Emergency Minute - Saving Gen Z: Resilience After the COVID Generation Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome back everyone to Emergency Minute Episode 29, Save Gen Z with award-winning author, colonel, and physician Dr. Josh McConkey. But before we get into that, a reminder that you can now check us out on YouTube if you prefer the video podcast, or you can join us on Spotify, Apple, or wherever else you get your normal audio podcast as well.

Now lastly, if you enjoy the show, please leave us a review on Apple, Spotify, YouTube, Like, comment, share on social media, this is the key to reaching more people to help with some of the topics we discuss and their personal journey within this broken health care system.

Now today's guest is Dr. Colonel Josh McConkey, best-selling award-winning author, esteemed emergency medicine physician with over 20 years of clinical experience.

He's a former Duke University professor, board certified emergency medicine physician, and he currently commands the 459th Aeromedical Staging Squadron in the U. S.

Air Force Reserves. where he continues to exemplify leadership and service. He has an acclaimed book, Be the Weight Behind the Spear, which has earned multiple accolades, including the 2025 Telly Award and a Pulitzer Prize nomination.

He resides in Apex, North Carolina with his wife, Elsa, where they raised their three children. They worked together to inspire the next generation of American leaders.

So without further ado, Dr. Josh McConkey, welcome to the show. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. It's good to see you. Yeah, it's great catching up.

And so, you know, you got a lot going on right now, obviously. I was reading through the resume, doing some show prep here. Catch me up to speed. Like, where are you at?

What are you working on? What's going on? Yeah, you know, been doing emergency medicine like you for over two decades now and, you know, try to make as big of an impact as you can there.

But just during COVID, I think really got burned out and we're just trying to make a difference another way. And with that generation that we really saw shut out of schools and churches and their communities, there's a huge mental health crisis in this country, which we both see and most people recognize.

So I wrote a book, you know, Be the Weight Behind the Spear. It's kind of my prescription to fix that problem and started a nonprofit organization, The Weight Behind the Spear Foundation to really promote community engagement.

And we've been really involved in Western North Carolina, raising money after Hurricane Helene. And then I've got my military career and family. So I stay very busy, but I enjoy it.

Yeah, I don't know when you sleep with that kind of a schedule. It's really impressive and I couldn't thank you enough for joining us on the show today.

I wanted to talk a little bit about your book, your award-winning book here, which we'll link in the podcast notes. Tell me a little bit about the book, the inspiration for it.

How did this all come together? So it's my personal leadership ethos. Be the weight behind the spear. I have a military challenge coin on the bottom. It's got the Latin inscription gravitate hostum, gravity of the spear.

So I've been very fortunate in my military career. I've got to work with a lot of special operations. So I was medical director for PJs, combat, search and rescue, and these individuals are amazing.

So that's the real tip of the spear. So to understand what it means to be the weight behind it, you kind of understand what that tip is. So these are the individuals jumping out of helicopters, taking down Bin Laden.

One of my team members actually was on the rescue in 2018 for those Thai children trapped in the caves, that soccer team in 2018. And you realize that These are just normal people, but there's just something different about them.

So the confidence, the monster egos as well, of course, but the confidence that they have, it's the weight behind their spear. It's our best resource in this entire country.

It's our people. So it's teachers, coaches, volunteers, families. Somebody was a mentor to them throughout their career. And that's what sets us apart.

That's what makes us an amazing country. And so everyone can make that difference. Like this is a team sport. Life is a team sport. Everybody needs to get involved, be the weight behind the spear in your community.

And this is my prescription to address just the issues we've seen with mental health and in this younger generation that's struggling right now. So it was well received, got nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Be the Weight Behind the Spear

I did not win, unfortunately, but hey, can't win them all. Yeah, it's incredible to get nominated and just to have that type of recognition to win the awards that you have won on this.

It's amazing. I've always thought about writing a book, but I guess I've never really sort of just sat down and done it because probably with my ADHD, I have like 100 projects going at the same time.

It seems like it was a complete work. Yeah, I've heard that. I think probably maybe when I retire, I'll write a book. I just I guess I have yet to figure out the best topic for my for my passion.

So but yeah, I'm looking forward to you sending me a copy because I definitely want to take a look at that. I wanted to also talk about your military experience here.

I have to read this because there's so much to go off of with your resume. Wicked impressive, your military and governmental involvement, nine-year veteran of the Army National Guard, chief of aviation medicine to the adjunct general and governor of Nebraska.

currently as a US Air Force Reserve and then also working as a liaison with FEMA coordinating defense support of civil authorities. I mean, I'd love to hear more about your work with the military and what this has taught you.

I saw your bio said from combat zones to the ER to book tours, which I think is is fantastic. You'll tell me a little bit more about your journey with the military.

Yeah, you know, I was very lucky. I had an ROTC scholarship coming out of high school and I was part of a rural health opportunities program. So I went to a really small school in Western Nebraska, Shadron State College.

If you know who Danny Woodhead is and Don Beebe, you know, some football players, alumni of Shadron State College. Go Eagles. And they were too small.

