

Episode 51: Dan preps people for prison

Dan

Are you nervous to go to prison? Are you scared? What are you afraid of about this? What do you think it's gonna be like? What if somebody tries to come at you? What are you gonna do?

Scott

Welcome to What Was That Like. I'm your host, Scott Johnson. This is a show where we talk to regular people - people just like you are just like me - who have found themselves in an extremely unusual situation. We'll hear their stories and get inside their head because we all want to know what was that like. More information about each episode at whatwasthatlike.com. Here we go.

There was a time in his life when Dan was in a pretty difficult situation. He was facing something that most people don't ever have to go through.

Even though he was not a violent person, and he certainly was not any kind of career criminal, he made a bad decision and accepted a job that, looking back, he never should have taken. But he did. And that led him to the tough spot he found himself in.

Dan was headed to prison. His plea deal meant he could get up to 60 months. 5 years of his life.

One of the things he found to be the most stressful was that he had no idea what to expect. So just before he was actually sentenced, he recorded a YouTube video – kind of an audio letter to his friends and family.

Dan

Just want to let everybody know - I am going to federal prison next week. Actually, 30th is when I get sentenced.

Scott

He was just reaching out for help, any kind of information that might be of some benefit.

Dan

I want to ask if anybody out there has any idea of what to expect. I've been dealing with this for about 3 years right now, in case you're wondering. Now, I'm smiling about it at this point. I'm just ready for this to be over. I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm just looking for some advice how to deal with federal prison. What I did was wrong. I regret it.

Scott

He kind of didn't really know what to ask for, or who he could talk to, to help him out. His lawyer couldn't even answer these questions

Dan

So if anyone can give me vice of what I should do while I'm in there - things to pass my time - any federal prison work camp that you can recommend-- I am looking to make time go by as fast as possible.

Scott

Dan made that video in 2014. Now we fast forward to today, and Dan is at a very different place in his life. A much better, happier place. He runs a very successful business, working as a Prison Consultant.

When non-violent, first-time offenders are suddenly faced with the fact that they're going to do time in prison, they are desperate for answers and guidance. What to expect, how to prepare, how to get your time reduced, how to interact with the other inmates, Dan helps with all of that.

In our conversation, Dan told me all about his own experience – what he did that earned him that prison time, what his first day was like (which is actually a pretty hilarious story in itself), and how he shortened his own time. And he told me how he helps people today. Imagine if you've never even been arrested before, but you make a stupid decision, or you drive drunk and kill someone, or whatever – and you're headed to prison. Dan knows exactly how you feel, and he has the answers you're looking for.

And if you want to hear more from Dan, you have to check out his YouTube channel. He has literally HUNDREDS of videos that he's created, all around this topic. I'll have the link to that and his other social media accounts in the show notes, or you can just search YouTube for RDAP DAN, that's R-D-A-P Dan. You'll find out what that stands for in a few minutes.

And a warning up front – you already know on this podcast I don't bleep any words, and this episode in particular has a lot of those words. So if that offends you, you might want to skip this one.

And here's my conversation with Dan.

Scott

Considering where you are today and what you do, do you consider your own prison experience to be a positive thing?

Dan

100%. It's a question I get quite often. I really feel that if I hadn't had my prison experience and had a different approach and different view on what I thought things would have been like, I would probably be in a much different place today.

Scott

Yeah, that got to be something you think about - where do you think you would be today if that hadn't happened?

Dan

Probably taking advantage of as many people as possible and continuing to scam people and justify my own needs over other people's concerns.

Scott

Well, let's talk about what happened to you. How did you end up being sentenced to prison? How long ago was that? When did that happen?

Dan

2011 is when the investigation started. I was indicted on my case in 2013. I started my prison sentence in 2014. You look back and kind of wonder in life - like you wake up one day and you ask yourself - like, "How the fuck did I get here?" It was really from a series of bad choices from always looking for shortcuts in life, and not really wanting to put in the proper amount of work and effort that was required. Living in South Florida, everybody had nice cars, nice houses, boats, and spent tons of money going out to clubs - I wanted these things as much as anybody else did. I just wasn't always willing to put in the amount of work and effort that was required to earn them the right way. So, I was just continuing to look for shortcuts. Each time I took a shortcut, a little bit more of humanity would, kind of, disappear. It got to a point where I was making such poor decisions and justifying them in my mind, like, "I have to do this to afford to live here. I have to do this for my kids." I started working at an office in Boca Raton. We were doing credit restoration, which was fine, but I wasn't really making any money doing it. It was a small business that I had started renting office space in another guy's office - the guys' names are Sean and Lou. They had a call center doing something else - magazine sales or some other shady South Florida Get Rich Quick scam.

Scott

It seems that South Florida is a mecca for that kind of thing, right?

Dan

Yeah, the days are sunny and the people are shady - it's the way south Florida breeds us. I blame Florida for all of my problems.

Scott

All right, now we know.

Dan

These guys were talking about opening up a pain clinic or a doctor's office in Savannah, Georgia. We were in Boca at that time. I had no idea what a pain clinic was. I just kept hearing about all the money that they were going to make doing it - they're talking about millions of dollars in generated revenue. I was just thinking, "How can I plant myself in there? How can I become involved to get a piece of whatever it is they're talking about doing?" They saw my enthusiasm in it and told me all the things I wanted to hear, which were, "We'll pay you \$10,000/month. You can bring your fiance with you. You can hire your best friend. You can pretty much take your Florida life and bring it over here to Savannah, Georgia. You'll open up this doctor's office for us. You'll manage the office." The question I had was, "Well, how do I manage a doctor's office? I've never worked in a doctor's office before." "Well, we'll train you. We have staff. We have nurses that will train you. There's going to be a doctor on site who's going to be treating these people for pain management. You just need to make sure that the office stays in order and people aren't getting out of line. We'll train you in what you need to know. Your girlfriend can answer the phone. Your best friend can do triage, who is basically the guy that watches you pee in a cup, so he had probably the shitty end of the stick - which is probably why he hasn't talked to me to this day. I don't know.

I jumped into it. People were coming from all over the place - from Kentucky and Ohio - down to see our doctor. It was very clear that they were just doctor-shopping. They were coming there because they knew they could pay a fee. They came with the hopes that this doctor would just write him a prescription for whatever they wanted. If that was the case, in some instances, there were cases where the doctor would turn them away. All in all, it was a pill mill. People were getting their prescription drugs. We were legalized drug dealers that found a way to do it

through the scope of the law - at least, we thought we were. It didn't open very long. Feds came in and raided us. Once they kicked in the doors and came into our houses at 5 or 6 in the morning, they had guns on us and our dogs. You would have thought that they were going after Escobar or something. It was something right out of a movie. I never imagined being in a situation like that ever. I was terrified.

Scott

You had a doctor - they were writing prescriptions. What was it that made this illegal?

Dan

We saw what other pain clinics were doing, so we kind of thought about what we needed to do to avoid getting in trouble. We saw a lot of these doctors that basically would see people whether they had issues or not. If you come in there with a fake MRI or just basically walked in with cash, the doctor would give you a prescription for anything you wanted in a lot of these other places. So, we specifically were not doing that. We were verifying MRIs. We were making sure they weren't photoshopped. We did our best to make sure people weren't doctor-shopping. But when the feds came in, they basically said, "This isn't a legit practice. These people are drug-seeking individuals and you're turning a blind eye." To this day, I really don't think that was the case. Granted, morally, you could tell these people were addicted to drugs. I mean, they were drunk. Who drives from Kentucky to Georgia to get a prescription? I mean, that's a little bit insane.

