Episode 11 Surviving Yourself – The Sean Dustin story

**Jen Lee**

Good evening, everyone and welcome to Episode 11 of I Need Blue. I love scratch off tickets. If I uncover an 11 it's usually a winner for me. I must say I feel like a winner tonight. and humbled quite frankly. This episode asks the question "what happens when you become a survivor of yourself?"

I'm pleased to welcome Sean Dustin the host of "No Where To Go But Up" podcast. It was awarded the #1 mental health podcast by SceneSnobs Network. As a child, Sean was exposed to an abusive environment. From being bullied to becoming a bully, a former drug addict, cocaine dealer, failed relationships, and the loss of parental rights, Sean started his podcast to show the world and God his shortcomings, pain, shame, and guilt. The listeners of his podcast became the witness to who he used to be.

Before we get started, I must share a trigger warning. I Need Blue does contain topics which could be sensitive to some including robbery, murder, and drug use. If you need help, please seek it.

Let's get started with today's guest. Sean, thank you for being here today. And allowing the listeners of I Need Blue to be a part of your journey.

**Sean**

Thanks for the invitation, Jen. I appreciate it. And thanks for watching whatever show that you did to inspire you to reach out.

**Jen Lee**

There are so many different elements of your story that are relative and not just to my podcast but in several different ways. I had a previous episode where I had a domestic violence victim, a mother, but her children were grown. I wanted to explore how that environment can influence one's behavior as they grow up. So, can you tell me about that environment and how it influenced you and what age you were?

**Sean**

I was about five when my parents divorced. My father was he was an alcoholic at the time. He drank heavily. I would have visions of situations, but I'm not sure if I was there?

**Sean**

It was like somebody told me the story, and then I adopted it as my story. I started to paint pictures of what that must have looked like. I don't know if I witnessed the violence. My brother and sister would rush me off to the closet and sing to me so I didn't hear most of it.

**Sean**

Let's just say that I probably witnessed stuff and I must have carried some things subconsciously. I acted out everything I saw except for being the physically abusive person. I did do things like bullying, things to intimidate my partners. I've blocked doorways, shove them, everything short of something that would get me in trouble and put a mark on them to not get arrested. I'm not bragging about that by any means, it’s just who I was.

**Sean**

I must have learned it from somewhere. It sucks having to admit that's the kind of person I was, but it's also freeing because I know I'm not that guy anymore. I'm not. Sometimes, I struggle with anger, and where to place it, in a healthy way.

**Sean**

I'm not always the most talkative person with the people closest to me but I'll run my mouth on a podcast; that balance hasn't settled in yet. Everything is a battle, but it's also been a journey. A great journey on the other side of that battle. From being addicted to meth for 18 years, in and out of prison, jails, 18 different institutions, three rehabs, I put myself through the wringer. I just chose to go down the wrong roads.

**Jen Lee**

You were a latch key kid. How did that influence your behavior?

That was probably the worst thing that could have happened for me. Whoever came up with that idea, should be put in jail. It's not a very good idea to leave a kid by themselves to run their own life. I think that was the beginning of breaking or a piece of the nuclear family being broken apart.

From the time I was in the third grade, I was taking myself to school and bringing myself home. A lot of the times I was making myself dinner. My mom worked in the city; she was a single mom. She worked at an accounting firm so during tax season she may not be home until 10-11 o'clock at night. I'd be there the whole time by myself, rummaging through her stuff. I'd be put me on restriction and my Walkman taken away. Well, I'll just go and find it and then I'll put it back before you get home.

**Sean**

I learned how to manipulate and do things and be creative about how I would do stuff right? It escalated as I got older because the older, I got, the less discipline I had. I grew more unruly and ended up landing at the Boys Ranch. I did 16 months in a residential treatment center, like a group home setting for adolescents. I thought it was going to only be there six months, but I didn't realize it in a therapeutic community, it's not about time it's about progress. And so, if you're not making any progress and you're not advancing through the levels.

**Jen Lee**

What is that like?

**Sean**

It's like being in jail but it was coed which is part of the reason why I went. I didn't think I had a problem. I was like, well if you're going to give me the option to go hang out with girls, I'm going to go. I'm going to take that instead of hanging out with dudes.

