

# De Frazee - 9-1-23

Sat, Sep 30, 2023 3:33PM • 51:46

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Interviewer:

Glad to be here this afternoon. It is, what day is today, Friday, September 1st.

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And I'm here with my friend to offer another interview for the Broomfield archives, and glad to be here. So I'll just turn it over to you. And if you wouldn't mind just kind of introducing yourself and sharing whatever biographical details you would like people to know.

De:

Okay, so I went by D for the entirety of my homeless experience. So I'm no longer going by that name.

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Biolo, biographical details.

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I came in from Florida to Colorado and then landed in Broomfield because The Refuge was kind of the only place that I saw nearby that was offering any sort of like showers or things like that, that kind of came without like persecution or without like a sort of danger.

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I do identify as non-binary, and identifying as non-binary is extremely dangerous as a homeless individual. It's stacking vulnerabilities on top of vulnerabilities. And so when I began to dress more feminine and other things like that, I essentially put a target on my back. And it made things, like I couldn't go to the gym to shower because people need to check to see whether or not I was truly a man or if I was truly a woman. And they wanted to figure out which one it was so they were trying to check what my body parts were while I was showering. And like those type of like, and that's why The Refuge became a safe haven for those reasons because of the private showers. Because I got the ability to shower without having to feel those things and to feel safe.

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So that was really good.

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Yeah, I guess, I guess I a little bit, I went a little bit into some of the challenges and stuff while also doing the biography. But I think that's really important because I, I kind of landed on why I settled into Broomfield especially because I was originally in Boulder and I was asked to leave Boulder,

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and went to, found myself in Broomfield.

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The way that I actually got introduced to The Refuge was I was at a pride event. I was just driving in my car that I was living in at the time and passed a bunch of pride flags. And I think it was Broomfield pride, and I, and I stopped there, and one of the individuals there

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told me about The Refuge. And it was funny 'cuz The Refugee even had a booth at that event. I didn't see that booth. But I was told to go to the refuge by someone who was going to that event. And that helped me out a lot. It ended up probably leading to me finally getting out of homelessness, which happened probably three months ago.

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I think that's a good answer, we can . . .

Interviewer:

Yeah.

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So, so how would you like to be referred to during this interview in terms of what name should I use for you today? D is fine. Due to how this is about my homeless experience. I believe using D is great.

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I, I just won't reveal the name that I go by now.

Interviewer:

Fair enough. Thank you.

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So D, if you wouldn't mind just taking a step back a little bit. And thank you for sharing those details about your how you connected to Broomfield. You said you came from Florida and what, what were the circumstances, whatever you're willing to share, that kind of led to you becoming unhoused?

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De:

Yeah. So Florida was already sort of bubbling with some transphobic stuff way before the politics started, you know, getting passed, which Florida became the hotspot for a lot of like, like don't say gay laws and other things like that pretty recently, but I was there in that environment.

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And I didn't realize that at the time what was happening, but like, I believe the person I was dating was extremely transphobic and knew that I was a what is called in the thing is like an egg which is someone

who hasn't cracked their egg yet and figured out what they are. And that person had a very, actually I had come out non-binary and I told them I was non-binary. And I had actually during the relationship forgotten that I was non-binary, forgotten a bunch of things because of the abuse that was going on. So it was a domestic violence situation and a lot of people don't understand,

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on to like one of the difficulties.

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Individuals don't really know that biological males can be abused by biological females. And so there's this whole stigma where I go like, well, I'm a domestic violence victim, and people were like, well, how bad could that be for someone so tall and so strong? And so, and it's like, but that wasn't even what happened. It wasn't physical. She didn't need to get physical. She controlled me emotionally. She took away all of my agency, my

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adaptive functioning, and then when I finally broke free of that I had nothing left. And that was the, the descent into homelessness. I was full on with PTSD symptoms running fight or flight every day for almost 24 hours a day, just entering, like our heart palpitations as soon as I woke up, and I knew it was 'cuz of the thoughts I was having.

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And I waited way too long to get out of that relationship. And the PTSD response. or the PTSD, things that, symptoms I was experiencing were short term memory loss.

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Like a lot of paranoid thoughts almost entering into hallucination, like hallucinations with like, there is this cat in the house that was my

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partner's and the cat cap attacking me all the time. And I just had to live in that environment being attacked by that cat. And I would feel like I saw the cat out the corner of my eye and things like that. And that was PTSD hallucination type stuff,

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literally generated by a cat on top of the stressors that I was having.

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And because I worked from home, I associate all of my trauma triggers with also working from home. And so I fell out of my career. I couldn't enter, I couldn't start typing on a laptop or open a laptop without entering flight or flight. And then just going straight into that, what I call the Infinite Corridor, which is essentially like all of that, all of those memories and how you kind of get stuck there.

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And I would just think about that past relationship and how it interconnected with so many things in my life, and there's so many things that will never be resolved. And you kind of have to be accepting of that. And that's one of the healing points with PTSD.