They would come down in carloads. There'd be one minivan that pull up, 44 people would crawl out of that minivan, and one guy would come in and pay for everybody, and those are called sponsors. The sponsor would pay for everybody when they get their prescription or whatever their pill count was. Most of these people were seeking either oxycodone, Percocet or some sort of a schedule to narcotic. Whatever the amount they would get - let's say they get 30 pills per prescription - they would take half of their pill count and give it to the sponsor that paid for them because of insurance. If you have insurance or getting these pills for a pretty low price, it might not cost you anything except the copay. The street value on these pills was, at one point, depending where you live, you might get \$20-\$30 a pill. Now, the drug dealers got 1000 pills from all the people that he sponsored. It's serious money for very little work, but it's putting drugs out onto the street. Kids are getting these, parents are getting these, and it's ruining lives. These are things that I chose not to pay attention to at that time because I was blinded by the potential money that I could have made - that I never made, by the way.

Scott

I'm sure it's easy to convince yourself "It is legitimate. We have a real doctor, These are real prescriptions. Maybe, the people are a little shady. Hopefully, I'm not gonna go to jail for it, of course."

Dan

Yeah. You justifying these thoughts is like you justifying anything. Maybe you own a liquor store and you're like, "Well, the guy is 21 years old. He's coming in to buy alcohol. It's not my fault if he drinks the bottle and gets behind the wheel." You can justify that with almost anything. Granted, we knew these people were driving from a faraway land to come see us. In the state of Georgia, there was no law prohibiting that from happening. People could drive from anywhere. They had MRIs. They had verifiable issues that they could show that they've been getting prescriptions for an ongoing amount of time. So the doctor could easily turn a blind eye. Even though I suspect - especially for me, for the office manager or other people working there - I was

just thinking, "Well, shit. It's all on the doctor if the doctor is writing bogus prescriptions. I just work here." Never in a million years that I ever thought that we might get shut down, get bad reviews, the Feds kicking in my door, and I end up getting sentenced to prison. That never crossed my mind.

Scott

I watched one of your - maybe, it was - very first videos in July 2014. You were kind of announcing to your friends and family, "Hey, I just want to let you guys all know that I'm going to be going to prison." It seems so ironic. I mean, you are the person who would come to you now to find out if you guys have any-- I mean you said in the video, "If you guys have any advice, you know what can I do?" Obviously, you know you're gonna be sentenced to prison. It's a pretty depressing time. Do you remember what your mindset was when making that video?

Dan

Yeah, I do. I don't know why I made that video. It wasn't like I had any intentions of starting a YouTube channel - that was the last thing on my mind. I'm not sure what made me do the video but I remember very vividly what went through my mind on a day-to-day basis. You hear a lot of people out there say, "Oh, these white collar guys don't get rough enough sentences" or "These minimal guys are only getting minimum time in a low-security prison or some type of like club environment." It's real easy to look in from the outside when you live in this fantasy world where it's easy to judge others. What you don't understand is the torment that you go through from the time that you find out you're in trouble till the time you actually end up going to prison for most nonviolent first-time offenders. I don't want to label it "White collar" because it can be low-level drug dealers as well. For nonviolent first-time offenders, you typically are out on pretrial when it's a federal crime the entire time. These cases can go anywhere from several months to a couple of years.

Your expectation of what you think prison is probably going to be like every fucking crazy TV show you've ever seen - dropping the soap, getting shanked, getting extorted, getting turned out, taking showers, and all of those fears and horrible settings where there's just a bunch of naked people running around or you got to survive. This is what you imagine prison being like. So, the entire time you're prepping to go, you don't really know what to ask. Your friends and your family are useless. They have the best of intentions, but it's almost like if you have a family member who's dying of cancer or some type of terminal illness. Part of me was like, "Just hurry up and die because I can't do anything to stop this. I feel horrible that you're going through this, but it's literally watching somebody die." My friends and family would tell me, "Oh, the judge is gonna see that you're a good guy. He's not gonna send you to prison. Only murderers, rapists, and child killers go to prison. You're a decent person, Dan." But my attorneys were telling me otherwise without giving me the full scoop of what that entailed. They were just like, "No, you're going to prison as part of your plea deal." So you have all of this unresolved in your mind because all you can imagine is your biggest fear coming true. What do you tell your kids when you're going to be taken away from your family? These are all the things that I would go through.

So, when I turned to YouTube and made that video, I think it was because I was so sick and tired. I didn't want to complain to anybody. I didn't want to get sympathy. I wasn't looking for somebody to go, "Oh, it's gonna be okay." I wanted somebody to go, "Man, that's fucked up. Are you nervous to go to prison? Are you scared? What are you afraid of about this? What do you think it's going to be like? What if somebody tries to come at you? What are you going to do?"

Those are the things that I was thinking about, but I could not find those answers for the life of me because they didn't exist. There is no real outlet to ask these questions.

Scott

Right. And who would you ask that from? I mean, none of your friends and family had done serious prison time, even though they're giving you advice about it.

Dan

I think I had a couple of buddies that spent overnight in the drunk tank - that was about it.

Scott

So you were looking at some serious time. What happened with your sentencing?

Dan

Originally, they offered me a pre-plea deal - they offered me a plea prior to being indicted. They offered me, "Hey, take a plea. We won't even indict you. We'll just indict you on the information." When I said "Okay, what does that look like?" they told me, "Well, we'll cap your sentence at 60 months." I was like, "60 months probation? 60 months home confinement?" The US Attorney said, "No, we're gonna cap it at 60 months prison time." I was like, "Wait a minute. Prison time? I'm actually looking at prison time?" He went, "Yeah, but the worst-case scenario will be 60 months." I was like, "I don't give a flying fuck if it's six months. I'm not going to prison. I don't know how to handle myself in prison. I have small hands. I might drop the soap, like, every other fucking day on accident. People are gonna think that it's an intentional signal or something." I was terrified, so I immediately turned down that plea deal. When I turned down the plea deal, the government unloaded every weapon they had. They went from "Hey, bud, how's it going?" to "You little cocksucker! We're gonna squash you like a cockroach. You don't know what you just did." because I dragged it on for a year, thinking that I'm gonna plead out because they kept telling me "Oh, we're gonna work with you. We're gonna give you this great deal. Just cooperate." I'm like "Okay" and walked in blindly.

My attorney, like most criminal defense attorneys, oversell and underdeliver. You're expecting this attorney to ride in on this giant white horse that's going to slay the demons - the federal government. Really, what 99% of criminal defense attorneys do - unless you're going to trial - is their fucking talking head gets the plea deal from the government and then sells it to you. They literally pitch it to you like they're a car salesman selling you a car that you know, you shouldn't be getting into. And they tell you this is the best it's gonna get this is a good plea deal. "Just take it." I was like, "What's good about going to prison? Can't we fight this?" He was like, "If you fight it, they're gonna come at you." I was looking at potentially 25-plus years in prison if I had not taken a plea deal. So, when that reality kicks in, you start to really weigh out your options. "Well, shit. I can't do 25 years. I'm going to be an old man. My kids are going to be grown. My kids will have kids. 60 months worst case scenario... There might be some little good time in there. Maybe if you get lucky, you can get some other time off. There are other ways you can manipulate that. 3.5 or 4 years? I would still have a life left." You start to swallow that and just look at this shitty option, and it becomes your best option. So, you suck it up and suck the government's "you know what" and take the plea deal.

Scott

Yeah. I can see that it would take time for your brain to process that. "Wow, this is really the best I'm gonna get." But you didn't do the full 60 months - right? What how long were you in?

Dan

No. My cap was 60. The government basically said at my sentencing, "Your Honor, we recommend the guideline range-- I want to say US probation was asking for 47 months out of the 60. The judge slightly downward departed. I don't know if this guy is still alive or not. For his part, his thought process was just ridiculous. He said, "Mr. Wise, this is the most heinous crime I've ever seen." Meanwhile, I was googling this judge before sentencing, and he sentenced people to death. I was thinking in my mind, "Well, you're not sentencing me to death."

