



Walking and Climbing Towards Dreams | Mike Posner

[00:00:00] Guest Intro - Mike Posner

Darin: What's up everybody? This is Darin Olien. This is The Darin Olien Show. How's it going? What's happening? How's life? How is the new year going? Are you creating? Just because you got off your original intentions, get back on that now. We had an incredible 121 Tribe, a Superlife camp. We change people's lives. That's not me saying it, that's other people saying it. So, if you need inspiration and possibilities to create a better life, you need to change the way you're doing things. I am on your side. We need to all create our super life, and someone that's really good at that, and that's Mike Posner. He became a fast new friend. After he came out here under the infamous 300-year-old oak tree that I have by the yurt, we get to sit down. Man, I could have kept talking to him. But if you don't know, Mike Posner is a multi-platinum singer-songwriter. Yes, he's written amazing songs, incredible voice. I Took a Pill in Ibiza was a massive one, a Spotify Top 10 Most streamed songs of all time, earning Mike 2017 Grammy nomination for Song of the Year, all of this stuff, as well as writing songs for Bieber's triple-platinum boyfriend. Yep, that was Posner. Maroon 5's six-time platinum, Sugar, that was Posner. He is a multi-talented person, but here's the thing, he went through a lot of stuff, we dig into that. He did one of those things that we all have the opportunity of doing when you go through some hard challenges. Losing people in our lives is intense. Losing anything in our lives is intense, and what are you going to do with that information? Are you going to bring that into your life? Are you gonna allow that to transform you and allow you to dig at what your reasons for doing everything are? That's the most important thing, understanding your why, understanding why you're doing things, and Mike contemplated. He dug into all these things. For some reason, only known to truly him, he decided to walk, stroll, skip, and jump his way across the United States from Asbury Park, New Jersey, to Venice, California, completing 3000 miles across America. We talked all about that. That was really the tip of the iceberg or maybe the top of the mountain, not even the top of the mountain. That was basically more of a mental challenge and starting to build himself up. After 18 months of training, summoning mountain after mountain after mountain, he didn't want to be that guy that just showed up, paid money, and showed up to Everest, he wanted to be a badass and be respected, and he did. In May 2021, he summited Mount Everest. In that effort, he raised funds for the Detroit Justice Center, which is helping to reduce poverty and mass incarceration, and building thriving communities in his hometown, Detroit, Michigan. He is a soul brother. He talked about his nutrition, talked about his training. He is such an amazing human. Mike literally is in service of his public speaking, helping to promote artists and projects. He's training to become Wim Hof Method instructor. You can follow him on social. You can follow him whatever he's doing because he is up to some good stuff. He's connected in so many ways. Sit back, relax, enjoy, give a big round of applause and take a deep breath in right now, and let it out and receive the life force and receive the incredible blessings of my conversation with the amazing Mike Posner.

[00:04:20] Podcast Intro



Darin: You are listening to The Darin Olien Show. I am Darin, and it is my life's mission to find and share healthy and sustainable ways of living. In this podcast, I talk to inspiring people and professionals from around the world to uncover ways that we as humans can improve our lifestyles, strengthen our mindsets, and take better care of this beautiful planet we call home. If you're looking for motivation to take the next steps towards a happier, healthier life, then you're in the right place, and I'm stoked that you're here. So let's do this. This is my show, The Darin Olien Show.

[00:05:04] First Part of the Interview

Darin: Mike Posner, thanks, brother.

Mike: Thank you for having me.

Darin: Thanks for coming out in nature. Man, there are so many tentacles that I think is really cool and kind of running through your whole bio. The thing that stuck out, obviously, musically, you've been doing this stuff for a long time. Where are you at now? Before I go off in the other areas and Everest and your father and stuff, where are you at musically? Because I can imagine all the journey that we'll unpack that you've been on, how that has influenced your music.

[00:05:40] Mike's complex relationship with music

Mike: Music is this beautiful sort of magic carpet that I've been riding my whole life, and I don't mean that just from a career standpoint. I grew up right outside Detroit suburb that borders Detroit called Southfield to a middle-class neighborhood, very diverse. I loved my streets. I like the little crew of young boys of my age that I grew up with. We ride bikes, play basketball. I started getting real in hip hop and I'd do beats and rap. Then all of a sudden, my music started taking me to where a lot of people who wanted to buy beats were they have to be in some pretty inner-city, pretty rough neighborhoods. Some of my music took me there at a young age and became more popular. Then my music started taking me to other countries and this kind of thing. It's been this beautiful way for me to connect with other people in the world and see things I never would have normally seen. But right now, where I'm at musically is sort of an in-between phase, which is an important phase. I'm always writing and working on stuff, even while I'm on my adventures. Right now, I'm noticing the birds behind you. It's not so subtle, but on my adventures, or walk across America or Everest, I'm always taking my phone out, or I have a Zoom recorder like we're recording on now and grab what the bird sounds like in Missouri or actually walked or what the river sounds like in Pakistan when it's emerging out of the Baltoro glacier, these kinds of things, and then they'll become layers in my music. But right now, I don't really know what my next project is going to be. I'm gathering material, writing songs, but at some point, there'll be a direction that grabs me and I'll rearrange my life around following that direction, and that'll become like an album or something like that.

