

Jacob Morgan 00:00

Intro before we actually publish this, but for now, I'll introduce you as Lieutenant Colonel Dan Rooney. I'll talk about the flying to the wind, and I'll mention founder Folds of Honor. And then like I said later, I'll do a longer intro. Perfect.

Dan Rooney 00:14

How long are we going for Jacob?

Jacob Morgan 00:16

60 minutes.

Dan Rooney 00:17

60 minutes. Okay, perfect. Let me let me make sure I get somebody picking up my kid. I have five daughters. And I

Jacob Morgan 00:25

know crazy. It's time of day. Just make one son and one daughter. I can't imagine five daughters.

Dan Rooney 00:35

I don't know if I'm gonna have good stuff for you for 60 minutes.

Jacob Morgan 00:39

I got questions for you. I promise it goes by very quickly.

Dan Rooney 00:43

No, I'm kidding. All good. All right, let's do this.

Jacob Morgan 00:47

Okay, cool. So introduce you. We'll jump right in. Hey, everyone, welcome to another episode of leading the future of work. My guest today Lieutenant Colonel Dan Rooney, Best Selling Author of flying to the wind, how to harness faith and fearlessness on your ascent to greatness. And he's also the founder of Folds of Honor. Dan, thank you for joining me.

Dan Rooney 01:06

Oh man blessed to be with you, Jacob. Congrats on hosting an awesome podcasts and all the guests you've you've had on it. So I feel humbled to be included.

Jacob Morgan 01:16

Oh, flattery is the best way to start any episodes. So thank you. Why don't we get started with a little bit of background information about you? For people who are not familiar with you or your work? Why don't you take us even way back to how you were raised as a kid? And how did that bring you to where you are now?

Dan Rooney 01:38

Yeah, so um, I call them moments of synchronicity or chance with a purpose. And we'll probably get into that because I'm, I'm kind of a Star Wars geek too. And I just believe in this force that's always around us, right? It's omnipresent. It's something and if you harness and recognize it, you can piece significant moments together in your life, but also the little moments that occur every day and going all the way back for me. So I was born and raised in Stillwater, Oklahoma, son of a college professor taught at Oklahoma State University. And I was 12 years old. And I had my first like, defining moment of synchronicity on the golf course. And I met my first fighter pilot. And his name is Steve Kortright. His callsign is Reno. And I remember meeting this guy, and he might well have walked out of the movie The Right Stuff. He's about six to seven feet tall, steely blue eyes, good looking dude. And he was 40. And I remember I'm 12. And I'm like, you can be grown up and this cool. And he was like, yeah, man, and you want to drink my Bud Light. And that was it. Right? My first man crush. I'm like, all in and I remember playing golf couple days later with my dad. And I'm like, Hey, Dad, I know what I want to do with my life. I want to be a golf pro and a fighter pilot. And his response to me was was pretty interesting. And you mentioned the book, but he said, Son, can you tell me which way an airplane takes off? And I'm like, I think it's in the wind. He said, Yeah, man. That's exactly right. Obviously, preparing this 12 year old kid for the inevitable headwinds that would stand between me and this very unlikely dream. I mean, so unlikely I'm a rare bird only guy in the history of the world to be a golf pro and a fighter pilot. But he really had no idea how God would, you know, take those things forward. And you know, grew up and you know, Leave It to Beaver household and spend a bunch of time on the golf course playing sports, but was good enough to head north to the University of Kansas to to play college golf. And that's kind of my upbringing.

Jacob Morgan 03:46

Very cool. And how did you actually get to become a fighter pilot? And what was that process? Like as far as the the schooling the training? And do you remember the first time you sat in? You were playing F 16? I believe, right?

Dan Rooney 03:59

Yeah. Yeah. So still still flying in the air force. I'm an old dude. But yeah, and, you know, to be a fighter pilot is an extraordinary journey and a gauntlet I remember the very first day of training, you obviously got to get a college degree, which I did and then you go to officer training and then you show up and pilot training for me it was in Wichita Falls, Texas, Sheppard, Air Force Base. Okay. And first day class, there's 45 guys in there and just the spit Polish blue Air Force uniforms. And this steely eyed Colonel walks in and he said, Hey, man, welcome to your boyhood dream. He was like, over the next two and a half years, we'll spend \$8 million per pilot training you. And the realities are most of you showed up here and you want to be fighter pilots, but less than 5% will achieve that goal and that doesn't mean you're going to wash out of the program. You can fly bombers or cargoes or tankers or whatever, but of the 45 you can do the math I found that, you know, that's three or four people. And I, over this two and a half year period, really experienced three transformational lessons that I love to share with people that the first one was day two, when I realized that, you know, only 5%, we're gonna make it. And that was my dream to be a fighter pilot, I started a routine that I have not stopped and 22 years. And that's I start every day with prayer. So I try to beat the world out of bed. But that's my first thing, a cup of coffee I get in the book. And that's the greatest gift the Air Force has given me is that routine that I probably

would have never had if I hadn't faced, you know, a task that was this big and overwhelming for, you know, a 25 year old kid.

Jacob Morgan 05:46

And I guess for a lot of people, you if you're for a lot of people, even if you're not religious that could be like maybe your morning gratitudes, or what you're thankful for or what you want to accomplish during the day, but it sounds like whatever it is, it's some routine or practice that kind of sets you up for the rest of the day.

