

## Episode 17: Doing Men's Work w/ Ben Bechtel

[00:00:00] **Drew Stegmaier:** Hey everybody. This is The Steg Show and I'm your host, Drew Stegmaier. This show is new, evolving and finding itself. We don't yet know what it will turn out to be. And that's exciting. I believe the world has a current civility deficit. And with this endeavor, I'll be exploring tough and taboo topics with compassion and incivility so you can do the same with your friends, family, and kids and co-workers.

[00:00:25] Ben Bechtel has sat in 350 hours of men's circles. That's more than you might think that doesn't include additional training transport to and from et cetera. Ben and I are both part of an organization called the mankind project or MKP. This podcast does not represent the views of the Mankind Project, but we talk about Men's work.

What is men's work? What does that mean? What is not men's work? We talk about both toxic and healthy masculinity, and we also model some of this men's work during the episode. Ben is a very dear friend to me. And if you're someone out there who is struggling, who maybe doesn't love yourself, give this a listen.

[00:01:18] This is for if you're looking for a holistic alternative approach to conventional therapy. Get in touch with Eric at dub dub, dub dot it's dash, not-therapy.com. That's it s-not-therapy.com. His clients who include therapists come to him for the same problems. They might see a therapist or coach for as well as for concerns in the spiritual and energetic realms.

[00:01:46] They often know the limits of conventional talk therapy and want alternatives to medication. Most of all, they want to make faster progress. Eric's toolbox includes a number of powerful, safe, and efficient approaches for healing personal growth, and problem-solving through mind, body, and spirit. They include ancient techniques like shamanic healing time, proven techniques like hypnosis and cutting edge therapeutic techniques, like energy psychology and eye movement integration.

[00:02:17] What's keeping you from the life you wanna live? Are you ready to make your life better by changing how you think feel act or react?

[00:02:25] Eric's office is in Annapolis, Maryland, but he serves clients nationwide by video. He welcomes people of all nationalities and ethnicities and sexual slash gender orientations. You can call him at (703) 288-0400. Again, that is 7 0 3 2 8 8 0 4 0 0.

[00:02:51] All right, then we are alive. Welcome.

[00:02:54] **Ben Bechtel:** Thank you, man. Thank you, man. It's good to see you.

[00:02:56] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah, yeah. I'm glad to have you. So I'm just going to get right into it. What is men's work?

[00:03:04] **Ben Bechtel:** Oh, man, you really do get right into it.

[00:03:08] Okay. Men's work. Um, wow. That's a good question. Uh, so I guess just to back up a little bit, you know, uh, I've been doing men's work for almost five years, December this year. We'll be five years

old and I found men's work, when I was seeing a couples therapists and a couple of therapists at the time.

[00:03:30] I guess I had heard about this group called the mankind project. I just need to call attention to this real quick. I'm super nervous, dude. I'm like shaking, you know what I mean? My body's like, my body's like, uh, my body's like trembling a little bit, you know? And I'm like self judging the words as they, as they come out of my mouth, you know? And I love it, but I just want to call attention to that real quick. Cause that really helps me personally to just to just put that out there right out of the gate. So yeah, I'm feeling some fear, I'm feeling some self judgment. Um, but yeah, so men's work. Um, I found, I found out about this group called the mankind project through a couple of therapists and she had, you know, the, the therapist at the time had kind of recommended it to me, thought it would be a good idea.

[00:04:18] And at the time I was. Desperate for something that it was like immediately, as soon as I heard about this group, I, I was like, that's for me, you know? Um, and, uh, and, and so, you know, before I go into what men's work is, there's many different types of men's work. Um, the men's work that I'm most familiar with is through a particular organization called the mankind project.

[00:04:41] Um, so that's, that's, that's my, um, greatest understanding of what men's work is, is through that organization, but there's all different types of groups and things like that. Men's work is essentially, um, it's essentially men getting together and, uh, as men only, you know, there's no women there and, uh, And we work on ourselves, you know we, sit in circle, we, we, um, and, and we do work but specifically, you know, the key component of men's work is that it's only men.

[00:05:15] Um, it's only men there. And yeah, man, it's been life changing for me. Um, you know, it's, it's actually, uh, it's, it's kinda crazy to think about what my life might be without it. Um, I w the couples therapist, when she first recommended it to me, The Mankind Project, they do, you know, the meat and potatoes of it is essentially two things that they do a weekend, an intensive weekend which is a 48 hour experience.

[00:05:45] And you only do it once as a participant, you can go back and staff and help put it on and stuff like that, but you only do it once as a participant and, I did that within a few weeks of the couples therapists recommending it to me. And then that's kind of one major component of it. And then the other major component of it is men circles, uh, groups of men basically getting together, whether it be weekly, bi-weekly monthly, it can be, you know, the, all the different groups kind of come up with their own, uh, format for how often they meet.

[00:06:16] But, um, I've been sitting in a circle, uh, pretty much every week. You know, I go in and out of phases sometimes I won't go a particular week or whatever, but I've been, I've been sitting in circle pretty much every week for the last five years. And, um, someone, uh, someone described it like this, like that weekend, that 48 hour experience.

[00:06:36] Um it's kind of like the wedding, you know? And then group group is the marriage. Um, I like that. I hadn't. Yeah. So it's like, you know, that 48 hour experience, man. And it just, you know, that, that rocked my world. I never you know, I left that experience. Um, I actually felt like I was on drugs when I laughed.

[00:06:56] Like I, I, you know, of course I was sober, but when I left it, it just cracked me open. And then, but the real, the real power has come from consistently showing up in men's circles. Uh, over the last five years and, uh, and what we do in those circles, what we do on that weekend is men's work. I don't know if I've really answered your question yet.

[00:07:23] Yeah, no. Um I've so far I've gotten to like where men's work happens. Um, but yeah, like, you know, and, and I'll say this too, I'm hesitant to go into details of like, what men's work is. And I sometimes struggle to describe what it is, but I'm hesitant to go into details because it's one of those things that I really, um, uh, you know, I want men to show up and experience it for themselves and, and see it.

[00:07:53] It's like but essentially it's work, you know, with, within just a group of men. And I'll say this too. Um, so many men that I know that go to these groups consistently, and I'm sure like my ex or my parents or the you know, the people around me as I've been doing this with, would say this it's so valuable for men to go and do work with other men and then to come home to their wives or their significant others or their families.

[00:08:19] And it just such valuable time spent to go and, and do work with other men. Think that there's, there's, there's, um, it's, it's a different kind of space where I can, where I can do things that, that I can't do with, you know, like. For relationships or with my parents or, um, or with my friends or whatever. It's important to me to have that time with just men where we work on ourselves.

[00:08:46] **Drew Stegmaier:** So let's maybe backtrack for a minute and say, what is not men's work or what are common misunderstandings and misconceptions, like why can't women do it? Isn't that non inclusive?

[00:08:57] **Ben Bechtel:** Oh, good question. Um, so first off, uh, the mankind project organization that I spend a lot of time doing men's work in, they have a sister organization called women within and women get together in a, they, they work on themselves in just, you know, as a group of women, you know I think I think, what is not men, or I think that.

[00:09:19] **Drew Stegmaier:** Have people that misunderstand it, right?

[00:09:21] Like what, what is maybe something about men's work. That maybe surprised you or, um, you know, just for example, right. Um, I definitely think there's folks that say, oh, women aren't allowed, therefore this is bunk, right? Therefore, this modality is trashed or is unhelpful, which I think is absolutely untrue, but, you know, how could you explain to those people why it's important that it be just men or why women's work be just women.

[00:09:52] **Ben Bechtel:** Right, right. Okay. Well, um, first off I think we need both, you know, um, like I I've for a long time, I've wanted to sit in circle like a coed circle. Um, but it would be very different. And, um, and I think, uh, so like for me, um, there's certain things that are, are much more difficult for me to talk about with women present.

[00:10:18] Um, Things, uh, related to say sex for example, or, um, or, you know, I mean, even just porn or like, you know, uh, uh, um, or, or, or, or relationships, or, um, there, there are certain things that just other men get, um, that, that, that I feel more seen and heard, uh, in a setting with men. And what

happens, what I've noticed happens is when I talk about things or I, or when I show up to a men's circle and I do work, you know, I work on myself, I put myself out there, I'm vulnerable and I get seen by other men.

[00:10:59] It shows itself in my relationships with women or, or it, it kind of, you know, it's kind of like, it's a stepping stone. And, you know, we need both, you know, I would encourage women to. In groups with other women only women and, um, and, uh, do things there. You know, we do it, we do it anyways.

[00:11:20] Right. So I, our I have male friends and, uh, I'll meet up with my male friends and we'll hang out and we'll have conversations and there's no women there, you know? And, uh, and it's a unique experience when that happens, just like women meet up with their, uh, women, friends, and they hang out and they have conversations and they talk about life and they do things and, and that's valuable for them.

[00:11:44] Um, where I think, you know, I think sometimes I think sometimes it gets a bad rap because. I know, like I know a lot of men and I know me certainly in my past where let's say they're in a relationship, you know, or I've been in a relationship and we'll kind of, we'll highlight the importance of like bro time.

[00:12:06] Right. It's like, I gotta have a bro night, got to get out with my, I got to go out with my bros and, you know, get away from you. And it's like, it's like, it's actually more like a, it's more like a, uh, it's more like an escape from say my significant other or the, you know, the it's like, it's like a, it's kind of a, um, it's kind of mean in a way.

[00:12:28] Right. But like what I'm actually doing when I go to what men's group is, is, uh, I'm going there knowing that I'm coming back and I can't wait to come back and hang out with the women in my life and integrate the stuff that I was able to, you know, learn with just men. I don't, I don't know if you're tracking what I'm saying, but it's like, for me in my past, I've definitely had a, uh, A not so healthy relationship with my time with just my guy, friends, where it's like, where it's like, I'm actually trying to get away, from women or I'm doing things that I'm not really working on myself.

[00:13:04] Say for example, maybe I'm just getting drunk or, um, uh, you know..

[00:13:07] **Drew Stegmaier:** Uh, escapism, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. I think, um, as you guys can see anybody, anybody listening is that this topic I would say is inherently nebulous. Right. And it is hard to talk about because first, you know, just to clarify a few things, when we talk about work and men's work, this work can take many forms.

[00:13:32] I would say it relates more towards the inner realms, personal transformation, psychological transformation, but those inner transformations manifest often as external behavior changes. What and what, what the hell is a concrete example? Right? Well, the first MKP meeting I went to as a guest, I showed up..

[00:13:54] **Ben Bechtel:** MKP stands for The Mankind Project.

