

THE TRULY AMAZING LIFE SHOW

with Aaron Kennard

EPISODE # 5

WHY MICHAEL SANDLER IS GRATEFUL FOR LITERALLY EVERYTHING! (INCLUDING THE 'MUCK')

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Aaron Kennard: Hello and welcome to the truly amazing live podcast, where you get to peek inside the brains of inspiring people who are absolutely thrilled to be alive and see what the big deal is. I am your host Aaron Kennard and my guest today is Michael Sandler. You're in for a treat today and this episode is longer than normal because there is really no way I was going to be able to dig in to Michael's fascinating life story in 30 minutes. So let us just jump right in to this conversation. This is a brief introduction, Michael has written a number of books about Barefoot Running. He wrote Barefoot Running and Barefoot Walking with Jessica Lee, right? You both wrote the books right?

Michael Sandler: Yeah, absolutely.

Aaron Kennard: Yeah, so they were featured in the news all over the place, over the last number number of years in the Barefoot Running Movement that took off and he was a big part of that. Anyway, he had some crazy experiences in life and he's just done some really cool and fun things. And some recent developments that just happened and just have lead to starting to write a new book. So that is just a brief overview. That's why I wanted to get you on the line and chat. There is just so much we can talk about here but what did I leave out about you Michael that people should know?

Michael Sandler: I think that is a great starting point. I am sure we'll get into the quote "My Story" as we go along, and there are so many directions we can go with at this point. Just lead the way and whatever the readers or listeners that need to know it will probably come out.

Aaron Kennard: Alright, cool. Well let's just start. This is the truly amazing life of podcast. That's what intrigued me about. Just reaching out to you, I saw your movement for your new book and what you and Jessica are doing. Your attitude was just awesome. I just love to hear that view point of gratitude and seeing that. And I'm gonna let you explain the story but I'm just gonna even the background here for people, why I was intrigued to get you on the phone, because you had a crazy experience happen after numerous other crazy experiences. And your first thought on that, from what I gather from the video you guys put was, that you were grateful

for it. Right from the get go, like right when the hard thing happen, you were automatically seeing that this was going to bless your life. And that is something that so many people need to hear. Like, so many people need to hear why you thought that way automatically. How did you get to that place and things like that? So that's just a background, let's get in to it. Let's see where should we start? Let me ask you a quick question before we jump in to all of that. What is it right now that makes life truly amazing to you?

Michael Sandler: Life, love, energy, light, all of that. All of the experiences we're going through. The muck, the fun time, the beautiful times, the challenging times, it all adds up. And it's all happening as it should for a reason and so, extremely thankful, grateful and happy. Almost each moment, there are some moments that are quite hard. When you look at the hospital bills and you're like, "Oh my God." but life is beautiful.

Aaron Kennard: That's Cool. Tell me, was it always this way for you? Have you always seen life as beautiful? Have you always have that attitude about life?

Michael Sandler: No, I've always had an attitude that I can overcome anything or surmount any challenge. Actually, that's probably what's gotten in me into a lot of difficulty in life because instead of flowing like water downhill, I've often to tried to be the salmon swimming upstream. And as the story goes, the salmon that makes it upstream, dies. See you really don't want to be swimming upstream and I was really good at it. But I had a very positive outlook that at least for many years, that out

of lemons could come lemonade. And that may have come through many of the challenges that I have been faced with. Each time you go through a challenge and come out the other end, you're tempered a little bit more. Sort of like that heated metal that gets thrown into the cold water and it makes a little bit stronger each time. Each time you get more of a, I wanna call it a divine or cosmic knowing, that everything is right, that everything has its purpose. That while this hurts like hell in the moment, there has to be a special reason for it.

Aaron Kennard: Absolutely. It sounds like its through the events in your life, you've just built up this greater and greater stamina to hard things or knowing that they're all helping you somehow.

Michael Sandler: A greater knowing and also, a greater internal knowing. At the age of ten, I was injured in a freak little bike accident, racing against another person who crashed into me which left me with six knee operations. And I was told, that was when my ACL was first removed, lateral medial meniscus sucked out..

Aaron Kennard: You say first removed like, you did it later too? Or we're gonna get into that?

Michael Sandler: No, removed.

Aaron Kennard: Oh ok, yeah. But you said first, like it was the first time that happened?

Michael Sandler: Oh meaning, that I had a total of, I've lost count.. Like 10 or 11 knee operations on that leg.

Aaron Kennard: On just one leg?

Michael Sandler: Just on one leg. And so I was told by doctors at age 10, " Well, don't expect your knee to be able to do very much, don't expect to be able to walk without arthritis, or maybe even to be able to walk after you're 18 because we just don't know how this thing is going to hold together.". And they're going through surgery after surgery with me, before I'm 12 they're telling me I've got an athritic knee and that's for life. And years later, I became a pro cyclist. So what did I learn from this? That nobody else is in charge of you, but you. And so, to let go of all of the belief systems around you, that are trying to be handed to you. To

say, you are this, you are that, it was a bad this, it was a bad that. All of these labels and muck. That really started to develop in that time for me, so that now when unfortunately I guess I'll get into that story but back when it was crack like an egg over a rock, I was able to say..

Aaron Kennard: You're just laughing about it.

Michael Sandler: It really was the best thing that ever happened to me, it was also the most painful thing that ever happened to me.

