

**EPISODE 1427**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:00] JM:** Developers struggle with mental health. And this struggle has only gotten more acute during the pandemic. Sitting in front of a computer all day engulfed by social media and code can cause us to lose our sanity. I personally have had some issues that were hard to grapple with during the COVID lockdowns.

In today's show, Kelsey Hightower joins the show to discuss our personal experiences with mental health challenges, as well as what we observed in the broader community.

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[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:37] JM:** Kelsey, welcome to the show.

**[00:00:38] KS:** Oh, I'm happy to be here. I guess it's going to be kind of a slightly different capacity today.

**[00:00:43] JM:** Right. So we were talking, I guess about a month ago. And as you know, I had some difficult times over the pandemic. And I just wanted to – For initially, I was talking to you just about how to kind of overcome some of the damage that I've caused. But you offered to come on the show and sort of talk to me in a public fashion, which I really appreciate. So I guess maybe you can start with just how you saw this situation unfold from your perspective?

**[00:01:17] KS:** You know, that's the strange thing about social media, right? I think I started seeing signs. Actually, if I were a backup, I wanted to say I started seeing signs around KubCon. I think you're reaching out to various people on social media asking if they're going to attend coop con. And I couldn't tell if you were trolling people that said, "No, I'm not going because of the pandemic," or whatever reason that gave. And so I kind of just ignored it. I didn't know –

Because I know you have a great relationship with a lot of people in the tech community, from all the podcasts over the years.

But I think if I were to back up and think about it, we were on a podcast together talking about the history of cloud. And I think you were just like on a tangent about cryptocurrencies and a lot of things that were kind of unrelated to the show. And I was like, "What's going on with Jeffrey? Like, maybe he's just really passionate about crypto." But it's probably the first time that I've seen you in a different way than I had in my mind before.

And so fast forward to the stuff on Twitter, and recently hearing your post about kind of what you were going through during those times, I start to put a few things together and just like, "Well, I wasn't really paying attention." And I guess that's where I think a lot of this catches people off guard. They're not sure what's going on in people's everyday lives.

**[00:02:35] JM:** Yeah. And a lot of this traces back to even prior to the pandemic. The lifestyle that I cultivated in doing this podcast has been kind of fundamentally unhealthy. It's not a normal way of living life to get most of one's socialization from podcasting with people and engaging on social media. And I had been trying to find better outlets for socialization for several years, and I hadn't really found it. I just haven't done anything dramatic enough to find that socialization. In retrospect, they probably should have like gone and done jujitsu, or join some kind of religious circle, or music park or something. But going into the pandemic, I basically was starved for real-world interaction in a way that was becoming alarmingly important.

And then when the pandemic happened, I went through some interpersonal stuff, along with the fact that I had been trying to start other businesses in addition to Software Engineering Daily, and those businesses had not been working. And all of this just led to all this immense pressure. And I snapped. So yeah, it's tough, because my career is sort of like on stage. And there wasn't really a way for me to shut it down. And I couldn't find relief. And so yeah, I was becoming unhinged in a way that I think people saw subtle signs of it, but it was getting worse and worse, and I just didn't know what to do about it. And so it just got worse and worse and worse and worse until I just kind of detonated in a way that you saw on social media. And now I'm kind of in a cleanup mode, and it's really hard.

I'm not exactly sure what to do and how to get back from it other than to just open up about it a little bit and hope that people kind of understand. But the level of paranoia that I got to in the level of confusion that I got to is something that I'm really embarrassed about and I just – Yeah, I don't know what to say other than that.

**[00:04:58] KS:** Someone reached out to me on DM and said, “Hey, if you recall, Jeffrey kind of had a few outbursts around this time. And he just wanted to reach out and apologize.” And the person asked me if that was okay. And I thought about it. I said, “Wow! Yeah, I mean, like, I'm not the one to tend to hold grudges.” And I was like, “Yeah, no problem. Reach out.” And then you and I got on the phone.

