

Episode 00038 - Interview Richard Kaufman on Resilience

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

If you went through basic training, you are a warrior, and I believe that as long as you don't quit, you can win.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Welcome to Veteran Voices SITREP, with your hosts, Tom and Chris Faust.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Welcome to Veteran Voices SITREP, where your voice matters. I'm Tom Faust, here with my co-host, son, and fellow Army vet, Chris. Today, we're honored to sit down with someone who truly embodies the word resilience, Richard Kaufman, host of the Veteran Momentum Vertical Momentum podcast.

Your podcast, I believe, ranks in the top half a percent globally, is what I thought I saw. He's a speaker, turned personal pain into a mission to uplift others, and your focus is resilience. Welcome, Richard.

I'm glad to have you here on the podcast.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

RICHARD KAUFMAN Tom and Chris, thank you so much for having me on your amazing podcast. I listen to every episode, I love everything you're doing, and I'm so blessed and grateful to be able to be here.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

PASTOR MARK I appreciate the feedback. That's wonderful to hear. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your experience in the military?

I know some of it, but our audience may not. So, go ahead and kind of give us a little background on yourself.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

RICHARD KAUFMAN Well, I'm the worst military guy you ever meet. If you're ever in the military, especially if you're in the Army, we always had that one guy that was a shitbag. That was me.

I was the shitbag. I joined the military at 17. I got thrown out at 19 for being a drug addict and alcoholic.

Got back in again, which is rare. Almost got thrown out again, except 2011, for being an

asshole. But because of what happened on 9-11, they didn't throw me out.

They kept me. I changed my mindset. I changed my attitude.

And I went from an EIOU-1 to an E-5 within three years, one soldier of the year. Ended up doing 23 years, would have done 30. I ran over.

I got hurt in a training accident and lost my vision. That's why I wear these stupid birth control glasses, so I can read something. And now, because of that accident, I started my podcast.

And now, here I am today, talking to you guys, hanging out with you guys, and teaching about resilience, about how it's okay not to be okay. And it doesn't matter where you're from. It matters where you end up.

So we can go anywhere in the conversation you guys want to go. That's just a little bit about where I come from.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. I was actually just kind of curious, because you said that you had, you know, you joined once, and then you got kicked out, you know, because of drug use and everything. Then you tried again.

How did you, like, how did you overcome your issue before and be like, hey, I want to do it this time. I want to do it the right way.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, when I got thrown out, and they gave me a reenlistment code of 3E, which means I got under than honorable. Within a year, it turned to honorable. But as I was being kicked out, and I got arrested at one point, and I was looking at five years from grand, for grand larceny.

And my uncle that bailed me out was a Korean War hero. And he looked at me and he said, you know what? I never knew you.

I knew you didn't have what it takes to be a military man. And for my hero, he was the boxing champion of the army in Korean War. For him to tell me that I didn't have what it takes, it just ate at me.

Night and day, I couldn't sleep for months on end. And that's when I decided, hey, let me try to get back in and maybe try to redeem my name. But it didn't exactly go as planned.

When you're an addict, things don't work out as you plan. And like Mike Tyson says, everybody's got to plan until you get punched in the mouth. And 9-11 punched me in the mouth.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Yeah, I was actually in airborne school when September 11, 2001 happened. I joined at a time when there wasn't much happening. And then that happened, and I was learning how to jump out of planes.

And I was like, oh, I'm going somewhere. This just became more than I was expecting.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Yeah. And a lot of people don't realize that being in the military is one thing. But when you have to sign your life insurance over to somebody, the pucker factor goes up really high once you realize that, hey, I might be going somewhere and I might not be coming home.

So if there's any civilians out there, there's a big difference when you sign that life insurance paper over to somebody knowing that you might not come home. It's a big mindset change, as me and Tom were talking about before we came out.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Yeah, yeah. So as your title says under your picture there, the comeback coach, where does the term comeback coach come from? I have a feeling it's based on what you've been talking about already, but can you tell us a little more about that?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Yeah, it actually came from a gentleman we might all know. His name is Mr. Gary Vaynerchuk, Gary V. I actually had lunch with him.

And I was telling him my story about how even when I was in the military, I always worked out. I used to bodybuild and I worked for GNC. And I worked with a lot of players from the NFL, Major League Baseball, WWE, The Undertaker, Triple H.

And I always helped them come back from injuries. But then once I started helping people, veterans come back from either mental health issues, physical issues, I talked to Gary and he's like, bro, you're the comeback coach. And that's just stuck.

I was like, okay, I guess I'm the comeback coach. And he's the one that told me to write my book. He's the one that told me to write my, start my podcast.