**Sean**

I was manipulating. I would go to the judge, "I have a problem." I would always find a way to charm my way out of something, or talk my way out of it.

**Jen Lee**

What is the first time you broke the law and didn't get caught?

**Sean**

I was 16 maybe 17. Me and my buddy, were hanging around. He was at the house. We couldn't sleep because obviously we were wired and high. My mom, I think, went to the bar, and was passed out upstairs. We go out and we're walking down the street and think it would be a great t idea to break into this car. So, we're in the process of doing it (we obviously don't know what we're doing. I mean, I've never broken into a car before.) I'm in my own neighborhood. That's the worst thing you can do what's wrong with you? I'm pulling on the window, and he's trying to put his arm down there and it just goes "pop!" The whole thing just busts, and it sounded so loud because this is a quiet neighborhood.

**Sean**

We both run and take off. We dive in the bushes. Suddenly, another car comes flying up the hill. Speeds around the other corner and we're like, "what the hell is that?" Probably like two minutes later there's cops. We think they're there for us. So, we're hiding and wondering what's going on? It was kind of crazy. They ended up catching the guy. That was my first time I ever tried to break into something on my own street.

**Jen Lee**

So next time was it the next street over?

**Sean**

No. You know, I get into a lot of trouble with girls. Girls are always somehow involved in my stories.

**Sean**

It was the summer of eighth grade going into ninth grade. I ended up hooking up with this chick and I didn't realize she had a boyfriend. He called my house, left a message on the answering machine, the tape recorder machine which had a tape. I took that tape to school the next day. I let all my friends listen to it at break time.

**Sean**

They're yelling, "we're going to go get this guy! That was the point, right? I needed people to do it for me because I didn't want to do it myself. A lot of the times I was a coward. I went down there, and he got beat up. They knew it was me and even though I never touched the guy i was the one who brought everybody there. I ended up getting charged with inciting a riot.

**Jen Lee**

What was the punishment for that?

**Sean**

Probation. I continued to violate this probation time and time and time again. I would just always make my situations or my problems worse for myself. My mom would always say, "if you would spend half as much time just doing what you're supposed to do, you would get so much further. You're smart. You're a bright kid, but you get caught up in trying to get out of everything. You make more work for yourself in the end and don't even realize it."

**Jen Lee**

How did your parents deal with you?

**Sean**

They passed me off once I became a big enough problem. I'd already been to my dad’s and got kicked out of that school. Then I went to my mom or my uncle's. I got kicked out of that school. I got kicked out of my original school and with hesitancy, they let me back in my eighth-grade year. I had six months left. I ended up getting suspended six times in six months and had a bunch of referrals. 3 weeks before we were going to go on break, they call me and say, “hey you know what, just go home. Get out. We don't want you here anymore."

**Sean**

That was the theme for most of my life. Even when I was in third grade, my desk was faced in the back of the room in the closet. When I was in fourth grade, they wrapped my desk with corrugated paper and isolated me from everybody around me. That's the kind of stuff that they would do. All the time I it was reinforced that I was a bad kid. I'm just as bad kid. Just a bad kid. I was bad news so I would do things that were bad. I'm not making excuses for it, but when you hear something enough, you just start to believe that's what it is

**Jen Lee**

As you look back, you were getting good at getting out of things. You liked the challenge. But it also sounds sad that as a child it was instilled in you that you were bad. So how bad did it get? What was your lowest point?

**Sean**

Well, there's been quite a few. I've got stories of times when I found myself in situations where I'm just like, "What the hell are you doing, man?" "How did you end up in a crack house in the ghetto in Las Vegas, behind the Stardust, which is a place called Naked City, smoking crack with a hooker?"

**Sean**

I didn't rent the hooker that's for sure. And I didn't touch her after I got high, that's for sure. It was one of those things, where I would always find myself in situations because I was never afraid to veer off by myself, right?

**Sean**

I was always hunting the next best thing or hunting the next come up. Everything was a challenge for me. The thing about that is I always moved on from people. I never maintained relationships. I'm finding right now as I'm older, that's a shitty quality to have because I'm great at starting things.