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And so yeah, that was the descent into homelessness, was the domestic violence combined with a few other issues, leading into a full blown like PTSD response that led me to make really poor decisions. But like, I knew like, I'm not going to maintain my job, I'm going to lose my job, because I'm not maintaining productivity. So I prepared for it. I converted my vehicle and made sure that I was gonna like land soft into homelessness.

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And I, you know, I had savings and other things, too, but I was using my 401K to survive and things like that.

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But yeah, so I'm gonna stop there because that's the end of the question.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Thank you, D.

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What, what was the career that you had to give up because of all that you were going through?

De:

I was a web developer. So I was making 84,000 a year working for like a big name company, like a global company

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doing websites related to like news and real estate and other things like that.

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So I was a web developer there.

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And I, I believe I that was pretty good in my field, like pretty top in my field.

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There's a reason why I was in that position. And it's not because I'm great at selling myself, I am extremely good at, like, if someone notices my talent, they'll just take me. And I had someone like my entire life for like, the past decade, every time I needed a job they were like, come work at my company, and like got me in there. And only recently that's kind of dried up because he's no longer in a position where he can hire on people. He's in a position where he's managing all this other stuff. So he's not the person on the ground saying, hey, we need people to help out with this. He's the person managing and

hearing that kind of stuff. And the other people are making those decisions now. But I do have a contracting gig, it's still just, I'm still like, literally to this day working on the flight or flight response and entering it and dealing with

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the fear of failure that comes from, because like it's instilled into me from the past relationship and stuff like to be to fear failure and to fear rejection and to fear someone being critical towards me. And all of that is what web development is, it's constant failure, constant learning, constant like not doing the right thing. And that's something I have to learn to be okay with again, and it's extremely difficult.

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Interviewer:

I think a lot of people could probably identify with having, for lack of a better word, a benefactor who's helping them in their career, who looks out for them and I think that's, that's true of a lot of people who have that and are able to kind of fall back on that. So thank you for providing that background. I'm curious about how you ended up choosing Colorado. I know you said how you ended up kind of in Broomfield from being in Boulder, but how did you choose Colorado as a settling spot?

De:

The person I was talking about that has helped me throughout my entire career moved to Boulder, Colorado.

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I, I was gonna follow them out there anyway as they were, and also my rock climbing partner from Florida moved out here too, and so I was gonna follow everyone out here regardless of becoming homeless. My five year plan, I was talking to my girlfriend and partner about coming out to Colorado and other things like that

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and,

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and so when I became homeless, I just, I went to Colorado, like there was no other reason. Also, Colorado is one of the best states for being queer right now. It's a sanctuary state in many ways. It is one of the places that a lot of Floridians now are going. And so I just, I feel like for like years I was talking about the political climate of Florida, how it's not really good to be queer there and stuff. And people were like, oh, blah, blah, blah, what about Miami, what about these things, and now they're realizing like, oh shit, they passed laws that are anti queer and stuff. Now, you know, from the outside looking in, Florida looks great. But then from the inside looking out, you know how oppressive Florida can be, especially if you don't have a network of queer individuals yet.

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Interviewer:

Thank you for that background. So let's, let's go back to your experience of homelessness, and you had mentioned that you were converting your car for that purpose, so you were staying in your car, correct?

De:

I'm staying in my SUV.

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For a long time, at first, it was like, oh, you know, I have my inverter and my computer and my monitors and stuff, and within the half, six months, all those things were broken, or like disheveled, and I was giving them away. I wasn't even selling those things, because I'm not good at that kind of stuff. I was just like, I can't use this monitor ticket. I need it out of my SUV. I don't have space, and stuff like that. So by the time I ended up at The Refuge, my entire setup was just sort of lackluster with like a power system and everything, and I ended up installing some solar panels and stuff. But

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it was mostly not what it was meant to be in the sense that when I built the thing, I was not in my right mind, I was already experiencing a lot of my symptoms from PTSD. And during my homelessness, all of those symptoms only got worse. And so the condition of my vehicle slipped from the best it would ever be slowly, just like degenerating into what it was by the time I ended my homelessness, which, it was in a van at that time, because I needed to expand out after like a year and a half. I just couldn't live in an SUV anymore with a dog. It was too much. So I, I got a van.

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And even that, like I didn't have the capacity to, to, to build it out. There just wasn't the energy. There wasn't the, like I was just surviving. I wasn't, and it's so funny because it's like, you talk about survival, and people go, oh, how hard is it? You know, you're being fed three times a day and stuff like that. It's like no, but you're dealing with the constant anxiety and pressure of the, essentially people wanting to violate your privacy as a homeless individual, because they're extremely concerned with what's going on inside your vehicle or anything like that. Like there's too many children around for a homeless person to be living inside their vehicle. You know, like, if there's smoke coming from the vehicle, it has to be hard drugs, it can't be marijuana, which is legal in Colorado. Like all of these different things just apply, and are constantly in your head. Like I learned recently that like buying Uncle Ben's Rice, the packaged rice, is a way to grow mushrooms. And so people that are homeless, which would have the Uncle Ben's rice, because it's pre packaged and sealed and sterilized and non-perishable, could also be seen as someone who's trying to grow and sell mushrooms inside of their vehicle, and just etc, etc, etc, because there is this baseline, which I know I'm getting off topic, but there is this baseline prejudice against homeless individuals that makes it where the, it's decided, essentially by the public, that for the public good you need to reveal everything private about yourself, or you're doing something nefarious, like dealing drugs, you know, infecting our children with whatever made you homeless in the first place. When in the reality, I was dealing with a really debilitating mental health condition. And I didn't have any really,

