guy was such a dick and he was hazing me and he threw a dry erase at me, a dry eraser at me one day.

And I mean, this was culmination of a month or two of just bullshit. And I slapped him so hard, like almost slapped his head off his shoulders and they fired me right on, right on the spot, which to show you how naive I was. I didn't know we had competitors. I didn't I had a couple junior clients at Enron that were trading like small trades that didn't really make money, but it was like a service you had to provide to the customers if you wanted to do the bigger trades and, I called those guys from a payphone and told them what happened. They told their boss, who was like the biggest energy trader in the world at the time. The guy was the head of trading at Enron for electricity, and he called me on the phone, which would be like the CEO of Goldman calling you on the phone, and you just got hot fired from the mail room.

He was from Boston and he was nuts. He's like hey, call this place. They're gonna give you a job, a competitor. I'm like, oh my God, we have, there's other people doing this like this. Just, I was so out of touch and yeah, I was making 40 grand the net. That was a Thursday. On Monday I had a job making 80 grand, and within two or three months they were like, your new salary's, 125 grand. And a year after that, I was making millions of dollars living in London, working for Kenner Fitzgerald, flying back and forth London, New York on the Concord. It was like $10,000 each way in 98, 99. I had a beautiful house in center of England and Kensington three bedroom house. I had a brand new Porsche Carrera for Cabrio.

I bought at the factory in Germany. I was poor. And a year later, I'm living like the life of a high rolling banker. But around the whole time that's happening, I'm kind of suffering with this like fraud complex or imposter syndrome 'cause I felt so out of my depth. I had a sociology degree from Framingham State and I'm sitting next to guys with MBAs from like Harvard, undergrad Princeton. Like really accomplished academics. But what you come to realize is like they've been set up for success. Their parents did what they were supposed to do. They put 'em in the right schools, they put 'em in a position to get into those schools, which is the challenge. And then they just did what I did.

They just figured out a way to get through college. But they had a, they had the right role models and mentors to explain to them, okay, next step, get an MBA. They'd get into the banking program. And I had like basically cut the line. So, purely based on my relationships and my performance and because I was doing really well in New York when I first got that new job, canner, hi Canner Fitzgerald hired me to be the manager of the trading desk. I was like, I'm not in a position to manage and lead men. I've never been in a leadership role, certainly not professionally. And I had an ankle surgery, got some Percocet. Soon as I took those Percocet, literally seven pills. First night I took two of them. I was like, oh my God, I have all the confidence in the world.

I can't wait to get to work tomorrow. I'm gonna kill every I'm gonna crush everything. I'm gonna make so much money. And I did. And it started working and it was like elevated my personality. The people on the outside looking in were probably like, this guy's un like a little unstable and crazy, but he's full of energy and and I was always like a kind person. I always got along with people. But I was definitely aggressive. And that started like a 10 year addiction odyssey. I didn't know what I was doing until I was too deep in this physical addiction that when I tried to stop, I was like, so sick. I thought I was gonna die.

And of course when I realized that, I was like, oh, let me get some more pills and see if that's what's wrong with me. And as soon as I took the pills again, I was like, oh, I'm back. And you know, it'd be like as, as sick as you've ever been, you know, when you're sick where you're like, I would do anything. A rich man has a million problems. A sick man has one. When you are sick like that and you know you can fix it with take getting high. It was the worst experience

of my life 'cause then it was like, for 10 years, it wasn't like I was enjoying myself. I was like, for 10 years I knew I what I had to do, but I couldn't quite do it. I'd do it for a couple weeks. I'd get sober, white, knuckle it sick as a dog and feel real good about myself. And then as soon as I felt good and confident, I'd get high again and go right back down in the hole.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because you had an identity, you know, growing up of what a addict looks like.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. You didn't see yourself like that.

KEN RIDEOUT: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And it was kind of insidious. It like crept up on you. You didn't even know really. And you shared that moment when you went to, I think it was when you went to the London office

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you didn't really have any choice. You didn't have your stuff with you anymore.

KEN RIDEOUT: That's right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you got really sick and it just, you kept getting sicker and sicker. And so you just re then you realize, oh I'm addicted.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and just being able to manage that, manage yourself in all these different environments to keep figuring things out and you know, eventually meeting your soon to be wife and your story's so great, man. Like I have so many parts like highlighted

and just it reminded me of certain movie scenes. But it wasn't all sunshine and roses, obviously, you know, a lot of obstacles.

KEN RIDEOUT: No, say most of it wasn't, most of it was in my head, was dark. I didn't want to be addicted to drugs. I didn't want to be like delaying leaving for a trip because I gotta run down and see like a dealer or see a crooked doctor. And and I was super resourceful. Like I'm must I grew up in the inner city, like on the streets. Like I, I'm a hustler. I can figure it out. I could, you know, everywhere I went I would figure out how to get drugs. I was like getting opium in Thailand. Like I was just, I would always tell myself, I'm gonna go on vacation to Thailand. I'm gonna get sober while I'm there. And then I'd get there, I'd be like, I don't wanna be sick the whole time I'm in this beautiful place. And I'd hustle down to you know, the city center and start scrambling around trying to figure where the drug deal is.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. And thank you for your honesty on this too, and just sharing because. You know, we are one of those platforms where, I think it was like 2022, we did a show on the data was published. The leading cause of Death for people in their quote, prime of Life years was, you know, these opioids and fentanyl.

KEN RIDEOUT: It's deadly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's just it's taking so many lives and it's so insidious. You know, you went in for this one thing and it just started making your life better. What wouldn't you pay for that?

KEN RIDEOUT: Well, the thing with fentanyl that sucks is it's awesome. When you take it, if you are into opioids and you're like, yo, whoa, you know, I would take five, six Percocets at a time, three or four times a day. So I was at my height, like taking 40 to 40, 50 Percocets a day. Something absurd where people are like, don't take more than four Tylenol in a day or six. I'm like, I'm taking like a whole bottle of Tylenol every day. I mean, I'm not saying that to be, I'm not proud of myself. I'm ashamed, but it is what it is. I'm just sharing my reality.

