

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, July 2026

Kaleb Joseph: The Power of Vulnerability



Kaleb Joseph travels the country teaching communities, schools, teams, and organizations how the mind and emotions influence behavior, performance, and quality of life. Through his Self Help Tour, this former basketball player helps athletes of all ages build self-awareness and a sense of identity that can carry them through adversities, both on and off the court. Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Kaleb shares powerful truths about mental well-being. His mission is simple: helping people understand themselves deeply enough to change how they live. Kaleb's gift is not just teaching; it's connection.

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to another MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh podcast. So, so excited for this day. In fact, I've got to tell you guys, we were scheduled to record yesterday and at the last minute there was some Wi-Fi challenges and so we had to delay and I think I lost a little bit of sleep last night. Again, just from—first of all, being nervous that I am sharing this information, that I'm sharing this amazing guy with all of you. And also, just with excitement and anticipation because I know what's going to come from this wonderful interview. So, let me just first of all straight up welcome Kaleb Joseph to my podcast. Thanks, Kaleb, for saying yes to this.

Kaleb: Absolutely. I'm really happy to be here. I appreciate you inviting me.

Winn: You know, sometimes these podcasts happen because I've known the person for a number of years or I've known of them for a couple of years and then I finally get the opportunity. And then sometimes these are brand-new relationships, and I discovered Kaleb on social media several months ago and I followed him during that period of time, watched a lot of his postings, which always are super short, but then I started diving in a little deeper to get more content of Kaleb. And then finally had the courage to reach out to Kaleb and, like every good leader, like every good teacher and mentor would do, he immediately responded because he's connected, he's aware, and I have a feeling that Kaleb is the type of person that just says yes. He sees an opportunity and he just says yes. And so, again, I'm so grateful. So, let me just share with our listeners a bit more information about Kaleb. And by the way, when I asked Kaleb to send me his bio to help prepare for this podcast he said this to me, which I love. He said, "I care very little about a sexy intro, Winn. So, whatever you see fit is fine with me." And let me tell you something, when you sent that to me, Kaleb, that spoke volumes to me because it just validated my gut feeling that I needed to connect with you, that I needed to have you on this podcast. And in this interview, I know Kaleb will share his story about being on a path to become a pro basketball player, playing at

Syracuse. And through his own journey of adversity, recovery, self-discovery, Kaleb developed a rare ability to translate these truths into language people can actually feel. Kaleb's obsession with understanding how the mind and emotions influence behavior began with a deeper need to understand himself. And you'll hear that as he shares his personal story. Briefly, I will share with you that Kaleb has a degree in healthy lifestyle medicine. He has worked with organizations including Nike, Made Hoops, and the New England Patriots while supporting some of the most competitive athletic departments in the country and the families of the athletes he works with. Partnering alongside sports, psychology teams, coaches, and leaderships, he helps create structures that strengthen the entire ecosystem where performance, mental-emotional health, and human connection exist at the highest level. Kaleb travels the country through his Self Help Tour—love the name of that—teaching communities, schools, teams, and organizations how the mind and emotions influence behavior, performance, and quality of life. So, Kaleb, before we actually jump into your personal story, I want to ask you: on your social media—and again, I've watched video after video of you in front of high school and college students. You know, you can hear a pin drop. The connection that you have is absolutely overwhelming. Just out of curiosity, how many schools have you been to in the last several years and how many students do feel like you have stood in front of?

Kaleb: Man, in terms of how many schools, I have no idea. Well into the hundreds, I'd assume. And you've got to think every school has at least a thousand kids. So, it's been a decent amount. And then, you know, obviously speaking with parents as well, that's something that I really value so it's been a good portion.

Winn: Wow. And your gift is not just teaching; it's connection. Can you expand on that? And then, again, we're gonna jump into your story.

Kaleb: Yeah. I mean, I think that like, that's what we're all after, you know what I mean? I spent a lot of my life like in this state of like desperation looking for connection. And I think that, like when you're desperate, it clouds your judgment and your decision making. And I think a lot of times, you know, I can only speak for myself, but like I settled for counterfeit versions of that in hopes that it was going to bring me real fulfillment. And I think that, you know, as I travel and I connect with communities, like we're all looking for that. We're all looking for connection. We all want to feel seen and heard and understood. I just think that we don't understand the power of vulnerability and how that influences connection. And without that understanding, I think we burn the bridges that lead to connection out of this way of self-preservation. So, for me, you know, doing this work, it's really about like helping people understand, like the natural functionality of the mind and how emotions influence behavior, because without that clarity, like we all just kind of shrink, you know. We all shrink and our lives become significantly more disconnected. So, to me, it's like how do I give access to the information and

the understanding that I desperately needed? And because of that, it forces me to like, stay vulnerable, you know?

Winn: So, let's get into your story, because I know you're a storyteller. You said earlier that being that storyteller, being vulnerable on that stage, it doesn't get easier. I don't think it's supposed to get easier because, my gosh, you're being vulnerable. Vulnerability, I guess in itself—and you can explain it better than I could—vulnerability is not an easy emotion. It's not an easy state to be in.

Kaleb: Definitely not. Yeah, no, I think that something that we all desperately need in our lives, but it's the scariest thing on earth, you know? Because I think that there's a difference between calculated risk and vulnerability. A lot of the human decisions are governed by calculated risk, right? Our brains are always scanning for what's safe and what's not. And how we show up in the world is often a reflection of what we deem safe enough. The conversations we're willing to engage in are a reflection of what we deem safe enough emotionally. And when it comes to vulnerability, it's complete uncertainty of, *When I say this out loud, how is this going to be received? How are they going to respond and react?* And without that certainty, the risk starts to feel a lot bigger. And that's the thing that's necessary for connection, but it's a skill and it has to be practiced. It has to be practiced. Otherwise, we'll all avoid it.