Darin: It's interesting because it's everything. It sounds like you asked yourself also questions when your dad died, like who are you without the Grammys? Who are you without the music? Who is Mike? That sounded like you asked yourself some of those deep questions and went on some journey. Talk to me about that because I lost my father 21



years ago, and for sure, my mom is still alive and it was the hardest thing in my life, and informed me greatly and still does. Talk to me about that transition and what led you to your feats of other activities.

[00:08:26] The impact of loss and grief

Mike: I had this big hit song out, it was called I Took a Pill in Ibiza. But this song, I'm setting the stage of my dad's story because that's what was going on in my life. I was in a period of just unfathomable success. I'm flying all over the world and playing concerts and stadiums and arenas, I'm nominated for Grammy, and I'm in a LA recording studio. My phone rings and it's not my manager calling to say we sold another million, it's not some celebrity calling to invite me to a party, it is my mom. She says, your father has a tumor, the size of a tangerine in his forehead. We found out today and they're gonna remove it tomorrow. So just like that my joy ride, my sort of solipsistic life stops, and I'm on the next flight to Detroit. I'm in the hospital with my mom and we're waiting and my dad's in surgery, and we're waiting to find out if the tumor that they're taking out is cancerous or not. After what seems like a lifetime, the doctor spills out into the lobbies, your husband has glioblastoma, and we don't know what that word is. So I take out my phone, we look it up, that's brain cancer. Basically, my father was alive about 10 more months after that. He passed away and I went home from the funeral. Imagine, I smell like a thousand different perfumes, all these people hugging me. Finally, it's kind of this whirlwind and I was alone, I was quiet, it was quiet. This photo album caught my eye in my parents' living room and I grabbed a photo album, I flipped it open. This very strange moment, I see myself looking back at me when it's not quite myself, it's my dad when he's my age, but it's like a mirror image. I look exactly like him or like he looked. It just hit me in a very visceral way that I'm next. I am alive. I look just like how he looks in his photo, and he is now dead. One day, I too will be dead, and I won't miss my life. We're sort of talking already but getting lost in your head and the future or the past, and this has been my default state. I think a lot of people realize that or can identify with that thinking, categorizing, analyzing, planning, just always kind of being lost in your head. No matter what you're doing, you're thinking about what you're doing or thinking about how you could do it better, and that's basically my experience of life. I just looked at the photos, I don't want to miss my life. There are some things like in the external plane as well that I know I want to do and I haven't been doing them. I sort of felt this kind of low-level of depression creeping in my life because I was letting some of my dreams die, and one of those dreams was to walk across America. This moment was powerful and transcendent but fleeting. A few hours later, I was just back lost in my head. I actually didn't go on the walk across America, I went back to LA, I was writing, and another year passed, another year passed after that, it's like two more years, and surprise, surprise, you don't feel fulfilled, you don't feel present because I'm letting my dream die. I had an album I was putting out and I was just so uninspired and I just didn't want to do any of the work that goes up putting an album out, you go on tour, you do press, and you talk about yourself, and try to convince people to shake hands with the radio guys and smile. I was talking to Elliot, my friend. I said, "Elliot, I just can't do it. I won't do it anymore." He goes, "What do you want to do?" I said, "What I really want to do is walk across America, but I told my agents and my managers, my team this idea and they think it is crazy." He goes, "That's amazing news." I said, "What's amazing news" "That your team thinks it's crazy." I say, "What do you mean?" He goes, "You got to understand, not all crazy ideas are great, but all great ideas are crazy, and I think you walking across America is a



great idea." I felt it, I felt the truth behind what he was saying or underneath what he was saying. It just sort of cascaded through my body as I'm doing it. It was summer, there's a strategy to walk across America. You start in spring, and then you try to finish before fall. In that way, you avoid winter. So I was like this spring, I'm doing it. I was like, my dad's dead. One day, I'm gonna die too but before that day, I want to live. One of the things I want to happen while I'm alive is I want to do this walk. Why? I don't know. In one of my songs is, I'm not walking to show people who I am. I'm walking to find out who I'll become, and I'll swear to it.

Darin: Where did that idea come from? You just had it?

[00:13:40] Walking across America: The beginning of the dream

Mike: No, I wish. I was in a jewelry shop. One of my dear friends, her name is Teeny. She used to own a small jewelry shop in Venice, men's beach. For a while, it was sort of like a meetup spot, sort of an epicenter for people my age who want to just come, hang out. You just pop in at Teeny's store if you will be in there hanging out. I go in there one day, and I'm talking to some person, their faces are blurry in my memory, and Teeny, my friend is on the other side of the room talking to somebody else. I hear her say, my friend just walked across America. Like a tractor beam, I just got pulled into her conversation. This is five years before my walk. I leave the person probably somewhat rudely, I just walk away from whoever I was talking to. I said, "What did you say?" She goes, "My friend just walked across America." I said, "You can do that?" She said, "Yeah, I guess, he did it." She's looking at me kind of confused as to why I'm so riled up. I sort of just proclaimed to that jewelry shop, I want to do that too. Everyone's just like, okay. There's something about it that grabbed me. I didn't know it yet, but I was caught in the gravitational pull of the walk. I didn't do it. It took me five years to actually do it. That's one of the things I started to understand the difference between reasons and excuses. For me, I always thought there was a big difference. On my walk, I started to understand pretty clear, there's no difference. My reasons are excuses because every spring, the time you got to start this thing, it was a reason, I got to finish the album, I got to do a tour to support the last album, I got a wedding, I gotta go to, maybe I do it next year, and it's never gonna be a right time. No one's gonna roll out a red carpet for you to walk across America. No one's gonna tell you this is a great idea. In fact, people are going to roll out red carpets, it's the reason why it's a bad idea. You're going to injure your body irreparably. You're going to commit career suicide. There's not gonna be a music career for you to come back to. No one's gonna care. I heard them all. At a certain point, you're going to live life according to yours and other people's reasons, or you're gonna live a life that actually inspires and fulfills you. For me, it was just like I just got fed up. I got to do this thing, man. I got to do it, or else I'm not living my life.