Dan Rooney 06:04

Yeah, and I couldn't agree more. And obviously, you know, for me, it's, it's the big man, and in saddling up with purpose to start the day and preparing for that day, and not just waking up and letting the day take you wherever it might go. Right

Jacob Morgan 06:19

having purpose in your day and planning it out. Yeah, yeah. And so that

Dan Rooney 06:23

was Lesson number one, lesson number two, we have a very dangerous business. And you know, it's a business, you can't get life insurance as a fighter pilot. And there's a motto that I learned the second day of training, which is stay ready, so you don't have to get ready. And again, to your point, Jacob, man, that translates really well to life, right, you shouldn't always be trying to get ready for the moment where you, you know, you gotta execute at work, or you, you know, you got to execute in a game. It's the culmination of always being ready, so that when that moment shows up, you can define it and that moment doesn't define you. And you know, in our world, those moments can be life and death. And you better not be trying to figure out what you're going to do when the airplanes on fire is happening. Right? It's kind

Jacob Morgan 07:09

of reminds me that the freeze, create your own luck, where you don't just wait for something to happen. But you're always you're always on the sideline, preparing, just waiting to get put into the game, you're always practicing, you're showing up earlier than everybody else. You're, you're always preparing and you're ready because at some point moment will come and it usually does come for for a lot of people out there. And you don't want to have that moment come along and say oh my god, what do I do you want to say I'm ready, I've been waiting for this moment, my whole life and I'm, you know, I'm gonna crush it.

Dan Rooney 07:44

preparation meets opportunity. Yeah, in my case, preparation may save your butt, right? As a fighter pilot. And so that was lesson number two. And then lesson number three, once you make it to the F 16, which was out at Luke Air Force Base, you get four rides with an instructor and your fifth ride is so low, or you wash out of the program. I remember sitting in this,

Jacob Morgan 08:09

you know, 54 rides, and then fifth on

Dan Rooney 08:12

your rights fifth ride solo, or you're out of the program. So I'm sitting in this \$55 million jet, which has a top speed of about Mach 2.5. That's 1700 miles an hour, goes zero to 50,000 feet and under one minute climbing straight up. It's called an unrestricted climb, but 90 degrees to the ground. I mean, this is an unbelievable machine. And there I am, all by myself sitting in it. And I'm like, Hey, what the heck. So I hit start to no keys required. And I bet Jacob you could take off and F 16 You probably couldn't land one. But anyway, I take me to do either. Yeah, I take off on Atlanta, and I come back and I remember like, it was yesterday pulling into my my parking spot and I raised this bubble canopy on the F 16. And there's this cold wind that hits me and it's August in Phoenix. So it's like 140 out and you realize dude, I've been in fight or flight literally for the last hour of my life. But as I unstrap from this jet, one of the most transformational moments of my life settled in and it's go before you're ready. And I talk about this in my book is well but man that not only is it a life anthem for me, I would argue that if there was one piece of DNA that ties greatness together, that's it man and just go before you're ready, and for me, it's I'm so fanatical about it. It's like the crazier The idea is the the more certain I am that I have to go but I I truly believe that the universe conspires for people that that just go and have that reckless faith and the good stuff and life is out on the ragged edges. And you got to go out there and get it and it's, you know, it's so many People are, are planning and I'm not saying that planning is a bad thing altogether. But if you're not careful, man, you can plan your life away, you know, and having the courage and faith to listen to what's in your heart translated in go before you're ready and not figure everything out. And certainly don't listen to all the people pontificating around you that will try to make you a prisoner of common assumption and tell you the things you can't do, or you can do. And that was, those are my big three is, is a fighter pilot that a man I take with me each and every day. From training, I learned a few more lessons on my three combat tours. But those were the foundational lessons as a fighter pilot,

Jacob Morgan 10:43

and love that. And I want to talk a little bit more about the F 16. My dad actually worked works in the aerospace industry. And he actually worked on the F 22. To help do some of the design stuff there. And he would tell me stories about that thing. And I've been to a couple of air shows, and I think they had some Epstein's and MiGs and stuff like that. I mean, they're amazing things to watch. So one thing that I thought was really interesting that you mentioned, you get four tries with an instructor where they kind of show you everything, and then a fifth time you're on your own, which to me is very, very relevant to the leadership world to the business world, because it's sort of like, at some point, you got to take the training wheels off. And at some point, you, as an employee or mid level leader, are going to have to take that chance and take that risk. And you know, to do things yourself, what happens when you mess up. So for the people who wash out, and they can't do that fifth, fly on their own. What do they I mean, do they like crash? I mean, do can they not land? Like you're up there by yourself? Right? I mean, what do you do if nobody can help you figure out how to get the plane down?

Dan Rooney 11:56

Yeah. So you're not going to get they're not going to send you if you can't get the plane down, right. So it's called proficiency and those first four rides, and you have to get signed off to go solo. And if you're

not going to get signed off to go solo, then you ain't going solo. And those people may not wash out of the Air Force. Totally, they might get retract and they go fly in air refuel or Obama or something like that. But yeah, it's, that's why it's, you know, the most expensive highest attrition rate of any training in the US military. There's nothing even close. As far as as far as that goes, but

Jacob Morgan 12:33

yeah, 1700 miles an hour or so how many? How many G's does that put on your body?

