TRANSCRIBER NAME: Jake Rude

Date:

Participant #: 72

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black)

I: It’s a little formal at the beginning.

P: I think you guys got good research, I think it’ll be interesting to see the results

I: It’s been great.

P: I think being involved in it was pretty cool.

I: Yeah and the first part is already at \*cannot understand\*. So just you know I’m recording.

P: Got it.

I: Uhm, I want to get your participant ID number.

P: 72

I: 72… and that’s your informed consent?

P: Yes.

I: I’ll take that from you, yup, you’re good. Up add a date. Okay. Perfect! So, first questions are easy then I get to the hard ones. \*laughs\*

P: That’s fine, whatever you need.

I: So...uh… Just tell me a little bit about how many siblings you have?... Birth order…

P: I am the oldest, I have one younger sister, uh, she is three years younger than me.

I: Okay

P: I’m 26.

I: So one sibling and sister…right?

P: Yes.

I: uhm, so, if you think about kind of your life experience and what do you think you would consider kind of your crucible or kind of life-changing kind of experiences that you’ve gone through.

P: Uhm, I think my situation is a little unique.

I: mmhm.

P: Uhm, I wanted to do this since I was a kid.

I: Yeah.

P: And my three best friends who I grew up with also wanted to do this and they’ve all made it through.

I: Really?

P: They're all in teams now, so I am the last one to make it through.

I: Oh interesting.

P: I wanted to do it before them, and I’ll put that on the record that I wanted to do this before them \*scoffs\* , but yeah uh I need a medical waiver to get in and it took me three years to get that.

I: Okay.

P: And that was a big crucible. Like that was A big, very up and down emotional process because this is all I ever wanted to do and I kind of just got told by this one doctor that should never allow it.

I: Yeah.

P: and Uh, here I am, so worked out. It just took three years and a lot of lot of work. Uhmm, but I grew up in connecticut and uhm I grew up in a wealthy like a wealthy family.

I: Yeah.

P: Uhm, struggled, I was a really bad athlete growing up. I struggled academically. Uhmm and I also didn’t really care that I struggled academically. I was super concerned with like playing video games that I thought would bring me closer to this.

I: Yeah.

P: uhm and then like around 16, my dad sent me to this Navy SEAL summer camp thinking it would like make me not want to do this anymore and they had me like jumping out of helicopters and stuff and shooting guns and I was like “I’m doing that!” And then, uh, a couple years later, I went to another one that was like really hard, uhm, and I got through that and that was a big confidence booster for me. And then I started running ulta-marathons and skydiving, trying to build my resume for this waiver I needed.

I: Yeah.

P: So that kind of like span of years, increased my confidence a lot. So when I came here, I felt like I could handle anything they threw at me.

I: That’s great.

P: So that was that was kind of why I think it was unique. Like I lot of guys didn’t do that kind of stuff.

I: So with that kind of mental piece, I mean what was it that kind of took, like was it your constant pushing to get through that.

P: \*sighs\* My parents would say I’m just stubborn. Uhm, \*sighs\* I just wasn’t going to take no for answer, I don’t know how to explain it. I just like wanted to do this since I was a little kid, I’m gonna uhh, I’m gonna do it. I was, I remember in college when I made the decision to have surgery. I had surgery for two herniated disks in my lower back and I remember like knowing this could jeopardize everything, but I was in a lot of pain at the time…

I: Yeah.

P: and uhm, I was like, I made a commitment to myself, I was like if they say no, I’m gonna fight it to the highest level possible and then I’m gonna fight even more. And it literally came to that. Like I was talking to people, \*Stutters\* not a th president’s level, but in the White House and stuff...

I: Yeah.

P: … Trying to make this happen. Ended up not working out that way anyways. Ended up working at the lower level, but yeah it was a really long story, but uh I think for me, just ingrained in me, that just through the process of getting here, like there’s no way I’m not doing this and plus with all my best friends coming here who are encouraging me the whole way. I moved out here to live with some of them, so I was around SEALs. It was… I knew what I wanted to do.

I: Yeah, so what about your personality, I mean you said you’re kind of stubborn, but what about your personality contributed to getting through BUD/S?

P: Uhmm, I don’t know I think I have a good sense of humor, uhm, pretty disciplined. I like to party a lot which I actually think helps, I’m not even kidding.

I: Yeah, why do you think partying helps?

P: Decompression. Most guys I know, I mean, most of my friends party pretty hard too and, we, we’ve agreed its like a really good way for us to decompress. This isn’t gonna be shown to the BUD/S staff right? Cause I like drank every weekend as well.