And when I got the first time I tried those pressed Fentanyl pills that must come like from black market, I was like, yo that really hit me like, okay, I gotta get sober. This is too good. And it's sad to say that, but people wouldn't get so addicted if it didn't make you feel good. It just resonates with some people. And unfortunately it did me, it's same thing with like alcohol. Some people can have a few drinks and other people have to have a drink to get out of bed. And it's like, why do some people react the way they do? And it's just super unfortunate when I talk to people and they're like, oh, I can't take those.

I had surgery and I took it. I'm like, so jealous. I'm like you have no idea how lucky you are. I wish I didn't know what it did to how good it made me feel, but it's all a lie. It feels the first time you take it, it's the best. Second time is good. Eventually you get to the point where you're high for five to 10 minutes and then the rest of it's a come down and then you start to feel terrible until you can take more. And it was just like a vicious cycle that I just can't believe it. It happened to me, but it did, and it built resilience in me and getting over that addiction is like the proudest moment of my life and it's what has enabled me to be sitting here with you today. I was like even when I was making money and stuff, I was just another Wall Street guy.

I was, for all intents and purposes, just a mediocre like loser, working in finance and money doesn't define anyone or anything. I know people that might not have had a lot of money in their life might think differently, but anyone who's made money will tell you like. I'm the same person. All my problems come with me no matter what's in my bank account. And I promise you, no watch, no car is gonna change who you are. And all those things sound real great and flashy. It's like I was talking to a friend, he's I wanna buy this expensive watch, blah, blah, blah. And I said, I love it. I'm into watches. I feel you. Let me ask you this. Think about the last time you bought a nice watch 'cause he was wearing a nice one.

Do you ever look at that now and go oh, I remember how bad I was Jones in for that watch and how good it makes me feel now. I know the answer, it's no 'cause I've done it. And what you come to realize is like all of that stuff is satisfying some other missing element of your life. Like I said, I love nice things, don't get me wrong, but when you start to identify with the things that you have and the car, it's a very dangerous, vicious cycle that you get in where you realize this is not filling a, you think it is, but it's not.

What really matters is your relationships, your interactions with the people around you and the sense of community, having friends and family that care about you. And you know, when someone, oh, that guy, oh, he loves me. I know he does. I could do anything. If I made a mistake and was like going through some of the stuff like, you know, your name's in the Epstein files, like there's certain friends that you know no I refuse to believe that about him. The I'm gonna go down swinging with him. You know what I mean?

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, part of this story and a big turning point as well. You and your wife were working to get pregnant.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And also, you both had decided early in your relationship like that you wanted to adopt as well.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Which was again, just one of these things that I really resonated with in, in your story. And so everything, and it took a while for everything to kind of come through when it comes to the adoption was about. So can you share a little bit about that? Because when it finally happened, when you were actually gonna get to adopt your daughter.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You went through something incredibly traumatic, and I'm saying this because your wife still didn't really know the magnitude of your addiction until that moment happened.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah. Well, my wife knew. Eventually in my relationship that I was struggling with, like drug addiction, my wife grew up like very straight laced like she had never done drugs. So eventually in our relationship she figured out oh, something's up with this guy. He is like too unstable. It's too inconsistent. And she eventually found drugs, you know, like I was just naive. And she eventually looked through my stuff, found the drugs, and was like, why do

you have all these pills? And 'cause at one point I'd have the whole entire pharmacy bottle, like a thousand pills and I just have 'em in my medicine cabinet of like 1,010 milligram Percocets that I would just buy on the street.

And so she knew that, but I didn't tell her the depths of the addiction and she didn't really have experience with addiction and to enough to know that I was like physically like deep in this. And when we got married before we, even when we first started dating, I told her I wanna adopt some kids. Because I, when I think about my own childhood, I was like, I'd love to take someone out of that environment. And not that adopt a daughter might, I mean, she might have been destined to be the queen of Ethiopia. I don't know. It's not something that I look at oh, I did her a solid, or I saved her. She did more for me than I did for her.

So I never look at it like I'm the savior. I just viewed it as there was a need and I wanted to fill it. And when we started adopt the adoption process, I said, listen, let's look internationally where we can make the most difference. I didn't, it could have been anywhere, Russia, China, there's only a few countries you can't adopt from. You can't just be like, oh, I'm gonna go to Ghana and adopt. That's not how it works. And we were also trying to have our own kids struggling. We had seven rounds of in vitro, three miscarriages, no unexplained infertility. There was no rhyme or reason. And you know, people would be like, oh, you gotta relax.

And I would've thought I'm into science, man. That doesn't make any sense to me. Like science doesn't work. Like relaxing helps, but. We get matched with my daughter, a newborn. We were approved for twins, but they called us, said She's three weeks old, do you want her? And I was like, yes, but I also knew we're going to get her in a month. The jig is up. My runway is now one month long to get sober, and which I've never been able to do and maintain sobriety for a long time. But I knew that there was a drug called Vivitrol that if I could get sober for one week, have no drugs in my system, they would give me Vivitrol and it would block all the opioid receptors in my brain and I wouldn't be able to get high even if I wanted to.

So I went to an outpatient detox facility in New York called Parallax, where they give you like a medically, they give you medically assisted withdrawal, an outpatient setting. So I would go in the morning, they'd give me Ritalin to stay awake, blood pressure medicine, one Xanax pill

to go to sleep at night, sleeping medicine. And I mean, I was sick. I would wake up in the middle of the night drenched through the whole bed and she'd sweating profusely, like almost like my body was in like panic mode. And I'm getting through it. I'm getting to the third day and the fourth day I go to bed. I wake up to go to the bathroom and I black out.