Darin: I was just contemplating yesterday. This New Year's resolutions coming up and in this episode, we'll be past that. But at this point, when people are hearing this, they probably have failed in their resolutions. They probably threw it out on the loose. I think some of the top ones are I wanna lose weight, I don't want to be healthy, I want to quit smoking, I want to drink last. These are some of the top things. A graveyard of dreams in people's lives, I can imagine, and there are infinite excuses, infinite reasons for the excuse. No one's really holding you to the date that you're gonna walk. It's just between your ears. You're just like, no, I got this thing, I got this thing, and here's all the things I'm supposed to do, so no one's



gonna complain, I got to do this for the thing. It's subtle because it's just you not doing it over and over and over again. That's the difference between resurrecting dreams and actually going after them, or just subtly blowing off and then time just fucking clicks, bro. Just think of that, five years went by, and you could have easily been into a shame cycle about it, and just go, well—

Mike: I could have walked five times. I could go back and forth.

Darin: Yeah. But you did it.

Mike: I did it eventually. It wasn't because I wasn't afraid. Another thing I found in the research is kind of the more tried and true way though plenty of people go west to east, the more tried and true ways, east to west, and just sort of lines up fairly well with the two big mountain ranges, Appalachian, Rockies. The other thing is the East Coast, you're always kind of near stuff, you're near civilization. Whereas you get a little further west, and that's not always the case. So you kind of get your systems dialed in the East Coast. Then by the West, you're more dialed in for when you're out in a little more wilderness. So, I'm in LA, and I walked supported. Meaning, I had a friend and we had an RV. I walk every step, but everything besides the walking, they pretty much take care of food, found a place for us to sleep, that kind of thing. Also, I didn't have to carry everything on my back because there's a support vehicle. I say that because there are people every year that walk unsupported, and they are way more badass than me. I got to meet several of them and just be in contact with them as we're going, and we're kind of texting each other egging each other on. So that's pretty cool. I make the decision to go on this walk. Me and my buddy, we get this RV. We're in LA. The first thing we got to do, I'm gonna walk east to west. We gotta get to the east coast. So we drive across America. I'm looking out the window on our second day, third day we're in Kansas driving for hours and out. I'm like, holy shit. I'm supposed to walk back this entire-- what was I thinking? Finally, I don't know, we took our time seven days or something like that where we get to New Jersey Asbury Park, and it's like, I'm afraid because at this point I've told everyone I would do it, my friends, my family, my audience that listened to my music, and I have no idea if I can do it. I know I want to. I don't want to try but I know very well I could fail, I could get hurt and I could fail.

[00:18:50] Fear and uncertainty start creeping in

Mike: So I get to Asbury Park, the beach. I get in the water, the Atlantic Ocean. April 15, 2019, saltwater waves are crashing over me and I realized that these thoughts of uncertainty and fear are just that, they're thoughts of uncertainty and fear. I'm capable of feeling them. It wasn't too dissimilar of the feeling like, I would feel right before I walk on stage. I'm capable of feeling this fear and this uncertainty and still going, still acting. That's what I do on stage every night, so I get frickin nervous every time. There's always something beautiful on the other side of that feeling. So I took a step. Step once, just take one step. I just started going. That first day, I walked like eight miles. Just to put things in perspective, the journey ended up being 2,851 miles. So eight miles I walked that day, I haven't even done 1%, not even 1%, not even half of 1%. Keep walking, keep taking steps. I walk across New Jersey. I walked across Pennsylvania where I share the road with Amish buggies, walk across cold country, I walk across Ohio where I see a double rainbow and start to develop some pretty excruciating plantar fasciitis. I mean, I was in some real pain, but I keep taking steps. I walk



