

Lying to Myself with Ryan Leaf

RYAN LEAF: When you're little, you dream you can do anything.

Some dream they want to be a doctor, an astronaut, maybe a cowboy. My dream was to be a professional athlete. So how did I get here?

ANNOUNCER: Here's a throw by Leaf, an open gap. Look at that play.

RYAN LEAF: I remember the day when I decided to go to Washington State. It was the greatest four years of my life. I played in the biggest games. I even played in the granddaddy of them all, the Rose Bowl. I was on top of the world.

I was meeting my heroes, on the cover of magazines, and the second player in the 1998 NFL draft.

ANNOUNCER: Ryan Leaf.

RYAN LEAF: Then one day, I started to lose control.

ANNOUNCER 1: Leaf, back to back, pressure, and goes down hard.

ANNOUNCER 2: Flings it deep. Pass intercepted!

RYAN LEAF: That dream slowly started to slip away.

ANCHOR 1: What about that guy, Ryan Leaf, from Washington State?

ANCHOR 2: He's got to be--

DON LEMON: Troubled former quarterback Ryan Leaf has been arrested.

REPORTER: Leaf was accused of burglary and drug activity. In a plea deal, he plead guilty to the charges.

LINDSAY CZARNAK: Former NFL quarterback Ryan Leaf was arrested Friday in his Montana hometown.

DAN KLECKNER: Ryan Leaf has been arrested for the second time in just four days. This is Leaf's latest mug shot.

RYAN LEAF: I'm both humiliated and embarrassed the situation not only for myself, especially for my family.

REPORTER 1: Quarterback Ryan Leaf was sentenced to 10 years of probation.

REPORTER 2: The strange story of Ryan Leaf has taken another turn.

REPORTER 3: Avoids jail time with a plea deal.

REPORTER 4: Customs agents.

REPORTER 5: His career was the epitome of a bust.

REPORTER 6: Former quarterback Ryan Leaf has been arrested.

REPORTER 7: Leaf was indicted in May in Canyon, Texas.

RYAN LEAF: What was I supposed to do? Just give up?

Today I try to use that nightmare to benefit others. My life's purpose is much clearer, and I just work to help.

The truth, even when it's hard, sets people free. Change is one of the few constants in life.

Question is are you changing for the better.

I'm Ryan Leaf, and I'm just like you.

[APPLAUSE]

That's super dramatic, isn't it? I've seen that like a 1,000 times. It just-- sometimes it feels like it's a-- one of those commercials you see on late at night or something.

I'm just going to tell you my story. I'm not here really tell you what to do or what not to do or anything like that. It's just it's my story. And it started-- a lot of it started here.

But originally I'm from a small town called Great Falls, Montana. And I'm the only Montanan who's ever been drafted in the first round of the NFL draft. There are more first round draft picks in the Manning family than the whole state of Montana ever.

So I thought I was pretty special. I don't believe you're a product of your environment. I don't think that how you grow up or-- defines on who you will be or what will happen. If that were the case, I would have never ended up in a prison cell.

I had two amazing parents. My father's a two-tour Vietnam veteran who raised three boys, had his own business, full of character, integrity. And my mom was a registered nurse, and I had an

extended family of aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents in a community that supported me. So there isn't any reason why any of that should have happened.

I was raised in a town where sport was very prominent, and I was head and shoulders better than everybody for whatever reason. I just loved to compete. I tell people all the time that I was a drug addict long before I ever took a drug. And in that I mean competition was my first drug of choice. Period.

I had to compete at everything. I had to win. And if I didn't we were going to run it back the next time, and I was going to embarrass you in the process. That's how I won. And I could never really figure out why relationships with my opponents were different when we stepped off the basketball court or the football field because I would embarrass them, and they would take that personally. And I could never really figured it out.

I wasn't a popular kid. I looked at somebody who drank or did drugs as morally corrupt. I would show up to parties in high school with six packs of 7UP thinking I was better than you. And this pedestal that I was placed on made me realize that consequences weren't necessarily the same for me.

I could act out differently, and if I performed well on the baseball diamond or the football field or the basketball court, consequences were not the same for me. And I reveled in that. So it made me also believe that I was better than you, not at sports but I was a better human being than any of you because I could play a silly game.

I didn't realize until, of course, much later in life where I had to be humbled in a way that I could understand this fully is that what I say at the end of that video, I say my name and I say I'm just like you because we are all the same. We are all flawed human beings just trying to be better every day. And we over and over and over again.

No one's better or worse than anybody else because of past transgressions because of their lot in life. Every human life is the same. And sometimes we get lost in that. Football's an institution in our world. We place them on pedestals, and those that get placed on them relish in that.

I was recruited by everybody you can imagine. I would just-- couldn't wait to go to college and get out of that small town. And Mike Price, who was the head coach here at the time, called me, and it was January 1, 1994, and I'm sure most of you or some of you weren't even alive then.

He called and said, what are you doing. I said, I'm watching the Rose Bowl. He says, I'll make you a deal. You come to Washington State, we'll play in that game together. And I just bought it hook, line, and sinker. I ran into mom and dad's bedroom and I told them I'm going to Washington State.

And they were excited because it was close enough to home-- it was far enough away where they could feel like I had some independence, but they still could have a tether on me I think in their mind. I hadn't done any research. I didn't realize that we hadn't been to a Rose Bowl since 1931.

It was a leap of faith. And what a great choice. Probably the best choice I ever made. I got here, and I was just like everybody else. Every athlete on campus, we were the same. We were the best players from their high school that we're now here working towards a common goal to win a championship.

And that's what we did. We had an amazingly special year 21 years ago-- 22 years ago I guess. And we did what he said. We won the PAC 10, and we went to the Rose Bowl, first time in 67 years. And we got to be on the biggest stage and play for essentially the national championship. One of my proudest moments to be a part of this university and representing that.

I also was a Heisman Trophy candidate with the likes of Charles Woodson, who won it, Peyton Manning, who finished second, and somehow, some way I finished third ahead of Randy Moss. That's a pretty good class. Those are going to be three Hall of Fame NFL football players. One of them already is.

And it was the best part of anything that my football celebrity ever gave me because not only I had Coach Price there, I had my father, and I was representing Washington State University, the only player from here ever invited to the Heisman ceremony as a finalist. That's pretty special with the types of players that played here and have played since me. And it was one of my proudest nights.

After that Rose Bowl, I declared for the draft. I gave up a year of school here because I thought that's what I wanted. It was my dream to play professional football, so this is what I was going to do. April 18, 1998 so 21 years ago yesterday.