They didn't have an ROTC program. So I always wanted to be in the military. So when I got into medical school, I took a direct commission with the Army National Guard.

And the recruiter tells you about all the fun trips to Central America and the medical missions in Guatemala and Belize. And this is in early 2000. And then obviously, 9-11 the following year kicked off.

And we have been at war my entire career. I was always a huge military history buff. I grew up watching Apocalypse Now, Full Metal Jacket, Platoon, and always had a huge…

Classics. Just classics and looked up to military veterans. America called, and I was there. I flew Medevac in Iraq. I did one aerosol, by far the scariest thing I have ever done.

I am super happy to be alive. I wake up every single day thinking about those men and women that we carried off the battlefield, carry some body bags.

It really changes who you are as a person. And that's why I'm so motivated. When people are like, man, don't you ever sleep? They're like, no, like no.

Because those guys, I carry body bags. Those guys are done forever. Like every single waking moment, I am going to make a difference in this country in one way or another.

So that's what really keeps me motivated. My military command tour just ended at Andrews Air Force Base. That was A hundred men and women, best war fighting medics in the United States Air Force.

I take a ton of pride in that and now have moved on to emergency management. So I'm flying to DC later today. I'll get a briefing and, um, at joint task force NCR there in Washington, DC tomorrow, and then fly back Friday night here for another ER shift.

So it's, it's crazy busy, but I enjoy it. And you feel like you're making a difference. Yeah. And I mean, props to what you're, what you've gone through your, you know, your journey in life is certainly unique and inspirational.

Um, you know, I always think, you know, a lot of people don't realize what we do in the emergency room, what we see, you know, some of the horrors we see.

And I always like kind of catch myself. uh and check myself really to think about the people that are in the military because i think the only people that get out there be like no no we see a lot worse than what you see in the er you know our you know our first responders uh and then our military you know men and women so um yeah i can't even imagine being on those medevac uh choppers Probably there's got to be some feeling of helplessness as far as what you can do and obviously what you can't do for certain individuals, especially the ones that you're unfortunately taking away in a body bag.

Yeah, when that tracer fire starts flying in, there's a helicopter in front of you that loses an engine. There's some anti-aircraft weapons on the ground.

This was while they were shooting down helicopters. It was 2007. They shot down eight helicopters just before I got there. The day I landed, they shot down one of our helicopters.

I was not in it. And I'm just like, oh my god, this is such a bad idea. Oh my goodness, I survived and here I am. Wow, that's great. God bless for that and for the people that you were with as well.

So, you know, you certainly have a passion for, you know, Gen Z leadership tactics. And I've seen the phrase from your camp that says, you know, leadership and mentorship, not legislation will change the future.

I love that line. You know, tell me more about your passion for this generation. Yeah. So, you know, the government's not going to save us. OK, you know, there's the politics, they swing left, they swing right, you know,

leadership changes.

You can't rely on the government when you're talking about these types of issues. It's you. The person that you're looking at in the mirror is the only one that's going to solve this problem.

You have to get involved in your community. Everybody has a different set of skills. Some people are super burned out and they don't want to be around people.

Great. Go to your animal shelter. Those animals can be emotional support animals for somebody. For people that do like work with other people, go coach, go do little league, soccer, volunteer in your church, volunteer in your schools, go to the soup kitchen.

I mean, there's so much, there are so many organizations that need you and everybody has a different set of skills. So the more people that take ownership of that, I mean, don't rely on the government, don't rely on anyone else.

Military Service and Combat Experience

Like it has to be you, get out there. Yeah, and I think I couldn't agree more. And I do think, unfortunately, you know, I think society has trended in a direction where there is sort of this reliance on others, whether, you know, whether it be governments or parental or you know, some sort of just overall mentality of, you know, the world owes you something, or the world is going to get you to where you need to go.

And the reality is, like you said, you're the person behind the wheel of your life, and you, you know, need to be the weight behind that spear. You know, so I think it's unfortunate, but I think the message that you're sharing, I think is unique in that regard, because I like that sort of self-accountability, and that's what I, you know, preach my kids.

I have three kids now, God bless them. And they don't always listen, but they do a good job trying. But, you know, to your point, like I love coaching, I've helped my son with football and baseball and basketball and things like that over the years.

So I do think there are just those little things that you can do to make a difference. And so I love the message that you're putting out there. How about that big Ohio State game?

Yeah, I feel like it was like two heavyweight fighters that were just kind of like feeling things out for the first couple of quarters. I think it's unfortunate that it was week one, because I think if it was like week three or four, I think you would have seen a much different, you know, gloves off.

You know, two heavyweight guys just punched each other going at it. Archie Manning's first game. That was a that was a rough one. Ohio State D. Yeah, yeah.

But yeah, it was fun. I love the team aspect and competitive nature of college football. It's great that it's back. I did want to touch on one of the topics that we're doing some of the show prep and we were speaking you mentioned the mental health.

and obesity crisis that's sort of impacting Gen Z. And this is something that we both see in the emergency departments. I recall I was on a call a few years ago with, and I won't want to name names, but with a very prominent regional children's hospital.