Dan Rooney 12:39

Well, the speed doesn't put any G's on your body, it's when you turn and you fight gravity. So the F 16 is a nine G sustainable aircraft. And if you watch Top Gun two, they're making a big deal about seven G's. So we're a nine G sustainable aircraft and that feels like an elephant sitting on you. It is like, you know, playing NFL football, and, you know, call to duty all at the same time. So it's very mental and very physically demanding. So it's, it's, it's, you know, it's really hard to describe other than it's, you know, the greatest drug I've ever ingested in my life, the way you feel and how truly alive you are flying a fighter pilot and just every one of your senses is kind of out operating at the highest level when when you're in that environment.

Jacob Morgan 13:38

Have you ever been flying where you lost control or and maybe not all of your senses were firing the right way and something bad happened as a result when you were maybe not present when you should have been?

Dan Rooney 13:49

Yeah, so I you know, I talked about it and fly into the wind but I almost killed myself on a routine flight which is, you know, complacency. I truly believe it's the devil's greatest weapon against all of us, especially people that are you know, you're successful. You made it and you get comfortable and for me, it was a you know, wasn't a combat sortie. It was just a typical sortie taken off at a Tulsa International, and I raised the gear about a half a second early in the jet and the way the controls are the unlike a normal airplane, we're actually a pilot has to put the flaps up. This is all computerized and so when you actuate the gear, the flaps come up on the aircraft, but I wasn't quite far and away from the ground of the jet actually settled back down on the 370 gallon fuel tank on the bottom of the airplane external tank. And unbeknownst to me, I had no idea I did it. And I come back around and I fly land and they put gas in the airplane they call me out and they're like, hey man, check this out. And I had just scraped the bottom of the tank and so gas was dripping out. And you know, based on the, all the metrics on the airplane, and it's super smart, so they pull the tapes and look at it, you know, another quarter of a second, that tank ruptures and blows up underneath me. And just, you know, total mistake on my part. And, you know, I talk about this in my book flying to the wind, but it was, it was that moment that was insidious, but it was like it, it lit off a life storm for me that lasted like 10 years, where the view of you know, myself, and I would say it's very dangerous to tie your identity to what you do, and what you do when it becomes who you are that as a fragile place to operate in this world ban. And it was a secession of a lot of things that, that kicked off in my life that got so bad that, you know, three years later, I ended up having to quit being a fighter pilot was my boyhood dream. And thankfully, you know, three years after that, I would be able to get back and have a mulligan, if you will, and get back in the

Air Force and fly again. But, you know, our lives are defined by what we do when it doesn't go our way. Yeah, and I don't know if everybody listens out there, like me or not, but that happens multiple times a day. But I you know, and I think too, sometimes you gotta walk in the desert by yourself not to get too deep into this, but the things you learn and struggle, and when your ego just you know, gets multiple gut punches. It's not fun in the moment, but it's a real blessing, especially as you evolve as a leader and the humility required to I think, lead effectively. And I'm proud to be the most broken guy that walks into every room, whether I'm leading in the military, or I'm leading it Folds of Honor, and share my shortcomings, the struggles that I've had, and it has an incredible impact on bringing people together because everybody's struggling, that's the common denominator of humanity.

Jacob Morgan 17:05

It's so a couple of questions, and maybe we can, you can share a little bit about that story and what happened. But before we get into that, you mentioned something important, which is complacency, and why that is such a danger and why it was such a danger for you. But I also want to talk a little bit about why it's such a danger for people inside of organizations for business leaders just for for us in general. Because it seems like a lot of people struggle with that they get into that routine of like uncomfortable, I'm good. Like I'm gonna show up to work. I know what my day is gonna look like I know the meetings then, like I it's routine. Why is that such a dangerous thing for us complacency and just being comfortable all the time? And how do you get out of it?

Dan Rooney 17:46

Yeah, and I'll tell a story, right, because nobody cares about pontification. But a story for me, I remember flying a combat mission on my second tour of duty in Iraq. And I was an alert pilot flying at night, and I was supporting Navy SEALs, special operators. And we had a tick which is called the Troops In Contact. So basically, you know, our guys are fighting for their life in close proximity. And they bring me and another F 16 into the fight because we're a very violent weapons system, I'd say you know, we turn stuff into pink Miss man, we show up and kill bad guys and save good guys. That's our job. And, but I remember sitting in a very comfortable room, just chilling out and the horn sounds the alert horn, which is, uh, which launches us lets us know, hey, we're getting into the fight. And we'll be airborne in seven minutes at that point. But running to the jet. One of the things that I learned as a fighter pilot is that, you know, courage and comfort can never coexist. And that translated these, these courageous moments are when we're growing comfortable moments are either you're sedentary or you're you're going backwards. And it goes back to your question of complacency. And I truly believe that that's the the devil's greatest weapon on on the walk and especially as you get through these phases in life, and you know, a lot of young people starting out you're kind of in this fight or flight, right, man, I gotta make it I gotta figure it out. And then you get to this point where it's like, Hey, I'm okay. Right? I got a house. I got a couple of nice cars, I got a family, my life is stable. I'm gonna take a deep breath, translated, I'm gonna stop growing. I'm not I don't have to work as hard. I don't have to use my talents. At the level I used to. Because I've made it and you know, that is that's so hard and it's so real. And then you combine that with the fact Jacob we live in a world that's trying to make you comfortable. Right Man, look at your iPhone and Netflix and the food that will show up at your front door and you can spend In a day in your house and do nothing, and be fully entertained in this binge oriented world that that we live in. And so you're fighting against this force that's trying to make you comfortable. And I think number one is you got to be aware of it. And number two is I live by routine, I live by a code each

and every day, to make sure that I don't fall prey to Ah, man, I'm comfortable. I had to work today life is life so good.