And if you look at some of his old videos, there's a wounded warrior hat hanging up in his window. And that's my hat.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Oh, okay, nice.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

So he came up with it. I give all the glory and all the honor to Mr. Gary Vaynerchuk. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing right now.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

I've listened to a bit of Gary Vee's stuff and he doesn't pull punches at all, does he?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

No, he's like an airborne guy. He'll drop a couple F-bombs here and there. Oh, yeah.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

That kind of rolls into, I guess, that's kind of what got you motivated to start your podcast. So you can either touch on that a little more or what do you hope listeners gain from your podcast?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, the reason I started the podcast is, well, when I first started, I was with GNC. So I would try a pre-workout like I'm drinking right now. And I would give a review on it.

I'd be like, oh, great. It works great. It tastes like ass.

If you want to pick it up, make sure that you know it's going to taste like ass, but it works great. And that's how the podcast originally started. But then when I lost my vision for 18 months, I sat in my chair.

I couldn't see, I could barely see until somebody said, hey, you're the comeback coach. It's time for you to come back. I'm like, but what can I do?

I don't know. I can't work. I can't drive.

I don't know what to do. And somebody says, with Anchor, you can just hit the record button and start your podcast over again. And that's where it all started.

So I went from having nothing to do. I ended up doing like six or eight interviews a day for like two years straight. And that's how I got up to like 1300 episodes or something stupid.

And for me, the podcast, the first guy I ever interviewed, he was a guy with no arms, no legs. And as I'm interviewing him, his wife is holding his phone to his ear. He's actually in Aspen, sitting in a jacuzzi, because he just got done skiing all day.

And this guy's got no arms and no legs. And that's when it gave me insight to say, wait a minute, there is no excuses.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Mm hmm.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

If you're willing to come back, anybody can come back. And even to this day, like one of my star pupils, I'm teaching him how to podcast. He's blind and deaf.

And now he's podcasting, being blind and deaf. And also, not only is he blind and deaf, but he also ran the Badwater 135 in almost as good a time as David Goggins. So for me, it's kind of like, OK, if people like this can do amazing stuff, a guy like me with a ninth grade education and only 40 percent vision can do a lot more than I'm doing.

It's all about resilience. You know, for me, it's all about it's all about giving people hope.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. And the comeback does make sense there. And that really is all about just having the right mindset.

I mean, a lot of people go through some really terrible things, but if you have your mind in the right place, you can make something come of it. There's a woman in another group that I have been in who got burned really bad, you know, face and hair, you know, she's scarred all over. And she's turned that into a coaching business for burn victims.

And it's just amazing what you can do when you, you know, you just say this is my situation. I'm going to make the best of it.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

And, you know, like I was on the phone with my friend, Ed Milette, and Ed Milette said, Rich, nothing has ever happened to you. It is all happened for you. And everything is a teachable moment.

So if you take your pain and turn it into purpose, then it gives you a whole different perspective on your life that, you know, whatever happened to you, didn't really happen to you, it happened for you. So you can help somebody else down the line.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. And I think one of the biggest things you said that goes for a lot of things is, you know, hope, you know, something bad can happen to some people. And, you know, all they need is a little bit of hope.

They need to see that there is some sort of light at the end of the tunnel that they can go towards. And that's key to any, you know, the start of any comeback is you give them the hope. They know what direction to go.

Okay. How can I get there? You know, I want to get here.

Hope is key.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

And like I tell everybody, listen, you know, I'm just a junkie who got lucky. I mean, I'm a ninth grade dropout. I didn't finish ninth grade.

And now I'm a two-time bestselling author, podcast host, blah, blah, blah. But if I can do it, anybody can do it. It's not too difficult.

If I can figure it out, you can figure it out. And I'm here to help you figure it out.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

So I know you also being a veteran, you also support veterans and first responders in particular. Can you talk about, you know, some initiatives or projects that you're passionate about or that you help with or work with?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, I mean, I help out with Project Refit, Project Die Hard. I help out a lot with the Veteranor Tribe on Facebook. I'm one of the original 500 from them.

So for me, it's just about paying it forward. I have a big hairy goal of helping 30 million veterans and first responders find their mission again. Because a lot of times when we hang up our uniforms, we hang up that gun belt for the last time.

You know, we don't have a mission. And, you know, as like my friend Sergeant Nick talked about, once we step off the base, the military doesn't give a shit about you. Your phone stops ringing.

You don't have a mission. You don't have a paycheck. You don't have camaraderie.