[00:13:55] **Drew Stegmaier:** The mankind project. Yes. Yeah. And all these grown ass men were hugging each other. I was like, what the hell is this crap mental hug? What the heck? And I reluctantly

like to hug these people. And then I was like, huh, I didn't die. I didn't get raped. Like. Yes. It's okay. I guess we can hug. Huh. And it was so peculiar. And then I realized it wasn't peculiar at all.

[00:14:25] What was more peculiar was the fact that any of my man friends that I deeply cared about, it was not okay for me to give them affection via hug. Or if I accidentally bump, you I'd have to say, oh no, homo bro. Just life growing up. Right. I mean, I remember, I don't know if you ever played this game, but this was just a common game.

[00:14:48] We played growing up. Uh, it was called smear the queer and you had a football and basically they've kind of renamed the game to kill the carrier, which also has the word killing it. So it's probably changed again, 800 times, but basically somebody has a flip. And you tackle them. And then when they get tackled, they throw the ball up in the air or to someone else, and then everyone goes in and tackles that person.

[00:15:12] But you can see by the name of the game, how wounded our culture is, right. How, how inherently wounded we are. And I think there's this great paradox, which is if you're comfortable with yourself and you know who you are, you're not afraid of those who you are not. Right. And I think so many people are disconnected from themselves or they don't know who they are.

[00:15:38] And so if someone places a label on them, that label has power and they're afraid of becoming that label. So they vehemently fight against it. Right. It's like if you bumped my arm, like, I don't have to say no homo anymore. It's okay. If you bumped my arm, it's okay. If you bumped my arm and you're gay, it's okay. It's not the end of the world.

[00:16:01] **Ben Bechtel:** If it's homo a little bit too, it's like, what are we talking about here, man? You know, like, no homo, why is it gotta be no homo? It could be whatever, you know.

[00:16:11] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. And I think talk about, the best description of MKP of the mankind project I've found in terms of a pithy one liner elevator pitch type thing.

[00:16:24] And, and you might disagree with this because it's, again, it's, it's tough to talk about. Um, as I'd say, MKP is an organization that teaches men emotional literacy. Um, and I, and I like that, um, because it's tough to talk about, like, when we say work, we're not necessarily talking about physical labor, tilling the fields at the same time that organization does some of that work.

[00:16:49] Right. And you could volunteer to clean up a park with your MKP bro. Is that men's work? Hmm. Oh, it's definitely not, not men's work. Right. But that isn't the sole or, or primary focus, for example. Um, so how has your life changed? Maybe some tangible ways since you've started this men's and women's half decade.

[00:17:13] Well, and I'll say that, um, but I'll say this first, like to me work you know, when we hear work, we think, okay. Physical labor, right. But it's not, that's what you were just saying. And, uh, to me it's work because it's hard, you know, it's hard. Right. Which, so when I first started going to group and not so much for me, because I, um, I grew up, um, very pretty in touch with, with my, with my feelings and stuff like that.

[00:17:40] And so I could say feeling words, but for some, for a lot of guys and me sometimes, you know, often as well as, uh, it's, it's work. It's hard to say. Um, sad or, or this one, this I'm afraid, you know? Um, and for some guys, even it's hard to say I'm happy, right? Like, like that. And so that's, that's, that's, that's the emotional literacy is like being able to say things like that and being able to identify them and that's hard, um, to do.

[00:18:14] And, uh, so how has it changed me, man? Um, it's crazy. I, I, I read back through my journal. I got a journal. I was gifted a journal when I first started going to men's groups and, uh, and I would write in it like every day at first. And then, and then after a couple months, I would only ever write in it when I was really, really depressed, um, or down.

[00:18:36] And I read back through my journal last summer, and it was a wild experience to read my words and to be able to now, um, see them with so much more clarity. Um, And, uh, and so th th the biggest way I've changed is I've just become, um, so much more aware of myself and what's going on. I can, I can, uh, I can tell what's going on.

[00:19:04] Um, in some cases, like, almost immediately, like, um, as an example, I've been wrestling this past summer with, uh, smoking tobacco. And, uh, and when I first started, I had quit for, uh, I, I quit in January and I quit for about six months, and then I forgot. And then I started smoking tobacco. And, and when I, um, when I was smoking, it was like, my, my brain was just heavy.

[00:19:29] It there was so much shame and guilt and just story around, you know, your life's not going where you want it to go, blah, blah, blah. And it just made me feel like shit. And, uh, over the past, uh, over the summer, I've quit like three times inclu, uh, last weekend I quit for about three days. And so on Tuesday, Uh, Tuesday morning, I, uh, um, went and, uh, you know, bought some tobacco and I smoked it.

[00:19:55] And as soon as the first puff, right, the first puff, boom, shame, guilt, you know, messages in my head. And, uh, I heard them immediately. Um, I heard them, you know, I'd heard them before. I knew a lot about them. Um, I was able to kind of like sit, sit with them and, and, and recognize them. And, but I noticed them immediately, you know, in my judgment is that a lot of people are walking around and, um, and we're, we're, you know, we have feelings and thoughts and emotions and all sorts of things are affecting us.

[00:20:35] But, um, you know, we don't have, we don't, we don't have a lot of clarity around what those are in real time. Uh, it's almost like. You imagine like Superman, you know, he's walking down the street and all of a sudden, like he just feels like shit. And he's like, what? You know, I don't know why it feels well, I feel like shit.

[00:20:56] And, and, uh, and, uh, but he just walked by some kryptonite, you know? And it's like, I've gotten better at seeing the kryptonite, um, like as I'm doing it. And, and, um, so that's, that's been really helpful. That's really helpful. For example, like in, uh, in fights with a significant others, um, you know, like really heated, you know, I remember one time, um, um, my ex and I, we were fighting and, uh, I was kinda, I remember one time I was, so I was so able to clearly state, like, as we're fighting, I said, you know, I'm sad.

[00:21:34] And the fight just like flipped on its axis. Like literally, like, it, it, it changed the whole dynamic of, of what was going on because she was judging me to be. Right. And she was having, she was having a reaction based off what she perceived was anger. And, uh, it was actually sadness. I, you know, I can't say how many times I've been sitting in group and I'm sitting there and I'm judging how another man feels and, um, and I'm wrong.

[00:22:04] I would say most of the time.

[00:22:06] **Ben Bechtel:** I'm wrong, man. Yeah. So being able to speak that out loud and tell people and communicate in that way, man, it just changes my whole life changes my whole life. Yeah.

[00:22:16] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. Well, and a couple things. Um, I love this saying that, uh, anger is sadness rearing its head in public. Um, and especially as men, uh, you know, we're taught that crying is weakness.

[00:22:31] Okay. That means you can't cry well, right. If crying is just an expression of sadness, let alone joy in some cases. And that's just not on the man. You know, it's, it's like going to a restaurant and being like, oh, I'll have some fries. What about some catch-up no, you cannot have that, like, right. But these are kind of dry and they're not that good.

[00:22:55] I need some catch-up no, it's like, um, the experience just banks are right. If you're a spectrum of experience is constantly constricted because you're not allowed to express yourself. It's like seeing in monochrome versus color. Right. It's like being blind. And, um, I also think there's this quote from, uh, Ludvig Vichtenstein, uh, the limits of my language are the limits of my world and little, little bits and pieces or, or nuance, at least for me have made a world of difference.

[00:23:33] A few that come to mind are the phrase you said versus. In terms of fights. Holy shit, that that changes everything because there might be a chance you miss ERD. And if you miss herd and you say, you said, buckle up baby. Cause it's going to be a rough ride and sharing feelings. Like I am sad versus I feel sad.

[00:23:56] The moment you can say, I feel sad. I think, I think the crux of what you were saying was when we're able to identify our emotions, we get some separation from them. We can see them from a distance. We, we become high, right. We rise above them and then we can collaborate with them. Right? If you're dancing by yourself, you don't have a dance partner.

[00:24:19] So you're not going to step on anybody else's feet. If you're dancing with a partner, you have to collaborate with them. You have to work with them, right. And the moment you're able to identify your emotions is a moment you can begin working with them. Otherwise you're just consumed by them. That doesn't mean that they are, or aren't. It just means you're not collaborating with.

[00:24:43] **Ben Bechtel:** Right. Like, you know, good luck getting rid of them, you know, they're not going to go away, you know, so, uh, might as well, uh, work, work with them. And you know, like, I the analogy I like is, uh, so like fear is a big one for me, fear a lot of times you know, if I'm not, if I'm not aware of the fear and working with it, you know think of like a bus, you know I have this boss and there's all sorts of things on that bus.

[00:25:09] There's fear, sadness, there's joy, there's all sorts of different parts of me. Uh, the little boy, you know, the adventure the, all these different parts of me on this boss. And I'm the boss. And if, if, if I'm not aware of the fear. The fear will just drive the bus, you know? And yeah. But as soon as I acknowledge the fear and, and talk to it and talk to all the other parts of me, I can then decide where the bus goes.

[00:25:34] And I can even decide where I want fear on the bus. I could maybe have it towards the front. Sometimes I really like fear. I have a lot of fear today. I love it. Right. Um, so maybe fears like more towards the front, and sometimes I can move fear more towards the back, but if I'm not even aware of it at all, man, it's driving the bus and that bus could go all sorts of places.

[00:25:55] It could work out or that bus could drive itself right into a ditch, you know, it's it's uh, yeah, man. It's um, so, so it's, it's just radically changed my life. I kind of think of it as like a. Yeah. It's almost like a, the, uh, I've thought about this before. I don't know if you're familiar with like judgments and projections and things like that.

[00:26:19] Right? Like we're constantly walking around. Um, we, you know, we try not to, but judgments just happen, right? Like I'm judging you, you know, you're judging me and, um, and uh, a lot of, most of the time those judgments are wrong and it's all. And so then, but I'm judging that you're this way and so, because I'm judging, you're this way, I am now acting this way, but I was wrong from the beginning. So now my action that I'm doing is misaligned. And it's almost like we're walking around the world. The whole world is if a, if, if like a judgment is throwing up, it's almost like we're walking around and everybody's just vomiting on each other.

[00:27:00] Yeah.

[00:27:03] You know, just imagine like everybody's just walking around, just vomiting on each other and then, because you vomit on me, I'm vomiting back and every, you know, and it's, and it's like, it's gross and it's messy. And, and, uh, and, uh, so I am trying to vomit last, if that makes sense. Like, I am trying to be more clear and communicate better, and I find that it just betters my relationships, it betters, um, my work, it, it makes me, it just betters my life.

