

Rachel: Hello, everyone. Today we're here with Scott Tibbet. At 17 years old, Scott moved from a busy to a small desert town, met the wrong people, and turned to methamphetamine. The people that introduced him to methamphetamine became his friends and he became an addict. After four years of drug abuse and addiction, dropping out of high school, and a frame of mind he knew were wrong, he realized he had a decision to make: keep leading this abusive, irrational lifestyle or stop the path of destruction. He chose to stop the destructive life he was living. He realized the power of his decisions and vowed to stop using meth.

When he was 29 and working as an emergency medical technician, he injured his back and became unable to work. This led to depression and his weight soared to 400-plus pounds. At 37, again he realized his circumstance was a product of choices. He vowed again to change for the better. He's now 42 years old and a sober college graduate with an A.A. with an emphasis in Psychology and will have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology in June of 2015. Although he has about 40 pounds to go, he's lost 140 pounds and stopped smoking cigarettes. He's never had counseling, formal rehabilitation, or relapse.

Now Scott said when I asked him about coming on the interview, he said, "Each of us has the ability to improve our circumstance. I want to share my stories so that those who believe they are trapped in addiction or a frame of mind to know that we each decide how we react. We each decide how we want to live. We each decide if we want our lives to improve and what actions we are willing to take to do so. Even if that decision is reaching out for help, we each have the spark to light the fire that will bring each of us to where we want to be. Even no decision is a consequence of making decisions, so decide."

Now the reason why I wanted to have Scott on the show you probably already understood just from reading his bio. I met Scott on Twitter, actually, and he told me a little bit about just all the things that he was able to overcome, and I just thought that he would be perfect for this show because he has just made such major life changes and can really break it down in a very practical way about the different things that he does to make his life become even better. He's just extremely inspiring, and I think his story's going to help you realize how powerful our minds are and just how much we have in us to make big changes. So Scott, thank you so much for being here.

Scott: My pleasure. Thank you.

Rachel: So the intention behind A Better Life is to show people that if they have a choice, they can choose a better life. So in that spirit. can you take a minute to share with us some of the things that you're most proud of in your life?

Scott: You know, just like you mentioned, I believe the things I'm most proud of in life is where I am because I've been in a far worse place throughout my life. I've gone through high school dropout to college graduate. I've gotten myself off of narcotics twice. I've lost over 140 pounds, and I've stopped smoking cigarettes. And I think what makes me most proud about that is that I don't stop. I keep going. I've drop it's good enough attitude to it needs to be a certain way. I need to keep losing weight for the better in myself. I need to make sure I don't relapse. I need to keep going to school. I think that positive outlook has been tough at times, and I still have that.

Rachel: Yeah. I was going to ask you about that. So I know the positive outlook can be tough for anybody to maintain, so what do you do when you feel yourself slipping and you want to relapse a little bit into something that you know is not so good for you, even if it's just a donut?

Scott: Well, when it comes to drug addiction, I think that what keeps me from relapsing are a couple things. One is I remember my frame of mind and how much, after I became sober, I hated that. And then I also understand as an addict that the first yes is the hardest yes. I know a lot of people who have been through different types of rehab several times. They've always relapsed. And it seems like that first moment where they want to relapse, that first yes that they tell themselves "It's okay" is always the hardest. And after that, the next second, the third, the fourth hit until they do rehab again seems to be easier.

Rachel: Hmm.

Scott: So it's been very important for me to not cross that threshold.

Rachel: That's a really interesting point. I know that you made some big choices to get to where you are now. Can you tell the listeners just about the mindset or choices you've made that helped first get you off of the methamphetamine, and then to lose the weight? Just what did you tell or believe about yourself to get to where you are now?

Scott: I've always compared my meth addiction similar to a dimmer switch. When the dimmer switch is all the way off, so to speak, completely dark, addiction is a lifestyle. No real effort or desire to become clean. I rationalized all the negative,

destructive behavior. As the dimmer switch gets turned on some, a bit of light shows up. There's questioning one's behavior, questioning the lifestyle, the drug consumption. When the dimmer switch is clicked to the full on position, there's real light, real consciousness of self.