Jacob Morgan 20:33

What's maybe you can share a little bit about what that code is? And how can people get out of that zone of complacency. So let's say you have a full time job, maybe you're a leader, maybe you're an individual contributor, and you feel like you're in that cycle, right? That hamster wheel where the days feel the same, the work feels the same. And, you know, it's not like you're miserable, but you're just kind of like, hey, like, I'm good. How do you break out of that? Well, I think

Dan Rooney 20:57

that everybody the days are the same, right? So the work is going to be the same, I mean, that, that, that's life, right? We're gonna look at your calendar, everybody's going to have more to do than they have time to do it right now, that is a given. Like, that's the world we live in. And but to flip that, on, its on its head, living every day with with a purpose in controlling every day. And I'm going to, you know, dive into my, my book here, because because I outline that in my code of living, I call it Kaboo, which is a fighter pilot acronym, it stands for ceiling and visibility unlimited. Obviously, those are the perfect steel blue sky days to go fly a fighter jet. But for me, I live Kaboo every day is an unlimited gift. But it's based on our choices. And I think most people agree the sanctity of the day is lost, you mentioned it, right? They just run into another. But we also understand that tomorrow was guaranteed to no one. And so how do you make sure that your choices on a daily basis culminate to write the legacy that you want in your life. And for me, I've got, you know, 10 lines of effort basically, every day that that I do with without fail, right? And, you know, it starts I talked about one, it's, you know, beaten the world out of bed, and I get up, I have my coffee, and I'm in the Bible, what time do you wake up in the morning, and then I work out, it depends about six. And it's gotten a little later as I've gotten older, but I'm good with it. And I've studied man, I'm going to be 50 years old, and they're like, hey, you need more sleep, you're not performing at the highest level that I was when I was 40. And I, you know, I get it, I'm not going to fight that and make myself miserable. But planning out each and every day. So that you know, that you're executing. And that's taken care of yourself, physically, spiritually, and emotionally, every day, regardless of what is on your calendar. And I think that's when people really get behind the power curve. I call it the EM curve, like we only have so much energy in our lives. So you have to manage that energy. And if you're waking up, and just jumping into the fight every day and looking at your calendar and be like, Okay, this is what I'm going to do, it's out of my control, you're not going to be fulfilled, you're gonna wake up 10 years from now, which we all will write and say, Wow, what happened to that 10 years, versus intentionally living every day and waking up in 10 years knowing exactly what you did for the last 10 years because I do the same thing, basically six or seven days a week, it depends, I might get myself a day off. But and the other part about this so Jocko is a good friend of mine, you know, in the circle, and I'm going to steal this from him. But he talks about the difference between discipline and motivation. Dude, every one of us is going to ride an emotional roller coaster of motivation. Some days, you're happy, some days, you're sad, you can't control it, you know, but you can be disciplined every day to have a mind that is stronger than your emotions. And you definitely learn that as a fighter pilot. I mean, you're in battle, and there's crazy stuff going on. People are fighting for their lives on the ground, you're getting shot out in the air and your emotions are going crazy. But you have a disciplined and structured plan by which you execute the mission. And I just translated that

to my life and it's different for everybody. Right? But you have to have a plan that orbits around your priorities in life, or the world will steal it from you.

Jacob Morgan 24:51

What was the most high pressure or scary situation you've ever been in as far as combat and you were telling actually a story I think before we transitioned to this how you were supporting some of your seals

Dan Rooney 25:03

are there a lot? Right? And I would say these stories require a beer which which we don't have right now. You know, I on on that mission I launched and we had two ground battles in Iraq, they were simultaneously just on fire and Fallujah and Ramadi there have been a big dust storm, let's call it Shamal that had blown through. So visibility was really low. And I was getting ready to launch for this mission Jacob and and just so mind, you're so nervous, right? You were so hyped up. And I'm sitting on the runway, and I'm typing in coordinates and all this stuff, because we're going to be supersonic headed to this fight, and people's lives are depending on me doing my job, you know, and in a crazy, scary way. Those are the most empowering moments of your life, when you realize that as a single seat fighter pilot, nobody's coming

Jacob Morgan 26:04

to help me a single seat, you didn't have a co pilot?

Dan Rooney 26:07

Oh, no, I'm single seat fighter pilot Air to Air air to ground F 16. Yep. So nobody's gonna come help me. I've been trained for this. And if I don't execute at the highest level, people can lose their lives. And when you get to that life or death place, and it, your performance depends on it. And you go out and you execute. That is an incredibly empowering sound. And the more you do it, the more confidence you have that, wow, I can go do this. And I don't want to downplay a team, right, or the people in your life supporting you. But when you really think about it, you know, you come into this world by yourself, and you leave this world by yourself. And there's a ramp and lack of accountability in the culture that we live in now. And you got to take ownership, because I mean, God creates all of us in his image with a unique mission. And are you performing at that at that highest level, but those were the most nerve wracking moments is a fighter pilot, and I was never worried about myself, right. And it's, it's crazy. In our culture, people would say, Man, I'd rather die than screw up. And that can be unhealthy, as well. But when you know, people's lives are depending on you executing your job, it really flips the script, and it's all about them. And you grow and you grow in tremendous ways. When you understand that, man, I gotta go do this by myself. I don't need permission, nobody's going to help me and you go execute. Those are game changing moments on the walk.