I don't re, obviously I don't remember this, but I do remember waking up on the floor to my wife screaming over me like, what is going on? And just in a moment of like weakness or strength, I don't know. I was just like, this is what's going on. And I'm like looking at her, looking at the balcony. We lived in this gorgeous high-rise apartment 'cause again, like I'm making money, we're living in a high-rise apartment, like the 50th floor in a glass building in New York City views of the Empire State Building. And I'm looking at her and I'm looking at the balcony and I'm like, I'm gonna make a run for her and just jump off the balcony. I couldn't take the pain I was in physically and emotionally and I obviously I didn't jump.

And I told her like, yo, this is what's going on. I'm so ashamed of myself. I'm a piece of shit. I don't deserve this. You don't deserve this. I want to die. And she, to her credit, was like, you know, same way I gave her the pep talk about cancer. She's you gotta cut this shit right now. We have a fucking child that we're going to pick up. Stop this. And when she said that, I was like, whoa what am I doing? I'm not a wimp. Like I'm not, this is not who I am. And then, you know, it was easier having her know about it. And I powered my way through the next three days. And that's also when I started running as a form of penant slash torture.

I was like, no, you put yourself in this effing position. Now watch what's gonna happen. I was running and sweating and freezing and just a fricking mess. Like every day. I was like, I'm gonna drop dead while I'm running. But there was a part of me that's good, you deserve it. Got to seven days. They gave me the Vivitrol and I was good to go. We went to Ethiopia, adopted my daughter, and while we were there, so we went for a week. We adopted my daughter in the court. And then you have to wait about two months for the documents to get processed by the US Embassy, which sounds crazy, but you're in a third world country. It's like very all paperwork, no, like computers at the time.

This is 2010. And I mean there's, I could write a whole book about the process of adopting her while I'm there. The first week, my wife must've gotten pregnant that week 'cause I come home and a couple weeks later I'm gonna go back over Thanksgiving to stay with them for a week. And then my mother-in-law was gonna fly over the last week and fly home with my wife and daughter. And so my wife's living in a guest house in Addis Ababa in like really rough conditions. Like the bed was just a box spring, no mattress. So I went out and bought an egg crate thing to put on top. It was like sleeping on a hardwood floor. The lot, the power would go out every night in the middle of the night in the guest house, and they had a big like diesel truck engine generator in the front of the courtyard that they'd fire up.

And it was like, I mean, it was so crazy looking back at the time. I was like, I can't believe how rough this is. And you'd smell fire at camp like cooking fires burning every night. And every time now I smell those kind of fires, I say to my wife, oh my God, it smells like Ethiopia. Remember how great that was? She goes, you are a crybaby. The whole time we were there, how much you hated. I go, I know, but there's something romantic now thinking about what we were there for, how it happened, and it's just crazy how you like recreate these moments. But I'd get up every morning and go to get coffee and I'd run through Addis Ababa and even though Ethiopians like got tons of runners and stuff, they don't live in Addis Ababa in the inner city.

And then I'd walk past this dude around my age a little bit younger, probably like in his late twenties, and he would be lifting weights with, it was literally like a tree branch with two blocks of concrete on the end of the thing that he had made with a bucket of concrete on each end. And he'd just be lifting weights, doing different exercise, couldn't speak a lick of English, and I'd just go by with hand signals and be like, yo, you mind if I work out with you? And I'd work out with this guy for 30 minutes. We would be communicating, but not speaking. And it was just, like I said, when I think back on it, I'm like, there's something romantic about it, but it was not fun. When I was there. I was like, I can't wait to get home. So then my wife comes home, she's pregnant. I take a pregnancy test with her, with me when I go back. And she's pregnant, but she had been pregnant and had three miscarriages, so I wasn't like, yes, we did it. And she came home, was pregnant. My son was due on my

daughter's first birthday. He came a few weeks early and we went from zero kids and nine months later having two kids.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah. And then we have four, we have three biological boys and they're all of the children's birthdays. I went in like a five week spread all in June and July. So she got pregnant around the same fertility window in like October-ish and had the kids every time in late June, early July.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow. Incredible man.

KEN RIDEOUT: It's crazy.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, that part of the story really hit different too because, you know, she was kind of sick. You had been sick. It's just what's going on?

KEN RIDEOUT: I got pneumonia while I was in Ethiopia the second time, came home and went straight to the emergency room. I thought they were gonna have to call an ambulance for me. I mean, I thought I was gonna die and Tensay my daughter. I had Giardia, I think, and was like severely malnourished, like big distended belly. Every time my wife would feed her, she would throw up, just like she'd put her down to go to sleep and she would like have like just, she would just make 'em, things were coming outta every end.

She was just, and we couldn't figure it out went to seven different emergency rooms in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She came home and I, the doctors never figured out exactly what it was. They thought it was Giardia, but within a week or two of being home, she looked like, I tell my wife, she looks like she just got off a cruise. She got, she gained weight so quickly and just was like, like she could barely open her eyes. She got so fat and it was just awesome. And then, you know, nine months later we bring home my son and the two of them have been like inseparable ever since.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

KEN RIDEOUT: And it's been a challenge, man. Like having a biracial family and having a black daughter is you know, it definitely presents its challenges 'cause she's not, she's hyper aware of the differences. But living in Nashville now, I will say, I have to say the black community in Nashville, where we live in Brentwood, has been so incredible. I'll get emotional talking about them. They instinctively some of the guys, and it was like Rand Hon who was the GM for the Titans the guy I bought my house from, Chris Spencer, played for the Titans offensive lineman.