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like I smoke marijuana, but I don't have an active addiction. I (Inaudible) don't think so. I literally smoke it because I'm neurodivergent and it makes me less neurodivergent, it makes me easier to deal with social contacts, makes me better with my executive functioning, gives me the ability to stand up for myself and not be pushed over and a lot of the ways that led to my homelessness. And so like, I understand why I'm doing those things and how I'm using it to suppress my flight or flight sometimes, but so do other medications. So it's a really hard line to draw there. But I don't think I was ever really addicted but yeah, I want to, I was gonna dive into another thing, but I think that this has covered the topic of this, that, that question.

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Interviewer:

Okay. No, I think that's all helpful and an education of sorts for listeners. So

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what, what was your experience of Broomfield when you were parking in this area?

De:

Broomfield was okay. One of the unfortunate things about The Refuge it's it's by a lot of

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organizations that work with children. And so there are a lot of children around in that area, the street by The

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Refuge, where I was staying, and so the, that was the source of a lot of issues, where like in Broomfield, I almost felt like I could not get away from the children even if I wanted to, in the sense that like there's schools everywhere, like everywhere you turn, like I would make a wrong turn because my short term memory is messed up, my phone died or something, and I had my maps turned off, and I would be like trying to like figure out how to get somewhere, and I wouldn't be able to stop because when you're homeless, you don't want to just stop somewhere randomly because that's weird. So you have to find a good place to stop that's like secluded and stuff where people don't don't get weirded out by you staying there for a minute or two just to charge your phone or get your bearings or anything like that. And so I'm worried about that. And I just make a random right turn and oh my God, I'm at a school. And it happens like over and over and over again, because there's like fucking four of them, sorry to curse. there's like four of them in Broomfield. And so that was extremely difficult. And it felt like trying to research all the places where the children would be in order to avoid them in order to not look like a homeless person that's by children, made me look like I was like, in like too interested in children and stuff because I was trying to avoid them. At that point, it just became a whole thing where it's like, these people want to protect their children, and I don't give a crap about it. I just want, I'm like, I'm literally surviving every single day, I just don't want to be bothered in all these different things.

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So it was that. There were a lot of implications. I do understand that, that

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queer, especially trans homeless individuals, are the target of a lot of harassment.

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And so

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I got the feeling that a lot of things were like being said about me that were not true. And, like cumulating in like when I had my van, like some kids rode up on their bikes by the van, and they're like whispering to each other, and they stopped right in front of my van. I know they're there. But I'm just like trying not to interact with children at all. And they're like whispering to each other. And I hear like, oh, yeah, this guy sells drugs or something like that, like sells weed. And they're just like waiting. And then they talk a little louder, and then they're like, okay bye guy. And like really upset that I didn't come out of the van to sell them, when I wasn't a dealer in the first place. And how do the children even know this? Like, why is that even a fucking thing? Like, sorry to curse again, but like, that is such a weird concept. And then like it, it extends further and further and further, because one of the things that people, the way that trans individuals are targeted is by targeting those, those extreme things that people are scared about. So they target, oh, well, they're going to ruin your children. So they're, you know, they'll tell stories about how this person's a drug dealer that sells to kids, or they'll tell stories about this and that and that because they want to really get into the, the fears that people have about trans individuals, and about how they're really bad for children, and that they target children and things like that. So you just feed it those concerns and that homeless trans individual is fucked, because everyone's going to treat them really terribly, they're going to be treated like an addict, they're going to be treated like a drug dealer, they're going to be treated really awkwardly around children, which makes it where they can't access many public services, like you can't go to the library because children are there. And that's concerning to everyone around.

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You can't go to gyms and shower because children are there. And that's concerning to everyone around. I had to get, I stopped going to rock climbing gyms because of the children that would be there. And that's concerning to everyone around. Like, as soon as anyone knew that I was homeless, it immediately flipped into why are they here? And it's like, because a homeless person can't enjoy rock climbing? And for the, you know, the price at a month, and it's like, I'm not homeless because I don't have money. I'm homeless, because I literally have a mental health condition that is disabled me and made me unable to earn an income. And so while I'm trying to recover from that, I am also trying to lower the amount of money that I spend entirely so that I can survive this, literally so that I can survive. Because if I knew that if I hit zero money like, that if I like truly reached that desperation, that I probably wouldn't survive.