And one thing I realized while talking to you is there is an immense pressure that comes with being in the public space. And a person like you who gets to do all of these podcasts, I'm pretty sure people have their favorite podcast episode you've done, and everyone's kind of looking forward to their next favorite podcast. And then your definition of success – And maybe I want to pull on that a little bit. I'm sure when you started your podcast, the definition of success was probably just to get off the ground and get a few guests and see how it goes. How does that translate into pressure over time for someone like you who, without a doubt, has a really successful podcast?

**[00:06:06] JM:** Well, when I started the podcast, I wanted to use it as an income stream to actually fund software companies, which in retrospect, was just an insane way of looking at things and I think speaks to kind of a lower level of maybe mental health or grandiosity problems that I've had. But yeah, over time, like the show got pretty popular. And it was this continuous treadmill to try to continue to maintain the level of quality, which takes an immense level of preparation. I mean, the reason the show got popular is because I would prepare for hours for every episode and really work hard to understand the products and the engineering challenges at a pretty deep technical level, and try to produce a really strong narrative around that.

But the difference between a podcast and a software product is that a podcast doesn't really ever – It's not like code where you write the code and then you can sell it ad infinitum. It's more like you have to continually produce stuff and you have to continually do it at a high level. And you can't really take a break, especially when a daily podcast. So the definition of success kind

of has stayed the same throughout the duration of the show, which is to produce the top software engineering podcast that is able to reach a significant technical depth.

But I paired that with trying to start these other companies, these other products that I built over time, and then that just occupied all my time in between producing the podcast and doing software development on all these other projects. I just didn't leave myself with any time to do things like develop a healthy relationship or develop like a real circle of friends outside of my business acquaintances. And it was just kind of self-destructive.

**[00:08:09] KS:** Looking back, you talk about – So I would imagine, Jeffrey would have tons of friends, right? You've met all these people. And I know that I've been to a lot of conferences myself, and it's one of these things where you meet people, but you never really get a chance to get to know them, right? I think there's a bit of time and space required to really develop friendships. When you look back, I guess, if you had advice for other people, how should they look at this thing we call balance?

**[00:08:36] JM:** You know, I stopped working at companies six and a half years ago. And I really miss the camaraderie of being in an office and of socializing with people on a regular basis. And I don't know how that has translated for people as the pandemic has happened. But I think a lot of companies have probably evolved appropriately in having virtual happy hours or doing things to force people to engage more readily, and maybe develop friendships, and then maybe they can do board game nights and stuff like that.

But if there's a way that – If you have a hobby, finding friends through that hobby I think can be really productive. You know, growing up, I played a lot of Magic the Gathering. And that was my outlet for finding friends. I know other people play sports, or they have hobbies in music, and they develop close friendships through that.

I think what makes balance tough for me in the socialization category is I have a lot of trouble with small talk. I don't know about you, but I really fall in love with kind of the deep technical conversations and then thinking about the ways that the world is changing, and having those kinds of big conversations, and it's kind of addictive, such that small talk becomes really hard and almost have an association of social anxiety with those kinds of small talk that I think leads

to a more balanced life. Because you have to have small talk to develop acquaintances and to develop relationships with people outside of your industry. So I guess it's a long-winded way of saying. I don't know how to find balance. Maybe you can give me some advice. I think probably getting a family like you have. That's probably a good idea.

**[00:10:21] KS:** Yeah. I've had friends , have four friends that I've known for over 20 years. And we talk on the phone once or twice a week. And my wife is been in the education field her whole career at different levels. And I go to those educational socials. I talk to the teachers, the principal's, the super attendants. And I am generally curious about what their world looks like. I find myself in these social gatherings. I even played Magic the Gathering quite a bit. I still do online. But I used to go to like these card shops. And as someone who doesn't really understand kind of that culture as much, I do really enjoy the game theory behind it. But I also enjoy how much time people spend in sharpening their skills, learning how players work. It's almost like people who play poker. The personalities are almost as important as a game that they play.

And so what I've tried to do is, my curiosity for technology, I've tried to translate that in my curiosity for people. Like I went to an Ethiopian wedding, and I was so fascinated by the food. Like, what's the recipe? Why are you using certain ingredients? Why do you cook it that way? And then you go try to make it yourself. And now you have a reason to follow up and say, "Hey, I tried that recipe you gave me and I tweaked it a little bit. What do you think about it?"