Like really awesome, cool, successful athletes, business people. It's almost like they could sense, yo, let me get you up to speed here 'cause I would always be like, my daughter's gonna go to college. She's not in touch with the culture. She's like a fish outta water and I don't want that for her. She's reserved. She's a nice kid, but she's not aggressive. So they invite us to everything. They're like, Hey, you wanna send Tensay over here? The girls are coming over. And it's it's heartwarming. Yeah. I'm like. No one is that friendly to us. They would go out of their way to be like, Hey, we're going to the church, bring tene to this. Like she should be here. And it's just, man, it's refreshing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. That's another testament to you man. You attract what you are, you know? Hey, listen a big part of this too, you know, with you, you said this earlier with, you know, the doctor's oh, you just need to calm down. Yeah. And I'm a big science guy, obviously.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But there was something that really kind of stood out and it was, it felt like life was qualifying you to be a father.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And preventing you in the time when shit was like the worst.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: From bringing a kid into that.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and just the timing of things. And so to see this evolution and to see this change that happened in you from, you know, this addiction that was insidious crept upon you and kind of took over to directing that addictive energy into running. Alright, so let's unpack that a little bit because some of, obviously and people are gonna know your story and everybody's got to pick up a copy of this book. But the things that you've accomplished running are, I mean, to say remarkable is. It is an understatement. Like it doesn't make any sense. It's incredible. But, you know, can you talk about some of those early races that you got involved in and just your mindset and you know, the process of going through that?

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah, so I was running and to get sober and I was boxing for the New York Athletic Club for years, and I, my knee was bothering me. I had a tight I it band and I had some friends in work that were like into cycling and there's a big cycling community in central Park in New York and Central Park guys ride there by early in the morning, like a huge Peloton. Looks like the tour of France. I mean, a lot of them are huge nerds, but I count myself as one of those nerds and I didn't, these guys were like, they were super nice, but they were like talking like they were like one step away from qualifying for the tour themselves.

So I got a bike expecting them to trounce me and I was like, pretty good. And then I started thinking like these maybe, I don't know if I'm good or they stink, but I just became obsessed with cycling and there was a duathlon in Central Park where you run two miles, bike 12, run two. And I was like, I wanna do this race. I can run a little bit. I mean, I was running if I ran a seven minute mile, I was psyched, you know, if I could run, I had run a marathon earlier in my life, just as when I moved to New York in three hours and 20 minutes, and then I did one at three 30. So, you know, I was right around that seven minute, seven minute mark, which I think those early marathons were like eight minutes.

But I liked running and, but I wasn't a good runner by any means. But I wasn't cra, I wasn't like complete, you know, unathletic, goon. I like knew enough to be athletic, you know, and how to try and how to have determination. So I did that race and I got trounced and learned a lot.

Maybe I finished like 20th, it might have been a couple hundred people. And then I went back the next year and came in second and I was like, oh. Oh, I'm into this. And this kind of training became a new addiction and a new obsession. And you know, over the years, therapists would ask don't you think you've replaced one addiction with another? And I would always say well, one addiction had me wanting to kill myself and the other addiction has me feeling proud of myself.

And that all that to say, that's not the answer. Like you don't have to find an obsession and be addicted with something. And I'm always aware of not letting that take over either. And I always try to find a balance and not inconvenience my family with my fitness addiction. But yeah I did a bunch of travelings and of course, like any addict, I was like, after a couple races, I'm like, what's the best race in the world? What's the big one? And it was Hawaii Ironman. And I was like I'm gonna do the Hawaii Ironman. And the people who were in the sport were like, you know, they dismissed me get outta here. Do you know how long people train to qualify for that? And it's very difficult to qualify just to get there.

But to me it was like getting qualifying for the Olympics. So I put everything I had into it, and I barely qualified at the New York City Ironman the first time they had one. And because it was a new race, there were extra qualifying slots. There was just, it was basically like I found this little loophole where I can, like I, if I do everything right, I can sneak in there. And I did, I had the last spot available for my age group. It goes by age group. So if there's 10 spots, if you are not at the registration the day after the race, then they're like, okay, Joe Smith, you here. No. Okay. Rolls down to the next guy and I like it. Rolled down two spots and I was like, yes.

To me, I was like, I made it. I'm going to the Olympics. And it was like a month or two later and I just discounted how actually hard that race is. Got out onto the run course. I'm like skipping over a bunch of it, but it's in detail in the book. I get there, my wife's there, I got two little kids. My wife's right on the main drag on a Lehe drive where the run starts and I start running after swimming the ocean. Two and a half miles bike, 112 miles in the Hawaiian heat and wind. And then you start a marathon around one or two o'clock in the afternoon. And it was hot and I was tired and I saw my wife and I was like, ah, I can't finish. I'm gonna, I'm gonna throw in the towel. And she's are you serious? You're gonna quit?

And I was like, yeah, I'm not gonna win. I just basically told myself every story I had to justify quitting. And as soon as I did it and walked back to the STA area, I'm like, oh my God. What have I done? I carry that burden with me now. And I always say the pain of quitting lasts so much longer than the thrill of victory 'cause I still know that feeling of being a quitter. But I will say when that happened, I vowed to myself, I'm like, I will never quit again. I would die first 'cause I don't like the way this is making me feel. And that mindset like really took over my like. Athletic endeavors. And I went back the next year, I did a 9 39, and to qualify for that race, I did Ironman, Wisconsin and came in like fifth or sixth overall in a huge Ironman.

Like I was, in theory, I was like in contention to win the entire race. And won my age group, the 40 plus, 40 to 45, 40 to 44 qualified. Went back, did like a 9 39 in Kona, which is I was proud of. And eventually we had four kids and I was like, all right I don't have enough time to train for Ironman. And we moved to LA in January of 16 and I just started focusing on running. But again, I had no intention or no goal of winning a marathon or being a competitive runner. I was just keeping my time and mind occupied and literally like just working away in darkness and anonymity. No one knew who I was.

I was just running up in the mountains right near here between Calabasas and Pacific Palisades. That's actually, that's where I met Reggie Miller, who wrote a awesome blurb from my book. He would be riding his bike, I'd be running there, would no one else around, and I'd see him almost every day in the morning. Sun's coming up, Reggie. He'd be like, let's go Ken. Which is crazy. I mean, it's like Michael Jordan, I mean, and talk about a nice guy. I send him a dm. He's yo, what's up man? Love seeing you out there. And I asked him, Hey I feel terrible asking, would you write a blurb? But he's oh, would be my honor.