And this was like about a year after COVID when we were doing the quarantine thing and kids were getting ripped out of schools and isolating and all this other stuff and wearing masks 24 hours a day.

And I remember hearing them say that their mental health visits were up in the emergency department over 400%. And I was, I was on this call and I'm like, yeah, you know, we're seeing a ton of it.

And we used to go like, I don't know, a month and we'd see like one 13 year old that was, you know, came into the

ER for like suicidal ideation. It was, it was extremely, I don't want to say rare, but it wasn't that often that we saw it now.

I mean, we see two or three a day. I mean, literally. Um, so there is this, I do think there's like this mental health crisis and obviously the obesity, like we talked about, like, what is, what do you see that has happened?

Why is it happening? And then how do we get this, how do we get these kids helping and this generation sort of back on track? Yeah. And it strikes really, really close to home.

My shift two days ago, as soon as I walked out the door, there was a 14-year-old boy that had shot himself with a handgun. My son, Luke, is 14. I went in the next morning because I relieved that same position.

We do 12-hour shifts and just had a chat. And man, it still rips your heart every time. I've been doing this for 20-some years. And it's still, when you have to talk with those families, I think it's a combination of issues so you just it was more of a perfect storm so you can talk about the policy issues during covid for sure i mean that had a huge impact but if you go back a little bit further there used to be helicopter parents you know just kind of hovering and trying to take care of everything I'm not sure when, but they just turned into lawnmower parents.

And so they just rode in front of their kid. They mowed down every obstacle in their path. They didn't allow them to make decisions. They didn't allow them to make any mistakes.

Everyone got a participation trophy, right? Everybody's a winner. Yay. Hooray for you. In those younger ages, I coached soccer. Everybody's out for fun.

But in real life, there's winners and losers. Everyone is not a winner. That's not reality. And so if you don't teach them that and then you mow down everything in their path, they don't know what to do.

They encounter a problem. They quit. They don't have resiliency. I saw that in the emergency department over the past three, four or five years. And as a military commander, all these young recruits coming in 18 to 25 years old, Wow.

I mean, it's, you know, the, Oh, back in my day, we used to, you know, those old, I don't want to be that old timer guy. I like back in my day type stories, but I'm telling you these 18 to 25 year old kids quit like that instantly.

Like one little obstacle. Oh, that's it. I quit. Like, No, no, no, you have to overcome that. Losing is not a bad thing, number one. So we have to get that out of people's heads because number one, if you're not pushing yourself hard enough to where you're losing at something, you're not pushing yourself hard enough.

All right. You have more in the tank. And then two, losing is not bad. That's how you learn. So as long as you make the make the changes, you don't make the same mistakes over and over because that's stupidity.

But if you, those mistakes are good. That's how they learn. Do be there safely. Don't be the lawnmower parent. Watch them. Let them make some little mistakes.

You know, I've got three kids of my own now. Like I said, my oldest is 14 and yeah, the lawnmower thing was not successful. And then you couple that with COVID.

We've got a very anxious, depressed, suicidal generation. And that's what we deal with every day. I saw another one two days ago. Yeah. Sorry to hear that.

That's, that's tragic. And, Nothing can prepare you for those. those children. And that's, that's the hardest part of what we do, right? Like we deal with your own kids.

Yeah. Yeah. I, I specifically recall cases in my career where I took care of a child that was like similar in, you know, age, shape and size to one of my kids.

And it definitely hits you harder being a physician and the emergency medicine physician before I had kids was a hell of a lot easier. And I'm not saying I don't generally rush, right?

Yeah, exactly. But it's a, Yeah, that's that's different for sure. And I do think I've, I like the lawnmower term, I've heard the snowplow parent, you know, I've heard that term because and it's hard, like, right?

Like, I mean, I've got three kids, like, I get it, like, you want to get out in front of them and push the snow away so that there's, you know, this clear path for their lives.

But at the end of the day, in the overall big picture, you're really not doing them any favors, they have to learn how to push the snow away themselves, right?

I mean, that's, that's kind of the goal. But it's as a parent, I have to check myself sometimes. And I'm like, on, wait, no, you know, h message. He needs to do to, you know, fail, miss that learn that that's what hap bad grades and then, you I also see, you know, I, y not to get political here know when you rip kids out of schools for nearly a year and you put masks over their mouth and isolate them and everybody's got to be six feet apart and all this other stuff like I I just don't know that we handle that the best way possible uh in hindsight of course hindsight you know more closer to 2020 so many people want to pass blame but we're not here for blame yeah ownership like it happened yeah no matter who did it now what are we gonna do to fix it so yeah and i think it impacted an entire generation yeah and so that was like you know with the book i talk about listen this is the most divided generationally and politically this country has been in my lifetime i'll be 48 here in days what can we all agree on like our kids right can't we all agree that we want them to be successful productive human beings developing leadership skills and not be anxious and depressed i mean i think every patient every parent can agree on that regardless of which where you fall on that political spectrum.