across Indiana, Illinois, walk across Missouri, and a heatwave where I had been wearing these tights and shorts. I stopped wearing the shorts because it's hot. It's like a heatwave. People say, you can't wear just white tights. It's underwear. It's inappropriate. It's like but it's hot. I'm outside 12 hours a day and it's humid brand of hot. The brand of hot where the weatherman goes on TV and it's like don't-go-outside-today hot. I'm gonna walk 24 in that hot so white tights it is. I keep going. I walk across Colorado. I'm in Colorado, and I could just see the Rocky Mountains on the horizon. I've walked 1,797 miles when I feel like this pain shoot up my leg acting, like what the heck was that. Then I hear sound I don't want to hear. You might hear it here sometimes, and I realized I just got bit by a poisonous rattlesnake. I called 911. I speak to dispatch, "I'm sorry, I'm in the middle of nowhere, the last town was called La Junta, and the next town is called Walsenburg. I'm on a road called Colorado 10 State Highway. It feels like the end of Looney Tunes. Remember, at the end where the circles get smaller and says that's all folks, it felt like that but it's just black. It was just black coming in from the corners and I'm speaking to the dispatch. He said look, I sent an ambulance from La Junta and another one from Walsenburg and a helicopter, whatever gets there first, get in. I said, "Am I gonna die?" He said, "I don't know, sir." I'm sitting there, and then the ambulance eventually comes. I get in the back of it. It was like the same sort of clarity I had when I look at that photo of my dad. It came back because where's the through-line between those things is like there's an acknowledgment of mortality. I look at the phot of my dad, I was like I'm next. I'm in the ambulance. I realized I'm gonna die today. I just decided, okay, I wasn't in crazy pain. I just felt kind of almost like a psychedelic. I wasn't hallucinating or anything but sort of like the strange V on that venom going through me.

Darin: That's some venom medicine.

Mike: I wasn't in crazy, but I was in pain from my walk, but I was used to that pain. So I just decided if indeed this are my last few hours of life, I'm not gonna waste it worrying about if it's gonna be my last day of life. I just sort of reclined in the ambulance, and I started to see the colors around me and just how beautiful and vibrant they. It's sort of this great moment of being that should be how we always live. It seems like how you live and like, this thing is easier for me to do that here, man. It's such a beautiful space and seems like it's [00:24:19] your intention is to carry that every day. I went to the hospital. My legs, they're swelling the size of an elephant trunk. I went from walking 24 miles a day to I couldn't walk to the bathroom. I was in the hospital, five nights. I go home to continue healing, and a funny thing happens, it starts to get better. 21 days passed and the hardest part of the snake bite was getting better from the snake bite, and this is why. While I was hurt, My family's there cuddling me, cooking for me, taking care of me, giving me sympathy. John Mayer is DMing me on Instagram. Wishing me a speedy recovery. I'm getting all this attention. I'm in this soft, cuddly nest of sympathy. These three weeks passed and I realized this thing has healed and I also realize that I have 1,000 hot horrible miles left to walk.

[00:25:28] Rattlesnake bite with 1,000 miles left

Mike: So I'm going to either listen to what is my best reason yet, I mean, it's a great reason, AKA excuse. Look, I almost lost my leg to rattlesnake bite. Maybe this thing just wasn't meant to be. I could quit and a lot of people probably wouldn't think I'm even a quitter and think I got it. The same day, I was like decide, that subtle thinking, am I going to live according to my reasons, excuses, or my commitments, my life that I actually want to live? It



was hard, man, because on the walk you get into a rhythm but I'm walking through summer so you can't roll out of bed at 10:30 AM because it's too freaking hot to do that. So you're up at 4 every day, you walk at five and it's 24 miles and it hurts. It really hurts physically. It's like I got to decide to go back out there. So many times we say it wasn't meant to be, the universe told me it wasn't meant to be. Yeah, I believe in the universe and all that but a lot of times we're saying wasn't meant to be, we're quitting. You're just dressing it up in some nice new agey terms, make yourself feel good, and whatever. It's meant to be if I want it to be. I got 1,000 miles left, my legs healed, I'm gonna make it meant to be. So I decided to go back out there, Colorado 10. I got the snake riddle shoulders of the highway. I got the sweltering heat, the excruciating foot pain waiting for me. It's like hell is waiting for me and it's like great, I want to meet hell too. So I go back to that spot that the snake bit me. I was scared. I stood on it, took another step. I kept taking steps. I went up and over those mountains that were in the horizon, that's where I started dreaming of Everest. I kept taking steps till I walked across Colorado, a little bit in New Mexico. I kept taking steps. I walked across Navajo Nation. I kept taking steps till I walked across a little in Nevada into California. People started congratulating me. I said, what are you congratulating me for? I'm walking across America, not walk to California. California 300 miles wide, rattlesnakes, more mountains, Mojave Desert. I'm not done. Thank you but not yet. I didn't do it. So I keep taking steps, Mojave Desert. I keep taking steps, I walk in LA. I see the Hollywood sign on my right. I keep taking steps and walk past Skid Row where people are looking at me like I'm on their front lawn and I guess in some ways I am. I keep taking steps till the pavement turns into sand. After six months and three days, 2851 Miles, 13 American states, I dove in the Pacific Ocean. I thought I'd feel accomplished, but it turned out I felt possibility and that started the Everest journey.