When the light went on for me, I could truly see with clarity the damage I was doing to myself, ignoring the people that love me for people that couldn't care less about the real me, the damage I was doing. All the time, I knew the difference between right and wrong, but the meth made me not care. When the light turned on, I saw I was back. I knew I was worth a better me. And I knew it was completely up to me to become sober and to remove myself from the lifestyle.

I guess my confidence grew as my awareness grew that I had to and wanted to be off of methamphetamine. And there was not another option in that if whatever happened was completely up to me. I could be mad at something or upset about something and think, "Oh, I'll just do a little more dope. It'll make me feel better and then I'll tackle this tomorrow." But I was just done making excuses and I was ready to better myself regardless.

Rachel: Was there a moment that turned that switch on for you or was there just the overall thinking about it every day, the culmination?

Scott: I think it was just the overall thinking about it every day. As the light turned on for me some, as I was realizing what I was doing was wrong and my frame of mind was wrong, I would still rationalize it as just how it is, or this is what I do, or these are my friends. And you just have to come to a point just to call yourself on your faults and step ahead.

Rachel: How did that affect your friendships? I know you had moved to this small town. These were your only friends, and now you're wanting to get over the only thing that kind of united you guys.

Scott: Well, I knew that I had to completely remove myself. And I had people in my drug circle that would want to get off of it, but wanted to be friendly and come back and then they'd relapse. And I saw that and I was realizing that I had an addictive frame of mind. I was thinking about how can I get away from these people. And I got real lucky that it seemed like a bad thing at the time but my mom, her house was repossessed and we went to go live with a friend of hers that was in the same city.

Well, this lady, really nice, she refused to let my drug circle over to her house. And so as I spent less time with them, the light was able to turn on more and more. I was able to hear my own thoughts and recognize what was real versus the lies that people were telling me, and that I was accepting, and that I was agreeing to because I wanted to be friends with these people and I wanted the drug flow to continue.

I remember one night, the last night, we were up for a very long time, 'til early, early in the morning. And I walked home, I believe. It was quite a long time ago. As I'm walking home I'm thinking to myself and I can hear myself finally, and I just got upset. I got real mad at myself. It was just like that moment, it clicked on. So I basically sat in the bathroom for about an hour and blew my nose, and blew my nose, and blew my nose, and vowed to never put anything in my nose again. My nose bled because I blew it so much, and I got so angry. I just wanted it all out of me. That was quite a fire.

Rachel: Wow! And then since then you just never tried it again. That's pretty cool!

Scott: I've never relapsed. It's funny because it's been quite a long time since it's happened, but there would be times in my life when I'd eat something, or I'd smell something, or something would happen and the taste of methamphetamine would hit the back of my throat and I'd think maybe because of my mindset the thought went in and out, as quick as that. Bam, bam. And I thought, "Right. Sure." And that was that. It's nice to have never relapsed.

Rachel: Wow! So it's now 21 years later. I'm curious. Do you still get urges every once in a while?

Scott: No, I don't.

Rachel: When did they stop for you?

Scott: Oh! I couldn't pinpoint it, but I'm going to say more than ten years ago.

Rachel: Oh! Well, that's great! Wow! So it lasted for several years, and I'm glad they're not there anymore. I mean, that's such a powerful story, for you to be able to quiet cold turkey. I mean, I've heard of some success stories from people being able to do that, but usually it's really hard for people to do that. So it was just, you made the decision to do it and then you realized that the first yes would be the hardest. And so that's kind of what had you not do it anymore? Like, was there anything else that you told yourself? I mean, it just sounds so simple, and maybe it is.

Scott: I think I just told myself that the decisions were mine. And I also told myself that I can do this. I know what I want. Don't rationalize poor behavior and just keep moving forward. There's no other choice. I think I really had the "There's no other choice" mindset.

Rachel: So then it's like 16 years later. So when you were 29 you were working as an E.M.T. and you injured your back. And then you said your weight ended up soaring to 400 pounds. Were you around 400 pounds for eight years?

Scott: On and off. I don't think I was quite that heavy. I'm trying to make the timeline right. It's been a while since all that happened so I was trying to get the timeline just right. But it built slowly, slowly but surely. My weight got up there. And then I was near that weight for probably at least a couple years of ups and downs, and pretending I was trying to lose weight.

Rachel: What do you mean when you say pretending?