[00:27:32] I have a better life experience. Um, and back to what we were saying before, it's hard, you know, it's really, really hard work. Um, but, uh, but it's a challenge that's worth it.

[00:27:44] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. Yeah. I think to talk a little more about judgments can be really dangerous when they're unconscious. For example, I think fear is the root of most prejudice and discrimination in the world because we are afraid of something.

[00:28:01] And that fear leads to a behavior which usually involves control. Right? It's like why we put dogs on leashes because we know our dogs, but we don't know other people's dogs. We don't know if they're going to bite us. And if I see a big, scary dog and it's on a leash, sometimes I still get scared. There's a small one.

[00:28:24] Like, Hey, a dog looks like one 40 and you're about one 20 and it's pretty muscular. I, uh, I don't know.

[00:28:34] **Ben Bechtel:** How strong is that leash.

[00:28:36] **Drew Stegmaier:** Or how strong is the person holding the leash? Right. Yeah. And I think often we're not even aware part of men's work, I think is that it gives us awareness of our own judgments, right?

[00:28:52] Judgements like feelings. Aren't a thing that just goes away, but you can become aware of it. And then you can decide, oh, Hey, I'm judging you as incompetent. Okay. Is that true? Do I want to hold on to that? Might I be open to a different type of judgment? Might I be open to not knowing, maybe I judge competence in a particular skill and not as a whole person?

[00:29:18] Like, oh, Hey. Instead of you're an incompetent person, maybe it's, you're an incompetent golfer and you're an amazing driver and basketball player. Right, right. There. There's so many layers to experience. And what I want to backtrack on a bit about what is men's work is first, why is men's work important?

[00:29:40] And also I think something many people miss or don't understand is that, okay, let, let's take a concrete example. This, this idea of. Okay. Men are often labeled as creepy and creepy can even have multiple meanings. But let's just say for the sake of this example, that creepy is when a man tries to interact with a woman and fails.

[00:30:10] Right. Um, and that that's, uh, that's a broad example, but, um, I guess the point I'm trying to make is that no one teaches us or men have very, very few teachers. We're not taught to share our feelings. We're not taught how to interact with women. We're not taught how to relate to one another. We just observed these things in the world.

[00:30:33] And many of the examples are trash. They're absolute trash. Yeah. And it's not fair to be upset at someone when they never had a teacher. Right. We must educate the ignorant, not shame them. And I think that's where men's work comes in. So. I guess to circle back to the question is like, why is men's work necessary?

[00:30:54] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. That's a really, that's real man. That's a really powerful question. And I think, um, it's it, you're exactly right. Um, you know, so many men today.

[00:31:08] **Drew Stegmaier:** Can I pause you for a second? Sure. So I just want to make a little correction slash caveat if I'm not condoning creepy behavior. I'm not relinquishing any personal responsibility.

[00:31:19] I'm not condoning any sort of harm, but I am perhaps trying to provide an explanation for why some of the messed up stuff in our world happens. Yeah.

[00:31:28] **Ben Bechtel:** Sorry. Continue. Well, I just think, um, you know, a lot of men today are, you know, there's a. They don't have teachers just like you said, um, men, men, you know, whether it be fathers or grandfathers, or even just the neighbor, you know, older man, um, they're older, men are not, are not properly teaching the younger men.

[00:31:53] Um, and, uh, there's just something lost in today's society, you know, back in the day. Um, that, that w I mean, I wasn't alive back then, you know, my understanding is that, uh, there was more of an initiation happening from boyhood into manhood. Um, and it was, it was something that was happening with like the older men say in the tribe.

[00:32:15] Right. Um, or the, or the elder men, you know, we're, we're T we're telling stories and, and, and, um, and teaching the younger men, what it meant to be a man, um, nowadays, you know, a lot of. Men are, or boys are learning how to be men from their friends. Right. Like we talk about locker room talk, you know, like, uh, hi, it's high school.

[00:32:40] And, uh, and, uh, and we just all went through puberty, you know, and, and, uh, we're, we're learning, we're learning that being a man is like having sex and hooking up with women and, and, uh, you know, it's, uh, it's, uh, I'll give you an example. Um,

[00:33:00] **Drew Stegmaier:** oh, well, I want to go ham on like a list of, uh, toxic masculine examples. I love the riff on that, but yeah. Start us off.

[00:33:10] **Ben Bechtel:** Well, you know, um, It's hard for me to talk about like generally, right. But I can talk about like, from my own experience, um, my, uh, my dad, um, he is, uh, he is an amazing father, right. Um, he really is, uh, just the most loving father is, is he shows up for me my whole life.

[00:33:32] Um, he, uh, he, uh, he was at all my sporting events and, and, um, he was just always there and he's, he's an amazing dad, but, um, I watched him love my mom by, um, giving himself, you know, taking care of her. Uh, the bath was always ran when she got home, you know, and it was just, he was, he was, he was very much in to take care of mom, you know, mindset.

[00:33:58] And, uh, I watched him, uh, not always, um, take the best care of himself. And, uh, so as a boy. Um, I learned and what, because this is what I saw. I learned that being a man and loving a woman meant giving yourself and in a lot of ways, all of myself to the woman, um, and not taking the best care of myself and just, uh, loving in that way.

[00:34:27] And, and, and this really affected me later in life. Um, in my previous relationship, particularly, um, I thought I was being the most manliest of manly men by just giving all of myself, um, to this. And I mean, not taking care of myself, just giving all my energy, you know, totally just running myself into the ground and not, and not taking care of myself at all.

[00:34:52] Now I know through work, through men's work through sitting in men's circles that, um, being a man is actually both, it's the ability to show up for other people and, and, and, uh, And, and, you know, give, but it's, it's also, uh, having the ability to take care of myself and to take when needed and things like that.

[00:35:13] And so, but that was my variation, um, of not really being taught in the best way. Em, and you know, my dad was actively teaching me, right. He wasn't sitting me down like with a chalkboard telling me, this is how you be a man, you know, you, you give yourself to too, you know, who, who you're with. Um, but he was just unconsciously showing up in his life that way.

[00:35:36] And, and that was probably, you know, he probably learned that from, um, you know, something with his life when, you know, before me, um, I was very fortunate in that I had a father at all. A lot of them. Are growing up in households with no father, um, he's not present or he's present very little or, um, he's, you know, uh, maybe he's addicted to drugs or maybe he, um, maybe he gets really angry and he shows aggression or, um, there's just so many endless variations.

[00:36:09] And, um, and there's, I think that there's a really important, uh, uh, my understanding is that when we're born, we have a really strong connection with our mothers. Um, that's kind of like, uh, our first true love and, and, uh, you know, we, we have this strong bond with art, with our, with our mothers. And then there's a, there's a point where it's, you know, important that we cut, cut that, cut that tie with our moms.

[00:36:36] And there's a transition that happens where, um, You know, we transitioned into manhood and we learned that from our fathers or whoever else. Um, and I think, I think that was probably a lot more prevalent or a lot more, um, just, you know, showed itself a lot more back when there were tribes and and things like that.

[00:36:56] And in today's society, it's just a loss. And then, so what happens is all these, all these men are walking around basically is just boys in bigger bodies, bigger hairier bodies, you know, but, but we're, um, we're still boys and, um, and, uh, yeah, I don't know. What's landing for you. What are you thinking?

[00:37:18] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah, I think that's right.

[00:37:19] I think what you said that's really important to note is we must not throw out the baby with the bath water. It's easy to trash our ancestors to trash, the people who have come before us. And let's say, um, a man does something stupid. And then, then you think, well, why did he do that? Well, because no one taught him.

[00:37:40] And then the next step is, oh, well, shouldn't his dad have taught him. Well, what if no one taught his dad? What if no one taught his grandfather? You know, how far back can that go? In some cases very far back. Right. And I think it's not fair to blame somebody again for not knowing something when no one taught them.

[00:38:00] Right. Let's say a boy grows up and he has a single mom, right? Yeah. You can blame the dad. That helps nothing. That gets us nowhere. Like, oh, he had a deadbeat dad. Okay. And, and what, and nothing right. That, that doesn't get us towards where we want to be. Um, so I think to terrific, a little more on maybe some toxic masculinity for a bit.

[00:38:27] Um, I joke sometimes that. I see all these sayings around the internet crush, the patriarchy smash, the patriarchy. I've never seen once build the matriarchy, right? Not, not once. Right. I see all the time toxic masculinity. We must rid the world of it. Okay. Poof, it's fucking gone. What now? What does healthy masculinity look like?

[00:38:50] I don't see these conversations.

[00:38:52] **Ben Bechtel:** Right? You gotta fill it back in, man. You can't just, you know, what are you going to put in its place, right? Yeah.

[00:38:57] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. And I think, um, this is, uh, I think, I think so many people miss is that, uh, I see Dwayne Johnson often heralded as the pinnacle of healthy masculinity, which I think is a terrible example.

[00:39:10] Like first this is the rock. Yeah. He's a mutant, like is a genetic freak. He played for Miami who was arguably the greatest college football team in history. And then became a WWE wrestler. So first most men, regardless of what they eat, even if they take steroids, they will never look like, right. So if being a man means looking like the rock, guess what many men are just immediately out of the picture.

[00:39:39] He is a huge statistical outlier, right? Most people aren't going to look like that, no matter how diligent they are in terms of taking care of their body. Second thing I think is that much of his message is what I would call the warrior archetype, which is just try more and everything will be okay, this, this endless constant striving, just try more.

[00:40:07] And that doesn't take into account survivorship bias that doesn't take into account that tons of people are working themselves literally to death, right? Like your example and your dad's exam. Maybe what was best for your dad at some point or yourself was to take a day off. Right. And we have these cheesy Instagram slogans, like no days off hard work pays off.

[00:40:30] And it's like, you know, it also pays off hard recovery.

[00:40:34] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. You know how hard it is for me to take a day off, man, as soon as, as soon as I try to take a day off or rest or sit on my couch or take care of myself in any way, it's like you immediately, oh, I guess I'm not being a man. You know, because I'm not getting things done.

[00:40:48] I'm just a lazy piece of shit, whatever. Right. That's exactly what you're talking about. Yeah.

[00:40:54] **Drew Stegmaier:** And it's not about working hard or being lazy. It's about cultivating balance and cultivating balance is nuance. Right? How do we cultivate balance? What does healthy masculinity look like? If you're not allowed to say I'm tired, what happens?

[00:41:10] Um, probably you work till you're burned out and you go postal, right. Or we have higher incidences of it. Because we're not allowed to take a break. I don't know if I told you this. I might've shared this on the podcast before, but I had a boss who he had a five-year-old someone else on our team who worked under the boss.