My girlfriend was also indicted on this - I don't know if you read that part of it. She went to prison with me. She was the low man on the totem pole. Like, she was the office receptionist. All she did was answer the phones. We thought that she was getting probation, for sure. She was the first person to get sentenced. When they sentenced her, they gave her 13 months. The rest of us were like, "Oh my God. We are so fucked because you couldn't get any more squeaky clean than Shelly." Due to the fact that the judge gave her a prison sentence, everybody else knew that it was game over. We all thought we were going to do the full 60 months. So, when the judge downward departed to 42 months, it didn't feel like a victory that time. 42 months felt like an eternity, it felt like life is over and nothing is ever going to be the same. But yes, I did not do the whole 42 months. On federal time, you get good time, so you serve 85%, and you get 54 days per year of good time in the feds. Then, we'll talk about it later, but there's some programming. You can also take substance abuse program - I liked my marijuana and I enjoyed my alcohol during my riot days. So if you have that and properly document it - which is part of what we do as our services - you can knock time off your sentence. So, I ended up only serving 13 months on 42 months. I mean, I really did about as good as you could do with the sentence I have.

Scott

Wow. 13 months out of 42. That is incredible. I specifically want to ask you about that documentation and how that works. When people come to you - their biggest fear is they're about to go to prison and they've never been in prison before - what are the most common worries of someone who's about to go in?

Dan

Most of the people that we deal with are definitely like-minded individuals. They're first-time nonviolent offenders. If you're a repeat offender and you're in and out of the prison system, you're not looking up RDAP Dan on YouTube because you already know what time it is and what to expect. The people that are coming to me are lost souls. They are contemplating suicide, just as I did. The thought of suicide crossed my mind several times - so glad I didn't. I'd be really upset at myself if I killed myself - I'm gonna tell you that right now. If you're listening to this, and you're facing a federal prison sentence for some kind of a non violent crime, don't kill yourself because you'll be really angry. I'll tell you, they come to me and the question is, "I don't really know where to start. I have all these questions for my attorney. It seems like when I sit down and start talking to my attorney, I leave with more questions than answers. What can I be doing right now that's gonna make a difference in shortening my sentence? Is there anything I can do to get probation and not go to prison?"

"Everybody's in denial. The government is making stuff up that's not true. Are you going to go to trial? Are you going to take a plea deal?"

"Well, my attorney is telling me that I got to take a plea deal."

“Okay, if you're gonna take a plea deal, you're taking responsibility for what you did. I get it. The government's out to paint a picture of you that's gonna make you look like the worst fucking scumbag out there, but is anything of what they're saying true? Is there anything you could have done differently, looking back at what you did?”

Reflecting on myself, I could have done a million things differently. So, when we can focus on what you did wrong and stop focusing on how the government is kind of exploding that into more than what it really is, it allows them to stay centered and go, “Ah shit. I did create this for myself because I wasn't focusing on consequences.” So, when you can start getting somebody to take the responsibility and ask somebody like, “Who are your victims?”

“I did a victimless crime.”

“So, you live in a fucking box and nobody knows who you are. You don't have a mother, a father, a wife, a kid, an aunt, a best friend? Well, I mean, these are your victims. These are people who were watching you go along with this. Do you think my children were not victims of what I did? You can make excuses till you're blue in the face and say ‘I did this for my family’ but the reality is you did this for yourself. You cut corners. So let's focus on what you did wrong.”

So we get people to start focusing on that and come up with a game plan of what they can start doing to be proactive to be a player in their situation - start working towards mitigation. Aside from what the attorneys are doing, we come up with an entire game plan that allows them to demonstrate themselves for the day of sentencing in a completely different way than what a judge typically sees, and that can yield amazing results such as probation.

Scott

I would imagine someone who's about to go into prison. They've probably seen Shawshank Redemption and they know what Andy Dufresne's first day was like. The fat guy was crying that night “I'm not supposed to be here” and that whole thing. Are you saying that none of that is accurate? Is prison not as bad as everyone thinks? I know that there are different levels of being incarcerated. Can we talk about that a little bit?

Dan

Sure. Is it as bad as people think? If you're a child rapist, you killed a family of 20, you blew up a building, you're in a drug cartel, prison is going to be pretty rough - you're gonna go to a higher security prison. In the federal system, you have your basic levels. You have a camp status, which is as low as it can go. Camp status doesn't even have a perimeter fence - like, you can literally walk off the compound and nobody would know until count time before they would consider you an escapee. Then, you have a low security where you're behind a perimeter fence. I was behind a low security behind a perimeter fence. There's no prison politics in a low-security for the most part. Some lows may have prison politics. What I mean by prison politics is whites can hang out with the blacks. You can sit at the same table and watch TV. The only real outcast in a low-security is not going to be threatened with violence, they're just threatened with “You can't sit at my table” - that's as bad as it gets. You can't sit at the cool kid's table if you're a sex offender or if you snitched on a bunch of people. Even if you snitched in a low-security prison, you're safe. There's no risk of getting hurt because the person that was inflicted would be the ones that would get moved out of that security and get bumped up to a higher-security.

So, when going to a low-security where I went, I was terrified. I've actually got a picture and you're welcome to use this picture on the cover. My friend, Matt was like, “Hey, I'm getting

myself hyped up. I'm getting ready to self-surrender to prison. I get sentenced to 42 months. The judge gives me 60 days to get my affairs in order. Now, I have to go drive myself to Coleman federal prison in Central Florida, up by Ocala. My friend, Matt was like, "You should go in there and make a statement." I was like, "Like what? Like 'Hey, I'm here'?" He was like, "No. You need to do something that's going to be on a stage or get their attention." So he came up with this idea - it's around Halloween time - and he was like, "Hey, let's go to the Halloween store and let's buy a black and white prison costume. You wear this when you self surrender - that's what you wear into prison." I was drinking and thinking "This is a fucking fantastic idea!" So, now we're driving. It's not even just him in the car with me anymore - there are 2 other friends, Evan and Paul. We got there and they were like, "You're going to put the costume on." I was scared. I saw the prison. I saw the gates. I saw the guard driving around. I was like, "I don't know, man." He was like, "Dude, you've talked so much about this. We've got the video. We're going to record this. You're gonna show you walk in. You got to do this." I was like, "Alright, twist my arm again. I'm always that idiot that agrees to do something." So I put on the costume, and I'll send you the picture. I've got the picture of me standing in front of the prison and holding my papers in front of the prison with a little white hat on.

I walked up and there's this call box. I pressed the button and waited. This guy with a shotgun drove around, pulled up, and he was like, "Can I help you guys?" I walked up and I was like, "Yeah, I'm here to self-surrender." He went "You're surrendering dressed like that? I was like, "Yeah, I'm not gonna lie. I was drunk. I did a bunch of Molly the night before." I mean, what fucking moron turns themselves into prison for 42 months? Just that in itself is like a mindfuck - just you turning yourself into prison. So I was on molly. I was wearing a prison costume. The guards were like, "Alright, man. Good luck with that." They buzzed me in. I walked in. My buddies were recording and videotaping it with hidden cameras because you can't record on federal grounds. They let me stand there for about 5 to 10 minutes, and I walked in the front doors. They brought me into what's called R&D. I walked up to a desk. I gave him my ID. The guy was looking at me and he was like, "Have a seat right here." So I must have been waiting about 15-20 minutes. I was trying to be cool. I was no longer cool. I was just like, "This is a terrible idea. Can I reverse the time? Where's the fucking Stewie time machine here? I'm not feeling this at all."

I saw 3 giants walking in the distance. I mean, this is something out of a fucking movie. Those three giants - 2 giant black guys and 1 white guy - looked like-- I don't know if you've ever seen Rob Zombie's movies - I can't remember the names of the movies. He's got these killer movies and the killer that dresses like a clown - well, this guard looks exactly like him. He's about 6 foot and 300 pounds. He had the meanest look on his face. They started approaching me. They got about 3 feet from me and I was like, "Okay, they're clearly here for me." So I stuck my hands out and I was like, "You got me, coppers", trying to make light of the situation. They saw negative entertainment and value in what I was saying - they saw no humor in it. They grabbed me, threw me against the wall, and put my arm behind my back. When I say they rip the clothes off me, I felt like I was about to get raped. I mean, the clothes were ripped off. I had, like, stress marks across my body from where the clothes were ripped off me. They threw them on the ground. All I remember was the guy grabbing the butt of my neck like I was a little doll - that's how big his hands were. He put his face right next to my face and he said, "You think this is a fucking joke?! You think we're your fucking friends?!" That's all I remember them saying.