Winn: I'm glad that you're saying that it's a skill that we have to develop and practice. I think some people just assume that these things are natural. We have them or we don't. You know, happiness: I'm either happy or I'm not happy, and if I'm not happy, there's nothing I can do about it. I'm either nice or I'm not nice, and if I'm not nice, there's nothing I can do about it. I heard you say that you had a different upbringing than your peers, so tell us about your story, your upbringing, how you got to where you are today.

Kaleb: Yeah, I mean, I'm sure there are many people who, you know, it's different in a sense but I think, you know, we're all very connected by our experiences because, you know, I was raised by flawed parents, by humans, right, that are limited to the human experience. You know, my mom, like very early on, I could just tell that there was something wrong. Not with her, but just like the way she processed her emotions. She was always kind of stuck under the weight of whatever she was feeling in that moment. And you know, when you're young and confused, you come up with your own conclusions as to what these things mean. And you're not really talking to many people about it. So, I think early on I realized that, you know, my mom's not like all the other moms. Like some days my mom just doesn't have the energy to get out of bed. And I didn't like that at all, you know. Being a young man, like the first thing I can think of is like, *I'm gonna fix this, I'm gonna fix this. Like, I can fix this and I'm going to. I don't like the way that I feel and I'm gonna make sure that I don't have to feel this way anymore.* And, you know, I had no idea that my mom was struggling with anxiety and depression and severe OCD. I had no idea what these things were, like you know? I'm in fifth grade trying to make sense of these big challenges. And, you know, I made a decision, like

very early on, like I was going to fix my mom, right? Because that made the most sense to me, right? And, you know, I remember thinking that, like if I could just get enough money, like if I could just get enough money, then I could get the best doctors in the world. And if I can get the best doctors in the world, then one of them has to be able to take care of her, right? Like that's the best idea that my fifth-grade brain could come up with. And I didn't know anybody who had a million dollars. I didn't know anybody who was well off. I just knew that guys that play basketball on TV, they make a lot of money. And from that moment on, I dedicated my life to playing basketball. So as a fifth grader, I'm waking up every single day at 5:30 in the morning and I'm training because it meant so much to me. And you do that long enough, eventually you're gonna get pretty good. And I did, I found success really early on. By the time I was in eighth grade, I received my first Division I scholarship offer and I think that's when the identity really starts to shift, right? Because when you're young and, again, desperate for connection and to feel seen and to feel heard and when you don't get that from your caretakers, inherently you go out into the world and you look for it anywhere you can find it. And it doesn't mean that my mom didn't love me, my mom's human, but we're all limited in our ability to show up to each other because we are human. And I went out into the world and everyone in school treated me like I was somebody because I'm the only kid in school with this social status of a Division I scholarship offer. So naturally, I want to feel accepted, I want to feel seen, so I lean into it. And that's when your identity just starts to get kind of morphed and start to wear this mask, right? You show up in the world a certain way because you want people to see this version of you. And you do that long enough, it becomes very easy to lose sight of who you really are underneath that. And I definitely did, I definitely did. I got so good at hiding that, yeah, I just lost myself. And I've spent a lot of time over the last few years, and really, like my entire life, like trying to, like get back to who I was called to be. It's been a ride, man. It's been a ride.

Winn: So, if things were going well for you in terms of the spotlight that you had on you, the scholarship in basketball, I mean, didn't that kind of put you on a good stage? I can't imagine that you were bullied. I can't imagine that—well, I'm making stuff up here. I don't know. But didn't that kind of put you on a good stage? What was difficult for you?

Kaleb: I think the reality is like whenever you show up in the world and you're wearing this mask, you don't really give people an opportunity to connect to you, right? So, as you grow and people start to have opinions of who you are, because you're the best basketball player, the best athlete, you feel like your identity becomes really challenged because everything that they're saying you should be feeling, you don't really feel. And that's confronting for a 15-, 16-year-old kid. That's confronting for anyone. And I think that, like we all, right, I've learned, like, you know, through my time traveling, like we all wrestle with these things: with the person that we think we're supposed to be, the mask that we wear, the version of us that's most accepted by the world in relation to, like how we really feel and the thoughts that we actually wrestle with. Like

that was just really confronting and I didn't know how to balance that. You know, when I got to Syracuse, you know, and this was my dream school, like Syracuse from the time I was in fifth grade, I knew I wanted to play at Syracuse and go to the NBA. And when I got to Syracuse, I was projected to be national freshman of the year. And like—on paper, right? Like at the surface, like everyone thought that I was like living out my childhood dream, but in the back of my mind, like all I could think of was, like just don't mess it up. Right? Like just don't mess this up. Everything's going according to plan. You're so close to being able to take care of your mom. Just don't mess it up. And I think that when your identity becomes so heavily attached to performance, I think that wins and losses really start to feel life threatening. This attachment to performance becomes vital to your well-being. And that's exhausting for anyone. That's exhausting for anyone. So now as an 18-, 19-year-old kid, like when I play poorly, I don't have the emotional framework to really process what I'm experiencing. So, all I know how to do is just hide, right? So, when I play good, I'm at every party on campus. I want everybody to see that I did that. But when I play poorly, like I trap myself in my room and I don't leave until I next have the next opportunity to prove myself to the world, right? It's like this emotional rollercoaster and it's dictating how I feel about myself daily. And because of that, right, because I'm on this stage at the end of the year, like I'm now on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* top 10 most disappointing players. And again, with no real framework on how to process these things.

Winn: Wait, go back and repeat that, to make sure that everybody captures that. *Sports Illustrated* top 10—

Kaleb: Most disappointing players.

Winn: Most disappointing players. So publicly—you failed, so to speak, publicly. What is that like?

Kaleb: I think it's—it forces you to have to feel things that are confronting by itself, but to then have to do that in front of the world. Like that's, it's intense, right? I remember just, I don't know when, but I just kind of went numb, you know? Because as humans, we all have a threshold of how much suffering and discomfort that we can handle. And when you max out, it's simply about survival. And from that point on, I just was in survival mode.

Winn: What did that look like for you? And by the way, myself included, I'm sure we can name our failures, the times that we fell down and the mistakes and—but none of them were broadcast on the cover of a major magazine.

