Module 0 - Lesson 2 (Export2)

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I know what it's like to be a technical employee because I used to be one. And I know how to communicate with most technical employees. But I don't have it all figured out. I want to give you the impression that I've mastered everything. I believe mastery is a journey. And we continue trying to master things until we die effectively. So it's like a life time journey. And daily, I still face situations that really like tests my patients or challenged me. And a friend of mine told me that situations will keep showing up in your life until you resolve whatever is causing that scenario within yourself. So the situations are a reflection of something within you. And maybe this is life teaching me a lesson that there's still some issues on my journey to mastery that I have to work through in my three decade, almost three decade career in cybersecurity. And in the military. I used to want to be the smartest person in the room. My need for certainty, and significance was so strong, that I really didn't care about much else. I sort of bullied my way through meetings. I postured I lead with my ego, I did a lot of the things that I talked about in this course in my book, that are things we should not be doing. So I recognise after I've taken the own journey that I was part of the problem in the past. My childhood in California and in Arkansas was very unstable, chaotic, uncertain. And I think because of all the difficulties of my childhood, that's why I sort of gravitated towards the, you know, two of the six human needs, certainty and significance. And I did whatever I could to achieve both of those. After I graduated high school, I got accepted to all three military academies West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, I decided to go to the Air Force Academy. Because I wanted to fly jets, I'd watch Top Gun which is probably my favourite movie of all time. And I know Top Gun is based in the Navy, but I wanted to go the Air Force for some reason, because I thought the Air Force might be cooler that cooler than the Navy. So once the Air Force Academy while I was there, I received a bachelor's degree in engineering. Then I took my first job at keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi where I learned communications and and how to manage computer systems for the Air Force. And then after that, I took my first real assignment at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. While I was in the military, in the Air Force, I was first exposed to aspects of cyber security. I my job in the Air Force was really an

information technology type of job. But because we were in the Air Force, we had secret networks and things we had to protect. So there was always a component of cybersecurity or back in the day information security, we called it throughout my career. Even when I first started in 1993. I was active duty for about six years. And while I was active duty, I installed a couple of networks that were are still there. One of them is the Baltimore Washington International Airport, BWI, the other was it SeaTac. So I installed these networks at the airports that were used by Air Mobility Command. And they're still there, which is pretty cool. And after I separate from the Air Force, I settled in St. Louis, Missouri, because my last duty assignment was at Scott Air Force Base, right outside of St. Louis. Then I became a contractor. I was at Department of Defence or Air Force contractor for several years. After that, I worked for DHS for a while as a contractor. And then I took a vice president of security products position for a commercial company. So I kind of I had a pretty broad career as a military, contractor, commercial sectors, I did a little bit of everything. But while I was that that commercial company, there's sort of a defining moment for me. Where I, I had a some disagreements with a CEO on a vision, and it was causing me a lot of stress and anxiety. So I decided to leave that job. And I decided to leave that job without having another job lined up. And the thing is, I really liked certain aspects of that job because one of the things I did was penetration testing of commercial aircraft to make sure you know, a commercial plane was secure from hackers, we would test the planes while they're in the air while they're on the ground and do all these tests for the FAA. So I really liked certain aspects of that job. But The overall feeling I had was very stressful. So I went into the CEOs office, and I decided to just leave that job. And I didn't have another job lined up. That's the first time I'd ever done this. So that craving of certainty I had kind of went away. Because for the first time, there was no job to fall back on. I didn't have another job. I just told myself, I would figure it out. So it's interesting that the two things that I craved the most the certainty, you know, having a great job, a great career, a stable career, and the significance having a you know, title in a company, you know, professional certifications, those two things got me pretty far in my career, but I sort of hit a glass ceiling, when I realised that I was being held back because in life will get you to a certain level won't get you to the next level. So we have to shift our strategy. And often we don't realise that, except in hindsight, so typically, there's some sort of defining moment that happens that causes us to realise that and for me, this was that moment where that stress and anxiety with a job caused me to quit without another one lined up. And I thought back to, you know, why do I have this need for certainty and significance? Like, where did this come from? And I think it came from, like I said, a chaotic environment growing up. And just to kind of give you a sample of my chaotic environment, when I was like 12 years old, we'd moved from California, Riverside, a big suburb of La effectively to a small town of like 800 people in Knoxville, Arkansas. And I would walk to school, small school, probably like 12 people in my class. And one day, I remember walking back from class and my mom had a gremlin car and AMC Gremlin. At this point, my mom had divorced my stepfather, and it was just my mom and my two half brothers. When I came back, the car wasn't in the driveway. So my mom didn't work. She never really worked. So this is kind of bizarre that the car was in the driveway. But I heard loud music coming from inside the house. So when I