[00:41:30] She had a five-year-old and they were at the office kind of late, like about 7:00 PM. And she was like, Hey, like don't, you know, you want to go home and see your wife and kid. And of course she can really relate. She has a child who was the same age. And he said she has no choice. I will never forget this.

[00:41:49] Like, like the Terminator, like, like Robocop or something. And, um, oh man, that hurt my heart.

[00:41:57] **Ben Bechtel:** Who had no choice.

[00:41:59] **Drew Stegmaier:** He said it as her, as his wife, like, she has no choice. Like my wife has no choice. Like she will, she will have to wait. And it's funny because again, totally dodged the question of like, don't you want to go home and see your wife?

[00:42:15] Right. And then the truthful answer, I can't speak for this man of course, but I would assume it's fuck. Yeah. I want to see my wife. It's seven o'clock I haven't even left the office. Haven't had dinner. Yeah. I would love to see her, but you can't say that, you know, and we have all of these work analogies and work metaphors that are militaristic for completely non militaristic situations.

[00:42:38] Right? Battles. It's like fight or flight. Uh, that's dangerous. Right. Anybody who knows martial arts, if you're a martial arts master, your best skill is learning how to avoid fights because fights are incredibly expensive. You know, someone's leaving hurt sometimes both of us. Right. Well, let's not turn that on.

[00:42:58] Right. Um, and yeah, that example just, uh, you know, it's really etched hard into my brain because I think that sort of behavior is the norm for many, many, many people. Um, like just work more, just work more is often not the right answer. And that doesn't mean hard work. Isn't important, right? It doesn't imply that one bit.

[00:43:27] **Ben Bechtel:** Oh man. I've, I've spent years grinding, you know, grinding at work, man, you know, just putting in crazy hours and putting so much energy into my work. And, uh, it's amazing. Um, how much more efficient I can be if I just take a break every once in a while, you know, or take care of myself? Um, my, my, my guests would be in the example you gave, I'd be curious to know, and only this person could say, but my guess would be that, that man that said his, you know, his wife has no choice.

[00:43:58] My guess would be that he feels like he has no choice. Um,

[00:44:03] **Drew Stegmaier:** There's some backstory, as far as I understand his father died, maybe in his arms, when he was 13. Okay. So basically as a 13 year old kid, it was his initiation to adulthood was, or to manhood, was his dad dying and it's like, well, you're the man now 13 year olds are not meant. They are not men.

[00:44:25] **Ben Bechtel:** No far from it, man. Um, yeah. And, uh, and, uh, so yeah, the grind, I mean, it's so important that we take care of ourselves. Um, and, and this is like, I think, um, I mean, what, uh, you know, fifties and stuff like that, like the man, the man went to work. That's what he did. The man worked and, and, uh, he brought home the paycheck and, and, uh, that was his job, you know, he took care of the family and he worked hard and that stuff is trickling down today.

[00:44:54] And it's, it's, um, it's a. I mean, I, I don't know what your experience was like when you were like, you know, say previously working at Google or what, or, you know, if you've ever been on the grind, but, uh, dude I'll work myself to like a corpse dude. I, I work myself. I mean, I get to a certain place where it's like, I can't even see straight, man.

[00:45:18] I've been working so hard so long. And, um, and when I'm in that place, I'm not doing, I'm certainly not doing myself any favors, but I'm not doing anybody around me, any favors, man. And, um,

You know, uh, I mean, I would come home, um, say to like spend time with my ex and, I wasn't even there, you know what I mean?

[00:45:40] I was in like, uh, I was in just this zombified state. I wasn't even, I couldn't listen. I couldn't talk. I couldn't, I just was not there. And I can't imagine, you know, you imagine if let's say I had kids there, you know, let's say I had kids in the room. Um, it, that that would, that would greatly affect them and, um, but, but the reality is, I think the reality is, is, you know, it's good to work hard. It's, it's good to, you know, you know, make money for your family, whatever, but there's a, there's a, there's a point where it's just not efficient anymore. Um, and so, you know, if I take a break, if I take a vacation and I come back to work, man, I'm cruising that next week after that vacation, you know, And I think, I think we have, I think as a society, we get it, we get it in our minds that like just put hours, but hours in, you know, just put in the hours more hours the better.

[00:46:38] Um, and it's just not true. It's just not true.

[00:46:41] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. I think also there's, I'll call it a collective disembodiment. So a lot of our labor has shifted towards knowledge work and often these jobs that we think of as manly jobs are not knowledge work. Right. We think of things like being a firefighter, being a construction worker, these are people who work with their bodies and it's not that they don't work with their minds, but it is obvious.

[00:47:10] Like if you're carrying a person from a burning building, that's very different than killing a spreadsheet. Like, oh man, look at these pivot tables. Oh. So sexy pivot, pivot, pivot. Right. And, um, yeah. And at the same time, What's odd is you could be great at pivot tables and be a much better provider for your family in terms of cashflow in the door.

[00:47:35] Right. Right. Um, but in terms of being a provider, when it comes to emotional support, emotional labor or being present, right? Uh, I don't know that there's any correlation to occupation with that. I think if you're burned out, if you're in a high stress job, you're just not going to have the resources to be present.

[00:47:59] But I think if you're a man, whether you're a firefighter or an Excel junkie, the message is usually the same, which is just work more, right. Just work more. And I think when it comes to knowledge work where this becomes pernicious is everybody has their cell phone and they have their work machine. So in some sense, knowledge workers are firefighters because they're always on call.

[00:48:24] And the way work more shows up is when you're not in the office, you are still available. You are at the Beck and call of your employer, which ironically is firefighting, right? You sit and you wait for a fire, right? This is now a digital fire. And if you're constantly on call, there's a reason why many firefighters sit at the firehouse because when that call happens, they have to be ready and they move, right.

[00:48:51] It wouldn't work. If you were a 90 minutes commute from the firehouse that just wouldn't work. Right. So if you're one of these knowledge workers and you're always on call, that means you're probably not there. You're, you're not fully present to whatever isn't, on-call like the needs of your family, your partner, your children, or just frankly, being able to relax.

[00:49:14] There's this constant low grade fever of, oh, is the boss going to send me a request at 8:00 PM? Is this going to happen? Is that going to happen? And for some reason we've bastardized time off, right? Like sleep is for the week.

[00:49:28] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. Oh man. Yeah. Yeah. And it's, it's, uh, it's hurting us. Um, it's, it's really, it's, it's hurting us as, as, as a society.

[00:49:39] I mean, divorce rates are higher than ever, you know? Um, it's, um, it just makes me feel really sad. You know, I get really sad thinking about it because, um, um, it can be better. Um, it can be better. Yeah. I mean, I've, I've had it, man, when I'm, when I'm really in the grind, when I've been in the grind, I swear, dude, it's on, even when I'm asleep.

[00:50:05] It would be like, you know, I'm like dreaming about work. Right. And so I'm not even getting good sleep, you know? And, um, and say I'm getting six hours or five hours or whatever. So it's less sleep. It's shit quality. Um, I'm walking around just tired, you know, like it's like, you know, take a nap, man. Like a good one, you know, figure out how to turn it off, dude.

[00:50:26] Like, I'm not, I'm not helping anybody, man. I'm not helping, I'm not helping my work. I'm not happy with my work when I'm like that. I'm certainly not a good employee. Um, so yeah, it's, it's a, it's a problem for.

[00:50:40] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. And then that begs the question, you know, how can we be different? And, uh, let's take one fairly simple example.

[00:50:49] Paternity leave, right. Paternity leave is a joke. Right? Um, many workplaces don't offer it at all. Right. And then on top of that, you have workplace. That offers it. But if you take it, you are soft, you are weak, you will not get promoted. And the implicit and or explicit message behind that is offspring.

[00:51:14] Getting time with their father is not important. Whole let, let, let that just sink in. Right. Offspring, getting time with her father is not important. Well, how could you make that claim? Um, because we don't have paternity leave, right? This is separate from maternity leave. I'm not talking about the merits of that.

[00:51:33] I'm just saying, Hey, the way we collectively organize, we've decided that when a baby is born, it's not important for it to spend time with its father. Yeah. Well, how do you think creepy guys show up? Uh, because no one taught them how to interact with their approach. How come well, because see, it's not important for them to learn that dad has to be at work all the time.

[00:51:55] Right? Yeah. And when we voluntarily, because it is voluntary, companies can choose to offer this and they can also choose to incentivize it. Right. Um, there's massive ripple effects. Right. Um, I would say toxic masculinity is a direct result of the absence of healthy masculinity. It's a result of a pendulum swinging way too far to one direction.

[00:52:21] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. Yeah. I agree. Um, and, uh, um, yeah, I mean that's, and that's, that's why I love this work that I do the men's work. I mean, to me where we're swinging the pendulum, you know, it fills me up inside. It gives me a sense of like mission and purpose to think that, uh, cause like you were saying earlier, there's this generational, like I don't have.

[00:52:47] I don't have any sort of blame towards my, my, my dad. Right? Like, I don't, I don't have any like, oh, you did this to me, you know? No. Um, in my mind it went back like, man, he is from many, many, many, many generations. Right. And, um, and you can go back as far as you want, but, um, it makes me feel so good just to think that I'm putting in this work and it could be.

[00:53:12] For future generations, you know, and this is work. This is work that goes, um, relatively unseen, right? So like my, my job, when I work at my job, I bring home more money. I buy a nicer things. You know, people, people see people, you know, if I choose to buy nicer things and people see and they go, oh man, he's, he must be a good worker.

[00:53:32] You know, he's doing really well. Um, the men's work stuff, I guess they still, they see that I've changed or that I maybe speak differently or, or, or that I'm happier or something like that. But, um, it's, it's this it's, I would say it's just as hard, if not harder. For me, probably definitely harder, uh, to do the work I do in groups than the work I do for my career and it's relatively unseen, but I, I, um, I like, uh, I'd like, uh, knowing I, I it's like the sense of purpose and mission to know that.

[00:54:07] I'm kind of the one in my family that could be making things significantly different, um, moving forward. And I might, I probably won't figure it all out. Right. Like, uh, but I could make some serious strides. Um, and if I ever, uh, have, uh, the opportunity to have kids, um, or a son, like, I, I, I, I, uh, yeah.

[00:54:31] You know, uh, or, or a daughter, right. Like it's not, you know, whatever. Um, I, if that comes into my life, um, I would look forward to the opportunity to try and, you know, just show up in a different way, um, in a better way. And it's not to say that the ways before were bad. Right. But, you know, it's just, it makes me feel good.

[00:54:56] Um, I'm very proud of myself. This is what I'm saying. Um, and, uh, yeah.

