

What Happens When the Dream Doesn't Go the Way You Planned

There's a version of success most people chase.

Win.

Achieve.

Climb.

Repeat.

And from the outside, it looks like the path works.

Until it doesn't.

In a recent conversation with Riley Tejcek—Marine officer, Division I athlete, and Olympic-level competitor—we got into something deeper than performance.

👉 What happens when your identity is tied to achievement... and that chapter ends?

The Trap High Performers Fall Into

Riley did everything right.

- Division I athlete
- Marine Corps officer
- National-level bobsledder
- Olympic trials competitor

That's the resume most people are chasing.

But even she said it:

👉 You can turn your identity into an idol without realizing it

Not intentionally.

But gradually.

When the Uniform Comes Off (Again)

She didn't just go through this once.

She went through it twice:

- After college athletics
- After stepping away from bobsled

And the question is the same every time:

👉 Who am I now?

The Lie About Achievement

Most people think:

“If I just reach the next level... I’ll feel fulfilled”

But Riley explained the reality:

You hit the goal...

...and immediately start chasing the next one

Because the feeling doesn’t last.

The Shift That Changes Everything

The breakthrough comes when you realize:

👉 **What you do is not who you are**

She put it simply:

“Sport is something I’ve done... it’s not who I am.”

That applies to everything:

- Military
- Career
- Business
- Athletics

If your identity is tied to it...

You’re in trouble when it ends.

Faith Replaces the Gap

When that identity gets stripped away, something has to replace it.

For Riley, that became faith.

Not surface-level.

Not routine.

👉 A real relationship

And that changed how she viewed:

- success
 - failure
 - outcomes
 - purpose
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When the Dream Doesn't Happen

She didn't make the Olympics.

And instead of bitterness...

She found peace.

“If it was meant for me, I would have been there.”

That's a different level of perspective.

Because most people:

👉 tie their worth to the outcome

The Real Win

What stood out most wasn't what she accomplished.

It was how she responded.

She became:

- the teammate cheering others on
- the person celebrating wins that weren't hers
- the example of what healthy detachment looks like

That's rare.

The Time Excuse (That Needed to Be Said)

She also addressed something most people avoid:

👉 “I don't have enough time”

Her response?

That's not a time problem.

That's a priority problem.

She broke it down simply:

- Define what matters
- Allocate time accordingly
- Cut the distractions

And if you're still stuck?

👉 Check your screen time

Confidence Isn't Natural

Another big point:

Confidence isn't something you're born with.

It's built.

Through:

- repetition
- discomfort
- action

Especially for women, she emphasized:

- 👉 Stop shrinking
 - 👉 Stop apologizing
 - 👉 Take up space
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What This Means for You

If you're chasing something right now:

1. Don't tie your identity to the outcome

Because it won't last.

2. Expect the transition

Every chapter ends eventually.

3. Build something deeper

If you don't, you'll feel lost when it's gone.

4. Be willing to pivot

Your plan isn't always the right one.

5. Check your priorities

Your time already reflects what matters to you.

Final Thought

You can achieve everything you set out to do...

...and still feel empty if your identity is built on it.

Because success isn't something you become.

👉 It's something you experience

And then move beyond.

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:

- *Stop Waiting for Permission to Become Who You Already Are*
- *Why Veterans Need to Stop Self-Selecting After the Military*
- *Why Veterans Struggle After Transition (And What No One Talks About)*