And he just wrote an awesome blurb for the book. It's just the things that I've done and the people that I've met all through running. I mean, I wouldn't be here sitting with you if it wasn't for showing using running to kind of display who I really am. But it wasn't my goal. It wasn't to be like a well-known runner. I mean, my Instagram sucks, like I don't know what I'm doing on social media. I try to do the minimum just to keep a presence and now I have brand deals and stuff, but it never feels natural to me to be like talking to the camera. And I always feels performative and narcissistic and I just, I've gotten better at it, but it was never my goal.

But now, like I was telling you earlier, several times a week, a month, I'll say to my wife can you believe I don't have a job? And she's you got 10 jobs. And I'm like, I know. But I love doing those. I don't think of it as work. It's fun. All the things I'm doing is like this. It's cliche. It sounds cliche, but chasing your passions and doing things that you genuinely love and figuring out a way to turn that into a profession is the greatest thing you could ever do for yourself. But it doesn't come without risk. People have, how'd you switch jobs? How'd you make this change? That's why I wrote the book. How did you do it? I guess what, I just showed up, jumped in and was like, I don't know how to swim, but I'm gonna jump in. And same when I did Ironman, I didn't know how to swim. I could swim if I fell off a boat, but I couldn't swim a lap.

I just showed up at the New York Athletic Club. There were literally former Olympians in the pool, that place is real. Athletes, jumped in the pool, started swimming, and I would just ask the people next to me, Hey buddy. Watch me swim down and back, tell me what I'm doing wrong. And after a couple days, a couple times, and they see you showing up every day, they almost adopted me like a pet project. Guys would be like, all right, get on my feet. You're gonna draft behind me. We're gonna swim here, we're gonna do a hundred meters down, we'll rest 10 seconds. And it took on a life of own. I became like not a good swimmer, but good enough that if you saw me swim, you'd be like, oh, he's a real swimmer.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Our special guest today knows a thing or 20 about athletic performance and really fueling his body. And one of the things that he utilizes every single day is the powerful electrolytes from LMNT. Now here are four specific ways that electrolytes impact your exercise and athletic performance. Number one, optimal muscle function. Electrolytes like sodium and magnesium are essential for nerve signaling, allowing your muscles to contract and relax properly, which prevents cramping and fatigue. Number two, fluid balance and hydration. Sodium helps your body and your brain to retain proper fluid balance. Inadequate hydration can lead to cardiovascular strain and decreased strength and power. Number three, energy and endurance. Replacing your loss sodium improves blood flow and helps transport nutrients into your cells.

Sustaining energy levels during long duration and high intensity workouts in particular. Number four, mental sharpness. Good electrolyte balance helps to maintain cognitive function and reaction time during competition. And scientists at McGill University found that sodium functions as a quote on off switch in the brain for specific neurotransmitters that support optimal function. Now here's the problem. We know that this is all true when it comes to electrolytes in our performance. But for decades, the Gatorades and Powerades of the world have been dousing. Our bodies with crazy amounts of sugars and artificial colors and all these different shady ingredients and LMNTs stepped in and said, no more, no moss.

We're gonna deliver science-backed ratios of these key electrolytes without the added sugar, without the artificial colors and the dodgy ingredients. And we're gonna do this in a way that today. LMNT is fueling some of the greatest athletes and high performers in the world, including team USA, weightlifting, NBA and NFL teams, Navy Seals. The list goes on and on, and right now you get to take advantage of the world's. Number one electrolyte supplement when you go to drink LMNT.com/model, that's drink l mt.com/model. And not only that, with every electrolyte purchase, you're going to get a free sample pack of their most popular electrolyte flavors.

And to top it off, you get to try all this risk-free with their no questions asked refunds. If you don't absolutely love the way that it makes you feel again, head over to drink l mnt.com/model right now to take advantage. My favorite flavors right now, grapefruit is popping lemonade. The lemonade salt is incredible, especially if you're doing anything where you're sweating a lot that lemonade salt hits different. So again, head over there, check 'em out. Drinklmnt.com/model. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now, when you started winning some races, I noticed something really remarkable in the book, and you started to really be more proactive or at least sharing in the book of coaching other people and giving advice to the people who are you're competing against.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. And there's obviously a place where you're doing whatever it takes to beat somebody, but also at the end of the day, you're still a big fan of greatness and excellence. And you could see it, you know what it takes to show up and to do something like that and for you to be self-aware of all those pieces is remarkable. But I want to ask you about something specific, because this process of you becoming an elite runner, which again, on paper circumstance, all the things you wouldn't add up to you being the person that you had become, but you actually got a check.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That you shared as well. Checks coming in from, you know, your accomplishments in these particular races. And so people might hear that and just man, there's just something innate in him that gets him up and able to perform like this. But you shared the dread that you would feel waking up those mornings knowing that you have this race ahead of you.

KEN RIDEOUT: Oh my god. The worst.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you shared this ratio that you live by that you articulated so well, this 49 51.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Talk about that a little bit.

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah I like I was saying to you my children, sometimes when they're playing sports, I can tell that they look nervous. Especially in football, my son was like in up at bat in baseball and he kept stepping out of the box in every pitch, like almost shying away from the ball. And I was like, buddy, it looks like you're scared. And he said, I am. And I said, okay. Everyone is scared. Everyone is scared of everything. I've been in the, I've been, I have worked the corner of world championship fights. I've been in the locker room before UFC fights with champions, and I've seen the fear in their eyes.

And, matter of fact, I was talking to Dustin Poirier recently. He's dude, I was in the locker room one time with a guy from Mike Camp and he was crying before the fight. He was like, I don't wanna go out there. He was going, but he was like I don't wanna do this. And what I said to my kids is you have to know that everyone is scared. I'm sure Michael Jordan before game seven would be like, man, I'm scared that I had, you know, not scared, but I'm like, I care. And that's part of caring is like having that element of fear. The problem is you have to, if you can't get up past the fear, you have to get comfortable doing things while you're scared.