I: No and they won’t even know who it is.

P: Oh okay. Yeah I drank the whole weekends, like every weekend, like even before hell week and everything. Like I would go out dranking with my buddies and like thathat’s not the best physically for you but like that was how I decompressed. I feel crazy for saying that was kinda how I felt with everything. Um Im not like an alcoholic or anything but I just love that was m;y that was my way to go out and have fun. Um and you know my buddies would keep encouraging me every weekend I was with them so that helped and then also sometimes you just have to chill out and relax um I kinda digress here I think personality wise like I was training I remember training before coming here because it took me so long more then I remember Buds, buds how we, Hell week was only a week first phase is only a like a month, um.. But I remember just being pretty consistent. Consistency was big um. There were days, like I really didn't want to do something and I just do it anyways. A lot of that was peer pressure too because I had my friends there who, they were showing up to do the workouts too even though none of us wanted to do it, um… I don't know. I’m not the smartest guy, like I, I just kinda, I like to think that I was just dumb and just kept going, like one step in front of the other, or one foot in front of the other.

I: Yeah, sometimes that's what it takes.

P: Yeah

I: What about, I mean you talked about, um our background a little bit and your family background but what do you think about your background led you to want to become a Naval officer?

P: Um, I remember it kind of evolved over the years. When I was like really young, I was dead set on like the action hero and the shooting and all that and like, I never lost that but it matured in that I remember my dad drove me down the coast of California when I was like 15 and um, I just like, and was like wow we live in an amazing country. Like, because I grew up on the east coast, we have a beautiful area I grew up in, this beautiful state and then everything in between all these great people, I got like very patriotic from that, I never lost that umm, just the, the real big inspiring factor for me was just being around SEALs, like I met a lot of them when I was younger and I was really inspired by their character and just their caliber of men they were. That just the biggest thing for me.

I: Now, were you apart of a military family or?

P: No, my father is like a wealthy wall street type guy and my mother has been a flight attendant for Delta Airlines for forty years. Ummm and uh noone really in my family was in the military. I don’t know, I wanted to be a Marine up until I was 10 because I thought they were what SEALs are and then I found out the difference and I was like “I wanna be a SEAL.” And if I couldn’t get in the Navy with the waiver I needed, it was pretty set I was going to go in the Army. I knew like Special Operations was it for me. I saw it as the best capacity to serve. I saw it as really high caliber of men. Uhh constantly being challenge, there were a lot of factors, but I just really wanna do this. I never had to, at least not so far, I never had to question why I was doing it, the training, like, there was never a moment where I like I needed to draw on that. Where I’d here guys, and there’s nothing wrong with it, but I hear guys who kind of needed to remind themselves. For me, it was just in my brain, I knew, I knew why I was here.

I: So you mentioned your childhood before, what was your parents parenting style?

P: Ummmm hopefully they don’t hear this, my mom’s an alcoholic and was more or less either not present or just drunk my entire life. I love my mom, but she has her demons. My father was like the best guy in the World. He was like my biggest inspiration like he put up with so much crap grinding through stressful jobs, it really inspired. Ummm, he was always like he didn’t love that I wanted to do this, but he supported me and then he made an effort to learn about it and that really really made proud of him and he was just always there, he would do anything for us, but also disciplined us when needed because I was somewhat of a deviant kid growing up. I never got in trouble with the law, but uh I didn;t make it easy for him, but he still put with it.

I: So with that, so with like discipline, how were you kinda disciplined. Were you spanked? Were you put in time out…?

P: I remember being spanked a little bit growing up uhhhhh, my timeouts and being grounded. I was a little bit of smoozer and I could get my way out of a lot of punishments, but I, he set an example where I didn’t want to let my Dad down, so as I got older, I either didn’t do anything stupid or made sure I wasn’t going to get cut doing it. And big thing to answer that was we had an open policy where I was pretty honest with him about most things, so they I was staying out past curfew, they knew I was drinking underage, they knew my friends were smoking weed and uhhh they they were pretty cool with it. They didn’t love most things, but they were a lot laid back then most parents and they gave me the rope to hang myself at every bit, so uhm.

I:So I wanted to talk a little bit about your teenage years, so what kind of activities were you into? Were you into team sports or any other kind of team maybe not exactly a sport type of activity?