**Sean**

I start looking back at my life and the pattern of starting and not finishing it. Relationships, starting them and either running away from them, or not maintaining them.

**Jen Lee**

Have you ever feared death? For example, did you ever have a gun pointed at you?

**Sean**

I've had to put a gun pointed at me a couple of times. I was living in Vegas. I had already been raided once by the by Metro and SWAT team and Secret Service and all those folks. I was out on my own recognizance because they let me go. I didn't have any felonies.

**Sean**

When they came, they blew the doors and the windows off my place. They had been surveilling me and I did five controlled buys but somehow, they let me out 3 days later my own recognizance.

**Sean**

So, I was like, well screw this I'm not turning myself in. That's crazy. I went on the run and moved to a whole new spot. I stopped selling drugs because I'm not going to get busted for the same thing again, if they come back.

**Sean**

I'm just going to go ahead and start doing white collar crime and credit card fraud and all this other stuff. I started doing that and I figured out some things and I decided to take the show on the road.

**Sean**

I always had a problem ripping people off when I was sober. It was difficult for me to do because I knew what I was doing was wrong. But when I would get high I wouldn't care.

**Sean**

I never really ripped anybody off myself. It was mostly through credit cards, checks, stuff that was insured. I justified my actions by saying, well the banks screw everyone over so who cares. I was good at justifying my behavior for a long time.

**Jen Lee**

What do you think is the most lucrative and easiest way to make money? Was it selling drugs? Was it the credit card fraud? What do you think? Or do they all have different challenges?

**Sean**

I guess if you're a good drug dealer that would be an easy way, but I wasn't. I was a horrible drug dealer. I was a "barely breakeven" drug dealer. I was surprised that I didn't get beat up. I would owe people money and owe people money. I think the reason was my house was like a party house. All the drug dealers that I was dealing with, wanted to come and hang out because they would always bring their friends around too. So, this is my theory: if you beat me up, you're not going to to be able to hang out anymore. So they tolerated me.

**Sean**

As far as a credit card stuff, that was more challenging. I got as far into counterfeiting $100 bills, like washing them and then reprinting the 100 over the original bill after it was washed. I would find creative ways to make money and get over on the system, no matter what it was because I couldn't sleep. I would stay up for three days in a row just working on stuff, working on stuff. I think the reason why I liked identity theft so much is that I didn't like myself. I'll be somebody else for sure. That played a huge part in the attraction to it.

**Jen Lee**

I'm sitting here looking at you, listening to everything you have told me, and you keep going on and on. I'm thinking, "he's not that old. Like you're like living the fast life."

**Jen Lee**

You said there were women always somewhere in the picture. When did you get married or did you get married?

**Sean**

I did. When I got out in 2006, I think I was married by mid 2007. It was for all the wrong reasons. I went to prison, yes, but that toxic individual was still there because I didn't work on anything. I looked good, I had a six pack when I got out, but that didn't last very long. Those go away quick when you hit the streets.

**Sean**

Part of the problem was, I did 18 months state and then I did 18 months in federal prison. By the time I would get to my destination and got comfortable, it was time to go again to the next spot. I never got a chance to do any programming or something like that. I was always trying to figure out how to not get beat up, or how to work the system.

**Sean**

When I first got in, I was fighting my case and they brought me over to federal custody for a little bit. I got jumped. I was trying to ride it out by myself. I didn't want to mess with anybody. I'll talk to some people, but I don't want to click up.

**Sean**

At that point, when it happened (the fight) I realized I wasn't going to have a choice. The whites came to me because I look like I'm Hispanic. I'm whiter than I am Hispanic. I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood, I don't speak Spanish and I don't identify with being Mexican. Other than liking Mexican food a lot, and I can make some mean tacos, I'm not Hispanic. I had to do something, so I said I was Italian. I lied to everybody but I'm so dark complected, they bought it.

**Sean**

Because I claimed to be Italian in the beginning, when I was in pre-trial, it stuck with me. You must remember; you’re going to end up with some of these people at some time down the road. If you're telling lies, and it catches up with you, you're going to get it.