And sometimes, like, you're left alone with your thoughts and either you're looking at the bottom of a bottle or at the end of a barrel. So for me, I'm just letting people know that, you know, just because your service ended, doesn't mean your life ends. It's just now you just have to move on and help reimagine and, you know, reinvent your life.

So that's what the podcast is about. It's about helping reinvent and reimagine your life. And I help veterans mostly through entrepreneurship because I figure if a veteran or a first responder, if they have a mission, again, they're not going to take their own life.

And for me, I found entrepreneurship helps out a lot because we suck. If you get out of the military, you pretty much either you suck at being an employee or you're great at being an employee or you're better off being an entrepreneur. So that's where the podcast teaches

veterans how to become entrepreneurs too.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. And I think that's a really good point because one of the biggest issues I think that people from the military have after they get out is it's almost like a culture shock. You're in this very structured world where you're effectively told what to do constantly.

There's always something that you're supposed to be doing. You get out on your own and it's like, I don't know what to do. You don't know anybody.

People don't understand the way you think anymore because, you know, the outside world is not like the military. There's a big difference there.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

No, and it's true because, you know, even well, Chris, I'm sure agree with me. You know, once we get out of the military and we get a regular job, you know, we get to the job early, which we're always early most of the time anyway. Everybody's standing by the water cooler.

They sit and bullshit for a half hour. Then they start getting to work and then they take a lunch and then they leave, you know, another water cooler break and then they leave exactly on time. And then we're looking at him like, wait a minute, we still got shit to do.

Where are you going? We still got a lot of shit to do. So a lot of us, we just don't fit in because we're taught to be high speed, low drag, and we're taught to push, push, push.

And then when people are just getting there, you know, on time, leaving on time and doing half of the work, we're just, we feel lost because we're just like, we don't fit in. I don't fit in here.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. Yeah. It's definitely the frustration aspect from that point is you're doing all the work here because that's what you've been, you know, trained to do.

That's what you do to get the job done. You keep working until it is. And then you get the other side where it's just like, you know, yeah, you go and collect a paycheck, work here, you know, nine to five and then call it good.

And it's like, that's something that we're used to at the time, especially transitioning, you know, like recent transitioning out from military to civilian life. So one of the things they're kind of going on that thing, because, you know, somebody might not want like, you know, a nine to five job. I know you have author to work, like, you know, the podcasting blueprint, the, you know, purpose, power, profit, three Ps of podcasting.

So kind of like what inspired you to write, well, in general, then, you know, kind of like what

messages do you aim to convey through your books?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, I mean, my first book, I wrote a hero's journey from darkness to light. That's just my story. And that one is just, like I said, it's my story with learn with, I teach people what not to do through my story.

And the last chapters are on depression and suicide. So it's a teaching book. But the podcast book is I've spent over now, I think \$130,000 on classes, on courses, on books, on going away to different places, learning how to podcast, and I found out there was no book where I can just this was actually said by somebody that wrote that bought the book.

They said, if you if you buy this book, by breakfast, you can have a podcast by dinner. And I did and I made it where everything is clickable, even though some of the clicks don't work, because some of the things change, like Google, they change. So some of the clicks don't work.

Some of the URLs don't work. But this way, I made a book where, like I said, if you need something done, if you want to sign up for Apple, here's a here's a link. If you want to do this, here's a link, there's zero flow.

I made it that way on purpose that there's no fluff. There's no BS. It's just a book that I wish I would have had.

I would have saved over 130 grand if I would have had this book. So that's why I wrote the book just just to make it easy for people like us that there's so much stuff out there. There's so many books out there.

But my book is I think it's like 42 pages, something stupid, something small, but it's a quick read, but it has all clickable links. So if you want to start a podcast, you could do it in one day. And that's why I did it just to make it because when I was growing up, I always loved the books there for dummies books.

And I wanted to make this book for dummies, but I didn't want to get sued. So I didn't put for dummies. So that's why I actually wrote this book.

And it's been number one three times on on Amazon so far. And if anybody wants to start a podcast, pick up the book. It's now it's on sale for two bucks.

You can start a podcast for two dollars. How can you beat that?

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Yeah, exactly. I've seen other books on, you know, how to podcast or whatever. And they kind of talk about, you know, things you can do.

But the title of yours, podcast Blueprint, actually is the way it is. I read through it last night. It was not a very long read.

And it's got great information in there. It really is a blueprint. You give all the steps.

I'm kind of giving you a picture of your book because it really is good.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, it's because most podcasts don't last 15 episodes. It's called pod fate. Most people quit after episode 15.

And the reason why is because, number one, their podcast isn't powerful. So people are not going to listen to it. And also, it's not profitable.