I was sitting in a holding cell for the next several hours. They were drug testing me and they were like, "Oh, he tested positive for opiates." I guess Molly had opiates. I tested positive for THC. They were like, "We should send him to the medium." I was just like, "Oh my god, the

medium?! Where am I at right now? What does that even mean?" I mean, these were all terms I didn't know. They sent me to general population at that point. They said, "Your unit is A1. Go there." They pointed in that direction and said, "Walk to that building." I walked to that building with no knowledge of where I was going. I walked into the building and a bunch of inmates started walking up to me. "Where are you from? What's your name?" I'm exhausted. If anybody out there has ever done Molly, you're depleted the next day and your serotonin is gone. You're like, "Leave me the fuck alone. I want to go to sleep." But you're in prison, so the last thing you're going to do is say any of that. So I was like, "Hey, my name is Dan. I'm from South Florida."

Typically, first-time nonviolent offenders that have a sentence of less than 10 years do not go to a low - they go to a camp. So when I told him what my crime was-- I didn't tell him what my crime was. I said where I was from and how long my sentence was. They were like, "What did you do? Why are you here?" All I could remember are movies saying, "Well, you don't talk about your crime. You're not supposed to tell people those things. You're not supposed to ask those things." So my response was, "I don't want to talk about it." They were like, "Okay." So, they walked away. Another white guy came up to me. I was waiting for, like, a case manager or guard or something to tell me what shitty bunk I'm gonna sleep on. Another inmate walked up and was like, "Hey, man, what's your name? Where are you from? What did you do?" "I don't want to talk about it." So, that happened 2 or 3 times.

Finally, the first guy that asked me was like the leader of this pod - the leader of the White Boys. His name is Rick. Everybody called him White Boy Rick. So Rick walked up to me and he went, "Look, man. I'm going to be real with you. You don't look like a drug dealer. You don't look like you're in a gang. So do you fuck little kids?" I was just like, "What?! No! Why?!" He was like, "You're not telling us what you did and that's a tell tale sign. When you don't talk about your crime, it's usually because you got one of those crimes that you don't want to talk about." So I immediately scrambled for something to show what I did, and it took me about 30 minutes to get paperwork from somebody from a correctional guard showing what my judgment committal was, showing that I was in there for conspiracy to distribute. Once they saw what I was in for, they were like, "Why are you at a low?" I was like, "I don't even know what the fuck that means. Should I be somewhere better than this?" I had an open case, which I didn't know about. So, when the Feds indicted me, the state had also charged me but the state hadn't prosecuted me yet. So, when you have an open charge, which is called a detainer, it prevents you from going to a camp, which is open custody, because when you have an open case. They don't know necessarily what your open case is. Since there's no perimeter fence, your open case could be some crazy crime that you might go on the run and take off. Anyway, that's why they stuck me to low. So yeah, my first few hours were extremely stressful.

Scott

I hear people say, "It's either going to be a great idea or it's going to make for a great story." and that costume was definitely not a great idea.

Dan

Hindsight, no, but it does make for a break. Fast forward, all those same guards came back up to me and they actually said, "That was fucking hilarious. We couldn't let you know that at the time. We thought you were maybe a complete lunatic or you were crazy because no one ever did something like that. We didn't really know how to take you." Once they saw that I wasn't crazy, I've always been that person, I've always been an attention-seeking brat, which is

probably why I have a YouTube channel. I love to hear myself talk. I love being on this podcast right now because I get to hear myself rattle.

Scott

I'm sure people are gonna love hearing you too.

Dan

That's just my MO. I've learned that the hustle and con artist in me is always good to be there. So I've had to find a way to use my powers for good, and not use it to take advantage of people, and question my morals. Is this going to cause somebody to be in a better off situation where they're currently in? So I found you can still get off on that same high, but you got to do things for the right reason. Usually, everything else would kind of fall in place when you kind of stack your priorities in place.

Scott

You've discovered your strengths and you're channeling in the right direction, so that's good. Do you think it's safe to assume that the judge is going to go easier on you if you don't have any past criminal history?

Dan

Well, sure. I mean, obviously, if you're continually making mistakes then that's not going to help you. If somebody says "I've never been in trouble before. Do you think that's going to help me?" - I'm not saying this to you, I'm saying this to my client - the judge isn't going to give you a pat on the back and say, "Don't do it again. Well sure, asshole. It's going to look a little bit better for you because you didn't murder anybody prior to this. You had better conduct. You had a better offense level. But this isn't their first time. There's nothing special about you. The fact that you're a first-time nonviolent offender, the fact that you're a father of 300 kids, the fact that you go to church every day, the fact that you bring food to the homeless and climb up trees to get cats out for the firefighters isn't going to mean a fucking thing because you still did what you did. What you did has a guideline range. What you did has an offense level associated to it. Your guidelines are basically what the sentencing is going to be comprised of - your past criminal history, all of these things. So, the fact that you have no past no criminal history-- yes, that helps you, but that doesn't mean 'Kick back and relax'. There are a million people that look and sound just like you. So, how do you create a different opportunity for yourself to create the opportunity for the judge to go, 'You know what? I give probation or home confinement, maybe, once a year, and you're the type of person I want to give it to'. How do we invoke that type of reaction out of the judge? That's what we're going after, and we have a whole method of how we do that."

Scott

Right. Because when you're standing there, you don't have time to create rapport or charm this judge because he sees people in and out, all day, and they all look just like you, and everyone he sees wants the easy sentence.

Dan

Yeah, absolutely. And getting people to understand that is rocket science, sometimes.

Scott

What if somebody says, "Man, I'm not going to make it in prison. I have never even been in a fight. How am I going to do this?"

Dan

I'll immediately tell people, "Look. Stop with all the bullshit. You're not going to that type of prison. You know what your day is going to consist of? I know it's hard to fathom that right now, but your day is going to consist of you walking a track. It's going to consist of you working a job - probably not that serious of a job. It's going to comprise of you going to classes all day. Maybe, you're on a softball team. You're gonna be walking a half mile track. There's going to be flat screen TVs everywhere. There's going to be a billiard room where you're going to go play pool. There's going to be a movie room. There's a commissary where you can order ice cream on the weekends. You're never going to hear a cell close behind you. There are no cells. There are no bars. You're in a dorm or you're in a cubicle. It's a non-violent environment. Most of the people who are there are either white-collar or drug offenders of a non-violent crime. They are people who are just like you. I made such good friends with some of the guys that I was in prison with to this day. I still communicate with some of them and we have this kinship - it's very similar to military. Everybody I talked to who had been through a military experience - I don't know if you were in military--

Scott

I'm not.

Dan

--anybody that's been through a military experience has a lot of the same regimen. You get up, eat your breakfast, go to class, work out together, and go watch things. I mean, I made the best of my time. That's why you asked me early on in this conversation-- you said, "How has this changed you? Has it changed you for the good or for the worse?" You can choose one of two directions. You can choose to go into prison and go, "This isn't fair. I don't belong here. Why me?" You can come up with a million reasons like "Somebody told on me." Yes, somebody probably told on you, or you probably told on somebody else. Well, it's one of the two, right? Most people in prison talked about "I would never tell. They're the ones that tell." I'll tell you that right now. But you're there, so make the best of it. Hang out with good people and like-minded individuals. I started reading books there. I've never read the Bible before. I read the Bible in prison - I found God in prison - and it's such a funny thing to say because you hear people say it all the time. "Oh, I found God in prison." It's so cliché. The reality is you're at an all-time low, so you would finally give into serenity - that's what it really is - and you realize, like, "My best fucking decisions and my best choices landed me right here. Clearly, I'm no one to give advice to anybody until I figure it out and clean up my own house. Get your own house in order before you start giving somebody else advice. You can't be a father to your kids, you can't be a husband to your wife, you can't do anything for anybody else until you fix your own shit, then you can start giving back to people. So I use my time to realize who I was, redefine and recalculate what mattered to me, and came out a completely different person, but you got to use maintenance. If I don't maintain what I learned, I could very easily go back to the scumbag person I was in the past.