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And so I, of course, I had a nest egg, of course I had money, of course, like, but that didn't solve it, because three months of rent would have taken away all of my money, you know, stuff like that. Like if I started my homelessness with 10K, then all that's really doing, that's five months of rent really, like especially in this area, until I found what I, I'm paying like 650 a month here for a, for a,



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in a housing CoOp of ten people where I share a room. And that's a really, really great thing, which I'm kind of bringing up now, even though it might come up later, but something to change is increase the limits of people that can live in a house just to lower the housing costs, because I'm living with 10 people and it's great. And I mean, there's conflicts and everything like that, but they're all getting resolved and ultimately, like it has nothing to do with any of the things that I think people would be

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worried about with 10 people in a house. It's just literally two people to a room, there's two beds, it's nothing weird going on. Like it's just, it's just living in a house (inaudible). There's five rooms, so there's 10 people. That's it, you know.

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So yeah, I'll move on from that. Because yeah, ultimately Broomfield was okay. I will say that even when I went to like the food pantries it felt mostly like those food pantries were meant to serve families and their children. And so me going in as an individual, people were like, oh, make sure to only take what you need. Don't take too much. There's people with families and stuff like that. And I was just like, yeah, but aren't there like hard limits to how much I can take? And they're like, yeah, but you should take much under that, because you don't need much food. Because we need to serve these families that still have housing and stuff. And I'm, like they didn't say that, but it's just that's the implication that's there is that you're taking away from these families by being in need.

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And I stopped going, I went like once or twice and then stopped going. And that's why The Refuge was the main place where I was being fed.

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And that's another thing, is that like one of the reasons why I was even feeding myself or not feeding myself, it's just because I literally didn't even have the energy or the executive functioning to make food, especially in a way that was sustainable for my income, or my lack of income. So like, I could eat out every day, yeah, but I refuse to. I would rather starve than eat out every single day, because I knew what that would do to my, the reserves of money that I had. So I, I, I took every opportunity I could to save money, but also like, like not with things like gas, I, gas cards, I, I, you noticed that I refuse them a lot. And for a long time, I'm like everyone else, they need gas. I, I can sustain my own gas needs with the income or with the, with the like money that I had, I could sustain like a lot of those, like basic needs, just not like sustainable food, because food is so expensive, unless you prepare it yourself, and I didn't have a place to prepare it. And so this place that was preparing food and offering it was one of the only places where I could reliably get food. Other than that I was just doing like Domino's, which was like a, if you do a carry out deal, you can get a, like a pizza for \$8. But then you get a \$3 coupon that you go into the next week with. So you end up getting a \$5 medium pizza every single week, which is something I was doing constantly. And it's like funny, 'cuz like people were like, oh my God, that homeless person's eating a pizza. And I'm like I'm eating a \$5 medium pizza once a week. And it's because it's some of the cheapest food and like, some people would seem to think that like, that some

of the cheapest food is luxury. And it's like because you eat fast food by buying a \$22 package meal thing, and I eat fast food by like buying the dollar items that have the most calories and end up spending \$5, whereas other people spend 16 or something these days. And I hear that a lot, I hear like fast food isn't isn't cheap anymore. And I'm like, it is if you care about it being cheap. It's just not if you don't. And if you have the money, you find, you somehow just find a way to spend it. Whereas if you really don't have the money, like you're gonna find ways to get a \$5 medium pizza every week, you're gonna find ways to do Taco Bell, which is extremely inexpensive with the vegetarian options that like \$1 to \$2 apiece on the value menu.

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And things like that just to get by. Or like the sip and save program where you could get a drink for free every single day. So it would normally be \$1. But if you paid \$8 for an entire month, every single day, you can either get a coffee of the largest size, or a fountain drink of the largest size, which I use that every single day just to hydrate myself because even water was hard to get and keep clean and stuff. I didn't want to drink from hoses and things, so, which is another way that The Refuge helped a lot by giving me clean drinking water that was in bottles.

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So yeah, I think that's enough for this topic.

Interviewer::

No, that's great. Very thorough. So what, what led to you, you said you've been in community housing for three weeks? 'Er three months?

De:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What led to that? And how did that come about?

De:

I reached a point where I realized that I was no longer making progress on my recovery from, from my symptoms of PTSD, and that I was actually really beginning to reach the point where I could no longer

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heal at all in an environment due to the pressures of it. So like, the best way to describe it was that, that domestic violence situation was worse than being homeless, in Broomfield. I will say with all the transphobia that I experienced with all the different things, with like some of the implications that my vehicles being broken into, and that my marijuana was being spiked, and different things like that, like even with all of that fucking trauma, 'er with all that trauma

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there is still like, I was healing because I was out of a worse environment. But eventually, I reached the point where I healed so much that I was like, I was completely aware of what was happening around me and being aware of what was happening around me was not good. I, I understood that a lot of these individuals were keeping me where I was, like, in the sense that like, there was a sort of animosity, or a resentfulness of anyone who started to get better and rise up. And to the point of like, someone would like give you a cigarette, and the cigarette would be a blue, which is like, mixed with a little bit of meth, and so like, someone's done that to me, where they gave me a spiked cigarette, and then I just went on a fucking like, like, I'm like, I feel like I've been drugged, and like I started texting people at The Refuge, and it's like ruining my reputation. And I understand that. But I can't do anything about it, because I'm not acting like myself and I have zero impulse control. And I can tell what happened, I can tell why that was. And I don't like it. And then I'm like working on my video game projects in the hotels that the, you know, they were for the winter during Cold Blue,