I was 21 years old. I was probably a lot of the same age as some of you students in here. And the San Diego Chargers drafted me second overall and paid me \$31 million.

I tell you that only because it's just an astronomical number. It's absurd to think it exists. Also I didn't believe money would change me. I saw how my father had raised me, how hard he had worked for everything. I didn't think money was going to change me.

But I can look back now and really see how my behavior was for the most part of my life, and it was unchecked. And I was pretty much enabled by the people that wanted me to succeed and never held me accountable for anything. So you put \$31 million in that person's hand, it's essentially a 13-year-old maturity wise with \$31 million.

And it was off to the races. I thought that success was these three things-- money, power, and prestige. I don't necessarily know where I heard of that. I didn't see it from my father, from TV,

or players that were in the NFL before me, but now I had all the money I could imagine, which gave me this power. And the prestige of being a starting NFL quarterback was everything anyone my peers had ever wanted. So I had it all.

I was going to play 15 to 20 years, win a couple of championships, ride off into the sunset, do some Old Spice commercials. That was going to be my life. But life isn't fair. Somebody has ever told you that it is, they're selling you a bill of goods. Life isn't fair. It's how you deal with it that matters, period.

I would win my first two starts as a rookie. That hadn't happened since 1983 and John Elway. We walked into Kansas City a week later, and I would have the worst football game of my life. I performed terribly. It was awful weather. I was in the hospital all week leading up to the game.

And I was embarrassed, and I was humiliated for myself. And then when the game ended, defensiveness and the criticism started to come. And how I handled that wasn't how I played, not how poorly I played but how I handled what would come next determined whether I would be a success or a failure.

I would play five years in the NFL. The average length of a career is 2.8 years. But I can honestly tell you that my NFL career ended after that third game. And that is so hard to believe. But it was because how I dealt with it, not only what happened in the locker room afterwards but the next day when I would-- confronted a reporter about an article he wrote.

I used to try to intimidate people and show them I was a big strong football player and that I was the one in charge and in power. Instead I looked like a petulant child not getting his way. That's how I won stuff. No one could check me anymore because I have what I considered the three ideals of success. The power and the money of it, I could just push people away. If people told me no, they were replaced with people who would tell me yes.

I showed back up on campus here the middle of that year after struggling greatly to donate, to do something really good, to be proud of, to donate a scholarship in the name of one of my mentors, Mark Rypien. His son Andrew had died, and we had named the scholarship in his name. And I thought that was, hey, you're doing something special with this.

But I go out you know the night before I'm about to do all this on campus here for the first time where I'm supposed to be a senior, and my ego is out of control. The guys I surrounded myself with were just enabling my behavior. I treated all of my alumni and all my peers like shit. And that cascaded over the whole weekend regardless of the good I was trying to do.

I would end up bouncing around at two or three different teams before my career was over. And there was always a problem. No matter what, no matter where I went, there was always some sort of issue. Because I heard this statement before, no matter where you go, there you are. If you're the problem, which I was the problem, no matter where I went, there I was. There was always an issue.

I started to feel different. I ended up in Seattle at the end of my career almost trying to resurrect it. Mike Holmgren was the head coach. He was giving me another shot, and training camp was about to start. And instead of being able to walk into his office and tell him this-- Coach, I can't get out of bed. I don't know what's wrong with me. I feel sad all the time-- I just walked into his office and I quit. I quit something that I wanted to do since I was four years old because I couldn't be vulnerable and honest because I was the big strong football player.

I don't know if a player could do that now. I would've hoped that Coach Holmgren would've heard me and said, all right, let's get you some help. I didn't realize I had a mental illness. I didn't realize that I had severe depression and anxiety, and I just-- I didn't know what was wrong. And I thought seeing a psychiatrist or a counselor was weak.

I never looked at it as like what we do as an athlete and how we train our bodies, why wouldn't you go to somebody who trains the brain in the same way. It's because there's a stigma that exists throughout our country, not only around addiction but especially around mental illness. People say that dude's crazy. There's a stigma that exists so much that people are so fearful of what others will think of them, they'd rather not say it than get the help that they need.

And instead of asking, I just walked away from something that I'd wanted to do since I was four years old. I walked away as an embarrassment to this university, to my family, to my home state. The expectations were through the roof for me, not only for everybody else around me but for me specifically, too. I had high expectations. I had the highest expectations of anybody. I wanted to be the best.

And when I wasn't, when I saw things in black and white as failure or success rather than, hey, I failed at this, it's just an opportunity to do it better the next time, my career just fell off the map completely. I walked away from the game.

But I still had this idea that everything was going to be fine because I had those three things. I had that money, power, and the prestige may have a little tarnish to it now since I was no longer a current NFL player but a former NFL player. Hey, that's good enough to get the free drink at the bar and the second look from the girl.

All I cared about was what other people thought. And it didn't matter if they thought good things or bad things. I just cared that they were thinking of me. I am the ultimate narcissist.

So I walk into this room, and I think please don't recognize me. Please don't recognize me. And then like 15 minutes later I'm like, why isn't anybody recognizing me? That's who I am.

I just-- I need attention. I always have. And I was given it early, so it just-- it became part of who I was.

[COUGHS]

Excuse me.

So about three months after I had retired-- I quit-- having done nothing to help with the transition, because you're caught up in the identity of not only football player for so long but in my case failed football player-- USA Today came out with the 100 biggest busts-- draft busts of all time last week. And I'm number 1 on it.

So every April, this happens. It just keeps regurgitating itself. So not only did I just I leave this game of football, I felt like I would disappear into the ether, and no one would really care anymore. That's not the way it works. At least that's not the way it works with me. My name is brought up again every April almost as a cautionary tale. Don't draft the next Ryan Leaf.

And I became really resentful and angry from that, and I hadn't addressed it at all when I left the NFL. And I just went into this life where I'd show up at public places to show everybody everything was OK. And one night I was in Las Vegas for a fight about three months later. And the MC was announcing celebrities in the audience. Announced Tiger Woods and Charles Barkley and the whole audience applauded and cheered.

And then the MC announced my name, and the whole MGM Grand just booed and hissed. And it's not like that hadn't happened before. I reveled in walking into Husky Stadium and going like this and everybody just booing me. I loved that feeling, but I had this helmet on. I had the crimson and the gray, and I had-- I just I felt emboldened.

The thing I told you earlier about being a drug addict long before I ever took a drug. This is-- I had the addict mind. I always had the addict mind. And what I heard from the audience that night was not only you an awful football player, Ryan, but you are a terrible, terrible human being. That's what my brain heard.