Scott

You ever watched the TV show "The Office"?

Dan

Of course.

Scott

When you were describing prison, it reminds me of the one episode where they hired the guy who had been in prison. The way he described it sounds like it was better to be in prison than to be in the office where they were working. You were talking about TVs, billiard rooms, and all that stuff

Dan

It was great. I had zero worries. I went to prison with almost 300-something pounds. I came out of prison 180-pound, in shape, educated, and witty. I was on point. I was ready to take on the world. I never would have had this moment of clarity if I had not taken this short break in life - thank God, it was only 13 months. Even if I had done the whole 42 months, I met guys who had been there for 15-20 years, working their way down to a low, and still got 10 years left. They were like, "Oh, man, you're still going to be shitting McDonald's when you get out of here." They put it into perspective. Like, you don't go in there and complain about your short sentence. Granted, yes, it's easy to say. I got clients who were like "I got sentenced to 60 days" and my initial reaction is, "Oh god, why even call on me?" But I get it. You only know what you know. That's your new glass ceiling. Until you poke through that glass ceiling, you don't know that you can go higher and higher. So, I was constantly challenging myself with questions, making decisions, and focusing on consequences. When you use those 3 things in conjunction, you are a force that nobody can stop. So, that's how I built my business.

Scott

Alright, I got a few questions from listeners. I asked this in my Facebook group for the podcast, "What questions people would like to ask you when I was talking with you?" Marcy asked a question. Her job is she delivered supplies to prisons, so she was wondering if she strikes up a conversation with an inmate while she happens to be there delivering something, does that encourage them or does it bring sadness knowing that she's gonna leave and they're still stuck there?

Dan

Definitely. I would encourage any human interaction. However, a lot of inmates will look for weaknesses. They'll look for ways to get you to do things or favors for them. It could start off with something little like an ask. I mean, turn on the light when the lights are not supposed to be on. I mean there's nothing wrong with giving somebody human courtesy as long as you have a boundary and a line that you're not willing to cross. If an inmate wants to go, "Hey, how are you doing? Great?" and start talking about your family or bringing up anything personal, you got to draw a line. It doesn't mean that you have to be rude or be a bitch to them or anything that's going to adversely affect them, but you can easily draw lines. You just change the subject. Look, these people are going to get out because they aren't lifers. So, if they're constantly beaten down, told, and treated like an animal, they might have that animal mentality when they get out. So, I think that's a great question. Definitely give them the respect of being a human being.

Scott

Tim asks, How should an inmate interact with the guards? Should they, like, be friendly or just avoid conversation? What's that dynamic? What should that look like?

Dan

Interacting with a garden in an open setting is fine. There are some guards that were pretty relaxed and pretty chilled around other people. You could, like, talk about sports. The problem was when you would see the inmates sneak away, they'd go talk to the guards one-on-one behind closed doors and you'd feel like, "Oh, this guy's a little office pet or teacher's pet or he's

going to tell on people.” Then, you start looking like a weasel and you got to be careful. If people see you doing that, no one's gonna trust you if they see you in there hanging out with the guard in the prison environment. Technically, the correctional staff is the enemy and you're the opposition - not to say who's right or wrong, but that's just the mentality. They're there to keep everybody safe. You're there as an inmate. I've seen plenty of inmates trying to game on guards and put guards into a situation where they could hold something over their heads to extort them and get things out of them. I've also seen guards who were just overly aggressive with inmates. My personal perception of that was - I was nice and respectful - if a guard did something that I didn't like or he abused his power with me, I would immediately realize, “You know, what? This is your world. For the short time that I'm here, have at it. I'm not going to stand and hold my ground or prove a point and go spend time in solitary confinement, lose good time, or get kicked out of a program because I wanted to prove myself.” It wasn't that kind of prison. So you have to be very alert of what you're doing and don't allow yourself to get too friendly with the guards because that could appear very poorly with your inmate staff or with your inmate population.

Scott

And that's not going to go unnoticed. People are going to notice that.

Dan

Correct.

Scott

Okay. All right. One more. Jennifer asked, “How extensive are the resources available to inmates, such as ministry opportunities, continuing education, that kind of thing?”

Dan

Again, that's gonna depend on where you go - state versus Feds. I was at Coleman federal prison. I'm a firm believer that if you want to educate yourself in prison, you will find a way to take advantage of the resources. I've seen a lot of guys come out of prison and they'll say, “Oh, prison didn't do anything to help me.” You really didn't do anything to help yourself while you were in prison. The resources are there. They're not there for everybody. If you're an average person that is able to kind of do a little for yourself then, yeah, the resources are there. If you've never held a job before and you can't spell, the resources are there for you.

It's not “You're gonna get out. No one's really going to help you. There's not a lot of assistance out there.” They say there's a lot of money being spent on it. The reality is I saw guys in the federal halfway house trying to find jobs that couldn't even get help with a resume. I mean, they were so lost - and you wonder why the revolving door brings them right back in. All they ever knew was a life of crime and no one's giving them the ability. They don't know where to turn for help because it's not like you can go to one place and get everything you need. It's like “They send you here. You're trying to find the money for a bus pass. It's a nightmare. Before you know it, you're like, ‘Fuck it. I'm robbing a convenience store. I'd rather spend more time in prison than deal with this bullshit world.’” The world's a rough place. The struggle is very real. We feel that every day, especially with what's going on right now with the pandemic, but I feel like I'm prepped for this. Stay in your house? Okay. I can walk around and listen to music. It's no worse than prison.

Scott

Alright, let's talk about how someone can help themselves before they go in. Before they go in, how can they lay the foundation to minimize their time inside?

Dan

Somebody that's in trouble right now might be thinking to themselves like, "Look, I am under indictment. I'm under federal investigation. What should I be doing?" Accountability is going to be number one - taking responsibility for what it is that you did and realizing that the government is not going to be your friend. They're not going to go, "Oh, we're gonna let you off." They're gonna paint a picture and you're gonna have to be okay with that. What you do are the mitigating factors. How are you preparing your personal narrative? That's probably one of the number one things that we talk about. A personal narrative is a letter that you're going to be writing and the judge is going to read at your sentencing. So, understanding how to properly develop a personal narrative is huge because you don't want to go in there just blaming everybody else, you don't want to go in there and say, "I did this because my father didn't hug me enough as a kid or I was addicted to drugs." You have to own what it is that you did.

If you're taking a plea deal, character reference letters that your friends and family are going to write on your behalf. Same thing - you can't have your mother and your best friend saying, "He's a really good guy. Please give him a second chance, Your Honor. He doesn't deserve to go to prison. He's my baby boy." You have to be able to explain to your friends and family, "I did this and you're one of my victims. If you're going to write a letter on my behalf, you need to be hard on me. You need to tell the court how what I did is also affecting you and what I'm doing now to better myself, the choices that I'm making, and the level of accountability that I'm taking for this. I also want you to talk about changes that you've seen and know what programs might be available."

If you use drugs. One of the fatal things that we hear a lot of defendants tell us is "My attorney didn't tell me to bring up my substance abuse during my pre-sentence interview. When the probation officer asked me if I drink or use drugs, I lied and said no because I thought it was going to make me look bad. If I was honest about that, I thought they would give me a rougher sentence or they would maybe revoke my bond. So, I lied and said I had no substance abuse problems." When you tell that probation officer that you have no substance abuse problems, that gets documented into what's called a pre-sentence investigation. Now, when you're in prison, you find out, "Well, shit, there's RDAP program - Residential Drug Addiction Program. If you qualify for this program, it can reduce your sentence after the fact by 12 months." When they look at your PSR and you were like, "Nope, I don't have any issues.", I don't care what you're saying now but you don't qualify. So knowing all how to properly prepare the steps that you can take to mitigate ahead of time, in addition to what your attorneys doing, can complement the situation. So, it's really not waiting to the last minute to take it seriously. Start taking it seriously right away. You're going to feel pain. You're going to feel anguish. It's going to be hard. Nothing worth value is ever easy. Change is a process - it's not an immediate event. So, you have to allow yourself to feel the pain in order to make the change. I just made that up just now, by the way. I never said that before.