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gimmicks in the hotels, and that's where they had access to my van because I learned later that you could open my van with a screwdriver. The key didn't matter. I was just using the key, but if you could use anything to open it, which meant that people could go in during Code Blue that were red flagged from the hotels and use my van as a place to, to keep warm and everything. But also that means that they could smoke my weed out of my bongs and also smoke whatever they had out of the same things, which meant that I was going to get that no matter what, whatever they were doing was contaminating my pieces, and I didn't know. Or they could have just been like sprinkling it into the flower itself and I wouldn't have known. But what I did know was like the feeling of being on a stimulant. Even though I've never done those things. I've been on Adderall in the past because I had ADHD. I do know that I was very productive, and that I did a lot of game development during that time in those hotel rooms. And of course, it was because it was medicating my ADHD. But it was also like, that's bad. That wasn't just random occurrences that hasn't happened since. I'm much more stable now. Those were, that was entirely like weird and not . . . yeah. A little bit

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concerning now that I think about it more and more and more and the different things that individuals have access to, like fentanyl is a really bad one that's really easy to you know, put on that kind of stuff, especially if it's being sold on the street, which if people had access to my van, they were probably taking my stuff and selling it. Because that's of course what would happen in this environment. It's yeah, so . . .

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Interviewer:

Really extreme, (inaudible) especially extreme.

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De:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So what led to the connection with the community housing group?

De:

But I had reached the point in m, like where I was, it was probably the hotel rooms too and the consistency inside of them and the fact that like, I was able to, like pin down a few things, get a few people that were red flagged out of there, and stuff like that, like that were hanging around in the parking lot, you know, you know, like just mentioning it to people and stuff like that which made, it's where my vehicle probably wasn't being used so often anymore and, and then I stabilized more.

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And after that, like Cole Blue ended and everything, and I was back in my van. I started regressing from a lot of the healing that I had done in the consistent stable, stability of that, plus I used it to train my service animal because PTSD and everything, I, I adopted an animal specifically to try to bring me back. And so I was using the hotel rooms to train my animal. And when my animal was fully trained in deep pressure therapy, I suddenly had this ability to, without using marijuana or some other substance, which I wasn't on any other substances so I don't know why I said that, she would like shoulder me or something or like shoulder my stomach and change my breathing pattern, which is what deep pressure therapy does. And then she, it would be like meditation, but it's forced on you by another physical being so, and it just, it's like a big giant hug that, like for five minutes, and I think that consistently brought me back to the ability for me to have the cognitive functioning to like feel like I could do this, like I could, I could get housing again because there was that rejection sensitivity dysphoria, there was a year and a half or maybe two years of being homeless and feeling the, feeling inhuman due to it. I truly felt like I could not explain my CPTSD, my, my service animal to anyone and that they would allow me into housing. I thought that my, my dog would be a problem. The my dog kind of was a problem in a sense. I will say that.

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I literally had people go oh, we don't want dogs and I'm like, that's a

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service animal by the way, what you just did is illegal. But I'm not even going to say anything about it because we can't start off on this foot with housing. And so like things like that were happening before I found this place. And even when I found this place, there were some issues like, you know, there's cats, and my dog wasn't hostile towards cats, but was sort of wary. But the cats were hostile towards her, and eventually turned into her becoming hostile towards cats, or at least get away from me with them. And then everyone's like, oh, my God, your dog. And I'm like, what about the cats? What about the cats that were constantly hissing that, you know, she's got cuts on, her on her ankles now. And she only started barking at them, like on site after those cuts showed up. And so I think that she might have had an interaction or something with it. And everyone's like, no, no, no, no, don't blame, and like, and it was like this weird thing going on. And then finally, someone else moves in with a different cat that isn't aggressive towards dogs. And they're getting along fine. And they're still timid and everything, but it's clearly showing that my dog isn't waiting for a cat to come out of a room so that it can chase it down the hallway. Whereas that was what was coming up and I'm literally trying to tell people like, Ruth was just scared. Ruth was being defensive, Ruth thinks that she needs to defend herself from these animals. It

probably happened after she got cut. It probably happened because her food bowl is near this doorway and she probably got slashed while she was eating, by a cat that was walking through the doorway and was surprised to stumble on the dog. Because we have seen a cat that has swiping behaviors when, when at the back of a dog, swiping and hissing. So we had all of the context clues to understand that the dog was probably eating and got swiped at by one of the cats. And that's a trigger stack for a dog to have that happen while eating. And so she's now, every time she sees a cat barking at them, and this becomes a whole, like, the whole thing, spending weeks until finally it gets resolved by someone else moving into the house and show, and like giving me the opportunity to train Ruth around cats with a cat that isn't on site trying to hiss and, and scratch at a dog, or isn't trying to run away from a dog, a dog, a cat that just stands its ground and is like, if you get too close to me, I'm gonna hiss at you but otherwise, like we're cool, right? And then they've gotten better over time.