[00:28:32] Bite Toothpaste Ad

Darin: Did you know every single time you brush your teeth, you swallow between 5% to 7% of your toothpaste. That's an entire blob of toothpaste, every seven days. Now that probably doesn't sound like much of a problem on the surface, but most commercial toothpastes are filled with harsh chemicals, artificial flavors, and preservatives and they don't list many of them on the product. This is not the kind of stuff you want to be putting in your mouth, let alone swallowing it. My go-to alternative to toothpaste now is Bite Toothpaste. Why do they call it Bite? Well, they are dry toothpaste tablets. That's right. You just put them in your mouth, start chewing them, boom, they're fine. You have everything you need, and you start brushing your teeth. They're made with clean ingredients that are not only cruelty-free, but also sulphate-free, palm oil-free, and glycerin-free. They're not messing around and they're so easy to use. Literally no waste, no harmful ingredients. Here's the other great thing. They come in refillable glass jars and your refills come in compostable pouches. How cool is that? I wish everyone would follow Bite's commitment. Yes, Bite's committed to creating waste-free products. That's one of my favorite things about them, selling everything from toothpaste, and clean whitening gels, and deodorant. So now you can completely swipe out the contents of all this other toxic stuff, and transform your bathroom sink into plastic-free alternatives that are carefully created and safe for you. I've been using the Bite Toothpaste tabs, and I've fallen in love with them. I love the crunching of it. I looked at the container today, it's the same container I've got six months ago. I love it. No waste. And the deodorant has been amazing for me, and it comes in this little aluminum case. Fantastic. State of the art, again,



no waste. If you are ready to support this incredible brand and get safe, effective products, they're offering you 20% off your first order of anything. Go to trybite.com/darin, or just use the code, DARIN, at the checkout that is trybite.com/darin.

[00:31:30] Second Part of the Interview

Darin: The thing about us as humans is listening to what that language is speaking to us, and it has nothing to do with anyone else. It has everything to do with us honoring what is coming to us, what dream is ours, and what do we require. That's the thing, and that's what I hear through that. It's like you absolutely could have stopped. You almost lost your freaking leg. You were given the opportunity of big obstacle. You could call that a big fucking obstacle, being bit by a rattlesnake. A big inspiration transmuted from the death of your father was like, hey, live your life, but that is only the catalyst. It's not everything that you need. Everything you need, what do you think that is? If you were to unpack that thing inside of you, that festering voice that initiated part of you that was like, I've got to do this, what do you think that is?

[00:32:34] Where is the drive coming from?

Mike: It's a couple of voices. This is the best I understand it. Let's talk about the ugliest, shittiest most embarrassing voice first, or element of that voice that's pushing me to do something like that. I want people to think I'm special.

Darin: There you go.

Mike: Yeah, it's in there, but it's not the whole thing, so we got that out of the way first. The second one is, I actually want to be somebody that I'm proud of. So it's like, if I were to be on the outside looking at Mike Posner, see, this guy got nominated for a Grammy and then he walked across America and then he summited Mount Everest, that guy is freaking cool. That guy inspires me.

Darin: And eat sprouts.

Mike: And eats sprouts, and he's friends with Doug Evans. That might sound braggy, it's not meant to be that because those things didn't exist three years ago. I lived them out, so I would be proud of myself. Lastly, I'm certainly no stranger to the feeling of waking up in the morning and just feeling like there's no compelling reason to get up, sort of a low level depression, and just uninspired. I would even venture to say that's usually how I wake up. This is like a default state of Mike. So some of those adventures like the walk or Everest is like, wow, really, we're talking about a skinny Jewish kid from Detroit, now you're walking. This is incredible. I never thought I would take too much time to reflect if I'm doing it now. I never thought this life was possible for me. I didn't know this shit was on the menu for me, and there's a momentum to it. It's like small acts of discipline, and start like with me practicing piano a lot and see how good I got and then started experimenting with fasting because I was curious. I don't have to listen to every single urge I have and desire all the time, I didn't know that. That snowballed eventually into my walk, like, wow, this hurts. I'm gonna keep doing it. I wake up at 4 AM and I don't want to wake up. Great. I'm gonna do it anyways. That discipline actually creates freedom. It actually creates the aptitude to do



things that you do want to do, like you do want to walk across America, but you don't want to wake up at 4 AM every day.

Darin: You don't want to train, you don't wanna eat good, you don't want to drink good water. You're like, well, that doesn't line up.

Mike: Then that's snowball into Everest and it's like, holy shit, this is actually my life. I can't believe it. I gotta remind myself of that, too. This has been such an amazing to have a life and it's like, one, it's such a privilege to still be a living human being, just baseline. Then to be able to do these things that we're talking about. Come on, that's the hero's journey, man. That was a long way of answering. For me, as best as I've been able to understand it that those have been the reasons I found myself on these adventures.

Darin: That's a cool way to do it because it's almost that witness perspective, am I proud of that guy, that Mike Posner? Because we're not even that name.

Mike: No.

Darin: We're beyond all of that stuff. It's almost like experiences in connection. Even that time when you're new in the ambulance, or I assume you're in the ambulance where you were being taken care of, and you were like, hey, listen, if I'm gonna die, I'm gonna be in a state where I'm gonna observe what's around me and appreciate it. What I hear is not just to also accomplish those things but to do it through discipline but also, it is that everything in terms of experiencing the journey as the journey is occurring.

Mike: This is everything, man.

Darin: It's everything.

Mike: We talk about being present, or our lives are now in this moment, me talking to, you talking to me. My list of accomplishments earns me a grand total of zero points in the present moment, in this moment. That's just like, am I here or am I not? Am I lost in my head somewhere else or not? Am I just thinking about the past or I came here to trump around like, how great I am or am I thinking about the music studio I gotta go to later? No. Or am I present with you then that's a yes, and they earn me no points.