Scott: Well, I was making a lot of excuses. I would eat a salad or two and then I'd think, "Oh, wow! Look how great I'm doing. I've earned a treat." And then we'd go and get a milkshake. And I'd say, "Oh, I don't know why I'm not losing weight. I'm trying." And then I'd say, "Well, maybe it was the milkshake." And then I would kind of get off track and I'd then gain some more weight back, and then get back on track for a couple days or a week, or make myself feel good about it. And then I'd rationalize poor behavior again.

Rachel: And so for the last five years you've been consistently losing weight. How have you done that? What are the things you're telling yourself now?

Scott: I've always been the big kid. I'm six foot four, and in high school I wore about a 42, 44. There was just a time where I thought, "You know, I've got to do something different." And I just didn't know what it was, and I would tell myself that I needed to lose weight and stop rationalizing poor behavior. And I actually started doing so. I started eating better. I did some research about free foods that are basically foods that you can eat that don't have any calorie content. So I stopped the late-night snacking. Well, I didn't stop the late-night snacking. I switched it to sugar-free Jello. And that settled that. And actually I started losing weight.

You know, I still didn't have a lot of confidence in my weight loss even though I was trying different things. You know, when you look at yourself and you're that

heavy, it's hard to have confidence for losing weight. And I think it was 2010 I watched a show called Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead with Joe Cross.

Rachel: Yeah.

Scott: And that really changed my life. I started believing that someone my size could indeed lose the weight and it wouldn't take 20 years to do. And his thing was juicing and I couldn't really do juicing, but it gave me confidence. And so I started looking into different things. And then I also watched Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition, and I realized then that I was fooling myself and I had to take a stand and that I wasn't trying. I was making excuses.

And my kind of can do attitude kicked in and I realized that I was again making excuses and again waiting for somebody to save me and I was the only one that could do that. Being an E.M.T., I know the health risks, and did I want to have a heart attack and live the rest of my life in that? No. Just like when I was addicted to methamphetamine. I knew I was better than that. I knew that I had to make a choice. Does that answer your question?

Rachel: No, no. That totally answers my question. It's really good because I think a lot of people can relate to justifying that behavior and making excuses. I mean, the example of the salads and then having the milkshake is perfect. And I know so many people listening are probably just nodding their heads and agreeing. As you were changing, let's say your weight, how did that impact the people around you? The people you work with, your wife.

Scott: You know, it's really hard to say. I kept my drug addiction away from my family. I don't know how they were impacted with that. Years later, I told my mom and my brother about it, and they saw my weight coming off. It's hard to tell how they were really affected by it. They were always supportive of me.

I'd like to think that my younger brother, he's about four years younger than I am, he has that attitude, too. He was kind of a punk in high school, like I was, a troublemaker a little bit. Didn't really care about my studies too much. And now he is an I.T. professional making pretty good money because he just decided that's what he was going to do. He never went to school for it. He just learned the material. And so I'm hoping that maybe I had some influence on that, but I give him full credit, of course.

Rachel: Yeah. That's awesome! And when you were losing weight, how were people around you affected?

Scott: You know, I got a lot of pats on the back and good jobs, and it seemed like people around me were happier. And I think that that was because it was a reflection of myself. When I was upset, and super heavy, and down and depressed, and making excuses, that was the light I was portraying and that's what came back to me. And as I felt my confidence growing, and my belt loosening up and I could tighten it up more and more, I think I just got that good reception back. What you put out is what you get back.

Rachel: Absolutely. How did your wife kind of react as you started to lose weight? Because I know at one point you guys were getting milkshakes together and now you're changing your habits. So what did she say about it?

Scott: She was very pleased and impressed. And I think it motivated her. She's lost some weight, too. She pays more attention to what she eats, too.

Rachel: So what is, for you, a specific action step that you take to make your life better?

Scott: Well, one thing that I do is that I always try to look at everything positive. Just try to have a positive outlook on life. I think that's really important. Especially, you know, I battled depression, too. I just try to move forward. I always look at the positive. I know that the decisions are mine to make, and that I can be happy about things or I can be sad about things. I can look at things as failures or opportunities.

Rachel: I'd love to dig into that for a second, too. If you'd battled depression, and I could see where it would be really hard to keep yourself in a positive mindset. How do you do that? I mean, I know you just mentioned one of the things. Does that work for you? Like all the time? Or are there other things that you do?