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So that's been interesting. And yeah, so . . . Sorry, the context of the housing was that I was getting better and, and Ruth was helping me a lot, but I was kind of slipping. And also you can kind of tell right now like the, the, this is the Infinite Corridor thing where I keep spinning off in different directions, and following these lines of thought. So I'll try to like go back to

32:38

the housing thing. I started looking for housing. And, and I couldn't afford any of the housing that was, like I had just gotten some tax breaks from the New York government, or the New York State because

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my old company was paying into New York because they were a New York based company, but I was a freelancer, or not a freelancer, but I was a remote worker in Florida, so I never had to pay New York State tax ever. So I, I got my taxes back from New York, which enabled me to get a supply of money after I was essentially running out after a year and a half of homelessness. And

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I bolstered that and when looking for housing, because I figured with that much money, I could pay for housing for six months. That would finish my recovery, and I would get back into my old career or some sort of other career, and then I would be out of this whole section of my life.

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So I saw them on

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websites called Roomies. I can't share too much about it because where I am and everything like that. And it's one of the few CoOps, you can understand exactly where I, where I live. So I will say that, like they just posted a few online ads, and then I contacted them, got, got an interview with them, went to the interview at the house,

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you have to get full approval of all members so that either they either do a rejection, which is if any, if any member says a rejection you, you do not move forward with, with this housing. If any member says a meh, what they're just saying is that I don't care really, I have no real personal opinion about this. Or if they say yes, then that's, that means that they're positive towards this change. And so no one rejected me entering the house. And I was asked to go to a second interview,

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where I answered more questions. And again, nobody rejected Ruth or I from the house.

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And so I found housing that way.

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And it was really great because of the cheapness of it, which was great for me for very particular reasons. I was, the interview, I was talking about like how this is great, I, I feel like I would only be here for six months maybe because this is this, is a really good way to get people out of homelessness and, and back on their feet and a few other things and, and it seemed like that was sort of the vibe that was going by with the house.

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And so there are a lot of people leaving now, you know, that I've noticed, and some money problems with the house too, which, you know, we don't need to go into, but it's gonna get better soon. I just wanted to mention that like, on top of like homelessness being like a thing, and then this housing being like a good way to bring people back out of that and out of the trauma and everything like, like, seriously, like, there's a lot like, you have to have a really soft landing pad.

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And this area was this household, I will say, was sort of resistant to that to doing the work of like, like, I understand that you literally just came out of one of the most traumatic experiences that someone in America can face. Like, we're gonna give you space. It was a lot of like, your, your stuff is a mess. You're, you're like, you need to clean up this and I was being micromanaged a lot to the point where I had no autonomy. And I had to like put my foot down and be like, no, like, when do you want this done? Okay, by Friday? Alright, don't tell me, don't talk to me about it until Friday.

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You know, if it's not done by Friday then you can come back to me and stuff like that. And I have to like start setting these hard ground rules. But those are things that are really difficult for individuals that have just experienced homelessness to do, because they don't even see themselves as someone who is of the same . . . I don't know, of the same, like, it's hard to see yourself as someone that's equal. And so coming out of homelessness, it very much was like any one of these people can put me back on the street. And so I need to comply, comply, comply, comply, do everything

36:31 there is no sound on the recording after this time stamp

make sure that they are happy. And then I realized that no one is ever going to be truly happy that they're always going to be sharing their the things that they don't like, and stuff like that, they're always going to have something and that it didn't matter how much energy I put into making them happy that they literally would just the next week have something else. And that's just something different. So

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that's all very helpful. Yeah, you've covered a lot of ground II. So thank you for taking the time to unpack

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your experience in so much detail. Is there

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something that you would like for people who may not have experienced homelessness before, to know about what that experience is like?

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Yeah,

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I think that individuals that

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that they need to be aware that it doesn't matter.

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Too much like how like you're who you are as a person when you're homeless, that because when you're homeless, there's a certain subset, and then it's a majority of people that are just going to see you as homeless, and then that immediately applies a lot of prejudice towards you. It doesn't matter what race you are, it doesn't matter, male or female, doesn't matter what.

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Yeah, I like I might be the one of the most privileged individuals when I'm not homeless. But when I'm homeless, I'm not the most privileged homeless person, I'm just a homeless person.

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And what I mean by that is, is a lot of individuals will still treat individuals as if they have privilege while still being homeless.

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And that's an extremely difficult sort of paradox to deal with.

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It's difficult, like every single thing you own will be seen as something that you shouldn't own, like a homeless person shouldn't have a phone, shouldn't you be selling that? Because you have no money?