So let's just focus on that. That's something we can all agree on. Yeah, I mean, that's the path forward, right, is to find common ground. And I think, you know, with kids, that should be an easier place for us to all start and agree upon those things.

Gen Z Mental Health and Resilience

And I think another thing that you talk about that you're also very passionate about you know, with that, especially with the pediatric obesity, well, just the obesity, uh, you know, epidemic in general, but the pediatric version, I mean, the other day, the other day, I think I had a, like a six year old that was like a hundred kilograms, uh, or something along those lines.

And you're like, how, how is that even possible? Like how, you know, and I think the first, I'm very passionate about it because I've treated a lot of patients, uh, for weight loss over the years.

I started a weight loss physician guided weight loss company many years ago. Um, and I think the first, the first problem, is that society doesn't believe obesity is a disease.

That's the first problem. It's just calories. You just, you know, just go eat a salad every day. Yeah, it's not that easy. It's not that simple. Now there are things and steps that you can take.

I know one of the things that you're passionate about is fitness. Can you touch a little bit about that, especially in regards to like pediatric obesity and activity?

Yeah, when you just break it out of the basics, diet and exercise. So when they looked at reinstituting the presidential fitness program recently, it's more than just instituting a fitness program.

It's giving the kids confidence. And everyone was like, well, President Obama had decided to stop that because the top 15% were getting the awards for that.

What about the other 85%? Well, if you frame it in that we're all in competition with each other, then yeah, 85% of

the kids are losing. But it doesn't have to be about competition with other people.

It's competition with yourself. Like, are you making those strides? Like, last year, I can only do this many pushups. This year, I can do this many. That's what you celebrate.

That's what you focus on. Yeah, I'm still a fan of giving the top 15%, the nice little patch. I never got that growing up. I wanted that so bad. And I just I couldn't do pull ups like, oh, you know, I just I couldn't get it.

But don't have to focus on that as much. Yeah, celebrate that top 15%. But for the other kids, this is a fun challenge. You learn something about yourself.

It's your mental health as well, just as much as it is the physical. And then you have to talk about the nutrition and the diet and that component. But we have to give these kids the tools now more than ever, because so many of them have just been raised on iPads and iPhones.

And then during COVID, just completely locked away. It was absolutely horrific. But those simple things is how we start. And then we adjust fire from there, but you have to start somewhere.

And I think getting that program back is, is really important. Yeah. I couldn't agree more. And I think, you know, we talk about this a lot, the iPad sort of generation.

Nutrition is a whole, you know, whole separate conversation. You do an entire podcast on nutrition right now and, you know, additives and, you know, food and things like that.

But I think one of the things that I see right now that is just absolutely mind blowing to me is these electric scooters, like electric bikes, these e-bikes, e-scooters, the whole nine yards.

And I'm like, what are we doing? And by the way, like take away the, you know, physical fitness, you know, activity of the children, take, take that part over here.

Let's talk about the fact that these kids are flying around going 25 miles an hour without shoes, a helmet or anything on a main road. It was actually, I think it was Pennsylvania last week where like 14 and 12 year old kids were like struck and one was killed and the other one was like severely disabled or something like that.

I don't have the exact story in front of me, but from a just from a trauma standpoint, it's mind boggling me that these things are legal but overall bigger picture like yeah, when I went to go see my friends when I was fourteen, I rode my bike like all over the city of Cleveland.

Um I don't even know how I survived to be quite honest with you but at least we we did have a lot of activity and I see like all these things that are trending towards just like sitting there and riding these ebikes with like near like zero activity.

I'm like it's just mind blowing to it's just like that disney movie where like amanda eventually evolves to where they just never have to physically do anything and everyone weighs 300 400 pounds and now that big spaceship traveling across because they just destroyed earth i can't remember the name of that movie you know what i'm talking about i don't know what you're talking about but i don't remember the name of that one it was up with wally wasn't wally something like that yeah yeah i think so and it's just Taking something as simple as hey, just riding your bike.

Well, they've made it all electronic now, so you just remove that complete physical component. But they pushed so hard for so many years to wear helmets for bikes that just yeah, these motorized scooters are way worse, but somehow they just kind of forget about it.

Yeah, it's crazy. And I think my kids think I'm like, you know, the devil because I make them wear their helmets when they ride their bikes are the worst.

Yeah, for sure. And you know, my kids have never been on a trampoline. And my kids, when they ride their bikes, they wear helmets. I know I'm that guy, right?

Like, get off my lawn. You know, I'm that guy like the old guy now that And my kids probably think I'm crazy. They don't have e-bikes. They don't have e-scooters.

I tell them if they want to go ride a scooter or ride a bike, they can use their feet. So Glockham Plekin that you had on the show a couple of episodes previously, which was an awesome show, by the way.

He had a great TikTok. He had a great TikTok video, I think a year or two ago, just like the different physicians and how they manage their kids, but wearing helmets on things.