And so I think for me is just being able to translate to other things in the world. I think it can satisfy the type of conversation you would like to engage in. For example, I don't want to really talk about Kanye West and Kim Kardashian's relationship. Like, if that is the thing that people are talking about, I will probably find myself also in a very awkward situation. So I try to pivot towards a – I don't care what you do for a living. If you're an airline stewardess, I want to know about that industry? What is the worst thing you've ever seen on a plane? How do air marshals work? Those type of things. How do they prepare for COVID? So that's what I tried to use in order to kind of cultivate those things.

And the other thing I've done is – And I don't know if this is the smartest thing in the world to do. I left my DMs open on places like Twitter, and someone would ask me a question. And I always

weigh the option between just answering the question straight up, or just saying, “Hey, let's jump on a Google Meet, and let's elaborate a little bit. Let's go back and forth a little bit.” And it just gives me a chance to tap into some new people. And maybe friendships grow on faster from that.

**[00:12:46] JM:** We talked a little bit about this on the phone, but how do you cope with the – I would call it for me like kind of the insecurity of not being the CEO or the billionaire in the room and consistently interacting with these kinds of people. Because for me, that's certainly been a struggle. And I think a lot of what led to this breakdown that I had was, I hate to admit it, it's obviously one of the seven deadly sins, but it's envy, and just looking back at my career and feeling envious, whether that I missed out on crypto, or that I didn't manage to become a CEO of a super successful tech company. And then that envy can become so toxic that it just ends up eroding your life and putting you even lower on the totem pole. How do you avoid that?

**[00:13:43] KS:** Man, that's a really deep question. I don't think I actually found a way to avoid it. Every couple of years, I do go through this mental exercise. And sometimes it's triggered by someone asking, “You should be doing more with your career. Why are you not running a company?” Sometimes even VCs will call and have a potential founder on the other line and say, “Hey, we have an idea about you starting a company together around these things, right? Like, what do you see yourself going? Don't you want to do more than what you're doing?” And sometimes that can cause you to question everything you're doing. No matter how successful you are, you'll always feel like you'd never have enough money, or you've never accomplished enough things.

And so, I'll be honest, like that is something that I haven't found a way to escape. But one thing that I've noticed is that what I find far more important – And I won't necessarily compare myself to these great people, but I can't name one billionaire from the 60s or 70s. But I do remember people like MLK and Malcolm X and these folks, and you asked what net worth did they have when they died? And most people could care less, right? We just don't really care how much money they had when they died, because they did something far more important.

And I asked myself what do I enjoy doing that is far more important? And one thing I would never trade is my impact on what I would consider myself as, well, normal people. You probably

have experienced this. You get that email that says, “Hey, Kelsey, I watched one of your talks. And I gained the courage to jump into this new technology. And I have a new job now. And I can now pay for a place to live. I can finally see my kids because I can make child support.” These are real things that impact real people. Of course, maybe I'm not going to impact a million people. But just knowing that you're impacting one or two people around you, I take comfort in that. And that's the kind of story that I want to be my legacy.

So whenever I get those DMS, and I appreciate the people who send them, there's this concept of giving people their flowers while they're still here. But I got a message the other day. Someone said, “Thank you for existing.” That was it. It wasn't, “You're the best speaker in the world. You're the best developer in the world. You have the most open source projects around the world.” It was just thank you for being here at this time.

So what I've learned to do was just really reflect on the value of those one-on-one interactions. So I don't need the whole world to say that I'm the best ever. I don't need to have the most money, because I don't think you will ever always have the most money. So I try to find something that I find sustainable, and kind of matches what my values are. So part of that was me becoming minimalist. I decided that my Twitter bio says minimalist for a reason. It's a reminder to myself as well, that no matter how many material things that you have, or you acquire, or all the accolades, the thing you have that a lot of people don't have anymore is that you're still here.