[00:55:02] **Drew Stegmaier:** So in the beginning we talked about. How you got into men's work? Um, ironically for me, it was very similar. My parents had gotten divorced in my early twenties, mid twenties, and I engaged in some self-destructive behavior for a while, which manifested as, um, I was seeing a prostitute.

[00:55:21] And then, uh, I found therapy and I guess, I don't know that I've ever talked about that publicly. That was like a nuclear fucking bomb to say that.

[00:55:29] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. You want to sit with it for a second man or, I mean, um, that's a big, that's a big one. Is that big or no,

[00:55:36] **Drew Stegmaier:** I had to say publicly because I'm afraid of all these judgments and, and I know exactly why, why I did it and I've integrated it.

[00:55:43] That, and my fear is that people won't care. They won't care. They'll just hear the phrase and they'll twist it and they'll miss it. Which makes me nervous. Cause I think putting this work into the world via this podcast is arguably the most important thing I can do. Modeling, modeling this vulnerability, I think is what the world needs.

[00:56:05] Um, but I'm also scared, right? Like man, my ability to, um, gain future employment as a result of that sentence might, you know, drop, I don't know. But um, so I engaged in that self-sabotage I fought, it was a place I could go to be seen. I was like, Hey, this is the place I can go and I will be accepted. And I thought I wouldn't be accepted anywhere else.

[00:56:28] **Ben Bechtel:** With the prostitutes..

[00:56:29] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yes. Yeah. And I thought therapy was for people who are quote, fucked up. Right. I didn't think it was for me. And that shifted. Then I started going and I was like, oh my God, where has this been? My entire life. This is great. And then I thought I want to do this more. And I was doing it once a week. It was 200 bucks.

[00:56:46] And I told my therapist, I was like, I want to do this more. I can't, I can't afford to just. Right. And she said, oh, well, I want you to check out this group, you know, the mankind project. And then it was off to the races. And, um, it changed so many things for me. But, um, so I think the theme for both of us is, I don't know if for you that you'd call it crisis, but I found this work via crisis.

[00:57:12] And I'm incredibly grateful that I had maybe what I'd call a quarter-life crisis, but just about everyone. And, and I know, you know, this as well, most people who get into men's work are people who've had a midlife crisis. And for some reason, for folks, let's say our age and younger, it's tough to get them into men's work.

[00:57:32] It is tough to, um, advertise it. It's tough to talk about it. Or even if you do talk about it, advertise it, et cetera. It's just met with this incredible amount of resistance. And I'm curious. On your take, like, why does this happen? How might we change it? I think what we're doing right now is how we change it, but why does this happen?

[00:57:53] **Ben Bechtel:** You know, I think, um, I'm just first off. Just take a deep breath. I, uh, I appreciate you. I appreciate you, uh, showing up open and honest and vulnerably, man. Um, and I'll just, I can only speak for myself. I can't speak for your listeners, but I certainly care your, one of your fears was that people might not care.

[00:58:16] Um, and I just want you to know that I care about you and immense amount, and I'm so grateful. I a vulnerability dude, man, it's just pumps me up. Like I have a story now I want to share. And it's a, it's a, it's like the most, uh, probably the most vulnerable I could be. And maybe I'll share it here in a second, but, um, I'll, uh, I'll say, uh, uh, I think that, you know, sometimes maybe, um, people just, you know, it's different for everyone, but they kind of talk about rock bottom.

[00:58:48] I don't necessarily believe in rock bottom. Right. Like I, I think we can keep going and going and going much further than what people think. Um, but there's a, there's a point where someone says, you know what, where I, where I say, you know what, I, I need help. I need help. Especially since I've been taught, um, in our culture that asking for help is a weakness.

[00:59:10] Right? Um, That point where I say, you know what I need help. And, um, and, and, uh, and I'm not happy and, and, uh, I'm in a lot of pain. And so I, I need to go do this thing. I'm going to go try out

this weekend that like sounds kind of weird. And like, I don't understand men's work and it's weird. And like, you know, but to get to that point where that, that point is different for everyone.

[00:59:34] And I think because human beings are so adaptable and because that rock bottom is a lot lower than we think, you know, sometimes it's not found till later in life. Um, sometimes, uh, yeah, we keep digging man. And I, you know, I guess, um, I will, I do, I do feel like I want to share this story. If you're open to it, I can keep it kind of brief.

[00:59:57] **Drew Stegmaier:** Uh, as long as you need to make space.

[01:00:02] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. When I was in college and like, uh, very few people know this, um, this is, uh, immensely. But I've been trying to integrate it more in the last couple of years when I was in college, I studied abroad for a few months and there was a night where I was in Barcelona and I was really, really drunk, really, really drunk.

[01:00:20] And, um, and I separated from my friends and I was on this mission to go find a strip club. And, uh, and, uh, I sorta asked a guy, you know, um, and it did the fear in my chest right now, just sharing. It's just, you know, it's, tight-knit blah, blah, blah. But I, um, uh, I, I asked the guy like, Hey, you know, where can I find a strip club?

[01:00:41] It's a different language or whatever. And he's like, oh, women, you know, well, you kind of, I mean this direction. And I, I found my, I found a prostitute and she told me, you know, okay, it'll be this much for sex or whatever. And, uh, and I agree. And I, and you know, I followed her to this kind of, it was a dark, you know, um, place and we went inside and I remember there were like these two, I remember there were these two guys, like kind of, uh, at the door.

[01:01:07] Right. Um, and I, I dude, when it, as soon as I got there, I wanted to leave. As soon as I got there, I wanted to leave. Um, but I, I felt like the only way I could leave safely was to have sex with her.

[01:01:25] **Drew Stegmaier:** Oh, like, Hey, you need to pay or we're going to hurt you. Okay.

[01:01:30] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. I was like, I remember like even kind of hesitating and wanting to leave or whatever.

[01:01:34] And I, and I was like the only, the only way I can leave is to have sex with her. And, um, um, and. Quick little backstory. I've always been the type of guy that like, I have a heart, I don't, I can't really have sex. Like just for pleasure only, right. Like I always, to me, there's always a love component. There's always a connection.

[01:01:53] There's always a, um, even the first time I, I, it was really hard for me to like masturbate at first because it, because of that, like I had to access like that part of me that like, you know, loves a person or it's connected and it's personal. So anyways, so I'm, I'm there and I want to leave and I judge, the only way I can leave is to have sex with her.

[01:02:13] I turned on this, I had to turn on that pleasure. Only part of me, right. Like I had to, I, and I only realized this now, um, years later, this was, this was about 12 years ago. And, uh, I, I, I had to have sex

with her and I had to finish. So. And, uh, and I wasn't in love with her and I wasn't connected with her and I was scared shitless.

[01:02:37] And so the only way was I had to just think about the pleasure thing about the player to trick myself and, and, and finish and get out. And so anyways, the next I left, um, the next, I was still kind of drunk walking home the next morning dared, I woke up and I thought my life was over first off, dude. I literally was like, I can, I can distinctly remember in my brain.

[01:03:06] I'm just like, my life is over. I can never tell anyone. I can never tell anyone. I have to take this to the grave. EV any relationship I have after this is going to be a lie. I'm a piece of shit. I'm never going to be able to, you know, I, you know, and, and, and here's the other piece of the puzzle. I had a rash the next morning, uh, on my groin and.

[01:03:31] I've I've been tested several times, uh, and it's a psoriasis, it's not an STD. Um, but I am convinced now later that my psoriasis formed from shame because that feeling was so dude, it was so immense. Right. And so, anyway, so, so this is actually related to what we were talking about, um, carrying that secret man, carrying that secret every day, that goes by that I carry that secret.

[01:04:00] I'm reminding myself that I'm a piece of shit. I'm a piece of shit. This is something that I did that I can't tell anyone. Right. And, um, I think that, and this is just one example of, of other things that have come up in work I've been doing in circles. But, um, and dude, I sat in a circle for four years and never shared this in a circle.

[01:04:21] And, um, I, uh, and I was in a relationship for seven years. I never shared, I never shared this with her. Right. Um, I, um, I think there's a lot of, I think there's a lot of men and women out there carrying things. It might not be like, it might not be the same story or whatever, but it's something right. And we're carrying it and, uh, it's heavy.

[01:04:43] And, uh, and I think that moment when someone says, you know what, this shit is too heavy, it's too heavy. It's different for, it's different for everyone, but us human humans, man, we're pretty strong. We're pretty strong people and we can carry it for a pretty long time. And so I think that's why I think that's why, you know, younger people are not finding the work because, um, you know, kind of like what you were saying.

[01:05:09] I think you said something like, kind of like, ah, you didn't need therapy or you didn't need whatever. Like it's like, people are still in that story of, you know what, man, I can still carry this. And uh, and I guess like, uh, I guess if I had any message to say right now, it would just be like, it's okay.

[01:05:27] I'm saying this to myself. It's okay to put it down, you know, it's okay to put it, put it out there and be seen and I won't judge you. Right. Um, and, uh, and, and, and, and here's the thing, man. The more I share, the more I find I'm not alone, because I'm curious what your reaction is to that story. Because like you, you just shared, you know, you just shared a similar one with you with prostitutes and, and, and, um, and, and, you know, like it inspired me to share my story and I haven't shared, I haven't shared that with that with really very, very few people, very few people, certainly not on a public podcast.

[01:06:08] Yeah.

[01:06:09] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. I mean, so are you asking, like, what's, what's up for me or what's the life of me after hearing that?

[01:06:14] **Ben Bechtel:** How's that, how's that feeling to hear that story?

[01:06:17] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. A couple of things. And these are all, um, I don't know if I would say coalescing, but coexisting. Right? Definitely. There was some fear of like, oh shit, should we not publish this immediately?

[01:06:31] Right. Afraid for you, like, oh, mg, what's going to happen with Ben at his workplace if he tells us. Right. Because that's a fear of not being seen, not being heard, not being accepted. Right. Like you will be punished for being yourself. Um, but then also just, uh, and maybe this is at the core of a lot of this stuff we call men's work is that displaying vulnerability is an act of strength.

[01:06:58] It's like, man, that shit was strong. That was strong. Like that was powerful.

[01:07:02] **Ben Bechtel:** It ain't weak. It's it's. Yeah. Yeah.

[01:07:05] **Drew Stegmaier:** And also I think it is a Testament to the person you are, uh, it's very powerful to put yourself out there. Like, like to be able to say that and to be able to own that is, is commendable. Right.