Jacob Morgan 27:58

So it was that feeling when you were having to take off and you know, that Dustin was going on, that was a very impactful moment for you.

Dan Rooney 28:06

Yeah, and you know, and that's one example of many. But going out there and just knowing the severity of the consequence, if you make a mistake, if you it goes back to stay ready, so you don't have to get ready. If I'm trying to get ready for that mission sitting on the end of the runway, and we got guys on the ground that are fighting for their lives. What a disservice. That would be. So you are ready for that moment. You go out there and you execute. But it's the you know, the scariest moments of my life not worried about myself dying, but doing something that would cost someone else their life because I made a mistake.

Jacob Morgan 28:46

Have you ever failed a mission?

Dan Rooney 28:49

No, not not on any not nothing like that. Right? Never do anything that costs anybody their lives or didn't put a bomb on time on target. We always fail. Right? We come back and we'll debrief for two hours. Hey, could have done this better? Yeah, this this could have been executed more expeditiously. That radio call wasn't any good. You know, we get into the weeds because when you're paying attention to like the smallest stuff, the big stuff you don't miss I mean, we talk about you know, when you check in on the radio, it is you are on time you are sounding right you are information, all of these things that don't have anything to do with dropping a bomb or shooting the Air to Air Missile, but the discipline that permeates the process. The end result is hopefully you're going to do the stuff that really matters at the highest level.

Jacob Morgan 29:45

There is a rumor that we're you know, stereotype a lot of people when they think of Air Force, the military, the seals, whatever. That command and control, there is no room for vulnerability you're supposed to be strong and tough and don't admit weakness, and this is why our companies are like that. Does that stereotype true?

Dan Rooney 30:07

No. And I've talked about it, I mean, like, like I am, and I will never downplay what you've achieved in life. So I don't want people to take this the wrong way. But I'd love to sit down and have a beer and talk about what you've overcome. Because now that is the metal of a man or a woman, not what they've achieved. But rather, what do you do in the in the storm of your life. And inside our inner circle, it's, it's, it's, it is vulnerable, we trust each other with our lives. And this, you know, bravado, if you will, you know, I'm sure it exists some places. But we're one of the most high functioning teams in the world is fighter pilots or seals are special operators. And within those teams, there is great trust. And in order for there to be great trust, you got to be vulnerable, right? You just You just do. But as I said, I'm I'm way more interested in what people have overcome than the medals on their chest, or the trophies on their wall, because what you do in the storm, and we'll all be in a storm, right? Every one of us and probably multiple storms in life. But what you do there is how you evolve. And that is what defines us.

Jacob Morgan 31:32

When you think about vulnerability, or when we talk about vulnerability, so it sounds like this is actually accepted and practiced. And it was actually used and exhibited by by your team by teams and different.

Whether it's seals or military army. Can you give an example of something like that, like, when did you have to ask for help or admit to a mistake, or talk about a personal challenge or struggle like to open up and connect with others on your team?

Dan Rooney 32:02

Yeah, I've touched on it before it was, you know, more than the worst days of my life when I almost killed myself flying an F 16 Making a stupid mistake, and, you know, landed on the on the fuel tank, and, you know, coming in and making that kind of almost Life and Death mistake and in front of your team in front of you know, all the maintainers of the aircraft. All that and I it was you know, thankfully I lived right. But it was a big blow to the ego. And I'll never forget this one of my guys I fly with, you know, Mike square, Sony called me up said, Hey, man, I know it's, it's hard for you. But everybody knows, you're one of the best pilots out here, you got to shake it off and push forward. And so they're, you know, daily examples. And I think one of the unique things too about the fighter pilot world, is we don't hide our mistakes. And when you show up to a debrief, I'll have written down multiple things. During the flight that I did, that I knew I could have done better, and I share those. Right. And that is how we get better. And if you're, you know, hiding your mistakes, hiding your vulnerability. I mean, good Lord just turned into social media, right? It's on the other guardrail of that, but we facilitated an environment, it's not about being perfect, it's about getting better. And the only way you get better is if you learn from your mistakes, and we finish every debrief for for a sortie will fly with lessons learned. And the the flight leader will write them on the board writes them all out, Hey, man, here are all the things that we could have done better, not, hey, we're awesome. Let's go to the bar, have a beer, we're fighter pilots. It's never a perfect sortie.

Jacob Morgan 33:56

It's funny that mistakes are so openly talked about and discussed yet, as I'm sure you've seen in a lot of organizations, mistakes are oftentimes hidden. Like we don't know, if we make a mistake, we try to hide it. We try to blame somebody else. We don't want to get in trouble. We don't want to get fired. And I'm always fascinated why the cultures are so different depending on where you look, for example, you look in the Navy, the Air Force and mistakes are talked about openly and in corporate cultures, they're oftentimes trying to trying to hide them. What advice you have for leaders out there when it comes to vulnerability when it comes to mistakes to be open and talk about these things? I mean, is it that simple, where you just have a debrief after each project in every meeting and just say, hey, let's talk about what we did wrong.