Look back at all the famous people that aren't here anymore. They don't have what you have, which is time. You still have time to impact people. You still have time to experience the world. You still have time to dream. You still have time to help other people with their dreams. And so what I found is making that a serious pursuit. And I found success like that in my kind of corporate career. I pride myself on being able to jump into someone else's efforts, goals and help them execute. And what I found is sometimes you don't get the credit, but sometimes you do. And sharing credit with other people is far more sustainable than doing things that get you all the credit consistently.

And so I reflect back on that. So if I were to reflect back on like your success. Like I've been trying to start a podcast on my own for a number of years. And it's that consistency part that I

just can't get right. So I just don't have what it takes to get started. So when I think about the success that you bring to the table, there's only one you, I guess. And you almost have to be willing to give yourself credit. And the funny thing is all of the great people seem to have the same issue.

Like Kobe Bryant, he still wants to be the best, and he's not here with us anymore. But think about all the pressure he had. Is he better than Michael Jordan? Does he have more rings than Michael Jordan. Even when you win the championship, people start counting. Alright, that's only three. You need seven. Until you get seven, none of these counts. And so I just think we all have the backup and just say, "Hey, we'll never be validated wholly by other people." And so we do have that power. And that's just something we have to exercise. I just think that is literally something we have to do. We have to exercise appreciation for ourselves, because I just don't think the outside world will do it consistently.

**[00:18:24] JM:** Have you talked to anybody else, or encountered anybody else who has dealt with some severe level of psychosis? Like, what I dealt with has been like much clinically defined as psychosis. I don't know if you've met anybody, or if you've seen anybody through the pandemic, or otherwise, in the tech industry that's dealt with this.

**[00:18:48] KS:** I think some people are dealing with it and they can explain it. Like, you'll have interactions with folks, and you know something isn't quite right. And I think it's one of those things that you just can't talk about, unless you really know someone closely. So I think I have met people who have been afraid to talk about it.

I mean, I've seen, of course, colleagues that you're a little bit closer to express certain things. But I just don't think you can express it well, especially if it's the first time happening to you. You don't know what it is. Like, how do you explain it? And I love to hear from you, is like people would imagine there's people around you saying, "Hey, Jeffrey, what's wrong here?" And how do you even answer that question if you're kind of experiencing that while it's happening?

**[00:19:29] JM:** I had a lot of people telling me that. I had a lot of family members, and doctors. And for me, it was actually pretty bad because this was not the first time this has happened. This happened to me – Something similar happened to me when I was in college, and I had

kind of a long experience taking medication. And then eventually, my experience with medication was so hard that I was kind of weary of the treatments that were offered to me as this was happening to me. And it's really hard, as somebody who prides themselves on clean living, and kind of dedication to personal health as I have over the years to accept help when I sort of want to take like a natural approach.

And knowing that something is going wrong with you is a lot different than knowing how to treat it. And it's really like what made me kind of snap out of my deep paranoia was I finally was able to realize how much damage I was causing to myself and my career. And I still haven't like found the perfect remedy to overcoming this problem. And I definitely feel a lot better than I did. And I certainly feel more grounded in reality.

But now I have this kind of like a new set of problems, which is that people finding out about how I was pretty unhinged for a while. I think it's caused a lot of loss of trust. And you hear all these quotes about like trust is hard won and easily lost. Or reputation is the hardest thing to rebuild. And you can't see it when it's happening, I guess. So, I don't have a great answer. But –

**[00:21:24] KS:** You talked about the decision of – As technical people, we like to weigh the decisions. Like, do I go out at this on my own? Do I take this particular solution? Especially if you have experience with one of the proposed solutions, how hard is that when you sit down and work through it? You know, “Hey, if I go down this medication route,” did you feel that it was going to have even worse side effects than maybe going at it alone and just having to kind of – Were you expecting it to kind of clear up on its own? Maybe walk us through a little bit of that.