Kaleb: For sure. Man, I think that, like when you're, when you're in that sort of like discomfort, like you'll latch onto anything that makes you forget about the way that you feel. You'll latch onto anything that just helps you escape, even if it's momentarily. And the tricky part is you never associate it with anything bad because it's the only thing that makes you feel a little bit better. So, I developed some really unhealthy coping mechanisms. Like you said, I was in college with access to anything and I abused that. Not intentionally. Like it's

simply because I just didn't know how to deal with and navigate my emotions. The way that I felt was so intense, it became unbearable. And the only way to survive the day was to alter my state of consciousness. I think that we all do that, right? Like we all are built to avoid. It's in our programming as humans. We all have brains that are programmed to avoid suffering and discomfort. And if you're not conscious of that, then every time you feel something that feels threatening, it immediately elicits avoidance. Right? Like I want you to think of your brain as, like a bodyguard, the bodyguard to your emotional being. If my brain is going to be an effective bodyguard, it has to constantly be scanning for potential threats. And how our brains determine what's safe and what's not, what's a threat and what's not, is based off of the emotional experience. So, every experience that I have that elicits an emotion that I don't know how to process, inherently my brain deems that as a threat. And if my brain says that's a threat, then I'm not engaging with it. I'm just not doing it. And if you don't know that this is part of our brain's natural functionality, then inherently you just start to shrink. Inherently the way you engage in the world is limited, based off of the emotions that you know how to process and navigate. For most of the world, we lack this understanding, we lack this education. So, as a byproduct, we inherently shrink, right? Like we avoid the things that are uncomfortable. We avoid the conversations that are necessary for connection. We don't ask for help when we need it because we deem that as a potential threat. And for me at that stage in my life, everything that I was experiencing felt threatening because I had no emotional literacy. I wasn't talking about the way that I felt. It just wasn't a part of the equation. Wasn't a part of the equation for my mom, wasn't a part of the equation for me, and it's not a part of the equation for most Americans. And as a result, like we all carry things we have no business carrying by ourselves.

Winn: What did it look like for you when you would shrink?

Kaleb: Really, really bad social anxiety. I would not leave my apartment. I would not leave my apartment.

Winn: For how long?

Kaleb: When I was in college it was, you know, until the next game, right? So, like we'd play twice a week so, like I would leave my apartment twice a week. Outside of going to practice, right? You had to go to practice, you had to go to games, so those are the only things I was showing up to on campus. Because you start to worry about what everybody's gonna think about you, right? And I just didn't want to face it. I didn't want to face it. So, I'd lock myself in my apartment. I wouldn't eat. I wouldn't go out to the dining hall. Like if I could order food, I would but, like it was just like, it was just me in my room and my thoughts just ruminating. And then after long enough, like that becomes unbearable. So, now I'm hanging out with girls. I'm drinking, I'm smoking, I'm doing literally any and everything to escape the way that I feel and kind of just create this lifestyle of chaos. And it doesn't feel like chaos because it feels like a distraction, right? The chaos is now the vehicle to distract me from the way that I feel internally. So, I'll latch onto any and everything. Like I am the type

of person who, like I am an addict through and through. Like I will latch onto anything to help me escape. Put drugs, put women, put alcohol, give me anything to escape when I'm in that sort of frame of mind and I'll gladly take part.

Winn: So, once that announcement was made publicly on the cover of a major magazine, what did that do to you? Was that motivation and drive for you to improve or did it just continue to spiral downward?

Kaleb: Definitely, right? Like I think, like on the surface, like I wanted to prove people wrong, right? Like I was very focused on the behavior of, like what I can do to fix this and I wasn't focused on the emotional experience that needed to be addressed. So, you know, I'm working my butt off all off-season. I'm training really hard in an effort to come back and to, you know, prove myself. But at the end of the day, like I'm limited, like I'm limited. I can do as many reps in the weight room. I can take as many jump shots in the gym. I can do all the physical things. But if I don't have the emotional bandwidth to deal with the reality of what my life demands, I'm not going to be able to show up in a full way. And I wasn't, I wasn't. And this is a lesson that, you know, took me a really long time to really, like understand.

Winn: Right. By the way, you don't have to answer this because I get asked this question and I'll answer it to a point. But how bad did it get for you? What was the rock bottom for you?

Kaleb: Man. I think, like if I'm being honest, I think, like rock bottom, like can always get deeper. I know it, I see it every day. Like with people that I work with, people that I'm in recovery rooms with, like rock bottom can always get worse. But I think, like after years of like living in this sort of avoidance, you know, I think there was a moment where, you know, I was playing professional basketball overseas and my girlfriend at the time came out to visit me and this was really supposed to be the trip of a lifetime. She was all excited. Her entire family was ready for her to come to Europe for the first time. I think she was there for maybe like two days, not even 48 hours and she realized that there was something going wrong. She kept asking me, "What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong? Just talk to me." And I say the only thing that I've ever known how to say when somebody asks me that question is, "I'm good. I'm good,. Fine." She just keeps pressing, like, "What's wrong, what's wrong, what's wrong?" And, "I'm fine." And that night when I went to sleep, she knew I was full of shit. So, she goes through my phone and she realizes that I've been living a double life. Our entire relationship, everything she knows about me, I've been living a double life. And I couldn't hide anymore. She wakes me up in the middle of the night and she's screaming at me and she throws my phone at me and she's just, like just overwhelmed, like, "You're disgusting, you're disgusting, you're disgusting." And, like I was saying I was sorry, but, like if I'm honest, like I was like completely numb, you know, like I was completely numb because I was living in avoidance my entire life. She just kept saying it. And as time went on, like it started to kind of wear at me and like it started to, like break me down because I started to realize like, holy shit,