[01:07:22] And, um, you know, you can't say you can't control how others will react. Right. But I think there is a power to being seen or, um, to letting things go, like if we're, if we're carrying them. And, um, it reminds me of this story: two monks come to a river and they need to cross, and their monastic order doesn't let them touch women, but there's a woman there and she needs to cross.

[01:07:52] So the older monk carries her across and they get on with their lives. And then at night, the young monk says to him, wow, no, I can't believe you carry that woman. And he says, I stopped carrying her hours ago. Um, and you know, it's a nice pithy metaphor and story. I think that's the crux of what you said, like, man, this thing was fucking heavy, you know, and carrying that heaviness is exhausting.

[01:08:23] It is absolutely exhausting. And there's a quote I like from, from GK Chesterton, which is angels fly because they take themselves lightly, right. Angels fly because they take themselves lightly. And I mean, I'm feeling, man, I have goosebumps over my whole fucking body right now. And like, people can only see like from here up, but I just want to honor you for that.

[01:08:46] That was very powerful. And also, I would say I have a personal ax to grind with this word, fearless or fearlessness. I fucking hate it for courage and bravery, because to me it often feels untrue that fear isn't present. I think in many situations, fear is present and the question becomes, what are you going to do?

[01:09:11] What are you going to do about that? And courage is choosing to act despite fear. And I think sharing often is one of the most courageous things we can ever do. And that's what you just did, so well, thank you, man.

[01:09:23] **Ben Bechtel:** And you know, I reflect that back to you, dude. Uh, you know, sharing is one of the most courageous things we can do and, um, and you did it as well.

[01:09:32] And, uh, that was a huge gift for me. Um, and of course, of course I have fear like who might judge me, right? Who, what if I get fired, really, if I get fired over a story like that, then like bring it on. But, uh, you know, it's, it's, uh, life is so much more enjoyable when I can show up fully, honestly, vulnerably and just me and the thing is.

[01:10:02] That story is not me. It took me a long time to understand that. Right. But like that story, that experience S not me. Um, but in a way it's kind of a gift, right? Like it's kind of, um, it's, uh, it just, uh, as hard as it is or was, um, it's, uh, it's allowed me to grow and become just a, a human, you know, that I like even more, I can relate to people, um, and listen to a lot of people out there.

[01:10:37] A lot of people have, uh, paid for sex, um, a lot. And it's a pretty common thing that people, you know, aren't, aren't, aren't talking about. And, um, I don't know. I don't know what I'm saying at this point, but just thank you for, uh, thank you for inspiring me, man. It was your, um, was your share that inspired mine.

[01:10:56] And, uh, I just think if we could all walk around and. And display courage. If we could find courage and share more openly and vulnerably and accurately, right. Like emotional literacy, like we were talking about earlier, um, ah, the world would just be such a more beautiful place, I think. Um, really, and work's probably the hardest one to do it.

[01:11:23] Right? Like you, can't do certain things, you know, it's way less, uh, appropriate to talk about certain things at work. But, um, but I'm just thinking like, you know, I spend most of my time at work. That's where I spend most of my time right now. It's most of my life is there. Um, and so it can be kind of fun too, it can be kind of fun to challenge myself to, you know, uh, bring some of what I'm learning and implement it at work.

[01:11:50] But anyways, what's coming up for you, man. What do you wanna do?

[01:11:53] **Drew Stegmaier:** Um, so first I want to kind of add to that, which is, um, we so often think we're alone in our struggles, which is wrong. I mean, it's, it's just not the truth. And, um, I guess I would like to just say, I think, I think you did a good job saying it, but I want to say it as well.

[01:12:16] Like, Hey, like, like I don't know who listens to this strangers, listen to these people from all over the world, listen to this. And if you're out there listening to this, uh, I, I use this as a greeting in a lot of my weekly newsletters. It's silo bono, which means I see you. I see you. And I accept you like to, to anybody, anybody out there who's, who's listening to this, like, know that you are not here by accident.

[01:12:44] You're here for a reason. Yeah. And you matter. Yeah. And maybe it seems cheesy to say that on some recording, but it's the truth. It is the truth, right. The Capitol teacher, and no one can take that away from you. Um, so yeah. I want to just take a breath for a minute and like.

[01:13:04] **Ben Bechtel:** Let's take a break. Check out some energy, man.

[01:13:09] **Drew Stegmaier:** I'm going to stand up for a second.

[01:13:13] **Ben Bechtel:** Oh yeah, dude.

[01:13:16] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah, that was, that was some powerful stuff. Um, I hope that emotion comes through because there was movement right there. I love this phrase. Let it flow. Not let it go. It's like, let it go. Fuck that. Like let it flow. Let it flow through. That helps me more.

[01:13:35] But, uh, wow. That was unexpected. That was not on the docket.

[01:13:39] **Ben Bechtel:** No it was not. Of course not man.

[01:13:41] **Drew Stegmaier:** That piece of paper. Um, Okay, well, so to bring us back down to earth a bit, um, I think ironically, we just modeled men's work.

[01:13:54] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. I mean, that's men's work, right. Me and drew are sitting here. We're two men and we just did one.

[01:14:00] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. Yeah. And there's many flavors of this work, but basically to let go of something you're holding or having held for a long time allows you to show up in the world with more lightness, more alive newness. And you know, if you, if you want to get into science, medicine, et cetera, based on my understanding, um, trauma is when emotions get locked in the body and then that blockage prevents energetic flow or like literal flow of electricity.

[01:14:36] And that promotes what we call this ease or lack of ease. So ironic. Our default state, which no one talks about, is ease. Our default state is ease. Things are messed up when we have dis-ease when we have a lack of ease. So you usually know in your heart what promotes ease, right? And for me really languishing something like that or, or, or letting go of something heavy, like that promotes ease.

[01:15:06] I feel lighter, right. This minute, I feel lighter. I even process the fear, right? It's like, man, if someone's going to judge me or choose to not associate with me because of that story, because of telling the truth, that might be a blessing. And it's like getting fired from a job you hate, like that could be a gift, you know, at the time, I'm sure it's terrifying, right?

[01:15:30] Oh no. But later on, man, that, that often shows up as a, as a huge blessing. And um, I mean, I still have a little fear after seeing that, but I'll. And, um, I guess a couple of things to kind of circle back to just looking at my list of questions here. First. I want to ask you, like, is there anything you want to share right this second?

[01:15:53] **Ben Bechtel:** No.

[01:15:54] **Drew Stegmaier:** Okay. That was easy. Um, so what does it mean to be a recovering nice guy?

[01:16:02] Our first one is a nice guy.

[01:16:03] **Ben Bechtel:** Right? Well, nice guys. Aren't actually all that nice. Even though they think they are, you know, it's uh, so for me, um, for me, I, uh, kind of like what I was saying earlier, you know, I associate my niceness with, uh, my willingness to give to other people.

[01:16:22] And it's not just like a, it could be all sorts of things, right. It could be doing the laundry, vacuuming the floor. Um, but it could also be giving, giving emotional energy, having conversations. Um, and, uh, and it, it for me a lot of times when I'm, when I'm a man I'm, so I've been so good in my past at being nice.

[01:16:51] Right. In the ways I'm describing, like, give, give, give, show up, show up, show up, give, give, give, show up, show up, show up. And, uh, in the process of doing that, I'm ignoring me and what my needs are. And, uh, and I'm also like a chameleon, you know, like I'm becoming like a chameleon, right? So like, let's say like, uh, um, like, uh, my ex wants to go, do you know, she wants to go for a hike or something.

[01:17:18] Right. And I'm exhausted. Yeah. Yeah, cause I'm nice. You know, like I'll, I'll go for a hike. Yeah. That sounds like fun. That sounds like fun. Yeah. I'd love to go for a hike with you. I'd love, you know, and, uh, and, uh, and, and, and, and meanwhile, in my mind, I know I'm exhausted. I'm fucking exhausted. I don't even want it.

[01:17:37] Not only do I not want to take a hike, I don't want to leave this couch. Right. And, uh, and so th th we ain't even, we're not even on the hike yet. I just left the couch and I'm already, I'm already resenting. I'm already like, you know, um, but I, ain't going to tell her, right. Because I'm a nice guy. I'm a nice guy.

[01:17:56] Of course, I'm down to go for a hike, but I'm already resenting her. So, um, you know, I'm ready to just go off at any moment, you know, she, you know, Hey, should we pack, you know, how much water should we bring? I don't fucking know. I don't know, fucking know how much water, you know what I mean? Like it's like, it's

[01:18:11] like, uh, is this all too common?

[01:18:13] Yeah. You know, this exact example didn't really happen, but, um, you know, so. I think, uh, you know, and I have this image of myself as a nice guy, but I'm actually not being very nice. The nicer thing to do would be to say, you know, you know, um, um, I, I, I'd love to go for a hike with you, but just not, not right now, not today.

[01:18:38] I could, you know, I need to really take care of myself and, you know, um, whatever, um, that's the ways that I've shown up, uh, thinking I'm a nice guy and, and, and, and, uh, and I'm not so that's, so the recovering nice guy for me takes, takes better care of himself, um, and acknowledges where he's, uh, and, and acknowledges that I have a role to play in this world too, you know, it's uh, and so in a way, actually, I've learned to be nice to myself.

[01:19:09] **Drew Stegmaier:** One, I think the trap is that we're taught a number of things as well. We can't share our feelings. We can't be vulnerable because then we're pussy. Right. And can't be that, oh, no, no, no. So that's just a horseshit narrative, which is not true. Right, right. Um, and then that narrative manifests all kinds of sideways behavior tantrums.

[01:19:38] Just like the example you gave, right? Yeah. I'll go for a hike. Well, how much water should we ring? Boom, gunshot explosion. Right. Well, because it wasn't about the water. It was about this self

betrayal of, Hey, you know what, not right now, I'm not ready to hike right now. I do want to hike just not right now.

[01:19:58] But if you don't give yourself permission to say that, like you said, boom, immediately resentment drops in. Right. Right, right. Which is this paradox because another trash narrative is that we're taught. We're supposed to be always on all the time. You're not allowed to be tired. We don't have space in our narrative for being tired.

[01:20:19] Why do you think the energy drink industry exists? You know, there are so many energy drinks everywhere all the time. Oh, because we need energy. There's not a rest drink industry. Oh, that'd be great. Maybe, maybe we'll make a restaurant industry. We should. Um, I mean like shit, I have a, I have, again, if I had gold a night, it's my nighttime tea.

[01:20:41] But it, that whole industry is a result of our inability to acknowledge our tiredness or the fact that tiredness is not allowed. Right. And I think you said it well with, you know, being a recovering nice guy means learning to be nice or to be kind to yourself. And the, again, the paradox that so many people don't realize is that your relationships will become much more harmony.