**[00:22:00] JM:** That's pretty accurate. The science around medication for this kind of stuff is very coarse-grained. It's not like what we have in computer science, where you have a really fine-grained understanding of an algorithm and you can prove that the algorithm is doing what it's supposed to do. The medication regime is a massive decision and it has impact that's going to last for years, because you can kind of get on this treadmill of trying one thing, and then it takes a month for that thing to work. And then trying another thing. And if the side effects of one thing are really bad, then you have to take something else to alleviate the side effects. And then that thing has its own side effects. And in the meantime, you know that the root cause of this stuff. I felt the root cause of this stuff was essentially things that I had done in my life. I mean,

the medical community has perspectives on chemical imbalances, and genetics. And at a certain level, that stuff is very hard to prove. It's very hard to prove that somebody has a chemical imbalance or has some genetic proclivity.

Even if you look into your family history, and you see a pattern of other people having similar issues, there's no way to know if it's nature or nurture. We mirror the things that we've seen in our childhood, whether we intend to or not. And so just because you see a pattern over time in multiple generations, that doesn't mean that there's some kind of genetic correlation there.

So all this is to say that I really struggled to accept that there's something inherently chemically wrong. I think it's more of a result of decisions that I've made. So I'm still kind of on the fence as to what I want to do medically about this. I'm choosing mostly to go down the path of changing my behaviors and engaging in more intensive therapy. The chemical side of things for me has just been really something I'd prefer to avoid if possible, other than maybe like acute – I think what would have worked better for me as if I would have – There are medications you can take for more acute scenarios. And when I was really spiraling, I think taking medication for the acute situation would have been more appropriate as opposed to a chronic medication.

**[00:24:40] KS:** I want to move on to accountability. But before we go there, as an outsider to a situation like this, I tend to ask myself a question. What's the best way to help? And I know you've had a little bit of time to reflect on this. And different people can help in different ways. But could you talk through a little – A few of the ways that people could help in different parts of this kind of scenario?

**[00:25:03] JM:** Well, I think it's communication, I suppose, outreach, spending time in the real-world with somebody who's having problems like this, or even just on the phone. But other than that, there's not a whole lot to do. Making sure the person has therapy. And if they want access to medication, making sure they have access to medication. But I think one of the hardest things about mental health issues is that there's not a whole lot you can do.

I guess what I would say, in my situation, what's been particularly traumatizing for me is that there's a lot of people who, as I was going through this stuff, got scared or offended because I said some stuff that was completely insane, basically. I was so out of my mind.

As you said in the podcasts that you're referring to, I think that was probably like a year ago. And then there was just a slow degradation over time. And it kind of culminated in some just real, deeply crazy stuff that I did at the end of last year. And people are not really forgiving. And I wish people could judge based on the aggregate of how somebody acts for a longer span of time, rather than who they were in an acutely weak moment.

**[00:26:33] KS:** I want to move on accountability, because one thing I think is hard is to not just apologize, but hold one's self accountable. And then I think there's another side of this is that as someone on the outside, when we hold someone accountable, when do we accept the apology? When do we say, "Hey, we believe you're taking accountability for this. And if you want to get back on track, we allow that." And I think that part of the discussion, I think, is maybe where you're at this point of time. In your eyes, what does accountability look like in terms of, "Hey, I realized what I've done. And here's what I need to do next?"

**[00:27:20] JM:** Yeah. I think a lot of accountability is about accepting punishment. And believe me, this has been a punishing experience. My network has been really damaged from this. And I think the other side of accountability is actually stopping the offensive behavior and I guess admitting to what you've done, which is what I've tried to do in that previous episode I posted and this episode right now.

For me, it's tricky, because I said some things that – I was so paranoid. I was so out of my mind. I was so confused about the state of reality. I could go into it in more detail. But it's really just extremely embarrassing the things that I was convinced of. I was convinced that Mark Zuckerberg was following me. And I was convinced that everybody I knew was out to get me. And it's incredibly – I'm so ashamed of it. And it led to offensive behavior. And I take responsibility for it.

And I think part of why I'm stuttering so much and why I don't even know how to address this is like I can take responsibility for it. And I do take responsibility for it. But the thing that's so heartbreaking about it is it's so – The things that I said and the ways that I acted are so the inverse of how I feel, because this is the community that I have invested so much in and that I want to be a part of so much to have said things and done things that make people feel like I am

an attacker or I'm a hostile agent within the community is so heartbreaking to me. So all I can say is I take responsibility for it. And I wish it never happened. And I was really confused. I don't know. What do you think?