Scott

You even write that down. It's a good thing. Okay. When somebody comes to you and they don't have any drug problem, they aren't an alcoholic, is it time to start drinking?

Dan

No. That is not going to do you any good. RDAP is all based on prior to your indictment. So, once you're indicted, you might pick up a heroin addiction because you're freaking out - it

doesn't matter. It's all 12 months prior to the indictment. After you're indicted after the arrest, you could become an addict and it's not going to help you.

Scott

Would they know your drug problem because of your prior convictions for drugs? How would they verify that?

Dan

Truth be told - I do not advocate this at all - they only have space for a certain amount of people to take these programs, so having guys making up lies and going in just to give them-- there's actually a prison consulting group called RDEP Law Consultants that is just getting sentenced right now for doing just that - manipulating people into lying to the probation officer about having a drug problem they didn't have in order to get the year off. You're not going to make your way through RDAP. There are substance abuse professionals who have seen a million people just like you come and go. If you walk in there and you're not really somebody who had used anything - drinking or marijuana-- you live in this unit with these people for 10 months. You cannot be an actor 24/7. The real you is come out and you're gonna get kicked out of the program. You're not going to get any time off.

So, if you're one of those people who doesn't have a substance abuse problem, we focus on personal narratives, reference letters, and how you're engaging with the community. If you're a doctor getting ready to go to prison and you've already taken your plea deal, we would bring you to colleges and have you speak to pre-med students about - just like how they were sitting there at some point - they're going to be in a situation where someone's gonna go "We can double bill these insurance - Medicare and Medicaid. We can make a couple of million dollars off of this when you're already making high-six figures and mid-six figures a year." That greed factor kicks in or you don't know how to fucking say no to somebody because you don't want any conflict. Then, now you're sitting in prison for some bad choices. Well, we have these doctors, pharmacists, or attorneys getting ready to go to prison, speaking to the younger version of them saying, "I hope this connects with you because there's going to be a time in your life where you're going to have a fork in the road. You can go left which sounds easy, or you can take the hard way and take the stairs instead of the elevator but you're going to be safe" and hoping that cautionary tale prevents them from making the same poor choices. So these things can inflate a judge's decision 10 times over because, now, not only are you giving back to your community but you're potentially stopping somebody from making the same poor choices that you made. There is nothing more than giving back. Going and donating your time at Salvation Army - that's great. Nobody knows why you're doing it. Practicing humility is the key. Making people aware of what you did really allows you to own the shit that you caused.

Scott

Right. Because I know that some of those med students are gonna come to a point where they have that decision to make - they can go left or they can go right - and they're gonna think, "Oh, wait a minute. I heard that guy talk back when I was in school. I better think twice about this."

Dan

My co-defendant, Dr. Gossett got the same sentence as me 42 months - this was mid-level. He was a very successful doctor who was getting ready to retire and had a few houses in Georgia. He is now a lawnmower operator because he's too old to go back and do anything. He lost his license to practice. They took everything from him. His wife left him and he's very bitter. He

blames the government and never accepted the responsibility. He's literally cutting grass to this day. I could not make this up if I wanted to. You have to be aware of what you're doing.

Scott

I know you've talked about the halfway house thing where you want to have additional halfway house time which kind of replaces your prison time. Can you talk about how the halfway house program works or what that process is?

Dan

Yep. Whatever your sentence is - 24 months, 36 months, or whatever it is - you can do a portion of your prison sentence as long as your crime allows you. If your crime is incredibly violent or you raped kids or something like that, you're not going to any halfway house. For the rest of us who didn't murder or mess with kids, we can go to a federal halfway house, meaning you can do a portion of your sentence in the halfway house and you can do a portion of your sentence in home confinement. So, it's not like you're going to serve your time in a halfway house - it's all combined. So technically, you can do the last 12 months of your sentence in a halfway house. I could not wait to go to the halfway house. I was so excited. I was like, "This halfway house got to be a step above prison, right?" You're thinking, "Well, prisons like this halfway house is probably going to be this much better." Then, home confinement is going to be, like, the final step before freedom.

So, I was very fortunate - I thought I was very fortunate - when they gave me 11 months halfway house out of my 42 months sentence. I qualified for RDAP, so you get rid of my 6 months of good times. I did RDAP - that took off a year. Then, in the last 11 months of my prison sentence, they said, "You've been so good, Mr. Wise. We're gonna send you to the halfway." I was in Spokane, Washington, because I transferred from Florida to Washington. I was like, "This is fucking great. I'm going to be in the halfway house. I can go eat regular food. I can go see my girlfriend. I can get laid." I had all of these thoughts of things that I could do. I get to the halfway house. I pulled up. They flew me there. I get on a plane. Shelly, my girlfriend, picked me up at the airport, took me to the halfway house, and I was like, "I think we're at the wrong place. We're in the most dangerous part of town. This building looks like it should be condemned. It looks like it used to be a mechanic's workshop." I saw these guys standing outside and I was like, "Hey, I'm looking for a halfway house. I have a garbage bag full of clothes." They were like, "Yep, you're at the right place." This place was a pure shithole. There are no amenities and nothing to do. Where I came from was fucking club fed.

Scott

And were you thinking, "Hey, can I go back?"

Dan

I'm not lying to you. I asked, "Can I go back?" I did that cry even once while I was in prison. A couple of times, I might have missed my kids. They sent me a nice card. I shed a tear. I didn't cry in prison over, like, "Oh my god, I can't do this." On my first night in the halfway house, when I finally got into my bunk, I sobbed like a bitch. I was so like, "Oh my god. I can't do 11 months of this. Well, what the fuck am I going to do? This is the worst place I've ever been." It wasn't scary. It was just a thing. There were no windows. It was dark. It was gloomy. The showers were disgusting. I was just like, "Send me back to prison." but you adapt and find a way to make it work. I got a job I was working. They liked me there because I wasn't causing any problems and they're a bunch of little pricks that work - they're a bunch of young kids - that had jobs. They weren't cops. They just call them resident monitors. I never talked back. Because of that, they

didn't mess with me and I was in and out of there. I was only there for work. I go home on the weekends. I ended up getting a pretty sweet job where I was working, and that's how I started my YouTube channel. I worked for a friend who got me an office. He put me on the schedule from 8 in the morning to 9 o'clock at night. Even though I was done working at 3, he would keep me on the schedule for 9. Then, I could just take my paycheck and give it back to him. From 3 to 9, I would make YouTube videos about my experience in prison, and that's how the YouTube channel started from a federal halfway house.

Scott

So, at the halfway house, obviously, there are rules. You probably have had a curfew.

Dan

You're not going anywhere unless you're going to work. It's not like, "Leave at 8. Come back at this time." It's like, "Oh, you don't work today? You're in the halfway house. Oh, you have to go to work today? Well, where do you work? How long does it take you to get there? Okay, it takes you 30 minutes to get there. We'll give you 45 minutes to get there." They give you just enough time. If you want to go clothes shopping - if you're a female, you need to buy feminine products or need a haircut - you got to let them know a week ahead of time about where you need to go. If they approve it, they give you just enough time to get there and get back. If you deviate, if you stop and get a cheeseburger, you're done, you're toast, you're going back to prison. I violated my halfway house and they sent me back to county jail for 27 days. It was pure torture for smacking a vending machine that ate my money and getting my chips out of the vending machine. They said it was theft of a vending machine and tried to violate me. If I would have been found guilty of that, I would have lost my RDAP, they would've taken the entire year back and I would have gone back to prison sitting in county jail.