like I can't run anymore. Like I cannot run anymore and, like everything in my body wanted to, like crawl up into a ball and go invisible. And like my back was up against the wall and I like had nowhere to go. And you know, she just—we talked and we fought and we talked and we fought and, like she was just like, “I can't, I can't do this with you.” And she left and I was stuck in Europe, right? Cause, like I'm a professional basketball player. So, like we still have like a month and a half left of the season. So, like I'm stuck. Like I can't go anywhere, but like, I know that my life's about to change because I know that she's calling my family, telling her family, like the cat's out the bag. Like, “Kaleb is an addict.” And, like every day that we got closer to that final game, like I just, I wanted to tap out. I just wanted to tap out because the idea of going home and admitting that my mental health had taken me to a place that I no longer recognized myself, like I wanted no parts of that. Like this was like my biggest nightmare. And I knew that, like if I got on this plane, then like I was going to have to answer to someone. Like I couldn't hide anymore. So, like that last 48 hours, like I was on life support, like around the clock, like I wanted to tap out. And as soon as I got on the plane and went home, I made the hardest decision of my life. I went and I checked myself into a rehab facility and that changed everything, right? Like it changed everything. It gave me enough separation from the disease to be able to recognize that there was another pathway to live my life. And yeah, it's been a journey ever since but like, I'm so grateful that I did that.

Winn: Wow. I might be jumping ahead because I have a whole bunch of questions on the stuff you're sharing with us, but you know, when you're with your audience and you're asking kids or young adults in the audience what are their biggest fears or you're asking them what are they struggling with, what's coming up?

Kaleb: Same thing that we all say to ourselves when we're sitting in our room by ourselves, like, Winn, when the world is quiet and nobody—and you can't hide behind the mask. It's all the same things that we all struggle with. We want to feel accepted. We want to feel chosen. We want to feel seen. We're confused about how to navigate that. We're afraid about how to navigate that. We know that we're capable of more but because we have a brain that's programmed to avoid suffering and discomfort, we limit ourselves. It's all the things that all humans desire and need. There's just so much confusion about it because we're living in a world where everybody wants to pretend, like they're above the human experience. And that is really isolating. That's really isolating. Like every adult, you know, and I think like—like as you get older, people stop questioning you. Right? Like when you're young and you're in school, like people ask, “How you doing? How you doing? Like, how's everything going?” Because like you're a kid.

Winn: Right.

Kaleb: But the older you get, people stop asking. And when you're a kid, you learn very early on that, like, if I'm honest, when I answered that question, it might not go over well. Because people ask, but they don't really care. They don't

really want to know how I'm doing, because like when kids are honest about how they're doing, like, look how they treat them. Right? Like they're so hell bent on protecting themselves from being seen that like, if I can point and keep the attention on the people who are struggling, right? Who are honest about their struggle, then like it keeps people from like being able to see that in me, right? Like it's like this—people will go to great lengths to avoid being seen when they don't like who they really are. So, it's the fears, the doubt, it's the insecurity that we all wrestle with.

Winn: Do you have any specific stories to share with us? Specific fears that—because I know when you're standing in front of them, what you have done is you've given all of them permission to share very personal stories and insecurities and fears with you. And not just with you; they might be even sharing these with the entire audience, but you're the one, because you're bringing this up, you're the one that's giving them permission, making them feel safe to do so. Do have any specific stories that could help us relate to what you're experiencing and what they're sharing with you?

Kaleb: Yeah. And to be honest, I think like because of the—how sacred what we're all sharing in that room is, like that's the reason why I never post anything from the engagements, like the actual conversation, the dialogue. But man, it's heavy, like it's heavy, like, and it looks a little bit different at every school, right? Like there are some kids who are exposed to addiction in their household very early on. There are some kids who have been sexually abused. There are some kids who, you know, are being physically abused by the people that they have to go home to daily. And they're carrying the weight of these things on their own. And then it's like there's a whole wide range, right? Like there's the heavy, heavy stuff like that. But then there's just the, just the knowing that you're capable of more but just like the daunting fear of taking the risk, right? Like when we talk about mental health, like I think it's very easy to look at the extreme cases and be like, “Oh, that's what it looks like. That's the person who struggled. Like they're justified in their experience.” But oftentimes it's the people who don't think that their issues are big enough to acknowledge that struggle immensely, immensely, because they don't ever validate their experience. Nobody's ever validated their experience. And so, they're going through life feeling unseen.

Winn: I like what you're saying right now, because if there's not a tragic story to tell of what's going on at home—could be mom and dad are healthy, mom and dad love each other, everything is wonderful at home, but what I hear you saying, it's just the daunting task of growing up.

Kaelb: Oh, 100 percent. And I think that because there's a lack of education and understanding of our brain's functionality and how the mind and emotions influence behavior, because people don't know these things fundamentally, we all just assume that the quality of life that we have is the best it's going to get. So, for the kid who has everything on paper: mom and dad work good jobs. Like on paper, yeah, it looks great but, like there's an internal world that we all have to navigate. So, mom and dad, yes, they have great jobs and they

do well for themselves financially, but dad doesn't know how to express himself. And because dad doesn't know how to express himself, dad is disconnected from mom. Mom is constantly projecting her fear, doubt, and insecurities on her child because she doesn't want her daughter to deal with the same emotional turmoil that she did. So, there's an emotional experience, there's an emotional currency that's taking place in every single household but nobody's efficient in understanding the language of emotion and how that's influencing behavior. Because we all hide behind status, we all hide behind the things that we can collect. We hide behind performance and titles. But there is a currency that is being spent daily that is driving how we behave that we're not in tune with. And that's why it doesn't matter whether you're a professional athlete, doesn't matter if you're an entrepreneur, doesn't matter if you're a stay-at-home mom. When we're truthful about these realities, we can all connect. Like it's very little about my story and my experience. And yes, it's easy to look at the reality. Like my mom struggled with these things and, like of course that makes sense, but I'm no different than you, Winn. Like there are things that you needed as a child that, like you just didn't get. Not because—maybe because people just didn't know how to love you the right way. And that is a human experience. We are all being raised by limited, flawed humans. So, trauma is inevitable. And I think one thing that people need to understand is that trauma has very little to do with the actual experience and all to do with our ability to process the experience. You and I can walk into the same room, have the exact same experience, right? Dad comes into the room, he yells at both of us, and inherently we're both feeling sad. We're both riddled with shame. We're both feeling overwhelmed. You and I both will walk away from the exact same experience feeling completely different, based on our individual ability to identify, process, and manage our emotions. We'll both walk away feeling completely different. And that is what we need to start training people on how to do: identify. What am I actually feeling? Why am I feeling this? And if you don't know why you're feeling, then you can't manage how what you're feeling manifests in your behavior. And that to me is fundamental if we want to maximize our potential as humans.