And sure enough that evening, I was going off to walk in and out of parties where they were Hall of Famers and Super Bowl champions where I always felt less than and judged. An old acquaintance of mine offered me some Vicodan.

Now I had been introduced to Vicodan while I was here on campus. I had torn my knee after my freshman year. I had surgery. The doctor prescribed medication called hydrocodone, and I took it during the recovery process. And when I was done taking it and I started rehabbing and going back to it, I didn't think about it again. I knew it worked.

I had acute physical pain, and it worked. They're called opiate pain killers. It's in the word. They kill pain.

And it worked really well for me. But I still had my drug of choice. I still had-- I had my competition. That was gone now.

And in this moment, this guy handed me a couple pills would be the first time I abused them. I mixed him with the alcohol, and I felt none of that walking in and out of those parties. I didn't feel any of that judgment. I didn't feel any of that less than. I felt nothing. I didn't feel better, but I didn't feel anything. And I didn't-- I just didn't want to feel anything.

I was so sick and tired of feeling like shit and depressed and sad and lonely. And this took all that away. I can't explain it better than that. Some people use sex. Some people use food, alcohol, gambling. Those are all mood altering substances because you are not comfortable with who you are in that moment, so you have to alter your mood no matter how you do it.

And this worked for me. And that night would start a trend of eight years of just absolute chaos in my life. It started off slowly, of course. I could go to doctors. I'd been beat up for a living. I had to have 15 surgeries. Told the doctor I was in pain. He would prescribe me medication. It was simple as that.

I didn't know a drug dealer. I also thought in my mind that I was doing the wrong thing the right way. It was a doctor who was prescribing it to me. It was OK because I was in pain. I just wasn't telling him what the real pain was.

So instead of finding the positive and healthy way to deal with this, seeing a therapist, talking about it, I chose a self-medicating way that I felt worked. And that was my life.

I lived in this beautiful home overlooking the ocean in San Diego. The drapes were always drawn. I'd wake up, see if I had pills. If I did, my day was glorious. If I didn't, I had to search and find them.

I'd sit around and watch old reruns of The West Wing and Dawson's Creek and pine after Katie Holmes. That was like my life. The saddest part about it, it was-- I just like, this is my life. This is cool. This is what my life's going to look like because I still had all the money, the power. Anybody could actually had a camera on that version of me for this eight-year period and just saw the decline.

I still show up to public things, pretending like everything was OK. But if anybody really knew me, they could see what kind of dumpster fire was actually going on right there. And I'd walk back out of it and go fooled them all.

And that progressed and progressed, progressed until you go from a guy making \$5 million a year to quitting that job but still living like you're making \$5 million a year because it was important for me for everybody to see that everything was OK. And for OK meant that I needed you to see me as successful or as rich. The hardest thing or the last thing I held on for the longest was the fact that I blew all that money. That was just the last pride piece.

Even after I became a drug addict and a felon, that was still the last piece I couldn't be transparent about to people because of the fear of what that-- the loss of power that comes

with that. Rich people in this country I thought were-- they just-- they had it all. They made things move. It was who you were, and if I were to lose that or it was known that I had lost that, then I was finished.

And before I knew it, I'm back in my hometown where I'm supposed to be the hero. My hometown hates me. The night of the Heisman Trophy, they did a survey on who they wanted to win and I finished third in my hometown. That's probably pretty telling. I finished first here in Pullman by the way. We'll just make that very clear.

Washington welcomed me into their arms. Montana, I burnt a lot of bridges. But now I was back in that town where I'm supposed to be the hero, but instead I'm living in a little guesthouse behind another house next to an alley waking up every morning and the first thing on my mind is do I have pills, and if I didn't, how do I get them.

That was-- that's all my mind thought of. The obsession that opiates have on your brain is nothing I can tell you. You have to experience it. It is a constant psychological yearning for something that you simply can't get, and you're willing to do whatever it takes. And there no consequence great enough to stop you from it.

I would look in the mirror at night and just scream out to the universe somebody please help me. I just was-- I didn't know what to do. I couldn't tell anybody else, so I just-- I would yell into the mirror.

And I had to reconcile with myself the shame and the guilt that this cycle had become. I had all this shame and guilt about who I had become, I was this junkie loser who needed his fix. And I was all guilt and shame ridden about what I was doing.

And that was ultimately walking into people's homes, stealing their medication. I had all that anxiety and guilt and shame around it, but as soon as the medication was in my hands and I knew I wasn't going to feel any of that anymore, it subsided. They weren't even in my system yet. That's the psychological effect it has.

And I would take them and the ends would justify the means. Because I wouldn't feel any of that shame and guilt, but all of a sudden it would come back later when the medication would wear off. And I'd have to go through that vicious cycle again just to feed it. And the only way it was going to stop is somebody intervened with me, if somebody-- I couldn't do it on my own.

I tried and I tried and I tried, and I just was not strong enough. I couldn't do it. And all those nights I was screaming out for somebody to help me finally, my higher power, who had tried to stop and help along the way and I just either was too messed up to see it or didn't care, my higher power finally said, I-- dude, you just don't get it. So I'm going to send the sheriff's department to help you.

And that's what happened. The sheriff's department showed up. They arrested me. I was so fearful of jail, I'd never been in any contact with the law in my life. I was so fearful that I immediately found a way to bond out. I don't know how. I didn't have any money left. Wrote a bad check, I got out of there, and I was just going to-- I just thought I'm going to go find as many pills as I can, and I'm going to just run until the wheels fall off, essentially 'til I die.

They had taken all my pills. I didn't know what to do. The addict mind is so messed up that it only thinks two ways-- I want to be high, or I want to be dead. And since I couldn't be high, I looked up ways to kill myself on Google. And then I took a knife and I tried to cut my wrist. I still have my scar from here to here.

That innocent boy on TV you just saw, how could that come to that? And it had. When that didn't work, I drove to my parents' house thinking I was just going to park in their garage and leave the car running. They weren't supposed to be there. They were supposed to be out of town taking care of my grandparents because again their eldest grandson had humiliated and embarrassed the family.

Because when I mess up, like when I screw up, the media montage that you saw happens. It's the bottom thing on Sports Center, the laughing stock of Washington State. That's who I am. When I mess up, everybody knows about it. And everybody knew about it. So my mom and dad were supposed to be taking care of my grandparents.