And that's what I have been able to do. And when I'm on the star line, like you said, I'll wake up for that race. Like I feel good until the night before. And then I'm like, why did I sign up for this? I'm so scared. Especially as I started to win races and started to become like kind of known in the running community. 'Cause then in my mind, even if it wasn't true, I'm like, I know they're all trying to kill me. They all wanna beat me even if that isn't their reality. That's what I tell 'em. This is my process and that voice in my head would be like, yo, I, why did you do this? We could have been home sleeping. I could have stayed up late, watched the UFC, slept in, hung out with the kids, and just had a fun weekend.

Instead, I'm in this like mad anxiety situation. I have to wake up at four o'clock in the morning. The race starts at seven. I gotta warm up. And, but then there would be the other voice that was like only 1% louder. So it'd be like 51% of my personality or the, or my inner dialogue would be like, no f all this, we're killing everyone in a competitive, friendly way. But before the race, I was aggressive and not like the friendliest guy in the world, but the minute the race is over, I love everyone. But leading up to the race, I would get into this state of mind of no, this is everything. Like we are, I will die to win. And I know that people will hear that and think that I'm kind of crazy, which I am.

But I would also say everybody wants to win and do well, but no one wants to carry the burden and deal with the bullshit that comes with getting in a position to win the obsessive training. The early mornings, I take the kids skiing in Aspen. Guess what? I'm running 10 miles up and down the side of the mountain. I've run 10 miles every single day for five years. I post everything on Strava. It's publicly available 4,000 miles a year. Not for anyone else, it's just that's my process. So that when I show up to a race, even if things aren't perfect, I know that

there's a certain amount of fitness that I can tap into from that kind of volume that I've put down for years and that consistency.

But yeah, those, the feelings of dread and fear are like incredible. I don't like it, but it has fueled me. And I just need to control that dialogue. And I notice it even when it happens in business and in life. I got a call that I don't really want to do. I've gotta pitch this thing, I've gotta ask for this deal. I don't want to do it. But then I just tell myself like, well, you don't have to want to do it, but you're doing it. And it's my kids like, dad, I don't wanna brush my teeth. I'm like, I get it. I don't wanna have to take a shower. I don't wanna do this, but I'm doing it. And every night you're gonna brush your teeth whether you like it or not.

So instead of telling yourself, dad, I don't wanna brush my teeth, just say, you know what? I'm gonna flip the, I'm gonna flip the script on my dad. I'm gonna be like, dad, brush my teeth. You don't even have to ask me the smell, my breath. 'cause they would be like, I brush my teeth. And I'd go in, I'm like, this toothbrush doesn't even look wet. And then they were like, yeah, it is wet. I'm like, lemme smell your breath. And I'm like, you didn't brush your teeth. Smells like you've been eating like Snickers bars and like not brushing for a week. And they, you know, I clown with the little guys all the time. But that. That's the key to all of this is like doing the things you don't want to do.

Short term discomfort for longtime pleasure. I tell the kids, yo, I don't wanna study either. I didn't wanna do this, but here's the like, secret of life for you. There are certain dues that have to be paid. You can pay them now. Do your hard work now. Get a good job, work for a little while, and then have the comfort to say I don't have to do anything. I don't want to do anymore 'cause you can build a little cushion or you cannot pay your dues now dig yourself a hole. Have a shitty job. You don't like work for you know, till you're 70 because you haven't saved enough money to do the things you wanna do. So I always tell 'em, guys, pay me now or pay me later.

No one's getting outta here without paying. And that's the truth of life. I mean, you know it, if you didn't do the things that you've done, you could be working in a job that you might not like, but instead you're doing things that you like and you feel proud of and you figure out a

way to monetize it. That doesn't happen magically. No one is, they'll tell you're crazy chasing your dreams and then when you reach them, certain people will tell you how lucky you are. And it's no, there's no real luck. Matter of fact, I think I'm unlucky, but I refuse to let the un luckiness dictate the course of my life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

KEN RIDEOUT: Cause I don't feel lucky. I feel like very unlucky, which is why I wanted to adopt a kid. 'cause I was like, I don't want anyone to go through what I went through.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Man. I mean, I'm speechless, man. I was speechless many times just reading a book and wanting to articulate it and, you know, explain it to my wife. I'm just like, you, don't you? I'll tell you later, you know, it's incredible man. And it's a real testament and it's a reminder, you know, we have a crisis right now in our world, especially in the United States comfort crisis. And, you know, our genes literally expect us to do certain things, to have certain stressful inputs, to become more, to adapt, to grow, to really express our capacity. And when you don't do that, like it becomes like a sickness. It becomes like a haze that many people are living life in just feeling like.

There's so much more. There's something I'm missing and not really feeling connected or on their purpose. And you're addressing that head on, you know, this comfort crisis. And you know, even the book, everything you Want is on the other side of heart and reminding of us of the benefit of doing difficult things. And not just that, but to schedule that shit, to make it a part of your life routinely. Because if you choose it or not, hard is coming. And so if you could, can you share for everybody in closing, I want to ask you about one of your greatest victories out there on the road and take us through whatever race that is for you and what you learned from that experience.

KEN RIDEOUT: Well, I can tell you about the race I did in Mongolia that really got a lot of attention called the Goby March. And I did that a couple years ago. A friend of mine was the CEO at Equinox Scott Deru and who's now the CEO of Ironman, former Dean of Michigan Business School. He called me and he asked me some advice. He was gonna do this race, and

he is telling me he's describing the race to me and just, I kind of just blurred it out dude, that race sounds wild. I love it, Mongolia, it sounds, it sounds like exotic. I bet I could win that. And he kinda laughed and was like, do you have any experience with any of this?