Winn: I think one of my favorite books, the author said something like that 95 percent of us were raised with some type of dysfunction, which means 5 percent were raised without any dysfunction? I think that's being pretty generous. [*Laughs*]

Kaleb: One hundred percent. One hundred percent

Winn: I'm curious about the relationship between mental health and performance.

Kaleb: It's everything. It's everything. Right. So like, we talk about, I believe wholeheartedly your mental health is a direct reflection of your ability to do those three things: identify, process, and manage your emotion. If you cannot accurately do that, then you're never actually showing up in the world as your true self. You're always trying to either protect yourself from an emotional experience or you're embracing an emotional experience. And when it comes to high performance, you have to be able to meet the demands, the emotional

demands of greatness every time it shows up. And if you don't learn how to process your emotions, then you're not going to be able to meet those demands head on with clarity, right? Like you think about, like entrepreneurship. It requires so much faith and movement in the face of complete uncertainty. So, now it forces you to have to wrestle with your fear, doubts, and insecurities. And if you're not honest about your fear, doubts, and insecurities, it's going to manifest in the decision making you make in pursuit of growing this business and how you're going to navigate this. And this is true for every human, every high performer. It's true for everyone. If you want to maximize your potential as a human, you have to understand how you function and take full accountability for that. Does that make sense?

Winn: It absolutely makes sense. And I don't think that I've learned anything from success. I think I've learned everything from failure, from struggle. And you shared with us your personal experiences of struggle. What did those experiences teach you that success never could teach you?

Kaleb: That everything we want in life, everything we truly desire in life, is on the other side of vulnerability. And vulnerability is directly correlated with risk. And unless we learn how to process the emotions that are associated with risk, we'll never tap into our full potential. We'll never get the life that we're fully capable of. Because as an athlete, in order to make the game-winning shot, I have to be willing to shoot the game-winning shot. I have to be willing to embrace the reality that I could miss and I could fail in front of the world and that there's gonna be an intense emotional experience attached to that. So, if I'm trying to avoid the emotional experience associated with failing in front of the world, I don't get to be the player that I really want to be. And then you take that same brain into my everyday life. If I am not honest about how I feel and who I am, I'll never feel chosen. I'll never feel chosen. In order to feel loved, you have to feel seen and you have to feel heard. But if the only version of me you see and hear is a filtered version, I know that our relationship only goes so far, so I'll never get access to connection, right? Everything as humans that we truly desire on earth is on the other side of vulnerability. And that is what my failure has taught me: that I always had a chance. I just didn't know, I didn't know any better. That if I want to really, really, like see what I'm capable of and really live a fulfilling life, I have to start engaging with these risks.

Winn: Wait. First of all, I've heard you say that, for you, it's exhausting to be vulnerable.

Kaleb: Yeah, it can be. It's exhausting to be vulnerable when the person on the receiving end of that isn't willing to meet you there.

Winn: Oh, okay.

Kaleb: It's connection when you're vulnerable and the person is willing to meet you there. Now we're charging each other. Now we can have conversations for hours because it's just flowing, we're just being authentic. We are now tapped into a frequency that is humans functioning at the highest level. There's

complete trust. There's complete honesty. And you're being seen, you're being chosen. We're both just connected. And that is what we're all after. But when one or the other person isn't willing to meet us there, that's when we have trouble. And I think that's what most people are experiencing. It's a disconnect.

Winn: Do you give people specific skills or steps, actions that they can take in order to invite the vulnerability from the other person, so to speak?

Kaleb: I think it starts with you, right? Like, I think a lot of people want to elicit vulnerability from others because that's the easier path, right? Like if they're honest with me, then like it makes it easier for me to be honest with them. Why? Because our brains are programmed to avoid suffering and discomfort. So, in all decisions, we're going to take the path of least resistance. So, if we actually want to connect, we have to do the thing that we're inviting. I have to put myself out there first as an invitation to other people to grab onto. Otherwise, good luck.

Winn: Can you share with us, what does that look like? So, you're saying that you're inviting somebody to be vulnerable with you and how you do that is by being vulnerable yourself. What does that look like for you to be with somebody in that vulnerable state? What does that—give us a visual of what that might look like?

Kaleb: Man, it's as simple as like, like I don't want this to feel like this mystified thing. I think like, it's as simple as like when you come home. and your husband or wife asks, "How are you doing?" Let's just start there. We're so programmed to, "Oh good, all good." Let's just start with telling the truth there, right?

Winn: Got it.

Kaleb: Let's start with telling the truth to ourselves and asking ourselves how are we doing, right? We live in a world where we're so connected to everyone around us. We have ways to connect with people via social media and our phones yet we are so disconnected because we're not taking the risk. We're not being honest. There's no, like special formula to it. You just got to be honest. When somebody asks how you're doing, you got to be honest. There are so many men and women that struggle in their marriage because they're just not being honest. Their wives have asked a million times, "How are you doing? How are you doing?" And it just, it doesn't go anywhere.

Winn: I've heard like somebody say like nobody wants to hear it. Nobody wants to hear what your day is like. Nobody, you know, first of all, half don't want to hear; the other half think you deserve it. Have you heard that before?

Kaleb: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Winn: Like that's advice we're supposed to take. Oh, okay. If I share my vulnerability, if I'm really, truly honest, half don't want to hear what I really have to share and the other half think that I deserve my horrible day.