People don't realize how much it costs to run a podcast, a good podcast, because you're paying for StreamYard, you're paying for promotion, you're paying for this, you're paying for that. So if you're not having money coming in, eventually, your wife or girlfriend is going to look at you like, you know, you're wasting money here. You know, why are you doing this?

It's just a money pit. And you're going to quit. So I teach people how to use a three piece of podcast.

So you don't quit. Because even if you hit episode 15, or 16, I'm sorry, you're in the top 10% of all podcasts worldwide. Because there's over 500,000.

I mean, there's like, I think it's like 1.8 million podcasts, but only 400,000 of them are actually putting out new podcasts. So I just teach people, listen, if you can make it past that 15, 16 episode, then you're showing longevity, you're going to be successful.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

So I want to get back to the, our planned topic for the show, resilience. And just, it is a recurring theme in all of your, all of your work. So how do you define resilience?

And what strategies would you recommend people use for building it in themselves?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Just, you know, I'm in the process of writing my third book. It's called Too Dumb to Quit. And, and I believe that as long as you don't quit, you can win.

You know, just don't wait. And whatever, you know, whatever you're going through, just keep going through it. Find people like Chris, Tom, you know, myself, find people that have been through it.

And latch on to those people, and they'll help you get through. So, you know, and I love the

Rocky, you know, I love Rocky, you know, he says, get knocked down seven, get back up eight. And I think as long as you can just keep getting back up, you'll be okay.

And that's my whole thing about resilience is, you know, whatever it is, somebody had it worse than you, but has come out the other side. So that's why I have all these amazing people on my show, because you'd be like, okay, well, I lost my vision. Okay, I got an episode for that.

Or I lost my legs. Okay, I got an episode for that. I always this way, you can find somebody that's somebody that's been through what you're going through, but came out through the other side.

So I think resilience is just getting back up. Even when everybody counts you out, if you have the mindset to get back up, because if you went through basic training, you are a warrior. We just sometimes we have to get back to our warrior mentality.

We were taught never quit. And then when we get out, the world beats up beats us up a little bit. We just might have to get back to that warrior mentality.

You know what I mean?

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

So along with resilience, I know that you had touched briefly on, you know, finding somebody, you know, that's, you know, gone through it, you know, whether it's finding a podcast with information on it, you know, kind of, kind of given your experiences, what insights would you, you know, what insights can you share about addressing, you know, the mental health challenges among veterans that come along with, you know, these things that happen to them?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, I mean, and then a lot of it goes back to like, Mr. Ed Mylett. He's got one of the top podcasts in the world. He's one of the number one speakers in the world.

But it comes back to what he said that if you think if you rethink things, you can go from post traumatic stress to post traumatic growth. If you realize, okay, this happened to me. Why did it happen to me?

And what can I take from it to propel myself? And once you realize that, you know, nothing's ever happened to you. It's happened, it's happened for you.

And everything is a teachable moment. You can actually move from PTSD to post traumatic growth. I mean, and that's not, that's not saying that if you have PTSD, like I do, a traumatic brain injury, like I do, that you don't need to go for help because I'm still in therapy.

I've been seeing the same therapist going on 13 years now. There's nothing wrong with getting help. There's nothing wrong with saying, okay, I'm not okay.

But sometimes we have to start thinking, okay, well, you know, what happened to me? How can I use it to help myself and help others? Because a lot of times, if we help others, it helps take away some of our pain.

And I think that's why you guys do what you do is because not only does it help you, but it also helps others. And like, I'm in recovery, 36 years, I've been sober. I realized that I can't have, I can't keep what I don't give away freely.

So when I'm helping another addict, I'm actually helping myself. And I think the same thing can be said for people that are like us helping other veterans.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Indeed. Yeah. So, so what are some of your goals for the future then, personally, professionally, whichever?

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Well, my number one goal is hopefully wake up tomorrow morning. I live, you know, day by day. I mean, I plan for the future, but I live in the moment.

And I realized that, you know, God can take me any day. So hopefully that what I'm doing today is going to help somebody tomorrow. And my goal, like I said, is my big hairy goal is to help 30 million veterans and first responders find their mission again.

And for me, that's a big goal. So for me to get up every morning, like I said yesterday, I worked 16 hours on social media yesterday, but that's what keeps me going is to, you know, try to hit that, hit that goal. And I, and I don't know if I'll ever hit that goal, but I can't help the 30 million.

If I don't help the one. If I hit, if I help the one, I can help the 30 million. And I think a lot of people get it twisted.

They're trying to help the whole world, but they can't help the one. And that's my goal is just to be able to on this podcast is just be able to talk to the one person that's hurting right now. That's listening to this saying, if he can do it, I can do it.