**[00:29:06] KS:** No, I think part of my maturity, even for – I'll talk about maybe two areas of maturity. I remember I was dating someone when I was 20 years old, and had convinced myself that this person would cheat on me. Not that they did, but they would. And your mind just goes into this thing where everything becomes evidence, potential evidence. And in my case, at 20-years-old, this is not stuff you go and talk to people about because you know that they will think that you're missing something here, that you're overreacting to something that isn't there. Because talking through it even with yourself, it doesn't make sense. But for some reason, I held on to just that belief until I got enough "evidence" to make it true in my mind to justify behavior such as breaking up with the person. And I left it at that.

And actually, I don't think I had to face any accountability for that because the blast radius was so small. It just I ended a relationship probably for unjust cause, right? Like as if you need one. And in my work life, I remember being so passionate about a tech decision. What CI/CD systems should we use? And I remember, sometimes you just hold on to a belief so much that it becomes a detriment to the team. You're trying to find logic fallacies where they don't exist. You try to take some upper hand maybe because you're the most experienced engineer or because you have enough political capital that you can outspend the other person to get your way.

And so it took me a long time to really understand that those are situations that will come about, but I had to learn how to look at those scenarios and step back, like literally step back for a second and just say, "You know what, here's what I'm feeling," and get comfortable talking about it. But it took 10 years of me focusing on those situations will come up. You can't avoid them. But here's how you behave when they arise.

And so from an accountability standpoint, I noticed that other people do these things as well. And so when I see other people behave this way, I try to step back and say, "Yo, this is not the best version of this person. Right here and now in this isolated moment, this is a situation. So how do I want to deal with the situation?"

And so as a person who grew up, and maybe you saw your parents argue, I never wanted to be that person. So what I learned to do was, if my partner, my wife was in a certain space, I would step back and say, "Let me give this person room to be as they are right now." And not hold them to this is who they are all of our 15 years, 16 years of marriage. This is just a scenario. And I think stepping back helped me see the big picture, bring the big picture into focus.

So I think in the tech community, over my career, I've seen a lot of people make mistakes publicly, like the likes of Linus Torvalds. The way he treats or response to people on mailing list. And I think in a tech community, we have the right to call it out. We have the right to demand a behavior change. But I also think we have, in my case, in my own case, I'm not saying anyone else has to do it, but if I can see an opportunity to help someone get on a better course, then I'm willing to step up and do that. Meaning if someone wants to reach out and to apologize, I'm willing to pick up the phone, listen, and even brainstorm about what it will take to get back right. Because I think at some point, what if I were to slip? What if something actually happened to me? What if the roles were reversed? How would I want people to set me back into the community? How would I want people to examine my entire timeline and weigh it against those temporary actions? And so that just gives me enough empathy for the situation to, in many ways, hold people accountable, but also take on a little bit of that responsibility of helping them get back on track.

And honestly, I end up trusting people once I see how they behave through those scenarios. Like it's really hard to trust someone who's never done anything wrong. Like if you've never done anything wrong, I guess I'm trusting you by default. But I don't know how you will behave if something really critical went down, right? And then how you recover from it. And so even though I don't think a lot of people want to find out, but that's, in my opinion, how a lot of trust is actually built, how people deal with situations that come up. And if you've done the wrong thing, then how do you own up to it and how you move past it while not trying to ignore that it happened? And it may take some people years to forgive you. But I learned a lot from those scenarios. And I think that's an important part of the whole living thing.

So I think for someone like you, I listened to that post that you put up. And it's the first time I've heard anyone in tech, if ever, talk about this part of it. Most people will say burnout is real, and they're just taking time off. But we never get to peek into how it all unfolds. And we never really

get to see how long it takes to repair, right? We don't get to see that process. We just don't get to talk about it. So I think as part of this, you do have a voice. I think maybe this is a good opportunity to start thinking about what is it like to talk to the whole person. I know you do that from time to time on your podcast. Sometimes you help people understand what's behind the tech, the people behind the tech. But what other skill sets should an aspiring developer seek to acquire, right? You can get really great behind the keyboard. But what about all the other human attribute? Should we also be putting work into that. And if a result of this, if one of the outcomes from this is that you can help all of those engineers out there be better at being humans and not just technologists, I think that's a win for the community. But that's something that you would actually have to do long term, right?