Dan Rooney 34:47

Yeah, I think I would offer up two things. One, you have to give your people permission to fail because that's when you Max perform. We call it bending metal in the fighter pilot business. You don't want people not max performing for fear of failure or fear of mistake, you have to make it okay to fail. And I'll never forget one of my instructor pilots, flying the T 38, spike Thomas, and he was an American hero, this guy punched out of his F 16. And Iraq was an all American, he's a Hall of Famer, that Air Force Academy football player. And the very first day he gave me a notebook. And he was like, Hey, we're gonna write down every mistake you make. And he was like, and you're gonna do great. If before you come to work every day, you review those mistakes for the for the whole, you know, six months. And we don't make those mistakes twice. And I'm always, you know, as a leader, I'm like, Hey, man, the first

ones free, and I don't care what it is. And when something's a mistake is made, I always look at myself as a leader first, like, hey, that probably wasn't communicated properly. But create an environment where failure is fine. And also an environment where I would say, you know, if you've got problems bring solutions, because people, they hide problems, too. And every organization is dealing with stuff and making sure that you're always bringing solutions to, to those problems. And, you know, from a leadership perspective, I've, you know, I'm 22 years in the Air Force I've been through every leadership course the Air Force has to offer, they've spent millions of dollars on me from squadron after school to Air Command and Staff College to Air War College, and the best leadership advice I have. You ready? Yep. Work, work hard, be nice. And people make it way too difficult. Right? They write these mission statements out, they put them on the front walls, they do all this and you walk into most corporations, you ask them what the mission statement is, people will have no clue, especially as you scale. Right? And for us, it's Work Hard, Be nice. And if you're going to have a day that you don't want to work hard, that's okay. Just be nice now. And it's digestible. It's simple. We understand what that means walking into the office. And we're able to do extraordinary things on you know, in the Air Force team on the folds team. With that simple model, work hard, be nice.

Jacob Morgan 37:29

I love that. I love that best leadership advice you've ever been given. Hopefully, the best leadership advice people will take away. Usually the last 15 minutes or so I like to focus on specific action items that people can apply in their lives and inside of their careers. But before we jump into that, maybe we can end with one more story. You mentioned that something happened to you where you had to kind of bow out for a couple years, it seems like you had to go through a struggle a tough time. Are you able to share a little bit about what happened and what you learned and how you were able to overcome that tough time and get yourself back into being a fighter pilot?

Dan Rooney 38:04

Yeah. So at the time, I talked about the accident, the F 16. And then I was building a golf course here in Tulsa called The Patriot so 2008 hits. And I woke up every day in my life for six years going bankrupt. Brutal, right financial pressure on me during that six year period. Most of the people in my life that were friends that you could count on vanished. Trouble with, you know, go into the fridge way too often with alcohol, right, trying to numb that stuff that spills out into, you know, challenges with within my own family. And then I got to a point where I'm like, Okay, I'm not going to get out of this storm anytime soon. So stop trying that. What can I do with within the confines of this storm. And out of that, I came up with Kaboo. And I'm like, I cannot control the world around me. But I can control at least some intentionality with each and every day to do the things that I know are making me a better person along the walk and I call it parasitic drag. But it's all the stuff in your life that keeps you from breaking through and holding you back. And I started and we only know that in the heart of our own hearts, you know, what is it that people are doing? Is it alcohol? Is it video games? Is it shopping? Is it pornography man who knows what it is right? But I'm like I can I can control this. So I started eliminating all of this parasitic drag in my life. That regardless of where I was, on my walk, I knew at the end of the day I'd made a little progress into becoming a better person in God's eyes. And over that 10 year period, I call it the walk in the desert right by myself, I walked out the other side, a completely different human being. And I'll take it to the parable of, you know, the when they're crossing the sea of Galilee and the Bible, and Jesus is in the boat with the disciples and, and there's a huge storm that that comes through, and

they go wake him up, and, and he's asleep, right? And they're like, we're gonna die, we're gonna die. And he's like, man, you have little faith. And for me, that epiphany of realizing I'm in the storm, but I'm not alone. Right. And we evolve in the challenging moments in our life, and a paradigm flipped for me during this 10 years, and it goes back to being a fighter pilot, is we always take off into the wind, because we need resistance to ascend. And I think our lives are exactly the same way when you stop thinking of it feeling sorry for yourself saying, Man, this sucks. It's not fun. Well, life's not supposed to be fun all the time. But God didn't put this in my life to keep me down. He put this in my life to raise me up and prepare me for something much bigger. And I have no doubt. Well, it was a horrible sucky suck factor high as we call it, the fighter pilot world time in my life. I'm so grateful. Now looking back that I went through it because I don't even know the person. I was barely before that happened now, and to lead folds, which, you know, we haven't talked about much. And you know, where it was in its infancy. And that point to where we are now, which is 44,000 scholarships awarded to spouses and children who've had somebody killed or disabled, like \$220 million out the door, just kicked off our campaign to support first responder families that have had someone killed or disabled with the gift of education, I would have never been prepared for this moment, had I not gone through that moment. And the humility required to know that I've got nothing to do with it. But what I can do is get up, try not to be complacent every day, get in the fight and glorify God on the walk.