Of course I didn't. And I signed up, had a bunch of sponsors, athletic brewing, athletic Greens, like all these cool brands. And as soon as I did that, the amount of pressure that I felt and I said to my wife, I was like, man, like I would never consider myself a professional runner. But I said the pressure of being a professional athlete and having sponsors and like knowing so many people have a vested interest in your success is I've never felt more pressure. And I only signed up four or five weeks before the race. People were trained for years for this. It was sold out for well over a year. And I emailed the race director, they let me in and they were, you know, they were happy to have me to get some attention on the race. And I bought a bunch of backpacks and you know, remember you're running 20 to 30 miles a day and one of the days is 50 miles.

You got 20 pounds in a backpack and it's like on your shoulders, on your weight, and you're run on your waist, you're running with it. It's chafing you everywhere. I mean, think about it. If you wear an uncomfortable t-shirt, it can chafe you up. So I bought a bunch of backpacks, was trying different ones, they all sucked for me. Like I couldn't get comfortable. And then I was eventually just you know what f it's this is, I'm gonna get chafed and that's it. And I just eventually when I was there I end up pulling tape and all kinds of kinesio tape and she had to block some of the chafing. But I got there and same thing, I was so scared.

I was like, I can't believe I've done this. And my wife's driving me to the airport and she's yo, you're going to Mongolia. This is so cool. I'm like. Are you crazy? I'm going to the effing electric chair. I'm like, not happy about this. I'm like a big mouth, look at the corner I've painted myself into and she's you are crazy. And as she was leaving, she's stop with this. Woe is me shit. Just go out there and win the race. You're gonna be uncomfortable anyway. Just go win and the flight home is gonna be awesome. And I swear I walked down when the minute I was walking onto the jetway on the first flight from Nashville, I went from Nashville to Atlanta to South Korea, to Ulan Batar in Mongolia.

And when I walked on the plane in Nashville, like something switched in my brain, not dramatic, but enough that I was like, okay, it's go time. Let's go. And I was like, in this zone of deadly serious, no clowning around. Read sleep. Just get in myself prepared for what was coming. Get to Ulan Batar. They drive us out on a Saturday morning out to the desert. And I had thought we were gonna sleep like five nights in the tent because we'd start the first day and then after the first day, we'd be in a tent. They're like, no, we're gonna drive out and sleep in the tents tonight, then you'll raise the morning.

I'm like, oh my God. One extra night in a tent. I didn't wanna do this. I, that is not my style. I wanna stay at the Ritz Carlton, get up race, kill myself, and then go back to a nice hotel. But I knew I was sleeping in a tent, but just the one extra night was like, oh, damn you. And I swear to God, it was like perfect storm. It rained sideways all night, battering the tent. And because I signed up late, I was in the only spot available, me and three women a Chinese woman, a Taiwanese woman, and a Irish woman. And they were like hardcore. And first night I was there, the Irish woman's whose bag is this?

And I was like, oh, hey, what's up? That's mine. Why are you in our tent? I was like, is this girl serious? I ended up getting along really well with her, but she was like, who told you could be in our tent? I'm like, take it easy. Before I'm the only one in this tent. I was like, at this point I was in like killer mode. But I mean that there's a whole book to be written about our tent. But they were cool. So the nice thing about finishing near the front of every day is I'd get to the tent, set up my stuff in the perfect spot, but then I liked the girls. So every day I'd get there, I'd set it all up. If there were rocks under the tent, I'd crawl under and move them 'cause we're sleeping on the ground, like under a tarp.

They ended up, we ended up becoming having an awesome team and they were all like, our tents gonna win. And the first day I got trounced and I was like, whoa. I came in like fourth place, but I'm expecting to win. And I'm like, oh my God, I'm gonna be lucky to finish in the top three. Second day, 28 miles I go out. And I was trying to be strategic and pace myself well, and I had a huge lead. All of a sudden I'm like, oh my God, I'm gonna win. And it's a cumulative time. So every day you get you know, I was 10 minutes down after the first day and then the second day I win the stage by eight minutes.

So I'm four minutes down, but with a few miles to go. I fell down and busted my arm open. I'm bleeding everywhere and my backpack ripped. The strap ripped off my backpack and like I'm thinking I'm gonna be outta the race. I could never finish the race with the bag the way it was. So the last, like three to five miles of that day, I ran holding the bag all awkward and it was heavy. 'Cause there were mandatory safety equipment plus all the food you needed. So you would eat food and it would get lighter every day, but the food was the least of the weight. I had a backpack, I had a sleeping bag, a sleeping mat, certain mandatory safety equipment. Third day go out. I come in second. Again, there's a Swiss guy who's just killing me every day.

A little tiny Swiss mountaineer guy. He is trouncing me, and I'm like, man, I don't know how I'm gonna catch this guy, but I should be good for second. But I keep thinking like, well, I'm just gonna keep going. Maybe something will happen. And then on the fourth day is when everything changed. It was a 50 mile stage, where're about 30 miles in just him and I.

And we're walking on the uphills and we're running, and he's a very stoic guy. He is not really talking to me. He wasn't a jerk. He was just not talkative. We come out of an aid station, so you'd get water every five to 10 miles. We come outta the aid station and he's man, I'm really struggling. I'm gonna walk a little bit. So I'm like, all right, I'll walk with you. We're in the desert and it's hot. So I don't wanna like just ditch him, even though we're racing. I figure, okay, if he's hurting, I'll run away with five miles to go, you know? And just tell him like, Hey, I'm gonna go. Not in a mean-spirited. We just, you know, we're competitors, but I'm also not gonna leave him for dead.

And he deteriorated quickly, close down and I'm like giving him some of my water, which is I have to use sparingly. And eventually some support vehicles come by and they render first aid. And I'm like, you guys good? Everyone good? Yep. And I just took off like a bat outta hell the last like 10, 15 miles and I won by 90 minutes. And then there were two more stages. And the Swiss guy, to his credit, he almost dies out there. He comes in after the 50 mile, or the next day is 26. But we have a day in between 'cause the 50 mile starts at Wednesday. And then we don't go again till Friday 'cause most people take 20 plus hours to finish.