Kaleb: Well, I think that's a byproduct of people not being honest, like it's just easier that way. It's easier on the surface. It's easier to just skate through the day. Right? If our brains are programmed to avoid suffering and discomfort then, like when we go through our day we're going to seek the path of least resistance. And being honest, that's going to create some friction because people might not know how to receive that. And when someone didn't know how to receive that, we didn't know how to process that emotional experience so now that becomes the threat. Right? Like think about ourselves when we were like, I'm sure—you have a daughter, right? Like when your daughter was young, we're all brutally honest. Like we can't help but be honest. But one day we went out into school and we realized that, like when we're honest, it can backfire.

Winn: Right.

Kaleb: And if we don't have the support around us to learn how to process the intensity of that experience and the emotions of rejection, because we have a brain that's programmed to avoid suffering and discomfort, now we're going to go to school the next day a completely different version. We're going to go into school the next day trying to protect us from that happening again. And that's what happens through years and years of our lives. We just collect more and more evidence of why it's safer to keep it to ourselves. But we're never giving our brain evidence or opportunity to collect evidence that good things happen when we are vulnerable because we only know, *I survived the day by keeping it to myself*. Our brains are always in it. Our brains are always in it. So, every time we play it safe, we only give ourselves opportunity to collect more and more evidence that that's the best option.

Winn: Mm-hmm. You brought up the human need for connection. I heard it said that that basic human need to feel like we belong—again, a basic human need. But that 60 percent of people say, “No one has my back,” and half of them are married. And you said it, that people are more disconnected than ever before, despite supposedly we are more connected than ever because of our social media and our smartphones and—I mean, what prevents authentic connection?

Kaleb: Lack of vulnerability. Every time, every time. Right? Like I was saying earlier, when you are depleted of the things every human need, you will search for them in everything and you will settle for the counterfeit version of them. And that is what we've done as a society. We've settled for the counterfeit version of connection by way of social media, by way of video games and discord. We've settled for the counterfeit version of connection because that's as far as we're willing to go. That's as deep of the risk that we're willing to take because truly being honest and putting yourself out there in an authentic way requires risk and vulnerability. And we just, we're not engaging with that often enough.

Winn: Who are you personally—this is an interesting question. Who are you personally wanting to have that connection with, through vulnerability? And I

guess what I'm getting at is I've been taught by mentors and I believe that we're not supposed to have large circles. In fact, I think we're supposed to, when it comes to our little circle, that our little circle is supposed to be kind of small. And mine, by design, is kind of small. Which doesn't mean that I don't want to have a connection to a large, large circle of influence, because I do. But I'm just—you know, give us some advice here on what kind of vulnerability are we supposed to have with what types of groups? So, we have our small friendship group, we have our family, but then the people that we work with, and then of course, you know, total strangers, we want to have connections, you know. I used to wear this shirt when I traveled, and the shirt said, "Whatever the question, love is the answer. Whatever the question, love is the answer." And I purposely wore that shirt when I traveled because I was traveling alone. For the most part, I was on the road by myself and I wanted to send a message out to total strangers like, "Hey, I'm available." You know, "Come talk to me. It's lonely out here on the road." I wanted total strangers to think, "Oh, he's a nice guy. I can go strike up a conversation with him." So, give us some advice on vulnerability with different circles that we all are in and out of.

Kaleb: For sure. I think that when I talk about, like the power of vulnerability and how it's like transformational, I'm not advising people to walk outside and just tell everyone—and trauma dump and just tell everyone every part of their life. That's not what I'm advising, right? We have to have discernment, right? But it's very hard to practice discernment if we're not engaging with the activity at all, right? So, let's just talk about the people that are in the closest proximity to our life. Who do we live with? Who do we live with? If you don't live with anybody, let's talk about our parents. Let's talk about our siblings. Let's talk about the people who are in the closest proximity to our lives that we can let in. It's gonna be scary. I'm not saying it's not gonna be scary. It's going to feel life threatening. But that's what vulnerability feels like. So, I think if we can start there as a way to practice, and that's really how it should be as kids, right? Like we should be learning how to be vulnerable, learning how to navigate emotions, like in our household, but most of us didn't. Let's just call a spade a spade. Not because our parents didn't love us, but because they were trying to survive the moments as well. So, we are now, as adults, trying to unlearn all the things that we know about connection because we didn't grow up feeling super connected. And if we can start with the people, with our friends, like just start being honest. And it doesn't have to be an every day, every moment thing but just be honest when they start asking questions: "How was your day?" Let's just start with being honest in how we answer that question.

Winn: Mm-hmm. And I want to remind people, because I've experienced it myself and I've watched it happen with you. When you are vulnerable, again, it gives people permission to meet you there as well. And to quote you over and over again, everything you want is on the other side of vulnerability.

Kaleb: Truly.