Scott: I think that it works. Some days it just takes a little bit more effort. I just keep on telling myself, "Okay, be upset for a second, but then what do I have to really be upset about?" And then I'd look around and I just try to be grateful.

Rachel: So gratitude's a big one for you?

Scott: Yeah, it really is. It really is. I used to say, "Poor me!" And, "Why can't I have this, and why can't I have that?" And, "Look at my little house!" And now I look around and think, "This is great!" and, "How can it get any better than this?"

Rachel: Yeah, you said something like that to me this morning. You have the opportunity to do your school paper.

Scott: Yeah, right.

Rachel: I'm guessing that's something you ordinarily choose to do?

Scott: Yeah. Well, that brings up a good point. One of the things when I get down, I think that people want to look at their faults. And I think the things that I've done in my life that are positive, the accomplishments that I have. Like you said, I was a high school dropout and now I'm just around the corner from a Bachelor's degree at an online school so it's not like I go to class and I have people looking at me. I have to really be disciplined to do that. And so I think about that and other accomplishments I've made. And then I can kind of pull myself up and straighten myself out.

Rachel: You know, that's a really good point about instead of thinking about all the things that you do wrong or whatever, instead think about the things that you do right. And I think that's a really good shift for people to think about when they're starting to just remember everything that they don't like about themselves. Is it just a matter of telling yourself, "I'm not going to focus on this," and then you just think about the good things? Or do you have something that you refer back to? Achievements that you're proud of? Or how does that work for you?

Scott: There are times that I still feel depressed. And I hope I answered your question. I've learned that by remembering my decisions are my own regardless, that I can decide to ditch my schoolwork or ignore my family like I was doing when I was a drug addict, or be sad in the corner, I can look for the positive. I can realize how fortunate that I am. And that can be some of the difficulty of improving yourself, clawing out of the pessimism when I feel like my emotions are deserved and justified when deep down I know they're not.

I try to remember: decide, act, conquer. You can decide about something and make up your mind about something, but if you don't act on it, you don't do anything about it, it doesn't matter. And if you act upon it and you keep that mindset alive, you can do it, that there's a better way and a better avenue to take, then you're going to conquer whatever your fears are.

And that's another thing. Sometimes I'm afraid. Sometimes I'll pull out of that, like, this is where I am. And I think that you have to step into your own fear. You have to look at your own faults and say, "If I'm upset right now, it's irrational. Conquer that."



Rachel: Did you learn this anywhere? Or is this just something that you do on your own?

Scott: Yeah, this is something that I do on my own. When I became sober the first time, one of the things that really clicked was that it's up to me. I'd just try to continually give myself pep talks. And I've come up with these things, divide, act, conquer, because that 's what you do. That's what people do. You decide, and then you act, and then you conquer. Or you fail.

There's another thing is that people need to not look at failure as how it's being portrayed throughout society, as a negative. I try not to look at my failures as anything but learning opportunities. There's no such thing as failure. There's learning and success.

Rachel: In your experience, is there something that you feel like people don't normally share about improving themselves, either because it's not sexy or it just doesn't have a rainbow and butterfly kind of picture of self-improvement or personal development?

Scott: That it can be a struggle and it's not as easy as just making a decision. Decisions take difficult action. When I got myself off of methamphetamine, there was a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to keep me from making the wrong choice. I made a lot of excuses and rationalization as to why I could do more meth just one more time or eat a giant piece of cake. Sometimes improving yourself means calling yourself out on your own lies and self-destruction and self-deceit. This isn't easy to do in a lot of situations.

I remember saying, "Forget it. I'm just going to give in." And then I'd call myself saying, "There's no way I'm giving in. There's no way." And that can be difficult to call yourself on your own rationalizations. People want to believe what they've been believing and it's hard to accept a new way of thinking.

Rachel: It really is. And just such a testament to how powerful your mind is, our minds are. But the methamphetamine, for example, I'm sure it's just really strong physical reactions that are just screaming at you to shut your mind off.

People right now might be listening to you and inspired by you but still kind of scared to make changes in their own life. What advice would you give them?