We finish at five o'clock at night and next day he's him and I off the front again, just him and I alone for 26 miles up and over some mountains and coming down the mountains with a mile to go. He just sprinted away from me and won by like a minute. But I was up by so much. I was like, all right, cross a huge roaring river. There was a rope there and I was like, I don't need that damn rope. I jumped in the water, I swear I almost got washed down the river. I wasn't, I was just an idiot. I didn't know what I didn't know. And then the last day was five miles and Irish guy there who lives in South Africa, Killian Ryan, his family owns Ryan Air.

Awesome guy. Just like the coolest dude and a recovering alcoholic. And he is yo, five miles stage, you're up by 90 minutes. Like you're gonna let someone else win. And I looked at him like, he like, I like, he was crazy and I was like, I would never let someone win. And if someone, if I thought someone let me win, I'd kill them. We're racing and dude, we got in a drag race, me and the Swiss guy, and at the end I end up getting him by two or three minutes. But, and then I won and I was like, holy shit, I did it. I won. And it was that was one of one victory where I was like, felt really good about that 'cause I did not wanna be there and I did not know what I was doing, but I figured it out.

And the thing that I hope people get from this is, like you said, like there's no indication that I was gonna be a good runner. I don't have any special gifts or skills other than the things that I can control, which is mindset, consistency, discipline, and all of the things that it took for me to get to the place where I am today is available to anyone. And everyone, as you know, I mean, look at you like you look at what you've done. I tell people all the time, you can go be a trainer, you can go be a nutritionist. There's lots of people that are gonna do that, and they're gonna be very mediocre and they're gonna get through life. They're gonna be comfortable, they're gonna have what they want.

And then there's people that are gonna elevate their platform and be like the best nutritionist. They're gonna be the trainer of Michael Jordan and what separates them. They all have the same knowledge, they all have the same skills. It's some people just have a different mindset and a different level of discipline and grit and determination and the desire to not be average.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. Man, I appreciate you so much. You know, I can't even tell you, man I, well just say it straight. Your book is one of the best books I've read in a long time, and I just roared right through it. My wife was in there watching some Apple show yesterday. I was laying on the carpet in another room, just consuming the book.

And, you know, it's special man. You know, like for you to share your story and to articulate it in the way that you do, it's very relatable. It's full of little insights. Of course, again, just a reminder that, man, you think things are going great and life throws another curve ball, and you really just like getting more and more gifted over time at hitting the curve, you know, and not just that now being able to share your experience and to coach other people, even, you know, in some of those races and you were coaching, you know, kids that you were competing against people.

Yeah. You know, half your age or more, you know, and just being able to share your insights about mental toughness and about the way you approach things, and, you know, and I appreciate that so much. And if you could, can you share where people can pick up a copy of the book and where to follow you?

KEN RIDEOUT: Yeah. Well, first of all, thanks for saying that. I like, it doesn't even seem real to me to have someone like yourself and some of the others that have spoken kindly about the book. Like I didn't, I think people see things like you writing your book in your show, and they just think that oh, of course he did that. That's who he is like every, we're all the same. Everyone has opportunity to start a podcast. Anyone can write a book. What separates you from the crowd? Like you, as you know, you don't know it's gonna be successful. You're just putting stuff out into the world and hoping it resonates. So to hear you say that is just, I it doesn't seem real to me.

It makes me wanna cry. I'm like, I can't believe. The guy even knows I'm alive. Like I did this. Wow. Well, like I don't think of myself the way other people see me sometimes. So it's so refreshing. The book, you can get the book anywhere you buy books. It's from Simon and Schuster Scribner's, the Imprint. And it's the other side of hard.com is my website where all the buying options are there, but it's at Barnes and Nobles, Amazon. I read the audio book. I

recorded the audio book on audible.com and it comes out March 10th. And man, I'm just. It's hard to believe it's become a reality. I've worked on this for so long and on Instagram, I'm just Ken ride out.

I do most of my work on Instagram and I respond to most of the dms. I try to get to everyone and I'm just so appreciative. You know, sometimes people are like, oh, you respond to all the dms? I'm like, are you crazy? Who am I? I'm not special. Someone takes the time to say something nice to me. Of course, I respond to them. The only thing I will say is when people send me messages like, Hey, can you gimme a quick call? I'm like, dude, I got six jobs, four kids, and I'm training. I don't really have time for, to call my friends. So a call might be a little bit a, it's difficult. But I actually thought about doing some, like maybe some live Q and As on Zoom or doing like a a call for people that pre-order the book, but TBD.

But anyway I'm gonna do some live events in New York, LA and Nashville and Boston. I'm gonna do something in Boston right before the marathon, and I'm so, excited to meet so many of the people that have given great feedback. So, man, thanks for having me. Thanks for all the kind words. Again, thanks for letting me share my experience and my story with your audience. It's not something that I take for granted.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course, you know, you got a supporter in me, man.

KEN RIDEOUT: Appreciate you, brother.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I appreciate you too, man. And everybody again, pick up a copy like yesterday. This is a great gift to give, and again, we're in a comfort crisis right now. Everything you want is on the other side of heart.

KEN RIDEOUT: That's it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So let's get to it. The one and only Ken Rideout everybody.

KEN RIDEOUT: Boom.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. Listen, I don't say this lightly. Ken's book was absolutely engaging and one of the best books that I've read recently, and when it comes to biographies slash memoirs, it's the best book that I've read in a long time, and it's an incredible journey, of course, but just seeing the human spirit and the resilience and figuring things out, and also the writing style was very engaging as well.

It's just a really great book, and I encourage you to pick up a copy for yourself and maybe for somebody that you care about who's maybe going through some tough circumstances because. Also when hearing about the difficulties that other people are experiencing, it is something that can help us to have some perspective, and also, of course, to sprinkle in there some reminders of our capacities. It's a recipe that can really help us out. So again, definitely check out Ken's incredible new book, follow him on social media and all that good stuff, and be prepared. We're just getting warmed up. We've got some incredible masterclasses and world leading experts coming your way very soon. So make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.