Darin: And certainly those feats of walking across, you definitely get a sense of who you are. I talked to this buddy of mine I've known for a long time, his name's Tom Jones. Before social media, before everything, this freaking dude, he ran 121 marathons in 121 consecutive days. The last day, because he was a seven-time Thai boxing champion, he did a New York Marathon and then went into the ring and knocked the dude out in three rounds after you ran 121 marathons in a row. He was talking about it because he ran across America twice. Multiple times, his toenails are falling off, and all of that stuff, and it all goes on within the mind or in the heart. You don't just show up at the Pacific Beach and walk to the Atlantic Beach, you just don't do that. Then you got to actually discipline yourself towards those goals. What I love about what you said is that you kept going back to a deeper listening so that you didn't get seduced away from it. Then the very fact that you just walked thousands of miles, and then you were inspired to go to Everest at that point. I mean, you would think that you would be thinking of week of massages and stuff but in fact, your body's



broken, I assume at that point, and tired, and now you're like, no, I want to go to Everest. You wouldn't be doing it the next day, but how did that happen?

[00:39:08] Next, the dream of Everest

Mike: Well, let's say beginnings hide themselves in ends. It didn't feel like an end to me when I was in that water. Like I said, there's momentum to this stuff. After that snake bite, when I went back, and I was in the Rocky Mountains, that's when I started to think about Everest. I had this certain dream over the last month or so, the walk, that dream slowly started to mutate into a plan. It was like, I could do that. I have no misconceptions of it being easy. I don't think just because I did this, I can just show up there. I actually know nothing about mountaineering. I've never worn crampons between myself in this water, and the summit of Everest is a hell of a lot of hard work and suffering and all the things and other mountains. The walk gave me permission to dream about Everest in a real way, and then plan Everest. Then two weeks later, a buddy of mine that I got in touch with, same way I approached the walks, researching the heck out of it before I really committed. Before I really committed, I need to really understand the risk because my word matters to me. So if I say I'm gonna do something, I'm gonna do it. Before I say I want to do Everest, I have to understand how really dangerous is it, how beautiful is it really. I got in touch with some people that done it because there's a lot of mashugana on the news about Everest and this kind of thing. I read where I could read, and I interviewed who I could interview. Two weeks after my walk, and my friend called me, he took me up Mount Hood. That was my first mountain. Then he introduced me to the man that became my coach, Dr. Jon Kedrowski. And Dr. Jon has a great line. He says, "Training for climbing mountains by climbing mountains." I love that line. People used to ask, so what do you do to get ready for Everest, like you go on a StairMaster? It's like, no, it's like the last thing. A Stairmaster's in a gym in a temperature climate-controlled building. We climbed, we trained for a year and a half. That was always my target because we started November, December. The season for Everest most typically is the spring, April and May. We knew I wouldn't be ready that spring, but a year after that spring, so we're on about a year and a half. This is my job. I'm training full time. I'm doing music, but Dr. Jon was my coach. He was in control of my calendar. Last year, if you said, "Mike, can you do the podcast on this day?" I could go, "I'd love to but I got to check on my coach first," because that was my goal was to summit Everest safely and return home, the second half less important. Not just summit. That's not a failure. Go out there and die near the summit. No, thanks. That's not success for me. That year and a half, Jon and I climbed 71 mountains together.

Darin: 71?

Mike: Yeah. The only reason I know that number is because when we finally dig it to Everest, you sit there a hell of a long time waiting for the weather to be right. It feels like crap because base camp is 17,400 feet or something like that. It just kind of sucks to be alive at that altitude. A year and a half we were going. A week didn't go by that we didn't climb a mountain, if not, two or three. Though we had this one rip, a lot of stuff we wanted to do was closed because of COVID, so we get creative with the countries we couldn't go to. We wanted to climb this mountain called Cho Oyu, which is another 8,000 meter peak. It's in China. There are 14 mountains in the world above 8,000 meters, Everest is the tallest one. The hardest ones, maybe K2 are Nanga Parbat and Aparna, Dhaulagiri, those are the



hardest. The easiest one of those is Cho Oyu. Now it's not easy. All 8,000 meter peaks can kill you, but it's the easiest one of them. So we thought we'd go there, but then closed because Covid is in China. So Jon says, you know, because it says we can't go there, we're gonna do a blitzkrieg here in Colorado. We got eight days, we're gonna climb 11 mountains in 8 days. I was like, alright. He knows we're just going, we just go [00:43:49] expedition. Anyways, back at base camp, on Everest, when it's my time to climb, I'm sitting for the first time in three years or two years, like kind of my walk. It's a very strange environment. People are talking about Everest all day long. Everyone there is trying to climb Everest. You imagine the kind of egos that attract, including mine. Sometimes people go up, and a lot of times they might choose a different weather. We're all looking at the weather every day from top meteorologists and you got to decide, is this in my zone of tolerated risk, acceptable risk. Some people have different definitions of that. So sometimes people go up and they summit, and then you get jealous because you won't be there anymore. So it's high, it's not air. Then some people would go up, and they unfortunately, some of them don't come back. Then you're thinking do I even still want to do this. Then you're sitting all this time, and you forget you're a mountaineer because you haven't climbed in like weeks. That's how I know this list of 71 because I thought I gotta get my head back in the right spot, took a notebook, and wrote down every mountain we climbed to get ready. I'm ready for this. I belong here. That was a discussion Jon and I had early on. I said, "Jon, I had no interest in going to Everest if I don't belong there. None. [00:45:19] people that puts myself and others in danger. Not interested." He goes, "I will not let you go if you if you're not ready." That was that was our relationship. It was amazing. We had this moment. Jon goes, "Look, man, this isn't about one mountain. The mountain is like this excuse for you to live, how we're living for the next year and a half, and every step it can be joyous and beautiful." This is the metaphor for life is obvious, you're not living life to get to the end. The point of life isn't to die. It's to enjoy this moment. That's the point. Be here now.