- Winn: Okay, I feel I'm not exactly sure when to slip this one in, but let's talk about social media. I want to get your take on how does that play into all of this?
- Kaleb: Man, I think social media is, I think—like with everything, right—as equally as beneficial it can be, it can be equally destructive on the other side of the pendulum, if you're not clear about how to navigate this for you. I think that young kids—across the board, not even young kids. Like people are susceptible to comparing because we want to feel seen. We want to feel accepted, so we compare our lives to others to make sure that we're keeping up and it can be exhausting. It can be exhausting, but I think the moment people start doing this internal work, all of these external things, like become less problematic. Like I really do. Right. Cause you start learning how to set boundaries for yourself. You know when it's time to get off, you know when to engage with it. Like I'm not getting on there the first two hours of my day. Why? Because I know that I need to ground myself before I start drifting. And the more you start doing this internal work on yourself, the more you start learning what you need to really get in the day and to really have, like an efficient rhythm of your day. But if you're not curious about how you're feeling and how you're internalizing these things, you're just gonna escape. You're just gonna avoid. You're just gonna keep going, going, going because, again, anything, any avoidance, any entertainment is better than sitting with how I feel. And that's why we have so many people that are addicted. Our world is more addicted than it's ever been, and it's not just drugs and alcohol. We're addicted to escapism, we're addicted to avoidance because we're not learning how to process and manage our internal experience.
- Winn: I remember one of my mentors used to say to the big audience that—I would be in that audience, and she would say you have a Saturday night alone, no plans, no date, and you just can't stand it. You gotta get on the phone. You gotta call somebody. It's like, gosh, if you don't want to sit alone with you, why do you expect that anybody else would want to be with you?
- Kaleb: So real. It's so real. It's hard for people to be with themselves. And I don't say that from a place of, like authority. Like it's hard. It's hard. But when you start engaging with growth, you realize that just because something's hard doesn't mean that it needs to be avoided. Oftentimes it's the opposite.
- Winn: Right. Hey, Kaleb, do you want to talk about the ecosystem? Do you feel like that falls into place here?
- Kaleb: Yeah, I mean, I think, like the way I see, like this societal challenge as a whole, it's based off of this ecosystem, right? We have students at the center surrounded by parents, coaches, administrators, teachers. And when we are in an ecosystem, every part functions in relationship to the rest. So, the student experience is dependent on the teachers, the coaches, the administrators, the parents, and vice versa, because we all affect the others, right? The students will one day become the parents and the teachers and the faculty. Like that's how this works, right? And when you have a lack of understanding of the brains that are governing the decision making in the

behavior of the ecosystem, this is what you see. Everything we're describing as a society—the addiction, the depression, the loneliness, the epidemics—like it's all a byproduct of a lack of understanding and awareness to the brains that are governing this ecosystem. And to me, that's what gave birth to the Self Help Tour, which is how do I inject this information into these ecosystems? And how do I help the parent, help the athlete, help the student, the teacher, the faculty? How do we get into these rooms and start building this understanding and awareness? And this, I see how this transforms schools and communities but also in business, right? Like there's an ecosystem that makes every office run. There's administrators, there's faculty, there's employees, and the ecosystem within this room dictates the quality of everyone's lives. So, it's understanding and seeing this, seeing health—mental health—holistically from a 360 degree.

Winn: Well, anything to do with culture is always, always one of my favorite topics. They say that 50 percent of people who quit their jobs did so to get away from the boss, did so to get away from a toxic culture, toxic team members. And by the way, those who quit are not the worst team members. They are the best. They quit because they know they deserve better. So, because you have that opportunity to work a lot with athletes, and I love it that you're not just stopping with athletes, you have realized that if you're not also working with the parents and the coaches and the leaders, then all the work that you do with athletes probably is not going to have the impact. But what are the common blind spots that exist between athletes, parents, coaches, and leaders?

Kaleb: For sure. I think that the number one thing is disconnect, right? Leaders do not understand the value of psychological safety, like how to make the people that you're serving or working in close proximity with feel safe enough to explore the parts of themselves, all parts of themselves in this environment, right? Creativity increases when someone feels safe. Adaptability increases when someone feels safe. Safe to make mistakes, right? When you're in a position of leadership, you have to make people that work for you, your employees, your team, the rest of your coaching staff, and your counterparts, they have to be safe to make mistakes because that is the only thing that's going to increase creativity, adaptability, and connectivity. All of those things are solely dependent on how safe they feel to fail.

Winn: Wow, wow.

Kaleb: A lot of leadership, a lot of leaders do not understand that that is critical to how people show up daily and their ability to problem solve in their sport but also in life. People, you're able to use less of your faculty when you're processing stress, right? You're able to use less of your problem-solving faculty when you're processing stress simultaneously. You're just less capable.

Winn: Well, I feel a little better that one of our guiding principles in my company is “failure is not fatal.” You know, theft can be fatal. There's some things that

could be fatal in terms of you might lose your job over this. But, you know, how can organizations create cultures where people feel safe enough to be honest and to grow?

Kaleb: I think that this looks a little different based off of, like your specific industry but I think you have to get curious about the people that you're serving. Like if I'm a leader and I am working with my team, I have to get curious about the framework, the minds, the emotions, the experiences of the people that I'm working closest with because that's going to give you insight into what is going to make them feel safe psychologically. If you don't know these things, it becomes very hard to navigate. Otherwise, you're just kind of throwing shit at a wall, hoping something sticks. And we see it all the time, like in big corporations. You go on these retreats and you do these, like feel-good experiences but they only get so deep. The connection only goes so far because we're not actually being honest because you've already created a level of distrust in their ability to express themselves.

Winn: Again, you're backing up things that we have been practicing but you're putting some truth. And I've heard you say that the power of truth pierces through all the noise, and I love that quote from you. But you're validating some of the practices and belief systems that we have. We actually have what we call our Gathering Guidelines, because I feel like we need to gather, we need to huddle together to communicate, and that needs to happen on a regular basis but there has to be guidelines for that, because I've been in those team huddles in some companies where they stand up and, "Okay, anybody have any problems?" Oh, so we're going to just talk about problems here. Just the language that was being used already was setting people up for failure.

Kaleb: One hundred percent. And then, like again, if you're going to lead, right, in this space in, terms of creating culture and psychological safety, you have to do the thing first, right? You can't teach what you don't know and you can't lead where you won't go. So, unless you're willing to put yourself out there first as the leader, nobody else in this room is going to trust or believe that it's safe, that we're allowed to be honest. And most leaders are not willing to go there. Most leaders are not willing to go to those places. And again, I'm not saying that you have to go into these rooms and just dump your trauma, but you do have to be honest and people can smell that out.

Winn: Hmm. I've heard you talk about person over player. What does person over player actually mean?

Kaleb: Everything that we're talking about, right? It's this belief that who you are as a person will always dictate how you perform in any arena of your life. Because you take the same brain with you into every arena of your life. How I function as a husband, as a teammate, as a father, as a friend, it's all being governed by the same brain. So, it's an invitation for people to start seeing themselves holistically as a whole being so that they can enhance how they play in life, how they engage in the real world. I think the people who fulfill all of their

potential in life are the ones who are deeply connected to who they are. And then there are certain things about themselves that they're not willing to negotiate with. There's certain parts of their integrity that they're just not battling with. And I think that's because they understand that, "I have to look myself in the eyes."