But for whatever reason, they were home. And I pulled a U, and I went out to a-- went out to a townhouse that I knew had pills. And I went in and I stole them. On the way out, the family arrived. I talked my way out of it. I didn't dress like a burglar or look like a burglar.

Talked my way out of it, got in my car, and as I drove away, all that disappeared because guess what? I wasn't going to have to feel any of it. I had gotten what I needed. This was my answer. It'd always been my answer.

Not-- it's never comfortable with just me feeling the way I needed to feel. But instead I altered it in some way.

I got back to my house. My brother, who had come to try to take care of me because he saw I had been arrested two days earlier, he'd come from LA to try to be a support. Had walked into the bathroom and seen blood splattered on the side of the tub. How it could have freaked him out, the knife sitting there.

I come back I walk in like everything's fine like this is normal. Because like I told you, my life was chaos. I created chaos. I didn't know what life was like without things vibrating.

And I got as high as I could, and I passed out. And before I knew it, somebody was knocking on the door. It was the police again. And they were there to arrest me for the second time in 48 hours. The family had figured something out and called the police. Very easily to recognize me

in a lineup being from my hometown. The 6 foot 6 guy in the peacoat, yeah, that's him. That's the guy who stole from us.

They would arrest me, and I would be arraigned and jailed. And I was-- this time I wouldn't get out. I'd spend the next 32 months of my life in prison.

The idea that was even a possibility is just mind boggling for me. I would spend the first like 83 days-- and they put me in solitary confinement. They said it was for my safety. I was withdrawing from opiates, which I wish nothing-- I wish-- I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

And then my brain, me alone for 83 days and my brain telling me the things that it was telling me. I still I just-- all I wanted to do was get out of there, get out of there, and die. Take pills, go. And I was so fearful of prison and what it was.

And then things passed. And I went in for my sentencing, and the judge looked at me and said, Mr. Leaf, you have no value to the society. I'm going to give you a number, and I'm going to warehouse you.

And I'd never been marginalized in my life. I'd always been on this pedestal. It was almost the opposite. I was privileged. I grew up in a very middle class white community.

I didn't get it. This would be the first time that I was marginalized. I didn't realize it because I walked into prison and this would put everything to the test that I said earlier about being a drug addict long before I ever took a drug. Because guess what, the drug was taken away. So I should have gotten better.

And I didn't. I probably got more angry, more self-loathing, more resentful. And for 26 of those 32 months, nothing changed. I went outside twice. I didn't talk to anybody but my parents, and the only reason I did that is because I was financially beholden to them. I needed them to help me get the nice things in prison.

I was still as miserable a human being as you can imagine. I fit right in with everybody in jail. I fit the role. And also I'd become calm about it and thought, hey, this is where I belong. No drama for my community, for my family, no responsibility for me.

Probably one of the most selfish acts was to continue to do that, to bypass my parole and just stay there. I sat on my bed, had a little 13-inch flat screen TV with the NFL Red Zone in the fall. It's not a deterrent. Prison isn't a deterrent. It's just another society in our country.

And that's where I was for 26 of those 32 months and nothing changed. And my higher power showed up again. This time in the form of my roommate. He was an Afghan Iraqi war veteran who had done something that a lot of people have done in their life and that's drive drunk one night. It just so happened that evening he would kill somebody.

But he wasn't resolute with that. He had made amends for what he had done. And he tried to better himself every single day, and I would just watch him and think what are you doing? Look at us. We're losers. We're in-- this isn't going to help.

And finally one day, he must've felt comfortable enough with me to confront me in a way and say, Ryan, you need to get your head out of the sand. You don't understand the value that you have, not only to the men in here but for when you get out because you're going to get out at some point. I may never, he says.

He said, this what we're going to do. We're going to go down to the prison library, and we're going to help prisoners who don't know how to read learn how to read. And I've had many of these kind of come to Jesus moments in my life from family members, from coaches, from mentors, and I just literally did that to them. I got this. I don't need your help.

And I can't tell you why this guy changed my thinking in that moment. Maybe it's because the substance had been out of my brain long enough where I was open minded to the idea. I went begrudgingly. I can still envision myself walking down that hallway to the library in my red jumpsuit just like metaphorically kicking rocks like a little child thinking this is stupid. This isn't going to help me. Doesn't he know how important I am.

And then I walked into this room, and then there were men-- 50-year-old men in a place where you're supposed to show zero vulnerability at all come up to me and say, I can't read. Will you help me? Be vulnerable in the most un-vulnerable place you can imagine. And that opened my eyes to something different.

And I went back the next day. And I went back the next day. And I started to notice the change in me that I was more personable, that I was sleeping better. I was talking to my family more. And what I had realized is that I was actually being of service to another human being for the first time in my life.

I used to think that me dressing up in a uniform and entertaining all of you on a Saturday or a Sunday was me being of service to all of you. What a silly idea. That day I came and donated the money for the scholarship, that was all about me. That was about my brand. It wasn't about Mark Rypien and his son. That was about me and what other people thought about me. I wasn't being of service to anybody in that moment except myself.

But in this setting, no one was watching. There was no media. There was no one there. There was just a couple of felons sitting in the library trying to help each other out. And I knew that it was going to have to be the foundation for me moving forward. Otherwise, nothing changes.

I liken it to go into the gym. You don't go to the gym one day and the next day you look in the mirror and you look like The Rock. It's about consistency. It's about showing up. And I just didn't do that. I didn't show up. I wasn't consistent.

Months passed. I was now the TA for the substance abuse counselor. And like I said, I knew that that was going to have to be at the foundation of who I was moving forward or nothing would have changed. I would've been the same person-- miserable, angry, resentful, all that stuff. Because the rule is, you get out of prison, you go back in this country.

There were 88 men on our cell block, 86 of which have either gotten out and our back or have never gotten out. There's only two that got out and have remained out. That's my roommate and I. We're the exception. The rule is you go back in our society.

The same with addiction issues. You go into treatment, you get out and don't have a plan in place, you either go back or you die. That's it. It has to be a 180 degree lifestyle change or nothing changes.

And so when I got out December 3, 2014-- so we're not talking like it was 10, 12 years ago, everybody. This was literally just over 4 and 1/2 years ago. And the drastic change in my life because of the choices I decided to make. And the first one started with when I walked out of that prison cell, the two people who were there to pick me up and take me home, my mother and dad, who have always unconditionally loved me. They never wanted or needed a famous football playing son. They just wanted one who was at peace and content with his life.

And to do that, I knew I needed to seek help because even though I didn't use while I was in prison and I can't tell you why I didn't. It was readily available, and it was the perfect setting for me to just sit in my self-pity and not feel any of it. But for whatever reason, I didn't.