Scott

Wow, what a simple, silly little thing, but a big effect it could have.

Dan

Important decisions in the real world don't matter. If you spit on the sidewalk, somebody cuts you off and you say "Fuck you", those things don't matter in the world that we're in right now where people are running on high emotions. That's why people tell you that prison is not that bad because there's a different level of respect there. You don't just assume you're gonna get away with everything. Until you're free and clear, you're under a microscope. Any little thing you do wrong can have catastrophic consequences until you're free and clear, which I am now.

Scott

Right. And it's another analogy to the military environment - it's the same thing. Everything you do is monitored and everything has consequences there as well.

Unknown Speaker

Yep, very similar.

Scott

Tell us about your service. How did you get started counseling people? Obviously, your experience qualifies you for this, but what made you decide to go into that?

Dan

I wish I could say this was like some master plan that I had came up with while I was in prison, but not at all. The first video that you referenced - that I did before I went to prison - where I was kind of just talking to friends and family through a YouTube channel. I went to prison and did my time. Obviously, it wasn't that bad - not nearly what I thought it was going to be. I got out of prison and lived in the federal halfway house. Finally, I got access to an email where I can check my emails and see "YouTube, YouTube, YouTube, YouTube." I see all these comments from YouTube and I was like, "What YouTube? Why am I getting emails from YouTube?" So I was reading it and I saw comments from that video that I recorded that I completely forgot about. Every comment was something along the lines of, "Hey, Dan. I watched your video. I hope you're out of prison right now. I'm getting ready to go through the same thing you're going through. If you have any advice for me, I would love to hear from you." Every comment was pretty much along that context.

So, while I had all this free time at work, because of my awesome buddy who gave me this job at food fresh, I would start answering these questions on my YouTube channel just talking about, "Oh, you should do this, you should do that." After I did maybe 6 or 7 videos, it started getting a little bit of a following. That video that you saw before I even got out of prison had, maybe, 20,000 or 30,000 views which, for me, was viral. That was huge for me. So, I had a little bit of traction coming out when I started making these response videos. Immediately, people were like, "Oh my God! You made it out! You don't seem crazy. You don't have a bunch of tattoos. You actually look pretty. You actually look better going in and coming out." They asked me what I did and how I shortened my sentence. I was just talking about my experience. Then, a criminal defense attorney started calling me saying, "Hey, I don't know who you are, but my client keeps telling me to reach out to you." I'd get these calls. "What do you charge?" I was like, "What do I charge? You can charge for this? I don't know. Here's my Pay Pal. Send me a donation. Whatever you send me, I'm fine with that." Some people send me \$20, some people send me a couple of hundred bucks and I would get on the phone and just do a light education service.

Another prison consultant approached me - a much larger one who was in the industry - and said, "Hey, we would like you to be a part of our brand. You have an approach that we don't have. You're the everyday guy that people relate to, whereas we only can hit the white-collar guys." I was like, "Great, let's do it! Let's make some money together!" But then, after like a week into it, they were like, "You need to stop giving everything away. You need to stop telling people how they can shorten their sentences until they pay." I'm a big believer of, if you're that dedicated, you're gonna figure it out. So, I wasn't giving away any secrets. "You still need us. You don't know where to navigate. You don't know how to end." I didn't believe that. They told me I'll never make it on my own because I'm not the white collar. I don't attract the white-collar guys. I'm never going to be taken seriously. Without their guidance, I'm just going to be some other schmuck that got out of prison. I said, "I could believe that if I wanted to, but I've always been a believer - when you tell me that I can't do something, I would go find a way."

I slowly started developing a team. I ended up hiring a life coach that understands what we do. I hired professional writers that learned the system from what's the best approach to take when you're writing a personal narrative and character reference letter. So, instead of just having you write your letter, we do an interview process. You'll answer a million questions. Based on your answers, we now know who you are. We built a physical profile on you. We can now build your narrative. We hired a chemical dependency professional to evaluate you if you did have a substance abuse problem but there was no track record. Like you said, maybe you were never arrested. Maybe you drank every day but you never really told anybody about it. We helped

bring this out through a substance abuse timeline. We brought in a team of professionals who made me look like a fucking rock star because without them, I'm really nothing. We use systems that are out there. I come from the world of sales with call centers and CRMs, and I've learned how to use this technology that's already existing to manifest into this industry, which is really non-existent.

The power of YouTube allowed me to catapult and bypass all of these prison consultants because they were charging everybody 15-20 grand. We were coming in and charging people 3-4 grand and doing way more services. Once the word got out that RDAP Dan - which is the name that got coined for me on YouTube - once they realized that RDAP Dan is not some fly-by-knight, "He actually knows what he's talking about, he's giving us the same value as somebody else who was charging me 15 grand without condescending me and making me feel like I'm anything other than a white collar guy not worthy of your service." So now, we have billionaires hiring us. Then, we have guys that are working on Walmart hiring us. So we've found a way to make it work. In that process, I was able to build-- for me, it's an empire to be able to generate 7 figures a year doing something that you love. No, I didn't say I make 7 figures a year, but generate 7 figures a year - just to be clear.

Scott

Revenue is not the same as nett, I know.

Dan

It's not. However, we've been very fortunate because you can't make everybody happy. Sure, you got people out there that get better results than other people. We don't over-promise and under deliver. We give you realistic expectations. At the end of the day, if you use the service that we have, you're going to be much better off with us than without us, and that's what our clients - that have actually put in the time and effort - will tell you. We have happy clients. We have great clients. I don't have it in front of me right now, but clients would send me this mask - they make these masks. These people that take their time to send me gifts in the mail because we've connected. My kids got involved. My kids got on YouTube and talked about what it was like from the perspective of a child going through this, what do they wish that I had done differently, being honest with them when I wasn't honest with them about what I did, how that affected them in school and getting these real-life perspectives of "I'm not just going to pretend to be like your attorney. I'm not going to pretend to be all super professional. We're going to get real. We're going to talk about what you did. We're going to come up with a solution and we're going to make you better." It's really that simple. I'm blessed to be able to do this for a career.

Scott

I love that. I always say the best businesses and the most successful businesses are the ones that solve a problem for someone. Obviously, that's what you're doing. I think I first found you on Facebook, but then I knew you have a YouTube channel, and I said, "Okay, well, before I talk to Dan, I'll go watch his videos and get an idea of what he says." I went on your YouTube channel and, man, you've got hundreds-- how many videos do you actually have on there? Do you know?

Dan

I don't know. I mean, for a YouTuber - I think I'm a pretty fucking cool YouTuber - I've got 400 or 500 videos. My license plate says "RDAP Dan". I'm kind of conceited when it comes to my YouTube channel because it's really cool that you can like that. But yeah, I got a few hundred videos,

Scott

definitely, I was gonna go in and watch all your videos but, obviously, I didn't watch all of them. I've not gone to prison. I have kind of the same concept because my primary business is computers, so I do computer repair. I remote into people's computers all over the country and fix things and stuff like that. But yet, I've been doing a computer blog and podcast for many years, and every one of those blogs, podcasts, and articles is teaching people how to use a computer, how to fix things, and stuff like that. Logic says, "Man, you're giving it all away." But people would look at that, read it, and think, "Okay, can you just do it for me?" That's the thing. They come to you and they know you're real because you're providing all this information. Obviously, it's very similar because you're telling people, "Here's what you got to do" but, yet, they're still going to come and hire you. You mentioned a fee of \$3,000 or \$4,000. Is that a typical price? What are your rates?