Jacob Morgan 42:27

Yeah, like that message of how to deal with those challenges and obstacles, because you're right, I mean, everybody's gonna face them. You know, a lot of people face those challenges at work, and, you know, you got to get through them. So the last 15 minutes or so maybe we could talk about specific action items for people out there. And I thought the first one that would be really interesting to explore is how do you create trust? You know, especially where, you know, in kind of the fighter pilot realm, I'm assuming it's a lot of people coming together. And the first time you show up, you don't know the person to the left, you you don't know to the person to the right of you, yet, you're all supposed to take off, you're all supposed to look out for each other. You're all supposed to save each other's lives. I'm assuming probably when you are supporting seals or Marines or whoever on the ground, you oftentimes probably don't know who they are. And they oftentimes don't know who you are, right? They don't know your your face. I'm assuming you're you're so there has to be an enormous amount of trust that gets created. How does that trust get created? And how can we create that trust inside of organizations?

Dan Rooney 43:35

You know, I think trust really stems from being accountable. And you say what you're going to do, and you do what you're going to say. And if everybody does that, then trust is a byproduct of it. You know, we use the example of military mean, that is life and death trust, right? I know that people are going to do what they say they're going to do. And to your point, or I'm anonymous, right? The Navy SEALs do not know that. Dan roadies find that f 16. Above them. They just don't have 16 guys there. He has been trained. He is going to do what he has been trained to do at the highest level, and execute and they trust me to drop the bomb sometimes within, you know, 50 yards of their location, and they're calling that bomb in and it's coming off my airplane and they trust that it's going to go the right place. And those are extreme examples of trust. But foundationally it starts with personal accountability. And that is looking at yourself. And I would say putting serving others before yourself is probably one of the key

attributes of building trust within an organization. But we think about where mistrust comes from, which is circular or to my previous point, it's when people don't do what they say they're going to do. Or they fail to work hard, be nice, right? And forget to work hard. But if people aren't nice, I mean, that's the greatest erosion of trust within an organization is, is well, is there a

Jacob Morgan 45:20

difference between being reliable versus being trust? Because it seems like if you show up on time, every day, you say what you're gonna do? You're probably a very reliable person. But does that necessarily mean you are a trusting person or trustworthy person? Or in your eyes? Is that is there a relationship there?

Dan Rooney 45:42

Yeah, I mean, I think reliable is a big step toward trust, right? It's foundational, I think trust goes, hopefully, it's a it's it gets deeper than some of the just gonna walk in and walk out the door at the same time every day and Turner's report in there. And I think that the trust goes to the next level of, are you truly giving it your best on a daily basis? Right. And I think that that is, again, foundational from getting from that reliable place, to that trust place. And that's a hard thing to do, you know, for leaders, to create environments where everybody's all in every day, working hard. People are messy, right. There's a lot of stuff going on and all of our lives. But for me, as a leader, you know, I build trust and a faith based environment. That's who I am. You've talked to me, you can see that's what drives me. And that Holy Spirit connect, connect the hearts and minds of the team to hopefully get to that trusting place.

Jacob Morgan 46:53

Yeah, yeah. I mean, trust is a I think you alluded to right, the foundation of any successful organization and a high performing team, which I think is crucial. Another interesting thing that we can go over as far as an action item, is, how do you prioritize information, decision making, because I'm assuming as a fighter pilot, you have a lot of information, you have a lot of stuff that's coming your way. And you have to make a decision, oftentimes life and death decision, but you have a lot of you know, people are talking to you, you're being shown stuff you get charged or looking at and you got to, you know, make a decision based on everything that you're looking at. How do you prioritize and make decisions? And how can listeners and viewers out there? What can they learn about how you prioritize and make decisions so that they can apply it inside their companies?

Dan Rooney 47:42

Man? What a great question. So I would say one of the key attributes for, you know, the four or five people that make it through the training become a fighter pilot is our ability to prioritize taking in copious amounts of information, figuring out what's important, what's not important, ranking it and executing in, you know, split second timeframe. Sounds a lot like life, right? Everybody is taking in copious amounts of information all the time, and trying to figure out what's important. And I think, for me, the best advice on that is, you have to define what is important, you know, on a, in your life, on a daily basis, and that's the only way you're going to be able to effectively prioritize, right? Rank what is important because if you do not, you will be a boat on the open water with your sails up and no vector, right because we're all getting pushed and pulled so many directions. And, you know, for our, our core values at Folds of

Honor, I tried to help people prioritize that's probably the number one reason that our core value exists and it's grow yourself, grow the team, glorify God right? It's in that order. And it goes back to Hey, take care of yourself, be accountable, get the job done, that leads to growing the team but at the end of the day, man, are you are you glorifying God and your work and in the mission but for people to effectively prioritize? You got to have your top five top 10 things that our I call it your Quintessence. But man, what is your essence and that says a human being that's it work. Hopefully, you can combine those two things in a in a seamless way. But if you don't know what's important, everything's important. Everything carries the same weight. So that's my advice on on prioritizing

Jacob Morgan 49:53

any advice on how to figure out what's important because I think a lot of people actually struggle with that right? Like they don't know Know What to prioritize, and as a result, everything's a priority. And when everything's a priority, it seems like nothing gets done. So how do you take a step back and say, Hey, what is it that I care about? What matters most to me? Because I honestly think I