went inside and open the door, I saw my brothers there, they were kind of freaked out my half brothers, they had like bandages on their head, sort of like homemade bandages, like a bandana wrap. There's like blood on them. And I walked in to the kitchen. And my mom was sitting there at the kitchen counter kitchen table. With a package of hamburger, she had kind of like, move the cellophane wrapping off the top, it was eating the hamburger with her fingers just raw out of the package. While my brothers were kind of running around, freaked out, so I could tell that my mom was out of it. I mean, she'd always had a problem prescription medication and drugs and alcohol. And it turned out that she had on a drive to Scranton, Arkansas, which is the nearest wet County, Johnson County, Arkansas is where Knoxville is a dry County. On the drive. They're actually on the drive back, she had wrecked the car, and flipped over the grimmond car with my brothers in it. And you know, fortunately, everybody was okay. But you know, it could have been much worse. So that was just a typical day. during my childhood, there was a lot of certainty, there's a lot of chaos. And I didn't feel very significant either. So that's why I think I crave certainty so much. What happened is, because of that strong crave for certainty and significance. I had achieved it in my career. I had, you know, the proverbial white picket fence, the house, the mortgage, the yard, all the things that society tells us are, quote, success, but for some reason, I felt very empty inside. You know, I felt like I had the trappings of success. I had certainty. I had comfort. I was significant. You know, I was a VP in a company. But there was this void that I felt inside. And that's ultimately why I left that job and went into the CEOs office and just quit without having a job lined up. And this is the first time I've ever quit a job without having everything planned out. Remember, I craved that certainty for so long. So for this is a big step for me to quit a job without having another job lined up and really no idea what I was going to do, but I didn't care. I knew instinctually like, for some reason I felt this is just what I had to do. I also knew that I could be resourceful. I figured I had salt I had survived my childhood. I had, you know, got out of my poverty stricken, you know, situation in Arkansas. So I can figure this out as well. I think that we often don't give ourselves enough credit. And I think a lot of our insecurities like for me, they tend to stem from things like, yo, am I good enough? Do I matter? What if I look stupid? Well, everyone else think it takes a while to resolve these insecurities. So that was a defining moment for me when I quit that job. And one of the CEOs, CEOs office, I was a defining moment for me. After I quit that job, I realised that certainty and significance didn't matter as much to me, I didn't need to be a VP in a company, I didn't need to have a full time job. And this started me on a path of starting my own company. Because after I quit that company, I did freelance work for several several years. So so I was sort of a solopreneur. And then I decided to start Alpine security. And I realised that that I valued you know, ultimately, my values shifted from that certainty and significance to more of growth and contribution. Because I was I was, like I said, I was part of the problem. In the past, I was posturing as having it all figured out. I was doing some intellectual bullying myself, because that made me significant. But I realised that got me to a level a certain level of, quote, success, but it wasn't getting me to where I really wanted to go. And I wasn't feeling fulfilled inside either. So I knew that transitioning from certainty as an evidence will be difficult. But I did a lot of work. on myself, I took a lot of personal development classes. I did a lot

of reading a lot of books from audible. And I really worked to do some deep inner work on my own belief system. And my limiting beliefs and why I was craving one thing, but yet feeling in congruent or dissatisfied. And this was not an easy process. When it first started some of these courses or these events, I was sort of sit in the corner. And pretend I wasn't there. One of the defining events for me was the landmark forum, the landmark forum, I turned this event in LA. And this event was like going to think was a Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. And the event was so uncomfortable for me, like during the first break, I almost never came back. But I felt like you know what I need to stay in this event. Because as I mentioned earlier, sometimes the breakthrough, or the transformation is right on the other side of that discomfort. So it was this, it was so uncomfortable for me that I just felt like running away, but I stuck it out anyway. And I'm glad I did, because it was really a transforming event, you know, this, this discomfort didn't really leave me. So even after that first break, the second break, third break, the second day, you know, every time I'd go for a walk during the break, and I thought about walking in my car and get it in and driving away my rental car, but didn't do it, I decided to stick it out. I decided to share and be vulnerable with my fellow attendees of the course. And it really changed me as a person. So you in that event was a defining event because I saw it myself the whole transformation from being the scared person, the background that didn't didn't want to participate, just someone that participated and got a lot out of the event. So from now on, you know, from that day forward, when I'm at an event, the group activities, the sharing the things that I did not look forward to, that made me uncomfortable at the landmark forum are the things I value and look forward to add new events because I realised that these activities, the sharing the connection with other people are really gonna help you to transform one of the events I attended. It was unleash the power then it's a Tony Robbins event. at that event, they do this thing called the dickens process. The Dickens process is really based on Charles Dickens, and A Christmas Carol or the Christmas story, the movie. But basically, it's a neuro linguistic programming or NLP technique where you look at your entire life. And you identify moments that shape how you interact today. And if you zoom out of your life, and look at those moments, we all have unresolved traumas, we all have insecurities, and and often these things happen in childhood, like between ages zero and seven, and we don't even know about it. But those moments play out the rest of our lives and we're often not aware of it. So going through this exercise at that event, helped me gain some insight into some of those moments or traumas that really affected me the rest of my life and insight. And awareness is only part of it, you know, once you have the awareness, you need to be able to, to take some action to shift yourself to get the behaviour you want. So the awareness is just one aspect of it. The key the key Really though, is, is, as I talked about this is, this is a journey, it's a journey of mastery. So you have to be willing to continually learn and continue to grow, it's not going to be one book, because the landmark forum was probably the, I don't know, fourth event I attended. So it took me multiple events before I was able to shift, or transform. And this is really a lifelong process, there's no magic pill, you can just take in one event, and all of a sudden you transform, at least it didn't work for me that way. So this is a process. So when you're going through this course, Have some patience, because it is a process, it will probably be