Winn: This kind of reminds me—I remember going back, again 30, 40 years when a friend of mine who owns a company was having a training for his team over the weekend and, "Oh, what's the training about?" Here I'm thinking it's going to be a training about customer service or how to get more sales or how to operational save money for the company. This is what I'm thinking. He's like, "No, it's a successful marriage training." I'm like, "What? Like you're spending money to train your team members on how to have a better marriage? Why would you do that?" And this falls in line with what you're saying. We take the same brain with us. If our marriage is falling apart, we don't know how to keep that together, how are we going to have creativity in the workspace?

Kaleb: And think about why do marriages struggle? They struggle because inability to resolve conflict. An inability to have uncomfortable conversations. An inability to be truthful in the face of adversity. An inability to move beyond your emotional experience and make room for someone else's. They struggle because one person doesn't feel seen. One person doesn't know how to advocate for themselves. All of the things that influence a positive or negative marriage also influence how someone shows up in their professional life. Because if I can't have the uncomfortable conversation with my wife, I also can't have the uncomfortable conversation with my counterpart at work. And we know how that influences the efficiency of a business. If you're really going to grow in business, you have to have uncomfortable conversations without taking it personal. If you can't do that, you can't do it anywhere. And that is person over player. Like that's the equivalent. It's that; exactly it.

Winn: So, what happens when we confuse who we are with what we do?

Kaleb: Our performance immediately is limited. Because if you're confusing and intertwining who you are with what you do, then the objective outcome now is correlated with like your being and the quality of your life. And that's really threatening. It's really hard to be loose and free and fluid when your life depends on this.

Winn: You know, we're recording—I'm going to start to wind things down here a little bit. Can you believe we've been chatting for well over an hour? You know, we're recording this in the month of June, and June is Men's Mental Health Awareness Month. So, I'm sure you're very aware of this and you're probably getting extra-bombarded. Anything you want to share or touch on when it comes to Men's Mental Health Awareness Month?

Kaleb: Ah, man. It's so interesting. I think that, like men have become so accustomed to settling for relationships that are far less fruitful than women's. I think if I look at like my mom, my sister: their relationships with other women are, like they show up for each other in much, in a significantly more full way.

They support each other in a significantly more full way. And I think that it's because there's been this standard and men are so depleted of connection that they're just willing to accept anything. Like we have so many—and women joke about it all the time, about how men don't know anything about their best friends because they're just happy that they have somebody next to them. They're just happy to have someone around them. And I think about how sad that is, right? How sad that is that most men are just willing to accept the bare minimum from their other friends because they're afraid that, “If I say what I really need from you or if I'm honest with you, that you might not be around anymore. Or you're going to think I'm doing too much.” And that's something that I would like all men to start to consider in their lives.

Winn: Hmm. That was perfect. Thank you for that. And to wrap things up, because I've been saving this question to the end. I've heard you say that the greatest version of yourself is in service. What do you mean by that?

Kaleb: All of the things that we're talking about: the insecurities, the fears, the doubts as humans. If left in isolation, they will ruin your life. But the moment you use these experiences to show up for someone else, there's a transformation that takes place where you become more willing to be curious about your internal experience because it's in support of someone else. And that speaks to something that's fundamental in humans, which is connection, right? When we can use our pain, our struggle, our experiences to connect with others, the pain now becomes a vehicle for growth and healing. But alone, like if I just feel this by myself, I don't stand a chance. I don't stand a chance. So, it's just this idea that, like if I really want to be the best me, I have to think about how can I use my lived experience to support others. And I think when we can start thinking that way, we become—like we just tap into another version, you know?

Winn: Right. I see that in the many charities, charitable organizations, nonprofits that my company works with. It's always those who have lost a loved one to cancer that are showing up the most to support the cancer walk. It's those who have had a veteran in their family, especially if they've lost a family member or if they've had a family member that experienced physical trauma or whatever, those are the ones who want to support us the most when we're raising money for the Gary Sinise Foundation. It always works out that way. When we've experienced something ourselves or our loved ones have experienced something that's hurtful and painful and difficult, it gives us a better heart. It gives us that drive to—I want to be part of the solution. I want to show up more because I don't want other people to go through this.

Kaleb: One hundred percent. One hundred percent.

Winn: Well, you told me that you're 31. I was an idiot at 31. How the heck did you figure this stuff out? Geez. Kaleb, you're amazing.

Kaleb: I appreciate you, man. I appreciate you. It's been an honor.

Winn: Do you have a final message for our listeners?

Kaleb: I know I probably sound like a broken machine.

Winn: Oh, I need the repetition, so go for it.

Kaleb: Everything you truly want in life is on the other side of vulnerability. There's no other way around it.

Winn: Beautiful. Well, again, I'm so grateful. We will share all the information about how people can contact you back. Do you want to share that now here, verbally?

Kaleb: Yeah. On social media you can find me on Instagram at @KalebJoseph15 or Self Help Tour.

Winn: Kaleb is spelled with a K, by the way, everybody: K-A-L-E-B Joseph.

Kaleb: Yes @KalebJoseph15.

Winn: Fifteen? What's the 15?

Kaleb: That used to be my basketball number.

Winn: Ah, okay. Has anybody ever asked you that question?

Kaleb: Honestly, no. Honestly, no .

Winn: Yay! See, I'm good at what I do, man. I get the truth.

Kaleb: [*Laughs*] One hundred percent. And on TikTok it's @selfhelptour as well. And if anybody wants to reach out, you can reach me on my website at selfhelptour.com.

Winn: By the way, you have a great website. Very good website. Everybody, check it out.

Kaleb: Thank you.

Winn: Well, again, thank you so much. I'm truly, truly grateful for your time. You bring me a lot of hope.

Kaleb: I appreciate you.