So that's, that's, that's my, that's my, my micro goal is to wake up tomorrow. And my goal for today is to be a better father, a better husband, a better friend, a better son, a better man. And my, my Mac, my mic, that's my micro goals.

And my macro goal is to help the 30 million.

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Yeah. That's one of the things that, that my quartet and I talked about this weekend. When we talk about performance is, you know, we, we, we have a, you know, we, we have a competitive

mindset, you know, we want to, you know, compete on the international stage.

It's something that we want to do, but ultimately that, you know, that aside, what we, the, the reason we do, what we do is to give that performance for that one person. Like, you know, the audience could be 10 people or, you know, two or 300 people, somebody, you know, if you perform, whatever you're performing, whatever song it is, you know, whatever meaning you put behind it, you're going to, you're going to affect one person. And if we can change that person for whatever reason it is, you know, the, the best song they've heard, maybe it's a song that touches to something they've been feeling that they needed to hear, you know, you know, going along that hope aspect in some of the songs, you know, something sad happens, but, you know, in the end there's hope that, you know, you, you can do this or see this person here.

That's, that's what we do is we perform to give that one person or multiple people that feeling of, wow, you know, this is something that I needed. This is something that I wanted to see. And that's, you know, kind of along the same things of, you know, you're performing, whether you're giving a podcast on information or, you know, singing music is you're giving somebody something that they can latch onto and use to give them that hope or whatever it is that they're looking for.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Yeah. Like when I, when I speak on stages, whether it's a Richard Branson stage, whether it's, you know, whatever stage I'm speaking on, the first thing I say is I'm not, I'm not for everybody. I don't care if you listen to me or not, but I'm here for the one person that came here looking, that's struggling, that wanted to take their life before they got here.

That's who I'm here to speak to. So if I can speak to that one person, I can speak to the millions, but I can't speak to the millions until I speak to the one. And so that's something I, you know, I want to get out there that people, you know, sometimes we're so worried about, you know, becoming famous worldwide and all that, but we don't look at the people that are in our immediate circle, you know, whether it's our kids, our wives, our girlfriends, if we're not being there for them, how can we be there for everybody else?

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

You're 30 million. It's really one person at a time. That's the way it has to be.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

It's the only way, you know, when you have a big goal, that's what gets you up in the morning. Like, you like, you know, like Chris was saying, he's been, he's been humping, he's been going hard, but because he has that goal, you know, he, it makes you get up in the morning. Like I love, one of my favorite teachers was Eric Thomas, the hip hop preacher.

And he said, if you went to bed broke, you had no reason to go to bed. And I think same thing with a goal. If you have a goal that's big and hairy enough, you're not going to want to go to bed.

You're going to be so pumped up. You're going to want to get up and get after it.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Okay. Well, I, unless there's anything else you wanted to bring up. I think we've kind of covered what we planned on covering today.

Give you a chance here, if you have anything else you want to talk about.

[Richard Kaufman - Guest]

Uh, no, the only thing I want to bring up is, um, for me, the three most important words in the English language are today. I decide. And what that means is like, when I end my show, when I end my, my, um, my podcast, I always say that every morning when we get up, we have a choice.

You can be a victim or you can be a Victor. So it's up to you if you want to be a Victor or a victim. Um, and that's why I wear the shirt and says, I win because I know that if I wake up in the midst of the mental state of, I'm no longer a victim, I'm a Victor.

I'm going to win today. And in order for me to win the week, the month, the year, I got to win today. So anybody that's listening to this, if you woke up in a bad space today, you don't have to be in a bad space before you go to bed.

So I just wanted to put that out there. The three most important words in English language are today. I decide.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

Excellent. I like that. Yeah.

All right. Well, Richard, we want to thank you very much for being on this episode. I really appreciate having you here.

And, uh, yeah, yeah. It's, it's been enlightening to me as well. Um, so with that, Chris, do you want to take us out?

[Chris Faust - Co-host]

Uh, sure. I want to thank everybody else for, uh, you know, anyone who tuned in, whether you're watching, um, we appreciate your time that you take into, uh, to listen to us, watch us, um, pass the message along. If you know of anybody, uh, family, friends, you know, anyone who might need this information, please pass it along.

And, uh, as always, you know, like subscribe, you know, follow us. We, we, we do this to get the information out there and just give another Avenue for people to find out that they're not alone with things they do. So thank you very much for tuning in and we hope to catch you on the next one.

[Tom Faust - Co-host]

All right. All right. Thanks on that.

We'll catch you next time.