But my muscle memory was still a certain way. When I got out, if I hadn't made changes and went and sought help and got the things I needed to get done, my muscle memory would've took over. Like if something happened, it would trigger me. My muscle memory would have been, OK, I need to numb that, and that's how I do it with this. I was conditioned to do something a different way, so I had to change.

So I asked for help. I went to my parole officer, said I need treatment. He looked at me like I was nuts. Guys who get out of prison from an institution don't want to go to another institution, and he wouldn't allow me to go. And I was like I'm being punished because I'm the precedent here? It's not like I'm asking go to the street corner in Compton. I want to go to a treatment facility in Malibu.

And for three months, I had to sit in that home town where I just saw shame and depression every single day. It's not a huge self-esteem builder to be woken up by your mother when you're 38 years old, asked what you want for breakfast, and then fed to you. It helped me rebuild the relationship with them piece by piece, but when that parole officer finally said, you can go to treatment in California, it was really a blessing.

I went. I was honest. I was transparent. I talked about what was real issues. They diagnosed me as depressive. And we addressed the addiction issues and why for 90 days.

At three years sober, it was an interesting trip for me to go through that process. And while I was there, I reached out to a company called Transcend Recovery Community who helps people moving transitionally into sober living and helps people new in recovery, and I thought that would be a perfect step forward in the service part of what I was wanting to do with my life.

And they brought me in for the interview, and they offered me the job. I would be driving new young men in recovery to meetings and be a mentor of sorts. And he told me that normally we start guys off at \$10 an hour, but we'll start you off at \$15. And I don't remember doing this, but my friend Christian, who's now my business partner in all this, said I gave him a giant bear hug. And the only reason I tell you this is because I was making \$5 million a year and was miserable and had just been offered a job for \$15 an hour and felt more value than I'd ever felt before.

So those-- that idea of success, those three things that I thought were success, was completely flipped on its ear. It was going to have to change. And if there's anything you guys take away from today and institute it in your life at all, it's these three things. And it's really ones that I live by now.

One is accountability. I was never accountable to anybody or anything my whole life. I blamed the media. I blamed the NFL. I blamed the doctors. I blamed my family, my home town. It was everybody else's fault. I was the victim all the time. I never saw my part in it.

That's when accountability is. Regardless of what anybody says, does anything, what is your part in it? That's what accountability is and taking responsibility for it. That moment where I could walk by the mirror in prison and look at myself and say, Ryan, you're here because of what you did and nobody else was incredibly freeing because I didn't have anybody else to blame.

I had an early roommate who just complained every single night of why he was in prison. It was because this woman had called the cops on him. And finally one day I got so sick and tired, I just, well, why did she call the cops on you? And he looked at me, and he's just like, well, I hit her. And I was like, well, maybe she called-- maybe you're here because you hit her.

People don't like when you show in the mirror-- I know I hated it-- on how you behave and how you act. I surrounded myself with people who hold me accountable, too. I still get defensive because I feel like I've changed and made positive changes forward. But when you're a certain way for 38 years of your life, it just doesn't change overnight. I might have this figured out when I'm like 76.

I'm still going to make mistakes, and I'm still going to behave in the same way I used to. I just need people to show me that-- that I care about and who care about me, that's the accountability part of it.

Two is spirituality. We played the Huskies to go to the Rose Bowl and Sports Illustrated ran a article on us. And-- [COUGHS] excuse me-- and there was this joke that Sports Illustrated ran with. It's that what's the difference between God and Ryan Leaf? And the punch line is that God doesn't think he's Ryan Leaf.

I thought that was hilarious. Of course, it's so silly. I'd like there is something about walking to do a stadium over there on the water and putting your arms out like this and getting 76,000 people to react. That felt godlike. It's just who I was.

The best way I can put it, I'm not a religious person. I kind of steal from every religion, all the good parts. I just know that there is a God, and I'm not it. That's the best way I can rationalize my spirituality. Sometimes I find it in a reading. Sometimes I find it in nature, something my sponsor says. That's where I find spirituality.

The idea that 4 and 1/2 years removed from being in a prison cell that I'm standing in front of a room full of my fellow students and alumni telling my story, trying to make a positive change, that's spiritual in my eyes. And I've welcomed that into my heart.

The third thing is community. I was never part of my community growing up. I was on this pedestal, and then I just thought I was better than everybody else. The closest I ever had to a community was while I was here. I was part of this team. I was part of this university. But that pedestal started to grow pretty high, too, and we did something that hadn't been done forever. And I just thought I was the greatest thing since sliced bread, and people were telling me I was, too. And I believed them.

Just like later in life when everyone told me, Ryan, disappear. Go away. You are the worst. I believed them.

I live in Los Angeles now. There's 2,500 meetings a week. The recovery community is unparalleled. The stigma does not exist there. And I'm just right in the middle of it. I'm not going to get picked off on the edges trying to do it my own way.

My best thinking took me to a prison cell. I don't make proper choices. I'm a hell of a football player, but that doesn't mean anything in life. There is a fine line between elite athlete and asshole, and it's just-- I bounce back and forth forever until I just firmly landed on asshole for a long time.

Athletes have different kind of skills than most people. We don't figure into the moment that we're flawed like everybody else. But the fact of the matter is we are not capable of dealing with life on life's terms like everybody else is because we've been handed everything so long-- so much in our lives.

Then when the real thing happens, when life really happens, we are ill equipped because we weren't willing to accept help from others before that. That's where community comes in. I

don't make the proper choices, so I went and sought out men and women who had what I wanted. I asked them how they got it, and then I followed their advice verbatim. And it's what I still do.

And it continues to work. This is a maintenance program. I'm not cured. I see a therapist every week. I go to couples therapy with my fiancée proactively because I want to communicate better with her because I suck at it.

I go to meetings. I meditate. I pray. I work out. I'm of service to others when I can be.

I do all of those things. That's my maintenance program. If I think, OK, I got it. I got this.

[COUGHS]

Excuse me.

That's when it implodes again. It's not lost on me that when I do the right thing, great things happen for me, not just run the mill good stuff but amazing things. I'm going to call the spring game tomorrow for the PAC 12 Network. Are you kidding me? This is--

[APPLAUSE]

I just have a terrible time accepting applause. It's-- my default setting is less than, and I just want to look down and go-- when people are like, yeah, we love you, Ryan, I'm like that doesn't make sense. Then when I hear somebody like, Leaf, you're an ass, I'm like, yeah, that's about right.