Darin: To have these experiences because I remember flying around on a Blue Rock. I think of this analogy I thought of the other day, you know tea? You have to heat up water. You're not going to get a tea unless you put bag in the fucking boiling water. That's what extracts the beneficial compounds. For us, when we put ourselves, we discipline ourselves, we put ourselves in these things, we follow our dreams, if those dreams were easy, we wouldn't be accomplishing anything. So we get this push and pull. We put ourselves in these things. The hot water of the challenges is the things that's extracting the character and the opportunity of who you are and what you are that you didn't get to see until you put yourself through these experiences. That to me is finding out who we are in this life is one of the greatest things ever. That's why I'm just sitting here and I'm just feeling your experiences and vision it. It's naturally just happening, and it's what it is.

Mike: Yeah. A commitment matters, your word your integrity matters. It's like you make a commitment. The reason you do that, the reason I committed and say, I'm going to walk across America is because I know it's going to get fucked up at some point. I know, at some point, I am not going to want to do it anymore. So you put the commitment in place to supersede those voices. We talked about it talking to you like, it's very subtle. Meaning, look in the mountains, there are times you should turn around because if you don't, you'll die. I mean, the weather turns a certain way. If you're not moving fast enough, the right move is to turn around. We all have to have our be internally calibrated to know, okay, is this the time to



turn around, am I in danger here, am I doing something wrong for my health, this kind of thing? Or is this is kind of like the wussy voice inside. We really got to know the difference. We really got to know the difference because that voice, that weak voice will show up. When you're doing something hard, you could bet on it. That's kind of why I wanted to do hard things is to hear that voice and go, who am I if I don't listen to this? Who's on the other side of not listening to that voice? I don't even know. You got to figure it out for yourself. There are certain situations where the ramifications are different. You're running a 800-meter race, that voice, you don't ever need to listen to it. Go as hard as you can. If you're above camp 4 on Mount Everest, you need to be listening to the voices and make sure you're safe but not irrationally, so when you're talking yourself out of doing something that matters to you. I think you said it so so pointedly where life comes at you. There's the hard parts of life. If you're listening, and you haven't had one yet, just wait, you will. There is a corner we can turn where we go, instead of living my life where I'm gonna try to minimize all these pain points and discomfort, what if I start making some of these pain points for myself. Not ones that like, I'm not talking about messing up relationships or something. I'm talking about go sit in that ice bath for 10 minutes, or put yourself in shape, or whatever it is for you. We start to welcome in discomfort. That can be a real turning point. Before my walk, I was just in this little sandbox. I'm trying to make everything perfect, make it as comfortable as possible. What happens is you start to get a pretty small life. Then you say, who would I be if I welcomed discomfort? These hard moments is where I shine. Great. Who would I be then?

Darin: That's a beautiful thing when you rely on that discipline, and then you put in the work and the time. I'm thinking of when you're up on Everest, the cultivation of those 71 Mountains is giving you the aptitude. It's giving you that listening that you definitely wouldn't have had. You didn't have enough knowledge, you didn't have enough experience if you just showed up, but you had to do that. The doctor set you up to be able to do that because he was setting the framework so that you would actually have the experiences and the ability to assess those situations that's because you had to go through the experience of it.

Mike: Here's a concrete example. It was January or February this year, it seems like a lot longer ago, this year, there's a mountain in Colorado, called Quandary Peak. One of the easiest fourteeners in the in the summer. Depending on the weather in the winter, it can be harder. Buddy and I looked and found the coldest, windiest day, and we went up there so we're gonna sleep on the summit of Quandary. We went up there, the weather says it's gonna be 16 mile an hour winds. It was 50. I know 16-mile an hour winds and I know 50. It was 50. We're talking like -16, -20 Fahrenheit. We got blown off the mountain. The tents start to lift me up. We got to bail in the middle of the night. That night, I got what's called frostnip. One of my toes, it was really cold, and frostnip is essentially you have that tingly feeling and over time it comes back and there's no damage. Now let's fast forward to camp 4 an Everest. It's four camps and then the summit. So you leave at 8:30 PM, that's the time we've started where you climb through the night, hopefully gets to summit around sunrise. It's dark and you're going and my toes got cold. On Everest, you hear all these stories, people losing fingers and losing toes and dying. My toes are getting cold, start to freak out a little bit. My voice in my head saying, your toes are cold. I just remember Quandary Peak. This is the same feeling I had then. I know my toes are cold, but I'm pretty sure this is frostnip and I'm okay to keep going, and I kept going. After climbing eight and a half hours through the night, we ended up passing the other climbers that were going that day and our group was the first



one up. Dawa Chirring, Dawa Dorje were the other two climbers with us and Dr. Jon and myself. you always hear about the lines on Everest, but that day, we were blessed we were first.