And the emergency physicians are always like super paranoid and, no, you can't go on the trampoline. And we see crazy injuries all the time. Yeah, one of the more absolutely one of the more common causes of pediatric paralysis in the, in the world that a lot of people aren't aware of.

Um, so yeah, it's not for me. And I know people probably, you gotta let your kids live and stuff. I get it. That's fine. They, they, they, you know, the irony is, is, uh, my, so my son is very active in sports, um, plays, you know, the big three basketball, baseball, football.

And, um, a few years ago at the completion of the baseball, uh, cycle there, He went to like the post game party, right? And he's on this like bounce house.

That's like a water bounce house. And he falls off somehow. The top third of the slide lands on his upper extremity, complete deformity of his forearm, you know, both bone fracture radius, ulna.

This thing is nasty. Um, and it's just funny because looking back, he healed, he's fine. He's good. But the irony is that he plays sports 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

And that's years. God bless never got majorly injured. And then he goes to like the party with the bounce house and he falls off and breaks his arm. So it's going to happen, but I don't know these, these e-bikes, you know, getting back to that point is just, it's mind blowing to me that these parents are like, let's buy these, let's throw our kids on them.

25 miles an hour down the road without a helmet, no shoes. And you know, what could go wrong? Yeah. We see him in our neighborhood all the time. I'm just waiting for one of them to fall and break something from my house.

Yeah, for sure. Yeah, for sure. Well, I see that you're running for governor, excuse me, the lieutenant governor of North Carolina. Yeah. So tell me about that.

Where are you at in this journey? And how did this how did this come to, you know, come to fruition here for you? Yeah, well, you just see some of those policy decisions.

And like I said, I wake up every single day trying to figure out how I can make a difference. I just don't take no for an answer and I can't stand still.

And so you saw some of those COVID policy decisions that really damaged a good chunk of our population, our younger generation, which is really our best resources, our kids.

And when you see the anxiety and the depression and then you see these suicides, somebody has to do something. We have to have more principled, purpose-driven leadership.

And in North Carolina, the Lieutenant Governor runs on a separate ticket from the governor. They're not together. And the Lieutenant Governor also chairs the Department of Education.

So, you know, as a physician, a lifelong teacher, I was a professor at Duke University. My wife is a teacher, my mom was a teacher. You know, I really feel strongly that we need someone with that skill set.

in the lieutenant governor, you know, mansion, not that it's a mansion here in North Carolina, but we need someone there that has that skill set because we just currently don't.

And I don't agree with the decisions that were made. So I'm going to do something about it. I love it. Yeah. Well, you have my vote. I don't think I get one in North Carolina, but if I could come down and vote, I definitely would spread the love, spread the love, you know, and I think we do need, you know, more physician leadership in those positions that are influential because you know, there's a big chatter right now about whether physicians should be able to own hospitals or help run hospitals, things like that.

It is kind of nonsense, right? Like it is kind of nonsensical that why, why shouldn't we, we, you know, we're the ones that are on the front lines. Like we know how hospitals work, you know, so there, I get that discussion and I see it all the time, but you know, to your point, to your, you know, bigger purpose sort of over, over a branching, idea of becoming lieutenant governor.

I applaud you for that. I don't know how that fits in with life, military, emergency medicine, et cetera. I'll probably have to retire from the military with that one, but I've served for 24 years, so that's a good excuse to hang it up.

Yeah, you've certainly put your time in and earned that, so to speak. Uh, completely off topic. I did see a video recently, some of the content that you put online where you discussed winning the lottery.

And I, and I wanted to talk to you about this because well, first of all, you know, before we even talk about it, we both won the lottery. I think we can agree on that, right?

Like my, I have a, I have beautiful family. I have three healthy kids. Uh, God, God bless. Uh, you know, they're healthy. They're happy. I have a smoking hot wife and, uh, she could not be great, uh, any better than she is right now.

I certainly don't deserve her. I do have to check to see if the $2 power ball ticket I won last night hit because it's 1.4 billion. Yeah, I bought a ticket as well.

I checked this morning. I won $4. Oh, congratulations on winning the Powerball. Yeah. So, uh, so yeah, we definitely won the lottery. We have the lives that we've dreamed of.

That being said, I want you to tell me if you can, like the moment you did win and like what experience like what went through your head, like what was the first thing that like that you went through your head?

Yeah. So like literally I've told the story a few times.

Pediatric Obesity and Fitness

There was a lot of podcasts that I've been on. So it's Wednesday and Gabriel's in gymnastics. So I drive him over to gymnastics. There's a gas station like right in the same parking lot, drop him off, go fill a car up.

And I just see, you know, in the window there, they list the lottery and the cash five lottery. You know, I'm a math and science nerd. You're much more likely, as opposed to like the Powerball and Mega Ball where you have to have that Powerball.

There's just five numbers. So statistically, you do have a better chance. And that was up to, I think, $1.1 million. I was not able to go into the store.