Scott: I think deep down that most people know what the path is the healthiest. But people are afraid to act for different reasons. Make the right choice. Call yourself on your lies you're telling yourself. And believe in stepping into your fear

and coming out stronger on the other side regardless of the outcome because there is no failing. You're only going to learn, and don't give up. It's up to you. You can blame a million different things as to why you should be where you're at or if you're trapped in destructive behavior. Call yourself on that. Stand up and don't accept it. Bring yourself back.

Rachel: One of the things I love to ask people is I want our listeners to know that you're a real human with everyday struggles and we're always evolving. What is something right now that you're currently working on in your life and how are you getting through it?

Scott: There are times that I still feel depressed, and I've learned that by remembering my decisions are my own I can decide to do those things. And I think that I'm just making sure that I move forward every day, just like I've talked about is calling myself on my decisions that might not be as good and just make the right choice. I think people know the right choice.

Rachel: Yeah. So when you get depressed, can you just walk me through, I guess, what happens in your head? Like what thoughts come up and what thoughts specifically you feed back to it?

Scott: It's really hard to say because it's relative to the situation, but if something upsets me or I wake up feeling down, and my life sucks, or I'm done, or there's no way I can keep losing weight, my accomplishments are to be laughed at or are not taken seriously because everybody kind of does these things, I try to remember that that's bologna. Everything I've done, I've worked very hard for. I need to remember that these accomplishments are not easy to do. I'm not saying that other people can't do them, but with the methamphetamine, not a lot of people can do that. I don't know. When I tell people that I've taken myself off my prescription narcotics I've never heard one person say, "Yeah, me, too."

So I try to remember that not that people haven't, but I just try to remember the good things in life. I try to remember that as I've said, my decisions are my own. I can keep going down a destructive path and negative thoughts or I can realize that I'm kind of having a pity party. Look around me. Look at what I have. I've got a roof. I've got a great family. And there's people right now living at the river three miles from here.

I've got a lot to be thankful for and all that other stuff is kind of irrational. And I'm not saying this about other people's thoughts but when I think about how I think, I tell myself I'm being irrational and immature, and look what you've got.

Rachel: Yeah, a lot of these episodes always come back to gratitude. And I think that's so powerful because thinking about you realizing that three miles down the road there's people living in the river, it's quite a perspective.

Scott: Yeah, it really is. I also try to remember sometimes that my problems are first world problems and get over it. Like living in a rural area, sometimes my Internet goes out and I get frustrated. But then I think there's people who are searching for their next meal right now, and I can go to my fridge and make a turkey sandwich, so relax. It's all right.

Rachel: Oh, I love that. So what would you say to somebody who is struggling and feeling trapped by their circumstances?

Scott: If you're feeling trapped by addiction, make the decision to get help and then actually do it. Tell yourself you're not going to put up with the destructive behavior. Stop looking from the outside in. Realize it's time to bring back the real you and own your potential. You have the key to the handcuffs that you put there. Give yourself permission to unlock those cuffs. It's not impossible, but making excuses makes it seem so. Understand that.

When I was addicted, many times I would tell myself I didn't even care even when I started to. If you're listening, then you do care. Even if it's the smallest glimmer. Take that. Hold it close to your heart and your soul, and listen to it and do what is right. And if you're afraid to act, or follow your dream because if you're afraid that people are going to judge you, guess what? People are going to judge you anyway. Step into your fear. Come out stronger on the other side.

Rachel: Beautiful. Thank you so much, Scott. Can you let people where they can go to find out more about you?

Scott: You know, I don't have a website. I'm just kind of a regular cat. I have some spoken word stuff on [ReverbNation](#). I have some poems on [Allpoetry.com](#). And [Twitter](#). I don't Facebook.

Rachel: Cool. What is your Twitter handle?

[Scott @scooteravis. S-C-O-O-T-E-R-A-V-I-S.](#)

Rachel: Thank you so much. And especially because sometimes people come on the podcast, they have some kind of website, they have something to promote. But you just have a genuine desire to really make the world a better place and

help people, and I am very, very grateful for it. And I know that people listening to this are going to feel really inspired, so thank you so much.

Scott: Yeah, it's my pleasure. I hope that somebody's getting something out of it. I do have a desire to help. I think that's one of the reasons that I became an E.M.T., because I have the chance to meet people on the very worst day of their life and try to make that day a little better.

Rachel: Thanks again, Scott. Bye.

Scott: You're welcome. Thank you.

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