Darin: Wow.

Mike: It was unreal. People don't realize mountains have shadows. Well, when the sunrises, mountains have shadows. You look off to the side, there's a giant pyramidal shadow, Everest shadow over hundreds of miles. You'll look at weather there and you'll say there will be a storm at 7,000 meters. You get above 7,000 meters and storm is below sea. You're looking down on all these clouds and the weather, there can be storms below you, and it's just a wild experience. Jon said to me, get off there and touch the top and world. This doesn't look pretty, by the way. I'm exhausted. It took everything but at 4:35 AM with the sun rising, I flopped onto the summit. I just cried into my hands. Jon was crying because everything we put into that, man, it was a lot. It is one of the most special moments in my life. I don't think I would have been able had it had it not spent that night on Quandary. Long story short, just the most important part, we got down safe. It was just what I thought, a frostnit. My toes were a little tingly about three or four weeks and I'm 100% fine.

Darin: I'm curious, after all of that, what is your day-to-day, keeping yourself in shape, what is that now? I mean, obviously you're sprouting. You're eating good food and good plants and stuff like that, but what do you do now? What's your motivation just to stay in shape?

[00:54:40] Walking and climbing: Now what?

Mike: Well, motivation, I just like feeling good. With all this stuff like Wim Hof has a great line. I love Wim Hof. I'm actually studying to become a Wim Hof instructor. He was talking about the cold. He was like, first, you fear the cold, but eventually you crave the cold. So that's been my experience with eating healthy and exercising and stuff. Take that day off from exercise and it's like, gosh, I want to move right now. So there is a threshold where it gets over. My motivation is it feels good, I get high from it. My routine, I just got a puppy three months ago. That's been great for me because I've just been kind of living, even departing from the music stuff doing the adventure stuff is still like the Mike Posner show. So I've just been kind of doing my my own thing and just having this dog. Having some accountability to something that's not me is really good for me. I'm up at between seven and eight. Then I'll meditate like an hour. Sometimes, the lowest I'll do is 20 minutes in that first sit, but then if I do 20 minutes, I'll make sure I get a second one later in the day. I like to do 40 minutes to an hour. Then I'll get out and let Alma out, and I'll walk her. She's a Vizsla, so she's hyper. You got to run these dogs. I'll go exercise her, like walking, some running, fetch. That's an hour, so now about nine. Now there you got to put her up and then I'll go either run. I live here in Topanga, so some nice fire rose right by my house. So either run or grab a bike, and I don't belong to a gym anymore. I see you got a great weights out here.

Darin: I got stones up there, mountain over here here, and I just grab them.

Mike: So as much as outside, exercise as possible, and then I got a pull up bar and dip station. That's mainly what I'm doing. Yoga, I love hot yoga. It's a little harder with the puppy because the one I like is a little far, but I'll try to hit that once or twice a week. Then I'm



sprouting. I got seven jars going. I'm eating, I don't know, usually like a jar a day of sprouts. Then the ice bath, I love. I'll say probably five days a week I'm in that thing. We got it down at like, I think it's at 35 today, but we had it 33 last week. It's right above freezing. I sit in there for 10 minutes and the mood. People, what's the health benefit of this? I haven't read all the research, but all I know is I feel amazing after for hours. Physically, my mood, I feel happy. So I'll do that. Then I also do some of the Wim Hof breath work a couple of times a week. That's sort of like my routine. Then I'm working, I go to the studio. So I write songs. I've been doing a lot of writing for other artists this season, basically, since September, I started working. So after this, I was going to studio but they moved to virtual, I guess there's some Coved exposures, so I'll be on Zoom. That job is quite sedentary and indoors, so I gotta make sure I get mine in the mornings and stuff.

Darin: What a pleasure. We could keep talking.

Mike: And this feels like the beginning of a friendship, which I'm excited about.

Darin: I'm stoked, man. Thank you for coming.

Mike: Thank you.

Darin: Thank you for sharing your amazing story. I was captivated, and I know people will be too because there's through lines to this whole thing. It's not about everyone walking away needing to climb Everest.

Mike: No, not at all.

Darin: Everyone has an Everest.

Mike: Everyone has an Everest, everyone has a walk, everyone has a thing that you've been putting off that you're going to get to when you're done doing what you think you have to do.

Darin: There is no perfect time. Time is now, figure it out, figure out a plan, set yourself up. Use your common sense and get your ass gone.

Mike: Let's go.

[00:58:46] Podcast Outro

Darin: Thanks for tuning in to this episode of The Darin Olien Show. I hope you took something valuable away from this conversation that will help improve your life in some way. If you'd like to learn more about my incredible guests, you can find all of their information in the show notes on my website. If you enjoyed this episode, or even you didn't like it, please rate this podcast. The team and I value your feedback so we can continue to give you the most value possible. We want you to get the most out of every podcast. So please rate, subscribe, share anything you feel called to do. I truly appreciate it, and I love and value your support. So, thank you, and I'll meet you in the next episode.