They have an online thing. I signed up. I had already signed up that night and bought a ticket. Did not win Thursday night. I just rolled the same numbers forward to Thursday.

And Friday morning, it's chaos. I got three kids, like, put on your shoes. Did you make your lunch? Feed the cat. Like they're running all over the place.

Just, you know, just managing chaos. And I get an email and the phone, I'm just like, Whoa, that's kind of weird. It says like, you need, we need that.

So it says like, you know, won the lottery and you need to log in and give us your social security number. I'm like, Oh yeah, whatever. All right. Sure.

You won the inheritance from Pakistan, right? Yeah. Total scam. But I mean, the email says is from North Carolina educational lottery. So I went in my computer and I'm sitting right here at my desk and I've logged in and it just like pops up like an obscene amount of money because it had rolled forward.

So it was like worth 1.5 billion at that time. Um, and I talked to my wife, like Elsa, Like, can you come in here, please? And she could tell there's clearly something wrong with my voice.

And she's staring at the screen. She's like, well, that's not real, is it? I'm like, I don't know. Yeah, I think it is. And so I'm filling it out. And I fill out just like the paperwork on there.

And then an hour later, I get an email. They're like, hey, come on into Raleigh. Pick up your check. I'm like, really? Well, this is wild. And then you understand I'm in the middle of a congressional campaign.

So to my knowledge, I'm the only active congressional candidate who's ever won the lottery. So it got national news. It was the UK and international. Like it was like one of the top feeds on Apple news, yada, yada.

So I go into the lottery winner site in Raleigh and there's like bulletproof glass and all kinds of signs and everything up. And I walk up and I'm like, hey, I think I won the lottery.

They're like fell out this form and I felt the form. I handed to her and she's like turns around, picks up like little red bat phone. The online winner is here.

I'm like, whoa, whoa, this is real. This is really happening. Whoa, so they they badge you through one door and then they badge you through another door and you're sitting in the lottery winner room and there's like the wall painted for like all the all the pictures and you know, just like North Carolina educational lottery.

And it was bizarre because I sit down and it's just me and the person that walked me back there and they're just like, okay, well, I'm going to take off and this phone is going to ring in about five or 10 minutes.

Why are you? What is I just sitting there by myself in this room with a phone in front of me? So I'm playing. I get punked. Yeah, you get punked right now.

Is there a camera? It's really bizarre because I'm testing my campaign manager like, dude, I think I won the lottery. Do we? And because I'm asking like, well, number one, do we want to say anything about it in North Carolina?

They do announce it. So I was like, well, it's already out of the bag. But you think about just keeping it private if they don't announce it, then for sure.

And then the phone rings and they ask you all the questions like you know, do you own a gas station? Do you own anyone that owns a lottery machine? Does your family work for the lottery?

Does your family own a gas station like? Nope, you know, just just trying to make sure there's no way you could have. I have no idea how you would do that online anyways, but yeah, make millions are not cheater.

That Macmillan's documentary talked about that for the McDonald's thing, how it was fixed. That's funny. Okay. Yeah. So then they walk in with a big cartoon check.

I've got it over here. Maybe I show it to you. So the big cartoon check and they take the pictures and You know, I talked to my wife on the phone, like Elsa, it's real.

Like I'm holding the check and she's like, oh my God, I can't believe this. And I'm like, and I told the kids before we left that morning, do not tell anybody.

Cause if this is like, like some scam, I'm looking like a total idiot. I do not say anything, but it actually would be great. So. Oh my gosh. What a cool story.

So they let you they let you walk out with the check. Yeah. So so there's there's the big cartoon check for the pictures and then there's there's the paper check like for I've seen.

How's it made out to your name then? Yeah. Yeah. It's just like go to the bank and cash it out. Take those taxes out right away. So you just took like $500,000 in taxes like right, right there.

I can't remember what the exact total was. And then I'm just walking around with this huge check. I'm just like, well, I'm going directly to the bank because what happens if this gets lost or gets, I mean, like, oh my gosh, I just drove to the bank and deposited it.

And the tether is just like, I'm like, yeah, I'm just a dude. I'm in here all the time and I won the lottery. Oh, that's amazing. I've never met a lottery winner before.

And, and then all the media and the interviews and, you know, in Europe, like the UK, and people come from all over the place, like Arkansas, some people I served with, like, dude, did you win the lottery?

Yeah, that's insane. But it's really good karma coming back. Because long story short, the years before that, I had a business venture with actually some some old residency classmates that had a CEO that was just not a nice individual.

He's going to be in jail eventually. But long story short, he was embezzling money. I called him out. He didn't like that. offered me a $3.4 million bribe.

I told him to shove it up his rear end because you can't bribe me. I'm a Colonel in the United States military and he punished me for it. So he tried to bankrupt the company.

We filed a lawsuit to prevent him from bankrupting it, but COVID hit. We couldn't get a court date. And then he actually made some threats. I got the FBI involved.