[01:21:10] When your relationship with yourself becomes harmonized.

[01:21:14] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah, man. I mean, look, I mean, I think most people would agree like, uh, you know, if I want to go for the hike and I asked my partner, you know, if they want to go, I just want to hear the truth. And certainly don't want you coming and just being, you know, uh, resentful, ready to go off at any moment, you know, type of person I'd rather go by myself, you know?

[01:21:38] Um, it's uh, yeah, so, and I'll give you an example right now. I have to go to the bathroom really bad. I could be a nice guy and just, uh, you know, be miserable, but I'd really love to take a bathroom break right now. So can we make that happen?

[01:21:55] **Drew Stegmaier:** We're doing it and pausing. All right. We're back quick aside. Um, the Joe Rogan experience is the most popular podcast in the world.

[01:22:04] I would say, based on my understanding, it gets more. Coverage than every major TV show. If I'm not mistaken, it is the top dog. And I saw on his show, there are instances and episodes where they just straight up, let it roll like a live stream and just took a piss. And I think there's a reason why his show is the most popular.

[01:22:29] And to me it's because it feels real. It feels authentic. It feels truthful. Maybe there's some performative action going on there. If that's the case, he's damn good at it. And I don't think Joe is that good at it as a comedian. And I don't think he's that good of an actor. Like he was a fear factor host.

[01:22:47] So I don't think he's BSA. I think what you see is what you get. And my bet in the long-term is that the people doing that will be the winners in terms of not that others are quote losers. I think that's what the world needs right now. I think that's what the world craves. So desperately. I think that's why so many institutions are failing.

[01:23:08] I think that's why we have a lot of recovering, nice guys is because people want what is real and will crave that. Even if it's inconvenient.

[01:23:18] **Ben Bechtel:** I mean, like, to me, like, that's, yeah. That's what people want, man. That's what people want to hear. And I wonder, like, what do you think that is? Do you think? Uh, they just, uh, like, I think there's a level of safety there almost like, it's like a, it's like, oh, okay.

[01:23:35] This is something I can actually connect to because I have realness in me. I don't know.

[01:23:41] **Drew Stegmaier:** I think it's a couple of things. There are these cliches, like the truth will set you free. Um, some people say the truth hurts, but there's also the cliché that the truth can never hurt you. Right. And I think people say stuff like the truth hurts and.

[01:24:00] Often when they're not telling the truth and say, you mean the truth hurts. And it's like, well mean is a judgment, right? Judgements are not the truth, their analysis of what is true. Right. Um, I also think that people are tired of being duped, right? Like there are so many instances and examples I can tell you of, the media hellscape right now.

[01:24:24] And mainstream narratives, where myself, as a person, I'm into this whole sense-making movement. And there's so many times where I'll just be going through life and I'll see something and I'll go look, I don't know what the truth is, but it's definitely not that. And I know that in my bones, in my being, and I think we all have this felt sense.

[01:24:45] Some of us are more connected to it than others, but some people call this the bullshit detector or the BS filter and that lack of truth and truth. Is biting us in the ass collectively, right? Is this putting on a blinders? It is this, Hey, this isn't important when it's really important. Um, and when we tell the truth, we get around that we, we get to the root cause, right?

[01:25:20] Anybody who's into like inquiry or problem solving, like a common managerial technique is ask the five whys. Right? Why did this happen? Okay, why did that happen? And if you ask why five times you drill down to the root of a problem, that's just a modality for finding truth. That's all that is right. And they teach that at like the Kellogg school of management and in all these other MBA programs, right.

[01:25:43] Things like SWOT analysis. Um, these are just modalities for getting us closer to the truth.

[01:25:51] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. Well, when it's like built into the way, it's like, it's built into the way we communicate. You know, it's like, Hey, how are you doing? You know, how are you doing when you pass somebody on the street? You know, how you doing don't but don't, don't actually don't tell me how you're actually doing.

[01:26:08] I just want to hear good. This isn't me. I don't actually want to hear good, but I'm just saying, you know, it's like, it's like, uh, um, yeah, you know, I've I've actually been kind of practicing this the last few years where I'll try to like tell people the truth when I won't, I won't like give them the whole story, but if, if someone asks me how I'm doing, it can be kind of fun to just say, yeah, I'm actually doing really shitty right now.

[01:26:38] I'm actually doing really shitty. And then look, you might make that person feel very uncomfortable because they didn't, they weren't expecting an actual answer. Right. But it's like, it feels good for me to not, I don't want a man, especially, especially when I'm doing work, you know that I'm doing now.

[01:26:58] It can almost become disconnecting because. I'm doing this work and I'm, and I'm finding out things about myself and, um, and I'm learning things and I'm learning how to express my emotions and, and stuff like that, you know? And, and so when someone asks me how I'm doing, I actually want to tell them, well, not always, sometimes I just want to keep it moving, but like, um, it's, uh, it's, it's fun to kind of like challenge that a little bit and actually tell the truth.

[01:27:27] And, you know, a lot of times, even when, like I told that story earlier, a lot of times, as I'm telling the truth, um, judging and thinking as it's coming out, that I shouldn't be doing that. And so there's a, there's kind of like a little bit of, I don't want to say force. I don't like that word, but there's a little bit of like, I'm just doing it and then, but it can be fun for me to just like, just see what happens.

[01:27:53] We might, it might hurt. It might set you free. It might not, but I don't know unless I do it.

[01:28:00] **Drew Stegmaier:** Go on. I think in some sense we're either choosing closeness or separation. And most of the time I don't hear responses to questions framed like that. But usually when you're answering something, you're either being closer or you're creating distance and the choice is up to you.

[01:28:22] And the life that I want to live has a lot of connection in it. And a lot of that's up to me, right? Because when people are putting out an olive branch, when they ask, how are you doing? I can choose to add distance. And if I want connection and maybe I'm afraid of connection and I add distance that's on me.

[01:28:43] Right. I remember my brother went through a breakup and he was feeling like. And he was kind of wrestling with this. And I told him if someone asks how you're doing, you can say, I feel like shit, that's not an invitation to tell your entire story. Right. And go on a rant. But if they're not interested in hearing it, that is on them, they shouldn't have asked that question.

[01:29:04] Right. Which ironically is a, is a segue into coded language. I think coded language has its utility. It also is often dangerous. Right. And the truth can circumvent coded language. Right. It's like, well, you're speaking to me in code and I'm just not going to use that code. I'm going to speak back the truth.

[01:29:27] **Ben Bechtel:** Right. Go ahead.

[01:29:29] **Drew Stegmaier:** Coded language creates noise, not signal. Right. You could say noise is a disconnection signal is connection, right?

[01:29:37] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. Um, and it's, uh, You know, and look, I, you know, I don't want to just know what's happening to, you know, so if someone says, Hey, how are you doing? And I'm doing shitty, but I say, good.

[01:29:50] And I keep it moving a lot of times. I'll tell myself right after that, Hey, Ben, you and me, me and myself, we, uh, we know we're not actually doing good, but we just chose to keep it moving. Um, and it, because, because the alternative for me is if I say good and it's like, okay, I'm just fucking, I'm disconnected online.

[01:30:13] Um, you know, um, um, um, not being true to myself, but, you know, I just got distant, active from that person. Sometimes it's not the right place, right. Sometimes I have somewhere to be, and I don't, you know, whatever. But, um, and the thing that works for you, you know, the thing that works for me is, um, I'll just sometimes I've never really well, not never, but I don't really tell people like, oh, I'm doing shitty, you know, but I'll just go.

[01:30:37] Yeah. I'm okay. Which is just me saying. I'm okay. I'm safe, you know, whatever, but it's like, you know, I ain't getting into it. Um, but, uh, yeah. Um, just know what's happening, but yeah, the truth, man. Um, honesty, it's a powerful thing and it builds a lot of connection. I'm super grateful. I, I, I consider myself a pretty connected person and I think it's because I usually show up in this way or I try to, um, and then, uh, you know, I'm self judging myself right now.

[01:31:09] Cause I'm thinking like, well, what's, what's even the truth. You know, I can go down these rabbit holes of like right. Even the truth or, you know,

[01:31:15] **Drew Stegmaier:** but thanks. Let's go down a little because the best simplest way I've heard about this is there's what is true and then there's truthful. Right? So what is true is like capital T truth, right?

[01:31:30] Truthfulness could be an intention. Right. So, for example, let's say you whip out your phone and you look at the weather app. Right. But maybe you're actually looking at the weather for a different city and you didn't catch it. And then I said, oh, Hey Ben, what's the temperature? And you're like, oh, it's 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

[01:31:51] And maybe it's actually 77 Fahrenheit. Well, you just didn't tell me the truth. Right, right. Um, but that doesn't mean you weren't being truthful. You had no intention to mislead me. Right. Right. And again, like many of the things we've talked about, um, it's, it's, it's a thing with layers, right? Like the infinite onion there, there's always layers and richness where if we recognize that being truthful and the truth are different, we have more richness in life.

[01:32:25] We have more texture, we have more flavor. Do, people can both be truthful and both of them can be telling what is not the truth. Right. And I think for something to be a lie, it must be deliberate.

[01:32:38] **Ben Bechtel:** Right. Right.

[01:32:40] **Drew Stegmaier:** And the intention I think is really important.

[01:32:42] **Ben Bechtel:** Right. Yeah. And that's, and that's, I guess that's what I'm saying.

[01:32:45] In the example of someone asking how you're doing and you just, if you choose to say good, because you know, you just want to keep it moving with your life and you don't want to, you know, um, it's okay to recognize that like, that's your intention and it's not, it's not necessarily a lie in the same way.

[01:33:00] Like you're not versus like, if you were just like, you know, you did actually, let's say you had time and you wanted to connect with this person and you, you know, um, wanted to be honest. And then you just said, I'm good, but I'm not good. Right. If you're actually back and you just say good in that moment.

[01:33:17] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. So it's like a dismissive acknowledgement. Cause some people say, how are you doing? And the answer is, how are you? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's like, I would call that dismissive acknowledgement. Right. I acknowledge you and I dismissed you at the exact same time it happened.

[01:33:38] **Ben Bechtel:** Thanks. Mostly with strangers too, right?

[01:33:40] Like it's somebody, you never met this person before. You're cross bay. How are you doing? Yeah, yeah.

[01:33:44] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. I noticed I have these interactions where let's say someone is an acquaintance. And what's interesting about acquaintances is that there are people that I consider acquaintances that think they're my friends and I'm sure it goes the other way too.