When we have a root cause analysis in the tech world, we identify the scenario, we try to own up to it and be very thorough to make sure that we're not overlooking something. And then we hold ourselves accountable going forward to try our best to make sure nothing like that happens again, or at least doesn't happen the same way again. Because I don't think it would be fair to say you should never end up in a state like this again. I think if you do end up in a state like this again, is there a different way to handle it when it shows up and then help other people be able to deal with certain things as well?

**[00:35:55] JM:** Yeah, well said.

**[00:35:58] KS:** My closing question for you is what now? People like me are definitely looking forward to you going through this in your way, learning how to support people, because I'm pretty sure this won't be the last time in my career, in my life, that this comes up. But I'm also looking forward to you giving your analysis giving people a voice in our community. What's next?

**[00:36:26] JM:** I'm figuring that out myself. I wake up every day asking myself that question. Beyond just saying things in public that were unhinged, this has taken a massive toll on my personal life. And it's been financially damaging. There's a lot of rebuilding and fixing to do. And I think, right now I'm in maintenance mode. I want to stay alive. And that means continuing to operate the business, continuing to focus on producing high-quality content.

It's painful, because I have to put a few dreams on hold right now. There were other businesses I wanted to start. There were investing opportunities that I had where doors are probably closed now, and probably closed for some period of time. Because so much of this business is networking, and it closes you off to a lot of opportunities when people see interacting with you as a liability. So when I ask people for advice on what to do about that, a lot of them say, "Oh, well, go build a new network." And I'm like, "Well, look, unfortunately, the network in the software world is actually kind of small. And there's only so many kind of like CEOs and influencers and investors and people that are pretty important to maintain good relationships with that's a media person. So fixing that stuff up, it's going to be tricky. So the short answer is I'm not sure. I'm doing a lot of reflection. I don't know.

**[00:38:10] KS:** I think this is a perfect opportunity to go build those relationships, the human ones. There're people you've never met. There're people you're yet to meet. There're people you already know, myself included. You now have that opportunity.

When we talked earlier in this podcast, we talked about how you kind of put a lot of weight on your shoulders with a different business ventures, the podcast, all of these things. You weren't able to find the time to invest in those human relationships, cultivate those things. Honestly, it sounds like this kind of gift you've been given – I know you received it in the worst way possible. But it seems like now you have the time to go and use that time to go build those relationships, whether they're new relationships or old ones, whether you're repairing, or cultivating, celebrating, it's still an investment in those relationships. Because with my friends did have always been ups and downs. And I think now you have the time. So I will look at this as kind of that opportunity. It's like when I have something fall off my schedule, right? Had an important meeting, and it gets canceled last minute. I look at that time that I've been given back to say, "Wow! What should I go do with it?" And it feels like maybe your calendar cleared up a little bit and you got a bit of control over what you do with it.

**[00:39:29] JM:** Yeah, I certainly have gotten reached out to by a lot of people, and I am building some new relationships that way. I know I'm not the only one that has been through some stuff, especially in recent memory. And yeah, fostering a more balanced lifestyle, it's been forced upon me. So, yeah, I'm hoping for the best.

**[00:39:52] KS:** Awesome. All right. I'm looking forward to what you do, what you continue to build and share in the future. And just know, look, you have people like me in this community that actually care. We care beyond the success. We don't measure people's values in dollars. We just like real humans. And a lot of this what you have on display is humanity. And so I wouldn't beat yourself up too much. Accountability is okay. But there's no reason to throw in the towel when you have so many people cheering for you.

**[00:40:22] JM:** Yeah. Well, I want to thank you so much for being open to talking and for coming on the show to do this with me, and just for understanding. Yeah, it's been rough. And having people like you that are giving me a second chance is much appreciated. So thank you.

**[00:40:37] KS:** Awesome.

[END]