He decided not to press charges because he hadn't actually physically done anything yet, yada yada. And he actually moved the family to Australia for a year.

in Adelaide until that blew over and then moved back here in North Carolina. So it's kind of wild. But when you see that whole history, I think it was God, honestly, just kind of testing you.

Lieutenant Governor Campaign

How far can you push you? Will you actually stick to your guns? And that integrity kind of held out. So four years later down the road, like, hey, man, I know I put you through it.

I lost $5 million. So I think that was gorgeous. Hey, I was just testing you out and you passed the test. So here's a good karma coming your way. Well, that's what a fantastic story and a great ending.

Everybody's journey is truly unique and their own, right? Life happened. And you just learned number one, you can't control other people. There are mean, nasty, evil people out there and you can't control it, but you can control how you respond.

That's all you can control is yourself. And I was not going to change who I was. You know, I've seen money change a lot of people. It doesn't change me in the slightest.

So I still keep doing what I'm doing. Yeah. Well, it's great to see. Uh, that integrity, uh, again, that's something I think that we desperately need, uh, you know, in Washington representing, you know, the people, um, you know, I think on both sides of the aisle, there's been a lot of, you know, concerns about that integrity.

Uh, did this backfire at all on you? Like, like, I know, like, you know, there's a lot of, you know, politicians that get, you know, put into situations where they're, you know, Salaries 170 grand a year and they're worth, you know, $150 million.

And you're like, okay, come on something. It was the primary. So it gave us tons of earned media. So it was fantastic because I'm basically a nobody. I'm just a guy.

I'm a combat veteran, emergency physician, proud Duke professor with a wife and three kids that like literally wakes up every day and I care. And, but, but nobody knew who I was.

So. Now they know. And it was a, if you follow politics at all, it was a swing district. It was me versus just the other incumbent. And then they redistricted and it became an R plus 17 district.

So I, at the time, was the only Republican candidate. Then it blew up to 14 other people jumping into the race. One candidate spent $12 million. I had a rich father and then a couple other candidates spent like 3-4 million dollars, so it knocked me out of the runoff.

I had a great team. I learned a ton. I really felt we probably had the best platform in candidacy. But when you have $12 million, you can actually do anything you want.

And so they just missed winning it outright by getting over 30%. They got like 28%. So it went to a runoff. And then that person that spent $12 million just wasn't a good candidate.

So they just quit. Oh my gosh. So they knocked me out of the runoff and then they just quit. Oh my gosh. Which is why I'm getting involved very early now in this lieutenant governor race.

I'm a genuine guy who really cares and people know that. And now they know who I am. And so I've got to put the work in. I don't have $12 million to blow on that.

I mean, I would never spend a lot of winnings on that anyways. I mean, I got a wife and three kids and paid money down on the house and took care of my family.

But, you know, it really put us in that public sphere. I was able to start the foundation, the Weight Behind the Spear Foundation, you know, contributed money in Western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene.

And we've done great things with that. And I think, you know, God's got to put us in a good place to be successful. Oh, that's great. That's great to hear.

And when's the election take place? Yeah, so it's 2028 and we have a long runway. But like I said, you know, I just don't have $12 million to blow on ads.

I have to actually campaign and be a qualified candidate. If people want to learn more, they can go to StrongerNC.com. You know, we're stronger together and this is a team sport, so I need everybody.

Yeah, and we'll put any of those links that you shared with me, definitely in the show and support you any way we can and put out some clips on social media as well.

So I think that'll be well received by both of our audiences, especially there's probably a lot of crossover between

the two. Well, good. Well, I always try to sort of end up the show on some positive notes.

So I appreciate you sharing that story with us. And then I always just for fun, just for some brevity here, what kind of couple couple questions that are rapid fire for fun.

What's your favorite food as an easy one? My wife's black beans and rice. It is fantastic. Great comfort food. It's so good. There is a chapter in my book devoted to it.

I look forward to reading that. My wife can cook and that has been one of the biggest blessings in my life. She's amazing. I don't know how they do it, but God bless them.

My daughter asked me this yesterday. I threw this curve ball at you here this morning. If you could talk to one person dead or alive, who would it be?

Boy, yeah, that's a really good question. I was really racking my brain. I would love to talk with Lee Harvey Oswald. I want to know the real story. Was he the only shooter?

You know, I mean, just like I sit down with them, like, Hey, listen, man, you're going to walk out of here. Uh, Jack Ruby's going to shoot you. Like, this is your only chance to clear your name for history.

Like, tell me, tell me what really happened. Like I would love to, I'd love to chat with them. That's a great one. I didn't see that coming, but I liked, I liked that we're standing in Chipotle yesterday and I'm like, my daughter asks me this and I'm like, this is like a really profound question.

Lottery Win and Integrity Story

I'm like, I, I don't know that standing in Chipotle placing an order with my phone is like the right, like, you know, arena for me to be able to give this question the answer that it deserves some of those kid questions.

They're just like so honest and pure and they just really want to know. I mean, they're just, they had the best questions. Yeah, for sure. Um, what's your favorite vacation spot?