P: I ran, uh, track, cross country, I joined the swim my senior year, when I really got even more serious about coming here. I, uh, in college I walked on a division 1 crew team. I didn’t stay for very long because I injured my back. I stayed for like one season, but uh it was never like official, but my buddies that I mentioned who wanted to do this with me. I trained with them religiously, in a sense we were our own little team. We did everything together, we trained together, we partied together, we hung out together, we got food together together, we grilled at each others houses, our Dad’s were friends.

I: Now were you high school buddies?

P: Yeah we all graduated high school the same year. Um so that was my own little thing, just being with those guys

I: \*something about ensuring the recorder is still recording\* So uhhm anything else about your teenage that you was formative?

P: Noooo…. I wanted to come here at 18 and my dad talked me out of it. He said go to college. I don’t think I would’ve made it at 18, you could put that on the record. I mean maybe I would’ve, but I needed my body to mature, I needed to mentally mature . umm yeah, I don’t think, I certainly wanted it really bad, but I don’t think, something wouldnt have worked out.

I: Now what about the last five years of your life leading up to BUD/s. What did you do with that time?

P: I worked like random jobs. I had like a dozen different part time jobs just trying to get this waiver, it was uh. I uhh saw myself leave at different times. I didn;t get into any like serious work. I was a lifeguard, at a wine safe awhile, uhh I made hot sauce in New York City. I learned to like try and do new things umm. I gave swim lessons, I worked as a grounds keeper on a golf course, uh a caddie, a camp counselor. Random summer type jobs I just did. I worked at a crossfit gym out here. I worked as a valet for awhile. Just random stuff like that, but nothing career wise.

I: So what about uhm behaviors. Would you consider yourself like in that kind of five year time space, compulsive?

P: No not compulsive, I was pretty consistent. I had like a routine I’d like it follow. Spend as much time training as possible. Um and uh reading, I was really big into reading. Especially since I graduated college. I got really into reading and exercising the mind just as much as the body. Um I got really into that, listened to podcasts, just try to be productive. I had this motto it was like do something productive. Even if it was listening to podcasts, its better than listening to music and like I tried to fill as much of time that was possible. There definitely been ebbs and flows as far as success. Like how I distracted I get, coming out of BUD/s, I did’t have a lot of free time so I spent most of it with my friends partying or relaxing in a hot tub or something or watching movies. Um I just now started reading a book this morning, I’m getting back into it. That was like the optimal state I wanted to end up at. That was, I remember before I came into the Navy, I was kind of at a high point in terms of productivity. Working a ton, uhh, exercising a ton. My friends all shipped so I wasn;t doing all the partying as much as I used to and then I came into the Navy and that all kind of fell apart.

I: Now would uh what kind of activities would you do that were impulsive. Have you done anything impulsive, like do you have any tattoos?

P: No.

I: Uhm anything like speeding tickets?

P: No, I don;t have any tattoos. I have no uh. I think I got one speeding ticket in college and I definitely deserved. It was the only I think I have ever gotten. I never got in trouble with the law. Uhhm, I don’t know, I try and be transparent as possible here uhm, not super proud of it, but probably the most influencing thing is like drinking too much sometimes. Uh definitely, uhm that’s probably the most impulsive thing and that’s like that probably a product of me being around I surround the people I spend my time with. They party pretty hard too and I like up to them. They are all senior to me in the Navy. Yeah other than that, pretty disciplined.

I: What do you think motivates you on a day like where you guys like…?

P: Not letting my friends down who are like further along than me.

I: Okay.

P: Like being the best I can be because potentially some day, people’s lives can count on it.

I: And uhm and when you say your friends that’s the three buddies that..?

P: Yeah and there’s a few more who I knew, I didn’t know them in high school, but I knew them before they were in the Navy and now they uhh, they’ve done deployments already and I uhh lived with two of them out here before they were deployed and they were kind of like mentors to me, So I look up to them.

I: Now uhm \*cannot discern\* uhm and then what do you think, now more specifically at BUD/S, what was the most challenging thing, whether it was a specific day or more of an event?

P: Uhh, I never, I preface it with that I never thought about quitting, like I never seriously contemplated leaving the program, I knew why I was here. That said, there were times where it was tough to really get yourself as far as you would be on a good day. Uhm I particularly found that second phase to be hard mentally. I really struggled with the OC8 test, I went to my last attempt, uhm, I wasn’t crazy about diving, so that like, I ended up being pretty good at it, but I just didn’t like it. I don’t the island was a drag, but it was cool. I can tell you the most painful thing I ever experienced and thing i never want to experience again was the CS gas on the island where they gassed us. I don’t know if they prefaced you guys on that. The single worst terrible thing I ever did in my life. I don’t know even if you’re allowed to talk about that in your article.