**Sean**

I wasn't into any of them. I didn't belong. I wanted to get out and go home. You question yourself when you first get locked up. "Where did I go wrong?" It gets it's real when you know you're not going home and you're not going home for a long time. I remember the third day I was there that I had been sleeping a lot. I know that because it messes with your emotions; your serotonin and you're all jacked up.

**Sean**

I remember curling up in a ball in the middle of the night while everyone else was sleeping. You know those hard cries, the ones which hurt your stomach? The kind that you need to like Primal Scream, but you can’t. That's what it was like. I was shaking and thinking, "you really did a number on yourself this time, buddy."

**Jen Lee**

I haven't interviewed anybody that has gone to jail. Your insight is very helpful. I haven't been to jail. So, I don't know what it's like. I'm assuming that's what your life was like for how long?

**Sean**

Total, probably about five years. I was lucky man. There are people out there which are doing way more time than me, for way less they what I did I deserved. There was a lot of things which they didn't catch me for. I could have been doing a hell of a lot more time. I had a positive outlook because I knew I was going home.

**Jen Lee**

Your time in jail, did it get you to rethink your behavior? Like did you come out and say, Okay, I'm good now. I don't want to do that, again, I'm going to be conscious of my behaviors now.

**Sean**

No. I didn't have enough time. I left knowing that there was more I wanted to do. That's what I left with. And there was a little bit of wanting to do good. I was going back to my mom’s, and I needed to follow these rules and do all these things. And I did and I started.

**Sean**

And that's where we get into "trying to". When I got out, I met my wife at a meeting. I was struggling. It was the decompression from being in a heightened alert all the time, in a heightened state of just being. In jail, you just you don't know what's going to happen. And I was in a medium. I hear horror stories about people that were in maximum security prisons, which is way worse than what I was doing. But there's always that level where you know what the undercurrent is, right? You know, if there's a group that has a problem with another group, or a person that has a problem with another person and at any point, it could explode or something.

**Sean**

The segregation teaches you to be racist in a way. Your group doesn't want to mess with this group. It was like, you can talk to black people, you can't eat after him, you can't drink after him, etc.

**Sean**

I moved around when I was in high school. I went to every group; I was a chameleon. It was difficult for me to not speak with everyone; until I became conditioned to that.

**Sean**

When you get out, you still have that mentality, the behaviors. You see a different race and make a negative comment because that's what you would do. You'd be trying to be cool with the people that you're around to fit in.

**Sean**

In prison, there's no way that I was trying to be a leader. There were bigger dudes than me and I wasn't trying to be there forever.

**Sean**

I got jumped by four gang members, Mexican gang members when I was in my pretrial. That made me realize that I had to click up wherever I went, with the whites. That episode is where my story was born about being Italian.

**Jen Lee**

Wow. Okay, so tell us about the woman you met? You met her at an AA meeting?

**Sean**

Yep, she 13th stepped me. Do you know what that term means? Okay, so there's 12 steps, the 12-step program. The 13th step is the step where you hook up with somebody at the meeting.

**Jen Lee**

That's not allowed, right?

**Sean**

No.

**Jen Lee**

I saw that on Grace and Frankie. That's the only reason that I know that’s not allowed.

**Sean**

Nope. Well, it's frowned upon. Because I was vulnerable. I'm new. So anyways, like I said, I got married for the wrong reasons.

**Sean**

I did my time by myself. The girl that I was with at the time, she bailed, stole all my stuff, cars, everything. Poof, gone.

**Sean**

I put in my mind I was going to be going back. I decided I better have something; I better have a woman. That way I can get my, you know, to be taken care of while I was in there. And so that's the reason I did that.

**Sean**

In 2008 during the financial collapse, I was in my union, I'd become an apprentice, and I got laid off. So, I had all this time on my hands. I'm living back in my old neighborhood and stomping grounds. She's at work all day, and I'm getting, $450.00 a week on unemployment.

**Sean**

I'm thinking, I got money, I got time. Let's go find something to do. I found myself right back into it. I went and got another computer and all the things that I needed to make checks, etc. I disappeared from my marriage for three months. I didn't answer the phone and just left. I didn't talk to my family or anybody. I just disappeared.