Right? Like, a homeless person shouldn't have a vehicle, shouldn't you sell that because you have no money, right. And ultimately, what people don't understand is many of the things that they that people assume about homelessness are wrong. The homeless individuals that have nothing are generally individuals with with more problems, that have like addictions and stuff like that, that leads to them selling everything. And that leads to homelessness and other things like that. Individuals that have a different path to homelessness, like losing their job losing their career entirely, becoming disabled, and things like that, they're going to have like, vehicles that they have on loan, that they're going to be like living inside of, and just hoping that no one takes, they're going to be like worried about repossession all the time, which is going to be an issue. So I would say like, if you're if you're going to be homeless, like be prepared for that, and do not feel bad for what you have, and just keep it, like whatever you currently have when you're going to enter homelessness, don't sell everything. So you get a bunch of money and then right out the months until like, just bleed your money out on rent, knowing you're going to become homeless anyways, that's not a great thing you should enter homelessness with with a vehicle and with money, if you can, knowing that, that, okay, in three months, I'm not going to be able to pay rent, so I need to just become homeless now, if that's going to happen, and this is for people that are extremely disabled, that understand they're not going to find work again, that it's going to be a long haul prepared for that.

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And I think that that's going to be more and more applicable. Like as things get worse with housing and other stuff. We're going to find people that literally are just priced out of housing while they still have jobs where

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We're gonna find people that are living in their vehicles and stuff like that, and being homeless, and they're going to be not even identifying as homeless, they're going to be working class individuals that are that are paying taxes and everything like that and still living in their home in their, in their vehicles and stuff. And there is this sort of

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illusion have built up on YouTube about how this is sort of like a, an ideal, like a life in a way. And that's not true. Social media is is meant to be look really glamorous, and everything like that are really, things and even like the hard moments that you see on YouTube generally aren't the hard moments that you that you experience.

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There isn't much like opportunity to go off into some dispersed camping area with your vehicle, if you don't have supplies, there isn't ability to to travel much if you can't spend money on that gas.

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A lot of unknowns too, especially if you don't have the capacity. Like if you've never done traveling before and other things like that.

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You may not have the energy, you'll get stuck in those daily routines, and you won't be able to break out of them and feel like okay, well, you can go to risk camping for 14 days. So if I just collect enough resources, from working days, I can get out of this entire situation, go to dispersed camping, and then I won't have to deal with everything and I can heal from in, yes, that would be an option. But only if you could get the information that you need. Only if you knew that those dispersed camping grounds were going to be open when you got there only if all of these different things line up perfectly. And that's a lot to do on top of trying to survive. So I feel like there's also a couple of tears where there's people that like live in their vehicles, but like they're doing well. And they're thriving in their vehicles. And then there's people who are living their vehicles, and they're not thriving, they're surviving. And the difference is something that's really acute, and really visible.

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And I don't know, I guess I want to say that like,

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you kind of want to be the person thriving, you don't want to be the person surviving and to prepare for that like, and don't feel bad that you have these resources that others don't, and probably don't share that you have the resources, don't tell people that you prepared for this and all this different stuff. Because no one's going to be really happy about how much you prepared for being homeless, they're just going to be upset with how much you have compared to them. And that's an extremely difficult thing to deal with. You don't want to be the most privileged homeless person, you don't want to have all other people in your area, looking at you as the one who has everything because for some reason that happens, where it's just like, I'm homeless, but, but I'm luxury, like I have the best, the most luxurious homeless vehicle and all this stuff. And that's not true. I'm also in pain and also surviving. But I'm, I have this huge disconnect from everyone else, because I'm surviving better. And not even better, because that's not the word that I want to say, because I didn't view it that way. It's the way that other people seem to view they're like, Oh, you have power and heat and electricity. And this must be so easy on you. And I'm like yeah, but the hard thing about being homeless isn't power and electricity and heat. It's literally the being dehumanized and other things like that and being vulnerable and being taken advantage of and people that try to keep you in homelessness and other things like that are trying to get you addicted to something so that you are that they have control over you and other things like that.

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It's it's so much, but also I have to keep in mind that been the individuals that I was interacting with was homeless are also homeless for a reason, variety of mental health issues and addictions. Same thing with me. I understand that during my homelessness, I had explosive bouts of PTSD rage, essentially, which is like it's just just like key PTSD. Like it's like the thing that identified PTSD was the bouts of rage that individuals with PTSD were experiencing, which isn't even truly rage when you break it down. It's a fear for your own safety that is turns into the fight or flight mode that you choose fight and the fight happens to be yelling and stuff like that to get people to get away from you or to feel safe again. And

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ultimately people view that as anger, but it's not anger. It is it is self preservation and the difference. It's it's extremely juxtaposed. It's a juxtaposition between how that person feels where they're protecting themselves and their safety and outwardly where people believe that they're actually dangerous and they're and that they're endangering others when that individual simply believes that they are being put in danger and they need to protect themselves and it's Sylar that were both individuals feel in danger at the end of that interaction and it's on the person with PTSD, unfortunately, to understand that and you overcome those things. But while you're also homeless, it's it's going to be something extremely difficult to do.

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I guess a lot

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but it's it's illuminating, and I appreciate you unpacking all of that. Is there in closing, is there anything final that you'd like to share?