uncomfortable as well. Most of us go through life not being very self aware, including myself. It's a lot of work to become self aware awareness is one of the things that you never really mastered. Just when you think you are aware, you say something a certain way, and somebody reacts the way that he didn't expect it. And you realise that you weren't aware of how that person was perceiving the world. So you kind of interact with them in a way that wasn't serving you or them. But what was what was good for me is during all these events I attended, I really learned a lot about myself, and how I interact with others. And that's really a lot of what this course is about. Because to be a better leader, we have to lead ourselves better. And I've said this over and over. But we have to lead ourselves and understand ourselves better. And then we can understand other people and lead other people better. So one of the things that I was so busy doing it I mentioned this before was that certainty and significance. I want it to be significant. But what that was doing was causing me to not focus on connections or relationships. Because I'd have to let some my significance go if I was part of something else. And that was hindering my growth. So once I became aware of these needs, I was chasing some my traumas that played out in my life, I was able to shift from trying to be smarter than everybody to being someone that was part of a group and having connections. And that's when I really started growing. Because ultimately what I realised is, you know, people want to help each other, most people. And we all want to grow together. And we have a lot in common. So if you're always trying to position yourself as being smarter than someone, you're really limiting your growth. And that's what I was doing. So what are the things I learned, I learned a lot of different things. But one of the things I learned at these events, like landmark forum, was the importance of connecting with people and sharing your experiences and being vulnerable. We all have the human condition in common. And we often think, you know, we're the only person going through something where the reality is, the person next to you at your office is probably going through the same thing. And once I was able to relate better to people, my overall life, happiness and fulfilment, improved, as well as my ability to get things done and my influence. So it's really, you know, an evolution and the insecurities I had had before that were manifesting as me being significant, try to be smarter everybody, as me trying to chase down certainty those things were holding me back, I realised that, you know, the insecurities that hindered by personal and professional growth, were also the same insecurities that a lot of people face in cybersecurity, or in technical industries, or just in general. And that's inhibiting the industry as a whole. Because the individuals that make up the industry, it's inhibiting them as well. So I think a lot of people that are technical or in technical roles, like I was have the same challenges. You know, we crave certainty, we want things to be predictable. We are significant, because we're smarter than everybody. Or at least we think we are, we're the person people turn to when there's a technical problem to solve. So those are the things a lot of people are chasing, and I was chasing that. But really that's an insecurity and the insecurity is, you know, people think, well, maybe I'm not good enough. I'm not smart enough. I don't know enough. What if nobody likes me. So all those things manifest in certain ways, and they're holding us back for most technical people. And this is true for me. Back in, you know, 10 years ago, I didn't really have very good people skills, because as I mentioned, I was positioning myself as being smarter than

everybody. And what I realised though, as in the industry as a whole, the same journey I took you several people have taken, several people are a little bit further behind on that journey, the same journey where they haven't quite made that shift from certainty and significance to connection or to something else. And that is really what's holding back a lot of our highly technical industries, specifically cyber security. Because a lot of people are still posturing as being the smartest person in the room. They are doing intellectual bullying because it makes them feel significant. And all this stuff is really hindering our growth as it as a society and specifically in cybersecurity as an industry. What I realised is there's really no silver bullet, or is there a silver bullet, right? We all we look for silver bullets all the time, the one thing that will solve everything. So let's explore this further. Let's see about the silver bullet concept and we'll talk about this in lesson three.