

How Veterans Rebuild Their Lives After Hitting Rock Bottom

There is a version of transition that does not get talked about enough.

The version where things are not just difficult.
They are breaking down completely.

In a recent conversation on *The Enduring Mindset Podcast*, I sat down with fellow veteran Philip LaFontaine to talk about what that actually looks like. Not the highlight reel. The reality.

When Transition Becomes a Crisis

A lot of veterans leave the military expecting challenges.

What they do not expect is losing themselves completely.

Philip described what that looked like for him:

- Severe anxiety and panic attacks
- Depression and isolation
- Substance abuse
- Loss of identity and purpose

At one point, he was experiencing multiple panic attacks a day and seriously considering taking his own life.

This is the part of transition that rarely gets discussed.

The Identity Problem

This is where most people misunderstand the issue.

Veterans do not struggle because they lack discipline.

They struggle because they lose identity.

In the military, everything is structured:

- Rank
- Role
- Mission
- Purpose

When that is gone, there is nothing replacing it.

So the question becomes:

Who am I now?

Searching for Answers Everywhere

Like a lot of veterans, Philip did not sit still.

He went after solutions.

He tried:

- Therapy through the VA
- Multiple treatment methods
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Alternative approaches like psychedelics
- New career paths

Each step helped in some way. But nothing fully solved the problem.

Because the issue was deeper than symptoms.

It was about identity.

Rock Bottom Forces a Decision

There comes a point where you cannot keep searching externally.

You either:

- Continue the cycle
- Or confront what is really going on

For Philip, that moment came after years of struggling.

He made the decision to seek help again, this time through a veteran-focused program.

One message stood out:

Just show up.

The Turning Point

In that environment, something changed.

For the first time:

- He was surrounded by people who understood
- He was not alone in the struggle
- The themes were the same, even if the stories were different

Anxiety. Depression. Loss of purpose. Identity.

That shared experience mattered.

But what ultimately changed everything was where he placed his foundation.

Rebuilding From the Inside Out

What Philip realized is something many veterans come to understand the hard way:

You cannot rebuild your life without rebuilding your foundation.

For him, that meant shifting from:

- External solutions
- Constant searching
- Temporary relief

To something deeper and more permanent.

It gave him:

- Stability
- Direction
- A sense of identity again

What This Means for Veterans

If you are struggling after transition, here is the reality.

You are not alone.

You are not weak.

And you are not broken.

But you do need to address the real issue.

Not just:

- Career
- Money
- Structure

But identity.

Where to Start

If you feel stuck, start here:

1. Be honest about where you are

Stop minimizing it.

2. Stop chasing surface-level fixes

They might help, but they will not solve it.

3. Find people who understand

You cannot do this alone.

4. Focus on rebuilding your foundation

Everything else comes from that.

Final Thought

Rock bottom is not the end.

For a lot of veterans, it is the beginning.

But only if you are willing to face it.



Listen to the full episode:

👉 <https://open.spotify.com/show/7fQ5oHlOZe94Jcjj6ytL2h?si=0c4c82fc29c6465f>

If you're a veteran or leader trying to figure out your next move, I share conversations and insights like this every week through The Enduring Mindset Podcast.

Related conversations:

- *What Happens When Life Forces You to Slow Down*
- *Who Are You When You Can't Go Back?*
- *Why Veterans Struggle After Transition (And What No One Talks About)*