[LAUGHTER]

Amazing things happen for me. I mean an amazing woman-- I objectified women my whole life, too. I thought they were only there for my satisfaction. There was never any true intimacy. I found this woman who had never met me before. She's getting the best version of Ryan that anybody else got.

The night of our engagement party, my brother asked her, why Ryan? Why did you finally figure out it was him. And she said, he's the most honest man I've ever met. And my brother just fell on the floor laughing because that's not how he would define me ever.

But imagine that. Imagine if your best friend, the person you want to spend your life with, defined you as the most honest person they've ever met. How amazing would that definition be? It wasn't defined as Ryan Leaf, the football player, or Ryan Leaf, the drug addict or the-- that was an unbelievable definition, one of the most proudest things I've ever come about.

She's given me a little baby boy, 18 months old now. I'm a dad, so we all know how that I'm messing up every single day now, too. It's new. I know I'm going to be a good father, though, because of what I've been through, and he'll never have to see that version that you guys got to see on the video tonight. That won't be him.

I'm going to close with this. No matter what in your life, you're going to have adversity. I could be sitting in this audience right now and you could be up here telling me your story, and I would get something from it. It would be inspirational to me because it's another human experience. There's adversity, there's overcoming, there's inspiration in all because we're all flawed human beings trying to be better.

And all of us will come up to a fork in the road regardless of anything, and you have the choice. You have control. In a world that takes so much control away from us, you are going to have control on how you deal with something in a healthy, positive way or a negative and toxic one.

You have that choice no matter what. No matter how angry my fiancée gets with me in the morning when I tell her that you can just wake up and be happy. You don't drink coffee to be happy in the morning. You can choose a positive and healthy way. That is not going well as of yet, but I have that power.

I'll use an example for you. I always use this one. When I get out of the shower, I use a Q-Tip on my ear and I clean, and I throw it at the trash can. Oh, tells me to eat. Sorry about that.

And I throw it to the trash can, and nine times out of 10, it will go in. But there will be that 10th time, and I think my whole life I just-- my eyes would go right back to the mirror and I go on with my day, and I think I was just-- assume somebody was there to pick up after me, that I was entitled to that. Until one day, I finally-- I threw it and I watched it, and I went-- and I went over and picked it up, and I put it in the trash can.

And it's about these little choices. That's just the smallest, most minuscule choice you can imagine, picking something up and throw it back in the trash can. But they're fleeting. Just today I took the shower, I clean my ear out, I threw it, I missed. My eyes went right back to the mirror.

I do a very good job of disassociating now where the version of me stands beside me and goes what are you doing? You're going to go talk about this in 10 minutes. Go pick up the damn Q-Tip.

So I go pick it up, and I throw it into the trash. Those little choices, just no matter what they are, they add up. They add up, they add up, they add up, they add up until the monumental choice happens. So I tell you right now if you ask the 18-year-old version of me, hey, 18 years from now when you're 36, you're can be standing outside a home in your hometown deciding to go in and burglarize it and steal pills. That 18-year-old version of me looks at myself and goes no way in hell. That is not me ever.

But I wasn't making these little positive, healthy choices from that point on. So when the opportunity presented itself at 36, I had no collateral. I had nothing in the bank to help me with that, and it was like that. You're at a party and somebody hands you the keys and you've been drinking, same with them offering you some sort of drug or all your friends are doing a drug. And you don't want to feel left out, or you don't feel comfortable with who you are in that moment.

Or guys if you're with a girl and you feel like things are going well and she says no. Stop. I know you all believe in those moments, you are going to make the right choice, but if you haven't practiced all the little ones, the major one is going to be like that. And you'll pay for it for the rest of your life.

It's like practice. You practice, practice, practice, practice. We're going to go the wrong way when we hit that fork so many times in our life. We're going to mess up. We learn how to take accountability for it, make amends, move on, and try to be better the next time. But you all have control over that. You all do.

I talked about showing up and consistency. You guys all had an option today to come here and show up and listen to a has been tell his life story or go on with your day and not try to do something different and be part of the solution. Because I guarantee you, you all can make an impact on this campus or within your communities or within your families.

Who wouldn't love to be in Tyler Hilinski's apartment and looked at him and said, you-- we care so-- we love you.

Who wouldn't of change that? I have survivor's guilt all the time. Why am I here and somebody like that is not? How he couldn't stand in front of a room full of his best friends and tell them fucking hurting here. Please help me.

We don't want that to ever happen again. And the more we can remove the stigma of what that looks like, the better.

When I walked out of prison, I didn't want to be in the public eye ever again. I just wanted to disappear and just try to live a quiet life. But like I said, my name is going to stay there. It's going to last. The things that I did positively as well as negatively in my life make it storyboard material.

So how could I remove the power from it? And that was to be accountable for what I'd done and start shining a light on things and take it out of the darkness.

My sponsor tells me that when we find this peace and happiness and acceptance, we become a lighthouse of sorts. And he says, Ryan, you don't see lighthouses running around the harbor looking for boats. It stands firmly in the rocks as a safe harbor for people who still struggle or who want help. And you allow them to come to that.

And I really feel like that I found my purpose in what I love to do in life, what I get to do in life, and the lives I get to impact and the lives that impact mine. I am here because of a ton of people-- a ton of people. And the only way I know how to give that back or to hold on to that peace and acceptance is to give it away. And that's why I came today.

I wanted to be part of the solution. And I really feel like you have, too. You showed up here at 3:00 on a Friday afternoon spring game weekend. I appreciate it. And I'm grateful for the opportunity.

I never felt like I'd be able to stand in front of a roomful of people and tell them I was grateful for having spent 32 months in prison. I don't recommend it, but I'm really grateful. And I'm grateful for this opportunity.

And I want to say thank you, and I want to end on any engagement here with anybody. If anybody has any questions, I'd love to answer them. No question is silly. I've had questions as far ranging as what was prison food like to who hit me the hardest in the NFL. I appreciate the time. If anybody has any questions, just raise their hand, and I'll pick on you and you can fire away.

[APPLAUSE]

Yes, ma'am?

She asked how I was preparing to speak to my son about it when he's old enough. And it's the perfect question because Google exists. My mugshot comes up when you Google my name. And I'm going to be honest with him. I'm not ashamed of what has happened. He's going to know me as a different person, too, so my biggest fear always was what are other kids going to say or do to him.

But I'm going to be honest with him. I'm not going to keep anything from him. My family kept secrets from me, and it was damaging. I found the light that-- when you expose light to something, it removes all power from anything. It really does. It's a freeing thing to talk about something and be open and honest.