**Sean**

There's a whole bunch of stuff that ended up happening. I did two violations. By the second one, I had to turn myself in. At that point I just decided it was done. I stopped using meth before I turned myself in, I stopped smoking before I turned myself in.

**Sean**

And then when I got out after the 90 days, I just continued not doing it. I found a hobby. I was playing adult slow-pitch softball, and I was having a good time. It took me away from those people. I managed to not get kicked out of the union, so I still had that job. I got involved with the business part of it. I was also on the rowing team.

**Sean**

I got involved in things and I started making goals for myself. When I started achieving them which was cool and it was me building self-esteem and confidence. I never did that before. I was always not showing up for stuff or cutting school or doing things where I didn't learn a lot that stuff.

**Sean**

I started doing alright. Thinking, "well if I can do this, let me try this." Then I would level it up and do something even bigger and achieve it. I would feel like, "Oh wow." And so, I just kept doing it and doing it and doing it.

**Sean**

At some point I ended up getting hurt playing softball and ended up getting addicted to painkillers for 7 years. Luckily, I could still function doing that.

**Sean**

There had to be at least 10 or 15 times that I attempted to stop and then started again. Each time I said, I was going to do it different that time. No. Always the same thing. What ended up happening, I started from 0 three times in my life. It was all because of meth. Almost died five times. Two or three were drug overdoses and meth were involved.

**Sean**

Every time I would try stuff it ended badly for me. But this didn't. But it ruled my life. I was spending $500 a month extra for another 100 pills. I was taking like 220 a month.

**Jen Lee**

Did you get them first from a doctor?

**Sean**

Yeah. I had a prescription for 120. I started out with, 5 milligrams and then was bumped up when I had my surgery. I was up to 10 milligrams. I was buying more, and my life revolved around these stupid pills, because if I would take too many of them, I would know that sickness is coming. So, I'd have to wean myself down. So much energy got spent on navigating my days, around these damn pills.

**Sean**

It was while I was working, I realized I need something to listen to. In my trade, we worked by ourselves, so I always had earbuds in. I was sick of listening to music. I decided to start listening to Podcasts. I saw Joe Rogan's. I would always watch him on the Fear Factor in jail and prison. I was a fan even before I went, so I started listening to him.

**Sean**

Before I knew it, I was listening to him for eight hours a day, sometimes 10 on my commute, on my way home. In just following some of the people he had on the show, like guys like Jordan Peterson, Sam Harris, Lex Friedman, like all these intellectual smart people, right. I'm a fly on the wall listening to this conversation and they're saying things which make so much sense to me. Before I knew it, my mindset had started changing without me even trying to change it. Because I'm listening to these people in my head all day long. And it's, it's making me go, damn, you know, I want to be a better person, I want to be a better man, I want to be a better father, I want to be a better this, I want to be a better that. I need to do this; I need to do that. I'm going through things in my life and then I'm listening to things that are making sense. I'm finding similarities.

**Sean**

Podcasting has been this thing that changed my life. It gave me my voice back. It gave me the ability to give other people their voice back. I'm able to learn. When I was struggling with something, I would have somebody on like a coach or, a mental health counselor on and ask questions. I was trying to be cheap. I don't want to pay for counseling. Let me get a counselor on here and ask them some questions. I just realized that now as I was talking about it.

**Sean**

Say I don't want to get in trouble for looking at another female. If I see one by glancing around, I'll put my vision in front of where she's going to end up. That way I don't get in trouble for staring at her right?

**Sean**

Had I not listened to these people on the podcast I would not be on the path I'm on. I listened to so much content. It's amazing, because if I would have had this when I was a kid, I wonder how it would have impacted me, because I know how it's impacting me now. Maturity also plays a huge part in all this too.

**Jen Lee**

Absolutely. Role models are so important at every age which is why it's important who you let influence you. Somewhere along the lines you got in with the wrong crowd. And then that just kind of led you down the path that you ended up going down.

**Jen Lee**

Who are you now if you had to describe yourself?