Dan 1

Our entry-level packages, if you asked me this 3 years ago, it was, like, \$995. People were like, "Oh, you charge too much more now than what you charge then." I was like, "Yes, but then, we didn't have licensed chemical dependencies on staff. We didn't have a certified life coach. We didn't have an attorney that worked with us. It was just me and my knowledge. Now, it's me and my crew. So now, our base price is probably going to be somewhere between \$3,500 - \$5,000 and that can range up to somebody that really needs, like, some hand holding. At a high end, I would say that our most expensive service would be about 10 grand. I know that sounds ridiculous. If you told me "I'm charging 10 grand for this", I would have told you to run for your life because you're getting ripped off - that's what I would have said - but I know what we do. I know what you get for 10 grand and, God damn it, it really does make a difference.

Scott

It's good because someone that uses your service pays your price. Then, when they get out of prison, they're gonna say, "Man, I'm sure glad I forked over that money because I'd still be sitting there.

Dan

We've had people that have gone in, come out and do interviews with us about, "Hey, Dan didn't leave my side. He didn't stop taking my calls. He kept in contact with me while I was in prison." It's a 2-way street. You're not going to hire me and then just go radio silent and think that I'm going to be like an ex-girlfriend texting every 5 minutes bugging you, "What are you doing?" If you're not going to be proactive, you might be wasting your money because it's a two-way street. You got to stay engaged. Sure, we're gonna send you "How are you doing?" emails from time to time, but if you're not checking in, you're not engaging with the service, you can't pay somebody to do something. There's no magic wand. I'm not giving you the choice of a red pill or here's the pill you're going to eat. If you don't eat this pill, you're not going to get the work that you need to get. You have to take it seriously. This isn't something that's going to fix itself with money. It takes hard work and dedication on your part. No one's going to take your situation more serious than you. If you're undermining and you're relaxing, guess what? You're going to get an outcome that's going to be a result of the action and the process that you put into it.

Scott

What's the most unusual case you've had?

Dan

Well, I had one guy. It's actually a national case. You can Google his name is Dr. Smithers. He was a guy. He was a doctor. He was in a very similar situation, except I was not a doctor. He's a pain Clinic guy who got indicted for it. They offered him a plea deal. His count was much higher than mine, so I think they offered him a plea deal of 7 or 10 years but he wouldn't take it. He got sentenced to 40-some-odd-years because he refused to take a plea deal. He hired us after the fact because I work with a professional legal consultant who specializes in when you want to fight your case after the fact, and this guy was just his own worst enemy. There are those cases where people just can't take responsibility no matter what because any amount of prison time sounds like too much. Those are bad clients to take. I try to typically stay away from those. Then, we do work with sex offenders and a lot of people give me shit. They were like, "You have kids. How the fuck can you work with a sex offender?" I was like, "Look, most sex offenders - I'm not gonna say all-- when you talk about sex offenders, you're dealing with somebody with a broken mind or somebody that has an illness. In reality, if you pull away what it is, it's no different than somebody that's got a drug addiction."

If anybody has substance abuse addiction, porn addiction, or whatever the addiction is, they're addicted to this. The common thing that I hear from all of them is they hate it, they hate that they do it, but they'll do it. They'll look at porn or something to look at whatever they look at on the internet. The minute they do it, they feel horrible. They delete it. "I'm never going to do it again." And that compulsion resurfaces. What people don't look at is the human nature behind that. These people also have mothers and fathers. So, when we take these cases on, usually, it's the mother or the father hiring us because there's nobody they can talk to and relate to what they're going through. So my job is not to go, "What your kid did is not that bad." My job is to say, "He's still your son. He's going to get out of prison at some point. So, we can either pretend like this doesn't exist, send him off to the island to be released, and pretend like he's the worst person in the world, or we identify what he can do to better himself because, if we don't, he will commit the crime next time and you're that asshole who wants to just pretend that he doesn't exist. Well, next time, it's your kid or it's my kids. So, we can either be a part of the problem or part of the solution." So that's probably the toughest one that I talked about openly because it brings a lot of heat. My wife had death threats. I've had people send me stuff in the mail telling me that I must be an undercover chomo, which is a term for a child molester, because I have compassion for them. I don't have compassion for the crime. I'm not condoning what they did. I think it's a heinous crime - the worst crime you could ever commit is something against a child who is an innocent person. However, I have to look at the human nature of it, what's causing you to do this, and how can we stop you from doing it in the future because they're not going to lock you up forever - you're gonna get released back into society. So that is always a very, very tough battle to win with the peanut gallery.

Scott

Yeah. This has been really fascinating. Is there any part of this that other people ask you about - that I haven't asked about - that you'd want to talk about?

Dan

No. I would say you're probably up in the top onslaught of people that have actually conducted a good amount of questions. I would say you're very well-rounded. I give you a hard 5.

Scott

Good. I tried to do my research.

Dan

No, you did a great job, seriously. I've done these interviews before where I feel like I'm fucking interviewing myself. It's like, "Just go away. I'll just talk to myself. I can do better." You've done a really good job. I wish everybody have that much time to research the curiosity that people have because some of those questions are, like, taboo.

Scott

That's what it is. Yeah. The majority of people have never been in prison. You see what it's supposed to be like in movies, but it's not really like that. It's like everyone's worst fear. What if I ever did something stupid and ended up going to prison? The only thing they can do is find you and, then, there's hope. That's kind of what you give people, right? You give them hope.

Dan

Realistic hope. We give them hope, not a dream. We help them sleep better at night, manage their expectation, and manage their anxiety. We're not going to get rid of your anxiety. We're going to help you manage it so it doesn't build up, and give you measurable steps you can take to reduce it so you can manage it, but it's still going to be there. Yeah, that's in a nutshell. I would just love people to come to check out my YouTube channel over at RDAP Dan. RDAP Dan - Federal Prison Consultant is the company. Come check us out. We're not just here to sell you something. We hope we can educate you. Maybe, we'll be on your podcast next.

Scott

Maybe. I've got your YouTube. You're on all the socials - Instagram, Facebook, Twitter - all those, I assume.

Dan

We're really we're starting to excel big on LinkedIn more in the professional field.

Scott

Yeah, I don't use LinkedIn much myself.

Dan

Come on after all you've done for us. All the adults are hanging out on LinkedIn.

Scott

Yeah. I'm looking for people with crazy stories and LinkedIn isn't usually where you'd tell a story like that. All right. Well, Dan, thanks for your time. I appreciate you coming on here. What you're doing is a pretty amazing thing. It's awesome.

Dan

Scott, I appreciate it, man. Let me know anytime and I'd love to come back and do it again.

Scott

Before meeting Dan, I never would have thought there was a job that had the title Prison Consultant. I learn new things all the time just by doing this podcast. And I hope you do too, by listening to it! And I'd love to hear what you thought of this episode. Just head over to the Facebook group at [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook) and let's talk about it.

This is just the second or third time I've done an episode like this, where I talk to someone who's in a really unusual profession. The most recent one was episode 40, where I talked to Spence, who works as a modern day lighthouse keeper. And you know how this one came

about? I found out about Dan, and I thought it would be a really interesting show, but I wanted confirmation. So I took a poll in the Facebook group, and it was an overwhelming yes, that I should do it. So I hope you're part of that group, because I'm sure I'll be floating out more episode ideas there in the future as well.

Also – you might already know all the episodes are now on our YouTube channel. But here's something I'll be you don't know - guess where else you'll find this podcast – on ROKU. That's right – if you have a Roku device for your television, you can go on there and search for What Was That Like, and you'll see the podcast there, every single episode. We're working on being everywhere, and it's definitely happening.

You know, I've said this from back when I first started doing this show – it's gonna be one of the big ones. It's gonna be one of those podcasts that everyone knows about. I look at the download numbers every day, and I see that growth trajectory happening. Especially in the last several weeks – lots of people are discovering the show.

And if you're a regular listener to the show, and you want to be a part of that growth, please consider becoming a supporter. I'm mentioning this at the end of this episode because I know if you've stuck around until now, you're a diehard fan. And I LOVE you for that. The best way to help the show is to tell your friends about it. But the SECOND best way is to join our Patreon, and you can do that at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/support). That really means a lot.

And I'll be back here in two weeks with another episode. See you then.