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About this chapter in your story that you would like people to know who might be listening. Um, yeah, so, um, I will say that, for me that that entire experience like losing your short term memory, it was, it was difficult. So, I guess this plays into like, what you would talk about to other people be extremely aware of like try to be extremely introspective during this time and everything and try to understand whether or not you are suffering for short term memory issues that may make it where you can't remember the past few days or what's happened, because that makes it extremely easy for you to be manipulated, and being manipulated, while being homeless is not something that's great. And so the only way to kind of escape homelessness is also to escape those individuals that will manipulate and use you. Because what as soon as you're essentially useful, or a commodity to someone, they're not going to help you get out of that position, they want to keep you where they where you are, because of the usefulness that you that you essentially have towards their life and to lose you would be to reduce their quality of life. And so they want to keep some control and other things like that.

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So

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it comes down to like, like, be like, just try to be aware and try to maintain and control your own autonomy, and really focus a lot on executive function and whether or not you have it and building it, which is the ability to initiate and do tasks that you want to do. Make sure that you're not having emotional responses to everything, and that you're not responding emotionally and making decisions based off of those emotions. So if someone wants to control you, or something, they'll they'll like, tell you something that will make you feel a certain emotion and compel you to do actions that benefit them. But they don't benefit you, it only benefits you because you no longer want to feel that emotion. And that's an emotional based action. And when those feelings are felt, I definitely, definitely say like, keep that in check, wait for those emotions to die down and don't get trapped in those loops of doing those things and acting in those ways that people want you to act. Because there are individuals in this

community that want that, that want to do the control that want to have people in these patterns around them and other stuff like that.

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And, and the easy way to do that is to initiate emotional responses to make you feel a lot which I think this entire interview, I've talked a lot about how emotionally damaging being homeless was. And that's because of the of that of how people will use emotions as a manipulation tactic. So I would say like don't lose your autonomy and your agency to the ones and wills of others. That's extremely common with PTSD, by the way, because you have flight, flight, freeze and fawn. And fawn is the fight or flight response that makes you comply with others and their will. And so an individual who is suffering from PTSD who is experiencing homelessness can enter fight or flight and she was fun. And then they're essentially being controlled by another individual, and they'll never escape it.

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So I kind of want to leave on that. Like the way that I escaped homelessness was by increasing my autonomy by speaking out for myself by saying what was right and what was not right for me to experience as a human being really doubling down on what I this is not right, like this is not okay, and stuff like that. And finally, like breaking out entirely and realizing that I wasn't the issue in my environment, that there were that there that this environment was just an issue in general, like the entire environment that I was in was overarching ly an issue and I'm an internal iser, so I start to internalize that as my own problem, which makes me start doing things for others and ultimate stuff when I'm homeless. And I'm trying to like, I'm trying to win the favor of other homeless people or like all these different things when I really just needed to get the get out and, and move on with my life and not. And that's why I haven't come back a little bit. And I still want to but like there's there's some stuff there that I have to deal with and some autonomy that I have to build before I ever go back. I feel like

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and so I'm sure you might have just heard my roommates laughing and everything, which is great. Because that's the sort of house I live in now where it's just like, constantly alive. And there's people and everything. And that's, I do I guess that's a good thing to end on to is that like, been this good environment where it's like, now, like when I was homeless, and I heard a sound I was like, what was that? And is it in danger to me? And now when I'm in a house and they hear a sound, I'm like, oh, is someone up? Can I go talk to someone? Can I go interact with someone like all this different stuff like Oh, who was in the kitchen right now I wonder if they're cooking something and I can join in on that cooking and then we can have food together and I'll clean up and like these thoughts are different, like it's positive thoughts that are initiated a motion like my initial emotional reactions are positive rather than negative. And so

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Even if I'm doing emotional responses there, I'm responding to good emotions in order to initiate, like certain actions and stuff to

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still dealing with executive functioning problems, I will say, Oh, another thing, like before, if when you find housing after being homeless for a long time, you have no muscle memory of anything, doing the dishes is gonna suck, putting the dishes away is gonna suck, doing laundry is gonna suck, all of those things that you used to do is gonna suck, and people won't understand why you're so bad at those things. Because you're rebuilding that muscle memory. Be like understand that because ultimately, I want to want to say like, if someone is homeless, the goal is to not be homeless anymore. So like, understand that during that transition of going from homelessness is not homelessness, you have all of the muscle memory of being homeless, and you're really good at that. But like living in a house now, it's different stuff, different emotional responses, different ways that you have to react to situations, different things that you have to do and you have if you haven't put away dishes in two years, you're not going to be fast at it. It took me like 15 to 20 minutes to put away the dishwasher when I first got here and now it takes five and stuff like that. So I think that's extremely negative. Like don't be hard on yourself that it seems like you're struggling when say like your roommates aren't or something, oh, your roommates are extremely productive, and they're doing the chores, and it takes you so much effort. It's that's okay, it's okay, you're gonna get better at that.

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It's just that you haven't been in house in a long time. So I guess I'll I'll end on that.

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It's all very helpful to me. And I'm grateful for your willingness to take time to share all of those aspects of this latest chapter in your life and

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very grateful so I'm going to stop recording now.

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Make sure I want to stop recording you