**Sean**

I'm a father before anything else. That's my priority. I had another daughter in 2000. I lost that relationship or abandoned it however you want to say it. I think she was 11 months old, and I got served papers to have my rights terminated. My ex-wife didn’t want to have anything to do with my lifestyle. I was out of control and living in Vegas.

**Sean**

I'm in jail, I'm sitting there on a DUI when I get served these papers to terminate my rights. I had time to think about it. I was sober at the time. Somehow it sounded like an amazing idea to not show up. "She's better off without me. I'll get out of paying child support, so I don't have to deal with that." I justified it in my head before I left and didn't show up to court.

**Sean**

What I didn't realize is I'm not a cruel person. Even when I would do bad things or if I would say something mean to somebody, I would feel bad about it. I would always come back and apologize. I was wrong, I just got mad or, whatever. Some of that may have been manipulation, some of it may have been legit.

**Sean**

Abandoning her really had an impact on me. I spent the next 9-10 years torturing myself and I put myself through the wringer because of that decision. That's when my behavior became riskier, and I started taking more chances. I started carrying guns. I started upping my level of where I was going to.

**Sean**

You asked when I got robbed at gun point. The second time, we're all sitting around. We haven't done ne any drugs, so the first thing we do is get high. We're sitting there and a guy pulls his gun out and puts it in his lap. I'm like, "hey man, put that away. You're in my house. Put that away." He's like, "no, I don't think you understand." I said, "no this is my house and I want you to put it away." He says, "get on the ground."

**Sean**

He splits us up. She gives the same story that I give. I got irritated. I said to him, “dude, this is the stupidest thing you could probably be doing. Look at what I can do if you want to make some real money. Come over here. Let me show you what I can do."

**Sean**

I showed him what I'd already been doing but acted like I hadn't been doing it yet. He says, "oh yeah, I want in on that. " "Alright, then get out of here." I spoke. He took some fireworks and a bike. So, after that, I was like, you know what, screw this. This dude, I'm going to kill this person. I went and made the ID and all the other stuff too. Got the shotgun with the assumed identity, went, and picked it up. Well, I'd forgotten that the person's identity I used was a black guy. When they ran my check, because they send your information to Metro to make sure you're not a fugitive, it came back as a black guy. They caught it at Metro. As soon as I showed up, they were there. I didn't run. I was just like, you know what, thank God I'm ready. I'm ready to get this over with. Let's just go, let's get it over with and get it behind me. If I can, you know, I don't know how much damage I've done now. They had at least 30 or 40 charges that they could have had me on right there. I believe that was divine intervention in my eyes because I was going to kill him.

**Sean**

So, I'd always make these situations which would elevate me above other people. I would surround myself with people that I knew I could be smarter than. I would never hang out with anybody who could challenge me intellectually. I would keep people around me like that. So, when I was strung out, I could say, "at least I have a car. I'm not as bad as you. You guys got the problems. I still have a place to stay. You don't."

**Sean**

That's a bad place to be. It's where narcissism is born. In situations where you're never challenged intellectually, buy you're able to challenge them intellectually. but they can't challenge you.

**Jen Lee**

I never heard it put that way but you're exactly right. Where are you now and I want you to tell us about your podcast and your nonprofit.

**Sean**

I am working again. For all of 2020, I was on disability and was podcasting, getting paid for it basically on disability. I was able to do a whole bunch of things, to the point I was doing 16 interviews in 2 days. I got buried in content and there's still about 70 sitting in my queue. I forgot what I've even talked about and so as a podcaster and a content creator, I do not suggest doing that. When you must go back to real work, in real life, there's not enough time to do all the things. I haven't published anything in a month because of work and I'm a father. I co-parent with my ex. The nonprofit. I have people who are counting on me like those on my board, which makes that the next priority.

**Sean**

My priorities are such: #1 is my daughter, my job, my nonprofit and then the podcast. Right now, the podcast is hurting a little bit, but I've got almost 140 episodes out so there's enough for people to go and listen to. My podcast "No Where To Go But Up was born because of all the times that I found myself in that position. I wanted to talk to other people that have been in that position. I wanted to see how they got through it. I wanted to tell my story and have others tell their story. Because after listening to a podcast for so long, I wanted to be able to bring that experience to somebody else.