Vacation spot. So my wife's parents have a place down to the Keys, down to Duck Key. I grew up in rural Nebraska, right? So for me, it just blows my mind.

You literally walk out the backyard, there's a pool, there's a dock, you can jump in the ocean and just like grab a lobster. It's incredible. So yeah, the Florida Keys.

Florida Keys, very good. What's the last show that you binge watched? So we're watching now Wednesday on Netflix. I think it was on Netflix, right? So yeah, last night I had a radio hit on America at Night with Rich Valdez on West Brooklyn.

So he has a nine to midnight show. I was on a 915. and finished the show. They all went into the spare bedroom to be nice and quiet for the radio interview.

And I just opened the door and like the whole family, three kids, the two cats snuggled up watching that show. I jumped in, I'm like, oh, this is heaven right here.

Number one, because the Lucas 14, the twins are 13 here in about two weeks. So you get three teenagers to like cuddle up on a couch and watch a show together, you know it's gotta be good.

So yeah, Wednesday. That's awesome. Yeah. It's hard to find something for, you know, that makes all of the kids happy, right? Like that's our biggest struggle.

Um, especially with our eight, we have 14, 13, and then six. So it's like this, this wide array of stretch. So we're,

we're, we're out, we're watching all like 10 seasons of friends or however many seasons are the classics, just so many like life lessons in there that we're just like, okay, let's pause.

Cause that was really awkward. Let's talk about that topic. And you know, and so it's funny, but, um, But yeah, no, it's good. Um, and then you're in North Carolina, right?

So have you been following, you know, Bill Belichick? What are your thoughts on him? Oh my gosh. So, you know, that one, I've talked about a few speaking engagements as well, because, you know, his, his, um, if you follow Bill Belichick, like his, his, uh, his, his, his motto was like, do your job, right?

Do your job. And, you know, did you watch the Tom Brady roast that they did last year? Yeah. Yeah. Wow. And so when he got up there and he basically told Gronk, like, I see you on TV all the time.

You're doing all these commercials. You do all this USAA. For the first time, I'm telling you, stop doing your job. And all the patriots, like Edelman, they just all lost it because their whole career, he's just railing on, do your job, do your job.

And for the first time, he tells them, stop doing your job. So yeah, that's a fascinating story. He's got a 24 year old girlfriend. Yeah, so I watched that.

It was on. It was on pretty late. It started like 8 or 9 o'clock here on the East Coast, so I only watched like the first half. It was. It was not much of a game.

I got absolutely destroyed by TCU, but it's fascinating. It's like 20 minutes from my house, so I'll probably try to get to it. If they keep playing like that, I'm gonna get some tickets real easy, right?

So I'll take the kids. I'm in Nebraska Cornhusker. I grew up in Nebraska, but it's fascinating watching him. at the collegiate level, it seems pretty bizarre.

Yeah, I'm not sure what he's trying to prove or unless this is just like his swan song, you know, like, I don't know. But it's wild to each his own. Everybody's got their own path, right?

Yep. And then the last thing I wanted to ask you is what's one thing that people don't know about you that you want to share? Well, a lot of people don't know that I went until very recently.

I hate public speaking. I literally would get anxious and palpitations. Maybe it was even like, maybe before Iraq. So I had done some speech classes and some things in college.

Like I did not do pub speaking. So I ran a congressional race where you're speaking 24 seven all the time, all throughout the state. And it just beat it right out of me.

I can go on camera, talk about anything, anytime. I was on Newsmax this morning, did a segment, and I can just get up and talk now. I think number one, being very passionate and really believe in what I'm doing helps.

I think being in combat, being shot at and watching people give up their lives for this country, like, how am I worried about getting on TV? Like, come on now.

So yeah, that congressional race beat it right out of me. Yeah, I mean, I guess that's, you know, face your fears head on, right? I mean, that's, that's impressive.

Rapid-Fire Questions and Closing

I never knew that because you come across on your interviews and everything. And I've seen you on TV and things very genuine. And I think that resonates with people.

You know, so whatever you're doing seems seems to be working. Where can people find you? Yeah. So you can learn more at weight behind the spear.com W E I G H T wait behind the spear.com and then on Instagram it's Josh McConkey MD and on X it's McConkey 007. Seven.

Love it. Well, yeah. So we appreciate you for joining us today on the show. I cannot thank you enough and you'll certainly wish you nothing but the best on your journey, your continued journey with that long runway up till 2028. Uh, and that, you know, that, uh, big challenge that you have in front of you, but certainly we hope that you're successful in that.

And, um, you know, again, I appreciate it and thank you for joining the show. Uh, all of our subscribers will hopefully follow you and, and, uh, find you on social media.

And of course you can always follow Dr. Jay Parente on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, uh, YouTube, just about anywhere. Um, so I do appreciate it. And I like to end all of our shows with a saying that, uh, you might be familiar with because you worked with dr to Julius and I hope, I hope I'm allowed to say his name, but peace, love and happiness to everybody out there.

Cheers guys. Keep up the great work. Thanks, man.