I: \*laughs\* probably not

P: They don’t advertise that. That was for sure the worst thing I have ever done in my life.

I: So what motivated you to push through that?

P: Uhh not knowing how bad it was. So like they did it. Right as it was starting, I was like alright let’s go. And then like it makes you want to just like run away. I remember, I don’t know how or why, but like all I could focus on was my internal dialogue except it was just so painful and I was just like stay, stay, stay. I just kept saying stay and just like trying, knowing it would end really soon because it was only like a minute and I kind of just rode it out and it ended just like everything ever does.

I: So whether, its that event or other events, was there group support or was it more individual that was kind of getting you through?

P: I don’t remember a lot of like group like come on like guys would try and do that, I felt like a lot of it was internal, but sometimes I would get that group support just by looking at another dude and being like he’s here too. He’s doing it, I’m gonna do it too. There wasn’t a lot of like cheerleading, but just being in the presence of other guys was enough for me. Some people may feel differently. I don’t know I wasn’t perfect in this program either, like I…

I: Its okay, were there any specific practices whether physical, spiritual, or mental that you used to help you get you through challenges?

P: Yes, big thing for me, was positive self talk, setting micro goals, uhm visualization was huge for the testing stuff. Uhm and uh \*pause\* I kind of had some mantras in my head like positive mantras that I would just recite. I did a lot of counting down from 10 when things got bad. I just count to 10 and then back down, up and down from 10 just to like focus on something. The single biggest thing was setting micro goals like just like taking things one bite at a time. That was huge and I learned that from a SEAL who made me practice it like before I joined the Navy, I did a 50 mile Ultra Marathon and that was harder for me because I didn’t like have that micro goal thing down and I had to like learn it on the fly and then I came here and I had had the muscle memory so that helped a lot. And I remember being in hell week thinking like I’ve been here before.

I: Just like keep going.

P: Yup.

I: What do you think, here at BUD/S, what do you think went through your mind when trying to make that difficult decision?

P: uhm what difficult decision?

I: Uhm any difficult decision whether it was ethical whether it was just…?

P: Uhm how would this look to the other guys. Would this be viewed favorably by the guys that I care about or just…

I: Do you have any specific examples?

P: No, not off the top of my head. Uh, sometimes like, I remember we had to like hit the surf at night and you were already wet. No one could see if you did it or not and there would be a debate whether I could get away with not doing and uhh I always knew that it would be like not favorable to do it because every one else was doing it. So it was just like cutting corners like that where you couldn’t really hurt anyone, you might get a little more comfort out of it, uhm, but I remember just being inspired by the dudes to not take that choice, so.

I: Yeah, Why do you think you were successful at BUD/S?

P: oh geez, uhm luck, luck and uhm uhh just still trying to figure that out honestly. I think the ability to take things one step at a time. That for me was, personally, was the single biggest thing, just those little micro goals. Just taking one little bite of something and then two, three, four, five and next thing you know you’re halfway done and then you’re on the downhill. Like i remember hell week like before it started when you’re in the tent and everybody was all nervous. I didn’t think a second after Tuesday morning. I was like if I am still here Tuesday morning, I know I am going to make it because I am like so close to getting all the hard stuff done even though we still had like days left. I knew like a lot of the hard stuff was done by like Tuesday night, Wednesday. So I was like just get to Tuesday morning and then you’re a few hours away from there, I can do anything for a few hours and then it’s kind of just like auto pilot, so I did that and then Tuesday morning came and I was like there’s no doubt in my mind.

I: Yeah, what do you think made the difference, like did you notice any difference between you and the people that didn’t make it?

P: Some really good guys didn’t make it. Some of my close friends didn’t make it. For me, I think it was just like how long it took me to get here. I feel like my commitment had already been tested. Uhm, I had been around guys who before I came here who would look at dudes who quit and be like oh like screw that guy blah blah, he’s weak. I don’t feel that way about at all about guys. I think there’s some great dudes who didn’t make it, definitely some luck involved like how hurt a guy is or whatever. Uhm, I don’t know, for me personally, I really don’t feel that much different then a lot of those guys. I think maybe it was just that I wanted this more. I certainly could tell you that athletically, I wasn’t better than a lot of them, I just was committed, so.

I: Okay that’s it.