Dan Rooney 50:14

think it's, I think it's very personal. But I think that ubiquitous to most of us people would be like, hey, my health is a priority. Yeah, well, is you have an hour on your calendar every day to take care of your body. Right? My, my spiritual well being is a priority. Well, do you have 30 minutes a day on your calendar to take care of that? My family is a priority. And that's a hard one, right? We all like to say that, but do your actions really reflect that? You know, because we have jobs, right. And how I reflect that my family is a priority is on most days, and I fail at this, sometimes, I'm going to make sure that when I walk in the door to my house, that I've got the same energy I brought to work, right. And so I have to preserve that at some point. So I come home, and I'm given my family, the leftovers, and I grab a beer and I sit on the couch, I'm like, oh, man, my day was so hard. I just want to chill out. I'm raising five daughters. So bringing, bringing that to the fight. But I think, to your point, what's important, and you have to sit down and we call it slow down to speed up and the fighter pilot world, you have to slow down in order to speed up and to slow down and really look at your life and say these are this is what is important. And there's my daily routine, and you have to have a routine, you have to this my daily routine, is it congruent with what I say is important in my life. And then you have a filter that allows you to prioritize what is coming in? And does it align with your quintessence of hey, man, this is what's important in my life.

Jacob Morgan 52:03

How do you balance the routine with complacency? Because it seems like that's one of the things that can sometimes lead to complacency. Right is you have that routine and you're comfortable. So how do you have that routine, but at the same time, not let it be? The only thing that drives your day?

Dan Rooney 52:21

Well, we've talked about it before I it's it's about discipline. Yeah. Are you still with me? Yeah. Yeah, it's it's about discipline, and not motivation. Right. So I'm gonna go execute, and check it off the list and not rely on mana. I don't I'm not I'm not happy today. I kind of feel a little crummy today. You know, I had an extra beer last night. Well, that's you're gonna have to show up in the morning to get to get the routine

done. And I would say to the the other piece about not becoming complacent. And this is like, my buddy Dave Novak, who was the former CEO of yum brands.

Jacob Morgan 53:03

Oh, yeah. I've had him on the show. I've interviewed him for my book. Of course. Yeah. Great guy.

Dan Rooney 53:08

Yeah. Dear friend, huge Folds of Honor donor. And I said, Dave, Hey, man, what is the one thing of all these great leaders that you've interviewed, that that you pulled out of this? He was like, great leaders are always learning. And I think that's how you stop from being complacent. I'm just I just read a book. I flew myself from DC to Tulsa this morning. And I'm on autopilot at 41,000 feet. I got time, right, fly myself home. And I'm reading this book strength to strength, which you've probably read. But it is so cool. Because it makes me excited, right? I'm not complaining. I'm like, Oh, I could incorporate this. I could do this differently. What a great point. And learning leads to evolution and evolution fights complacency. So it's, you know, and I really think it's hard for some people, right, because it's half full, half empty view and light, but I look at every day as Kaboo man, it is an unlimited opportunity to evolve, be better, do better. It's not linear. I'm going to fall down, man, I'm going to have a few bad days. But I'm not going to let those days define me. I'm going to be back on the horse back doing what I'm going to do. And I think learning is the key to fighting complacency.

Jacob Morgan 54:23

Last question for you. A lot of people might hear that and say, hey, you know what, that sounds great. But I'm so busy. I got so much gone. Um, I have joined the world, right? Yeah, exactly. So because you know, a lot of people make excuses for why they can't do better or why they can't get in shape why they can't be a better spouse or partner. I mean, for me, for example, one of the things that I at least tried to do, you know, I always have family dinners. And I always commit to playing with my kids at night playing games with them and reading stories to them before I put them to bed. Like that's something that I I wanted to because I feel like that's important. But you know, there are times when the evening is like, Ha, man, I can just send out those additional emails. I can write another couple 100 words, maybe maybe I don't need to do that today. And, and sometimes it's a hard thing, right? Like, you really need to focus on doing that. So for people out there who struggle with that, and they make excuses, I don't have time I'm too busy. What do you say to them?

Dan Rooney 55:22

So I love this word, volition. volition is the power of choice. Every day, we wake up with two things, right? We got a chance and a choice. The choices that you make each and every day are writing a legacy of your life. Every choice you make follows a logical path. And it starts with I won't do that. I can't, I'd like to, I'll try. I can, I will. If you can make it to I will. Nothing can stop you. Right. And it goes back to the accountability of you, you have to define what's important in your life. You have the power of volition by which to write your legacy. But at the end of the day, it's up to you.

Jacob Morgan 56:06

You know, and love it. I think that's a perfect way to end. Dan, why don't you let people know where can they go to learn more about your book Folds of Honor your website, anything that you want to mention for people to check out?

Dan Rooney 56:18

Yeah, so they can check out Folds of Honor folds of honor.org out there to support our military and first responder families with a gift of an education talk about learning man is the power and teaching someone to fish. And they can hit me up. Dan rooney.com, or Lieutenant Colonel Dan Rooney out there on the social media airwaves as well, but I hope they tuned in. And, you know, I've, I wrote this last book, and this crusty old publisher said, Hey, man, if you can give readers one thing that changes them for the rest of their life, this book has been successful. And that's my hope and prayer that folks tuned in, that you're taking one thing away from this podcast, with Jacob and I that will have a lasting impact on your life. And I'll finish where I started, humbled to be included with, with all the distinguished guests that you've had on here.

Jacob Morgan 57:10

I'd love it. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day. And thanks, everyone, for tuning in. My guest again, Lieutenant Colonel Dan Rooney, make sure to check out his book fly into the wind, how to harness faith and fearlessness on your ascent to greatness, and I will see all of you next week. All right, we are all done.