And, in fact, you become more personable and likable to people when you throw all your shit out there on the platform for everybody to see because guess what. I'm Eminem during 8 Mile. I'm going to tell you everything that's-- that you're going to rap back at me about because it's nothing going to change. That's exactly the way it looks. Yes.

He asked if I hadn't been an immediate success when I was a freshman here, if somebody would have knock me in my mouth. I had plenty of people try to-- when I was in the NFL, John Elway came out one day and spent a weekend with me trying to-- and I just looked at him like he was crazy.

Some people have to be humbled in a way-- I had to be humbled in a way where I ended up on a prison cell floor. My hope is when I speak at these things, somebody will hear something in their bottom will not have to be as dramatic or tragic as mine.

But actually they could look in the mirror themselves now and go, OK, that's me. I can see that. Let's make a change. That's the hope, but it also has to be your bottom. It always has to be your personal bottom for you to climb back out. Anybody else?

Well, I think you continue to shine a light on it. Talk about it. Expose them to it over and over and over again. Show them that it's OK. You can't control what somebody does with your message. I can't control what anybody is going to do with my message here. You may walk out of this room and go that dude's full of shit.

But I only can control my part in all this. So it would have been to be here on campus and be in their meeting rooms and talk about my story with them so he understood that it was OK to be vulnerable and ask for help. But I didn't come back here and talk to the football team.

We control what we can control. And we can't take it on when people do things that-- people blame my family all the time for how they raised me was the reason why things-- my parents raised me the best way they knew how.

We make the choices. Ultimately we make the choices. So for me, it's the continuation of raising awareness, weekends like this or this whole spring football weekend's raising awareness around mental health.

This wasn't happening three years ago here on campus, and I don't like the fact that something tragic like this has to happen for people to get motivated and forward motion happen. We know what was going on with other people. Hell, I was going on right in front of their eyes after my career was over.

I was in the worst possible place struggling going into a prison cell, and Washington State was nowhere to be found. They just said this guy's not good for our brand. Let's distance ourselves from him completely. When I just needed-- I needed my brothers.

So I'm not ever going to let that happen. I don't care what anybody else does. I'm going to be that friend who doesn't enable your behavior but supports you in every single way. And I'll be-- I'll show you the mirror.

I guarantee you your friends that are mad at you, are mad-- and you're probably saving their lives. Friends that you confront or are happy with you, you're probably enabling their behavior. That's just how it works.

So you just be part of a solution continuously. That's how you make change. And people that-- they don't know anything about it, they're not going to speak up about it. It's not something that's in their locker room.

I never felt comfortable going into Coach Holmgren's office and telling him all those things I was dealing with because guess what? The stigma exists. So let's shine a light on it and continue to do stuff like this. Allow people to come back and talk to their peers about their lives and what they're going through. Yes, ma'am.

I do. Yeah, she asked if I still keep in touch with Coach Price. Saw him a couple of summers-- I saw them last fall, too, when I was here. But he was like a second father to me for sure, him and Joyce. Yes.

Well, I think it's great because it opens up a safe harbor for individuals who choose not to partake in that. And college campuses are rampant with that. Pullman being one of them. Pullman's institutionally known as a party and drinking school. It's just how it is.

And it doesn't mean anything wrong with that. It's just that I have a problem with it. So when I drink, I break out in handcuffs.

And there are others like me. And there needs to be a safe place for these individuals. It needs to be anything like any other civil rights situation where there's a place available for people to feel safe and not discriminated against and not looked at like you're weird because you're not doing what everybody-- like 95% of the other people on campus are doing.

And it's OK. But you want to feel a fellowship with that. So I applaud any and every university that establishes these types of programs. I work with UCLA and Bruins for recovery because it's right around the bend for where I live. And they're developing on campus living and sober dorms and things like that. So I applaud that. I applaud anything you're doing to make things safer for our students and more accepting. Yes.

Thank you by the way.

Yeah, it's embarrassing. And it's a humbling act, especially when you have something going good and have been known for making a change. But it just shows how the disease can affect you in a way.

You can't control what your son does. Set a program in place and follows it. I relapsed two times. I got sober, I relapsed. I got sober again, and I relapsed before I went to prison.

Relapse doesn't have to be a part of recovery, but sometimes it is. The final piece that I would take away with that is if you stop-- if you quit. If you stop getting up, that's-- long as you keep getting up, there's always hope. And as a father, I can fully understand what you're going through.

My parents did it. But they finally set those healthy boundaries and said they would support me in any way, shape, or form when it came to my recovery, but they would just no longer enable my addict behavior ever again. And that was-- that shifted in our relationship.

And they no longer on pins and needles about whether I might go use tomorrow because guess what? That easily could happen. I'm just over seven years sober, but I don't do the things I need to do every single, I can be right back in a prison cell. That's just how it works. But I feel like if I do what I've done today again tomorrow that I'll lay my head down tomorrow night, thank the Lord for removing the obsession to drink and use and do it again. Yes.

No, I'm still as competitive as I ever was.

I have a better-- we were playing golf today this morning with a bunch of the other Cougar quarterbacks, and there was closest to the pit and there was longest drive and there's Bledsoe and there's everybody else and I'm-- yeah, I'm going to beat their ass at everything I do, OK. That's just who I am. That's how I'm wired.

That's always a slippery slope for me because if things would've worked out for me. I can't imagine going back and having the understanding of everything because if I-- if things hadn't happened the way they did, I wouldn't be the individual you guys see right now. And if I had done anything right and rode off into the sunset with two Super Bowl rings, I would be a 42-year-old asshole with two Super Bowl rings. That's all I'd be.

Instead I'm this version of myself, and I'm going to impact so many more people because of that. Because guess what, we can relate to one another so much more because we all mess up all the time.

I watched Tom Brady and even though I played in the NFL and I'm a quarterback like him, I have a really hard time relating to him as a human being. He seems perfect to me sometimes. So I think that what has happened and what has played out in my lifetime has really done me a service.

And I don't mean to minimize my story at all. But it really was just a rough patch I had to get through like everybody has rough patches. Mine was just really public, and it probably saved my life because when I messed up, there were consequences to my actions. There are individuals who are going through the exact same things that I did that are in the shadows and no one sees it, and they just disappear.

And that's why we continue to shine the light, so that's a hard question to answer. Of course, I'd like to go back and be uber successful doing the right thing and being the good person. That's the thing. Could I be a good person? And when I talk to young athletes all the time, I'm like just because you're a great athlete doesn't make you a good person. You need to build that foundation first, and everything will else fall in that way. I don't think you lose your competitive nature if you're a solid, good person. Yes.