[01:33:59] There are people that I think I'm friends with that I am just their acquaintance and there's no hard and fast rule. Right. But sometimes someone will ask, let's say they're an acquaintance. And I hesitate because I'm like, Hmm. Do they actually want to know? And it's just this awkward long. Yeah. Um, where you could choose connection is not being dismissive, not pouring your heart out, but just saying, Hey, it's like, oh shit, they've opened the door here.

[01:34:36] And you need to gauge whether or not they want to know or whether they were just greeting you. And you could say like, where are you just trying to say hi, like you want to, you want to chat? Like, oh, let's get into it. Well, I got some hammerheads.

[01:34:56] **Ben Bechtel:** Could you imagine if you, like, let's say this, I'm thinking I might try to do this today. You know, you're crossing paths with a stranger. Hey, how you doing? Hey, how you doing? But let's say, let's say I just actually stopped. And I just put it out there, like, Hey man, for what it's worth. I, I I'd like to actually hear how you're doing, if, if, uh, like for real, if you have the time, all good, if you don't.

[01:35:21] Um, but if you have the time, my name's Ben, um, I'd love to hear how you're actually doing. I, I am. I just imagine whatever comes next is going to be, be beautiful. Like it's just going to be the most beautiful thing, you know? Um, now I'm thinking I might challenge myself to do that today. Right. I think that'd be great.

[01:35:40] Yeah. But, uh, yeah man, what else you got?

[01:35:45] **Drew Stegmaier:** Um, one last thing. What is an authority resume and then how did making an authority resume impact your life?

[01:35:56] **Ben Bechtel:** Um, okay. So, uh, I, uh, It's an authority resume. I just made an authority resume, uh, two or three weeks ago. And, uh, it was, uh, it was a task that was given to me by, uh, my coach, my life coach.

[01:36:12] I have a life coach I've seen for, I guess, about 10 months and actually, so this is how it actually came up. Right. Um, uh, I had shared with him that I had this feeling like I wanted to go on this podcast and, uh, but I was scared. Right. And I was scared of what might be said or. Hurt someone or if I hurt, you know, for my, you know, harm me in some way.

[01:36:36] And, uh, and I also judge myself to not really be an expert of anything, you know, I'm not an expert, you know, like, uh, we, we talk about Joe Rogan's podcast. Like, you know, uh, he's always got like in the description, like this person's a, a comedian or they're a UFC fighter or they're this, or they've done this for however many years and I'm thinking, well, what the hell do I know?

[01:37:01] You know? Um, and so that's where this, uh, assignment was kind of born, was, um, an authority resume is it's a resume like as if you were to apply for a job. But it's a list of, well, it doesn't have to be a list. Um, but it's basically just a, these are the experiences I've had.

[01:37:25] Um, these are, uh, Yeah. Like for me, it's mostly experience, it's it's this has been my life thus far. This is what I've experienced. And, and, and so in a way that's, that's created who I am and it's also, these are things I can talk about, like, for example. Okay. So dude, I, you know, when we were talking before the podcast, I was telling you about how I made this authority resume.

[01:37:52] Right. And then I'm like, you know, I'll just send it to you. And it was never meant to be shared with anyone. Um, never meant to be shared with anyone. And, uh, I'm like, you know, I'll just send it to, and, and, uh, you know, you know, this cause you were there, but, uh, it pumped you up, right? Like, oh yeah, this is great, man.

[01:38:10] I gotta call this guy right now. We had like a podcast before the podcast was not recorded. Right. But, um, it's, you know, like one of the things on that list I've sat in. Over 350 hours of men circle. Right. And I had to kind of sit down and do that math and it's rough math or whatever, but that

[01:38:26] **Drew Stegmaier:** doesn't include like the commutes that going to, and from all the coordination, any sort of social events outside, like that's all, it's a lot of hours, right?

[01:38:36] **Ben Bechtel:** It's a lot of hours, dude. And and, uh, before I did that math, before I put that on that resume, it was like, Hm, I don't know. I don't know if I really am qualified to talk about men's circles. Right. That, that, that was my, that was my story in my head. After I wrote that down now I've realized, like, if I'm not qualified, who the hell is 350 hours, dude, you know, like sure.

[01:39:04] I don't sure I judge myself. Sure. I sometimes think the words don't come out right. Or sure. I, whatever, but like, yeah, I can talk about that. And so I've gained authority for myself. On that topic and the resume itself has many, many items, right? It's, it's a, it's a long list. And so it allows me to just own my authority.

[01:39:26] It allows me to say, you know, I am qualified to talk about that. Knowing, knowing that there's things, I don't know, knowing that, you know, that there might be people that are more qualified, whatever, but like how, yeah. I had that experience and I can talk about that. Um, so that's what the authority resume.

[01:39:45] **Drew Stegmaier:** Yeah. I think a couple things to touch on first. I want to challenge people out there to create an authority resume. And I think it's really important that you make this knowing that no one ever has to see it because I've done this as well. And you and I shared ours, but they both were created and sat for some time without any inkling that they might ever be shared.

[01:40:13] And that's important because. That makes it non performative. This is by you for yourself. Right? And I think what I would call playing small is there's some weird stuff happening right now in the zeitgeists where people are spewing their opinions everywhere, and other people will get upset and say, it's fine to share your opinion once you've earned it.

[01:40:37] And to those people, I say, fuck you, everyone has a right to their opinion. Now that comes with the caveat, which is own opinions. They are not capital T truth. They are not facts. They are opinions and you're welcome to yours and I all come to mind and we must respect each other accordingly, but everyone is welcome to their own.

[01:41:01] And once we remove that, we remove personal agency, we remove personhood. It is an act of dehumanization. Everyone is welcome to their own opinion. Aren't better than us. Their opinions. Yeah. We don't rank them. They are rankable by their nature. Right. Um, and so I think in some sense, doing an authority resume is an antidote to playing small.

[01:41:27] It is a great way to boost self-confidence. It is a great way to give yourself credit without bragging. Cause bragging is often about getting others to give you attention based on some performative behavior. And if you write this thing, knowing that no one will ever read it, then there's no performance in there.

[01:41:48] Right. Right.

[01:41:49] **Ben Bechtel:** Um, for them it's not for them. It's it's it's for you. Um, yeah.

[01:41:54] **Drew Stegmaier:** And I think you said it well, like if I'm not qualified to talk about this then who is right. And I think we're where people, um, often make. What, what I would call errors in judgment is we see someone on TV. We see someone on a podcast.

[01:42:10] And they show up on the podcast and it's like, oh, so-and-so has done 700 hours of blah, blah, blah. And it's like, well, where are they? Just a trash human being through our 6 99. Right. Where are they worthless? Uh, obviously not obviously not, well, how valuable is it? Right. We use numbers as proxy for value.

[01:42:32] Right. And I think the simplest answer is they have more experience than some and less than others. And that's the truth.

[01:42:39] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. You know, that was the other thing that the, the resume really helped me with was, you know, it, it helped me with like, okay, this is something that I'm not so qualified to talk about.

[01:42:51] Like, I can have an opinion on it or whatever, but like, you know, I don't, I'm not tired. I don't, it doesn't affect me as negatively thinking about something that like, I am not so qualified to talk about

now, because I know about the things that I am, you know, it's like. And that's, that's helpful. I think there's probably a lot of that going around is like people, you know, speaking up on things that they're really not as, I mean, like me, for example, man, like politics, dude.

[01:43:18] I, I don't know it, you know, I don't, I don't know. I don't, I don't know. I couldn't sit here and list off like the different beliefs on the right side and the left side, you know, I could list a few, but I couldn't really go very far. And, um, it's helpful to know that, to be able to own that, to be able to own it.

[01:43:36] That's okay. That's okay. Because I have other things that I know about. Um, and, and I'm able to look at them too, with less judgment. Like, you know, like for example, like, um, uh, I think as a society, we kind of judge people who play a lot of video games. It's bad. Right. I don't know that that's a judgment.

[01:43:58] I see. Right. If someone has played a lot of video games for a lot of years, that's something that they have a lot of authority and they could, they could talk about that. And there's a lot of people that would be interested in listening to that might even pay money for it. Um, and so, you know, uh, I, I've also been able to really look at where I am. It's really helped with self judging a lot, um, and building confidence.

[01:44:21] So I highly recommend it. And you just write it, knowing you'll share it with no one, you know, but I'll say this too. I was so grateful to read yours.

[01:44:32] **Drew Stegmaier:** Right. Likewise, likewise.

[01:44:34] **Ben Bechtel:** Yeah. It was wonderful. Um, so yeah. Thank you for that.

[01:44:40] **Drew Stegmaier:** Wow, man, this, this has been great. Um, okay. Any, any last words, any place you'd like to point people?

[01:44:47] Um, any merch you would like to shill? Um, what, what have you?

[01:44:55] **Ben Bechtel:** No, I don't have any merch. Uh, my name I assume, will be in the title. That's who I am. You know, you can find me on Facebook, I guess. I don't know. Um, but, uh, you know, it doesn't matter to me, you know, the, the big thing that I just, I love you guys.

[01:45:12] Whoever's listening. I love you guys. You're loved at least by me. And, um, yeah. Two, two people love you. And, uh, and, uh, I just, uh, I just wish everybody the best and, and, and just, just a life full of passion and, and, and, uh, and purpose and mission and, and all of, uh, all of the beautiful emotions that, that, that come with life.

[01:45:38] And I'm just super grateful to, uh, have been here. I want to come back, dude.

[01:45:43] **Drew Stegmaier:** And we can make that happen. There'll be a cul a Mulligan. Alright, man, for sure. All right. Peace out.

[01:45:54] If you're looking for a holistic, alternative approach to conventional therapy, get in touch with Eric at [www.lts-not-therapy.com](http://www.lts-not-therapy.com)

[01:46:06] That's its-not-therapy.com. His clients who include therapists come to him for the same problems. They might see a therapist or coach for as well as for concerns in the spiritual and energetic realms. They often know the limits of conventional talk therapy and want alternatives to medication. Most of all, they want to make faster progress.

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[01:46:51] What's keeping you from the life you wanna live? Are you ready to make your life better by changing how you think, feel, act or react?

Eric's office is in Annapolis, Maryland, but he serves clients nationwide by video. He welcomes people of all nationalities and ethnicities and sexual slash gender orientations.

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I hope you all enjoy that one quick thing and closing [stegdrew.com/juicy](http://stegdrew.com/juicy). Steg Drew just like the [show.com/juicy](http://show.com/juicy). You can sign up for my weekly musings there on all things like we spoke about in this episode and other assorted weirdness just drop in your email [stegdrew.com/juicy](mailto:stegdrew.com/juicy).

[01:47:48] Thank you.