**Sean**

So that's what I started doing, then it sort of took on a life of its own, then my personality started coming out of it, my interests, and then it turned into this Joe Rogan esque sort of thing. There's a lot of lanes in it and there's something for everybody. My main stuff is calling out corruptions wherever they are, amplifying the signal of people that have been done wrong, whether it's wrongful convictions, or exorbitant amounts of time for non-violent drug offenses.

**Sean**

I don't hold any animosity towards law enforcement. If you ask me is, defund the police a good idea? Hell, no, it's not a good idea. It's probably the worst idea I've ever heard. Now, I think if anything, they need more training, more money into programs that teach them how to interact with the people they encounter. I think a lot of these missteps or mishaps come from people that are nervous, and don't know how to operate under pressure. Even Jocko Willick says, when he was in on SEAL Team Six, we train for six months straight for an operation so we know about our breathing and how to control our breathing. How not to be afraid and not to put ourselves in fear. These guys, they get three months school or training, and then they get a brush up course one week of a year. That's not nearly enough.

**Sean**

They need to get back to having liaisons that guys like me can relate to. That can come in and try to de-escalate a situation before it even becomes a situation. They used to do that. They used to have those, and they just sort of went away from it. They need to go back to it because a guy that's trying to talk me down with a gun and a badge, I'm not going to listen to him. Just like I didn't listen to counselors that didn't have any experience like mine. You read some books about addiction, and have never done drugs in your life, so how do you know? You can't meet me where I'm at? Because you've never been there. We need to go back to mitigating types of situations. Meeting people where they're at with people that they identify with.

**Sean**

I feel my own experience in prison didn’t really help me. The behaviors are what I feel are more important. Your trauma was what made those behaviors become habits to begin with. To change before you even address any of your trauma is not trying to mitigate the behavior. I feel like that's where I had to go. Some other people have different opinions of that.

**Sean**

But for me, that's where it laid because the behaviors were really the driving force, which are subconscious. I find I would lie about dumb stuff. Like, why did you lie about that? It was an auto response. I'd done it so many times. I would lie about everything. When I talk about it, it's almost like I get excited about it. Because for me it was fun. I had fun doing that and figuring out how to do it and all that stuff. But it's wrong, you shouldn't do that.

**Jen Lee**

There's a little disclaimer on the bottom.

**Sean**

Yeah, kids don't do those types of things. It's not good for you. It gets you in trouble. You'll find there's a lot easier ways to make money if you just go and get a job and work hard. Do your best. That's what I do now.

**Sean**

I started a nonprofit organization to help 18 to 24 year old males coming out of incarceration and reentering the society. It's a startup. We're working on the web, and all this other stuff so it's called the "No Where To Go But Up Project" which falls under "No Where To Go But Up, Incorporated and my podcast is No Where To Go But Up, as well. And so that's the brand, No Where To Go But Up.

**Jen Lee**

That's great. Can you tell them your web address?

**Sean**

www.nowheretogobutuppod.com or SeanDustin.com

**Jen Lee**

Last question for you. I'm a new podcaster on Episode 11. What advice would you give me?

**Sean**

I would say, just keep going. Don't give up. It will get hard. Sometimes it feels like nobody's listening, but then you'll get that message, or you'll get that review that makes it all worth it. Or you'll get contacted by somebody who saw your show and you inspired them. Like you did with me. At some point it will happen. It's a long game; it's a marathon, not a sprint. Good content. If you have good content, you’re going to have people listening. Don't be afraid to go for people that you wouldn't think would say yes, cuz you'd be surprised.

**Jen Lee**

I'll remember that. That's awesome. I'm on the east coast so it's like 9 o'clock, but for you it's dinnertime.

**Sean**

I felt like we were we were going forever, but it's only been an hour and eight. I'm getting better at telling this thing.

**Jen Lee**

I just sit here and listen. It's a great story. I really appreciate you sharing it with us today. This is your host Jen from the podcast, I Need Blue. You can find the episodes on our website, www.ineedblue.net, check it out. We'll talk to you soon.