I did. I came back and finish my degree. I lived in Moscow. It was right after I retired really embarrassed driving over here, going to class to finish my degree. But no one really knew who the hell I was. They were all-- it was like six years removed from when I was there, and that made those kids like 12 years old when I was playing.

So again it was narcissistic of me to think that. But yes I went and I went and finished. I get to next week-- I'm the commencement speaker at a graduation in Missouri at a university, and I'm getting an honorary doctorate. So Ellen next time you have me come speak, it will have to say Dr. Ryan Leaf, OK.

[LAUGHTER]

That's a lot for the ego right there, isn't it? Anybody else? Yes, sir.

Yeah, he limited-- he tried to limit me a lot of ways, yeah. He wouldn't-- yeah, he-- a certain-- I wouldn't rebound. And I was just the most dominant rebounder you can imagine, but I wouldn't rebound. So he would say you have to get five rebounds a quarter or you can't play the next quarter. Those were things like that. And, yeah, he would limit me to three dunks so I would have to start work on my perimeter jump shot.

A lot of people don't know I played basketball here my freshman year for Kelvin Sampson and Mark Hendrikson and Isaac Fontaine and all those guys. And I found out really quick that I wasn't good enough to play PAC 10 basketball at the time. But I loved-- basketball is my favorite sport. So, yeah, there's a little truth in that of the things that he did to-- yeah.

Yeah, I wrote that thing like for three months, and I gave the editor-- what you guys read is pared down to 33% of what I gave him. He didn't remove-- he removed a lot of excess but didn't remove any of the content of what of how to articulate it. And I remember when he sent it back to me, I was in a cab in New York driving from a meeting, and I read it. And it emotionally impacted me in that moment. I'm like, this is going to affect people.

And it has because it was just my blatant truth to what somebody probably would have said to that 21-year-old version of myself on draft day. Question is would he have listened still. So at the end my best advice to him was going to be, hey, it's going to be a hell of a ride and it's going to hurt like hell but you're going to be OK.

And that's a lot, especially for young people in here that sometimes it feels like it's the end of the world when things happen in our lives right now, but it's not. I don't mean to use my perspective as-- but anytime people are complaining about something, I'm just like, hey, you could be in prison. And they just immediately are like what the fuck.

Yeah, that's right. I could be in prison. That would be terrible. So there's perspective. And there's nothing ever going to be as bad as that. No matter-- fight with my fiancée last night on the phone. I'd been on the road all damn day, and I was insensitive to her about something

between us that I was completely unconscious of. But it bothered her, and she wanted to express that to me and communicate to me. And I'm like it's 1:30 in the morning. I just flew in here from Vermont. Why are we doing this now?

I just I didn't have empathy around it and put myself in her shoes. And she'd been feeling this for like three days since I'd left and wanted to express it to me so we could be better communicators with each other. But I was so still in my head, I'm like all about me still in that moment. So it's a daily battle. Yes.

There are a few. My backup quarterback Dave Muir was my best friend here and has been my best friend since. Jason McEndoo was my right guard. He wrote to me while I was in prison. Mike and his whole family, Eric and Aaron wrote to me while I was in prison.

But I found out who my friends were definitely. I definitely found out who my friends were. And there some that just completely disappeared. And, of course, they're starting to reappear now, and I'm just like I forgive you.

But it doesn't mean I have to engage in a relationship with you either. That's empowering. But I don't resent them. I don't resent Washington State anymore either. I forgive them. I made my amends to them to for what I drug them through.

And I really am grateful for to be asked back here to do something like this rather than to do something or be recognized because of my football career but rather what we can do as a community to try to better one another. I think that's the best part of it all. So somebody had their hand raised here. Yes.

Yeah, for sure. There's no family history of brain tumors in my family, and I was diagnosed with a brain tumor that had to be removed, and the tumor's from trauma. I can't-- I don't-- I can't remember growing up. I don't remember anything really, high school. And the stuff in college I only remember because I've been shown it so many times through video and stuff like that. So I definitely think there's--

But I also know what the symptoms look like now because of what individuals ahead of me-- Seau, Andre Waters, Dave Duerson, guys that I know what the symptoms look like. And I was exhibiting all those symptoms, and now I'm treating them in a healthy, positive way where those guys didn't treat it. They just-- Tyler we found out had CTE.

They thought their only answer was not to be around anymore instead of there's this healthy alternative to live. It's a disease like if you had cancer or diabetes. It's a disease that can be treated if done the right way. And that's the way I'm approaching it every single day. I just-- I look at it as if I'm living with CTE, and I can do that in a positive and healthy way. Yeah.

Well, we manipulated that situation to make me feel like I had gotten what I wanted because I did not want to go to Indianapolis. I go to San Diego, the beach, money, babes are you kidding

me? That was like I don't want to go out-- why would I go to the Midwest in the cold and gloom and I wasn't thinking in their right mind of Marvin Harrison, Marshall Faulk.

I was-- I had dollar signs and flashbulbs and different things in my mind. So I actually thought I won that. I really thought I won that that day. I thought it was draft 1A and 1B. That's what I looked at that day.

One more question. Yeah.

Oh, I mean-- San Diego gave him my dream, so I will always hold them as the Chargers. I live in LA ironically now. They're that right there. They're just like man without a country right now. They just--

It's like if a tree falls in the forest and no one's there to hear it, does it actually exist. That's what the Chargers are right now. So they're in limbo. I don't know what's going to happen. The big stadium's going to be built a year from now.

The Rams went to the Super Bowl last year, presented themselves. They've been in LA before. So we'll see what one more year does. They played really well the last two years. A lot of times that's systematic because of their ownership. But we'll find out. I just-- I don't know. Let's do one more. Sorry, Ellen. Yep.

I think it's a part of the addiction. It's a narcissistic personality disorder for me. It's all about me. But that has a lot to do with it. It's about-- especially when things go-- don't go your way or you get defensive or hypercritical, you-- that adrenaline burst pushes you towards it. And it's taking a lot of practice.

I practiced every single day dealing with things in a positive and healthy way because I still-- think I just told you a story about arguing with my fiancée last night. It was my immediate reaction was almost defensiveness and about more about me. And so you got to step back and work on it and see somebody and have somebody help guide you through it. Strongest thing you'll ever do is ask for help. Thank you all again very much for being here today.

[APPLAUSE]