

You Can Have It All... Just Not All at Once

There's a pressure a lot of people feel but don't always say out loud.

To be everything.
All at once.

A great parent.
A successful professional.
Present. Focused. Driven. Balanced.

And for a lot of people, especially those who've served, that pressure doesn't go away after the uniform comes off.

In a recent conversation on *The Enduring Mindset Podcast*, Kate McDermott shared a perspective that cuts through that noise.

The Identity Nobody Talks About

Not every veteran story looks the same.

Some deploy.
Some don't.
Some leave the military with a clear identity.
Others feel like they don't quite "count."

Kate put it honestly:

She struggled to even call herself a veteran.

Not because she didn't serve.

But because her experience didn't match what people expect.

That tension is more common than people realize.

Service Doesn't Always Look the Way You Think

Kate served eight years in the Navy as an ER trauma nurse.

She volunteered.
She stepped forward.

But her path didn't include deployment.

And that created a quiet internal conflict.

What she expected her service to be...
versus what it actually was.

The Truth About Identity

A lot of people struggle after service because their identity was tied to one version of themselves.

But here's the reality:

Your value is not defined by:

- where you were stationed
- what missions you did
- whether your story fits the “expected” mold

It's defined by who you are and how you show up now.

You Can Have It All... Just Not All at Once

This was the line that stood out the most:

👉 **You can have it all. You just can't have it all at once.**

That applies to:

- Career
- Family
- Personal growth
- Purpose

Trying to maximize everything at the same time leads to burnout.

Real progress comes from seasons.

The Power of a “Powerful Pause”

Instead of trying to do everything at once, Kate described something better:

A powerful pause.

Not quitting.

Not falling behind.

👉 **Choosing where your energy goes right now.**

That could mean:

- Leaning into family
- Focusing on career
- Resetting mentally

And trusting you can return to the other areas later.

Where Purpose Actually Comes From

Purpose isn't always found in big, dramatic moments.

Sometimes it's found in:

- Raising your kids
- Showing up for your family
- Doing your job well
- Being present in small moments

Kate sees this every day in her work in hospice care.

At the end of life, people don't talk about:

- titles
- accolades
- achievements

They talk about:

- relationships
- impact
- how they lived

Resilience vs Toughness

One of the most important distinctions she made:

👉 **There's a difference between being tough and being resilient**

Toughness:

- Push through
- Shut it down
- Ignore emotion

Resilience:

- Feel it
- Process it
- Keep moving forward

That's what actually lasts.

Start Smaller Than You Think

If you're struggling with identity, purpose, or direction:

Start small.

Kate said it simply:

“If you string together seven good days, you have a good week.”

You don't need a five-year plan.

You need:

- Today
- Then tomorrow
- Then the next day

What This Means for You

If you feel behind, stuck, or unsure:

1. Stop comparing your story

There is no “right” version of service or success.

2. Accept seasons

You don't have to do everything at once.

3. Focus your energy

A powerful pause is still forward movement.

4. Redefine purpose

It's not always loud or visible.

5. Start small

Momentum beats perfection.

Final Thought

A meaningful life doesn't come from doing everything.

It comes from doing the right things...
at the right time...
with the right focus.



Listen to the full episode:

👉 <https://open.spotify.com/show/7fQ5oHIOZe94Jcjj6ytl2h?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 Military Spouses Understand About Leadership That Most People Miss*
- *You Don't Have to Do This Alone*
- *What Happens When Life Forces You to Slow Down*