Aaron Kennard: Ok so, I didn't even know about that 10 year old experience. That gives me more clarity on why you are so tempered against so many hard things you've been dealing through since you were ten. But when you say you're cracked like an egg over a rock, was this the skating incident or was this the most recent incident?

Michael Sandler: The most recent incident.

Aaron Kennard: Ok, so take us back a little bit because before you wrote about Barefoot Running, you had another incident. So just tell us briefly what happened there.

Michael Sandler: Yeah, at that point, in 2004, I had stopped racing and did.. Aaron Kennard: Racing bikes, right?

Michael Sandler: Racing Bicycles, yeah. And I was racing on the track. I was kind of of your 200 meter big sprinter big guy at that time. I was going to help others and I was writing a book for people with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. It came to me in a dream and I crazedly followed that dream, and did a 5000 mile unsupported bike ride across the country. And that was.

Aaron Kennard: Unsupported?

Michael Sandler: Unsupported. Nobody out there with me.

Aaron Kennard: You would just stop for food when at restaurants or just carry gear or whatever huh?

Michael Sandler: Carry your gear, stop into the Seven Eleven when you can, cry yourself along the way, and just keep on going.

Aaron Kennard: Ok, so you did that and then what were you saying?
Michael Sandler: And then 2005, that went really well. I got invited to meet

members of the house and the senate and talk about Mental Parity Act and learning disabilities, all that good stuff. So in 2005, I was sponsored by Rollerblade because I'd formerly been a speedskater. And I was sponsored by Rollerblade to go after a world endurance record of skating from coast to coast, to L.A. to New York City, which was to be 4000 miles in 40 days. Like endurance, a little bit, and/or need my head examined. In training, I was getting very strong, but I was struggling in foot challenges in training and a lot of plantar fasciitis condition. But one day in training, I slipped off my skates, put my legs in a creek which is actually flooded this week, Boulder Creek. Fascinating to think that's where I meditated. And I kind of prayed and ask for safety and guidance for this upcoming journey. Also wondering how my body, legs, and feet were going to hold together. I got out of the water, laced of my skates, pushed off, round to the bend, I was going slow as a Sunday. I said, "You know, there will be tourist out, so take it easy in the bike path.", and a father had gotten his, he was visiting town and didn't know it was a bike path, and he was teaching his baby how to walk, and they stepped out right in front of me. Yeah, so I threw myself down to avoid the baby because, you're not going to hit a baby. In that moment, my whole world would change, exploded my femur on impact, my hip, my arm. I was told that a charge of bone came less than a centimeter from wiping me out, hitting my femoral artery. And yet I knew in that moment, I've been praying for safety and guidance, here I am completely broken in the trail. Instead of going, "Why me? Woe is me?", I was like, "Thank you.". I got an answer, we're going to be doing something different here.

Aaron Kennard: So you literally, right then, you're laying on the trail and you were feeling grateful? you were feeling that thank you?

Michael Sandler: I was feeling life is good. Life is good.

Aaron Kennard: Even though you were probably in severe pain, I would imagine?

Michael Sandler: Oh I had to take my left leg, and flop it over the right because that was probably what saved the pieces of bones from cutting

through the artery. So I was in excruciating pain. In fact, the ambulance crew and everybody got there, and they see me, ear to ear grin on my face like "Life is Good". And they are trying to talk to me and I'm like, "I'm in a lot of pain, I'm meditating right now. Please let me do this."

Aaron Kennard: That is awesome. I don't meet many people that are like grinning about stuff like that and saying thank you right there. Because it's just not the natural tendency to do, and you obviously build that up and trained yourself to see life in such a grateful way. So, I wasn't sure that you're feeling that way during that experience. I knew you were during this most recent experience but it sounds like it's just been your habit throughout life to see things as a blessing.

Michael Sandler: Yeah, that one was easier. The pain of that one was a lot less than the more recent one. And so, it was much easier to have that beaming ear to ear grin, even though I literally could've died there on the bike path.

Aaron Kennard: Because the pain wasn't so intense? Michael Sandler: Oh the pain was, up till that point I mean. Aaron Kennard: It was the most intense thing you had.

Michael Sandler: Yeah, but I mean the boy is ok, the sun was still shining, the fingers and toes. Well, the finger moved quite a bit, the toes, kind of doing their own floppy fish thing but they were moving. And so, I am like life is good. I could see under a layer or two of the onion to know, if you pray one minute, if you're meditating one minute and you are saying, "Give me safety. Give me guidance.". And the next minute, you're cracked open on that trail, there is a reason for it. And I don't need to know what the reason is now. It will come to me, that something special is coming.

Aaron Kennard: I love that trust. That just like, it almost gives me chills to hear that. It's just like, yes you trust, you have faith. You cannot see like it's exactly opposite of what you would think. I mean it looks like exact opposite of safety right? You just cracked your knee open, and yet you're still saying, "Thank you, I believe this is good for me. I am going to trust.". And that is so powerful. So go ahead, sorry to interrupt you there.

Michael Sandler: oh no, I felt it was a gift. And it really help carry us forward in life. And I look back at it also, and I look at this, I was going to do this crazy 4000

mile 40 day skate across the country. Maybe there was a mach truck, that had my name grill, and this just saved me from that. I don't need to see.

Aaron Kennard: You have no way of knowing that, yeah. And maybe someday, when we're dead that maybe we'll see all that. Maybe that record will be revealed, who knows. But you don't have to know that right now, right?

Michael Sandler: Exactly, all I now is. You put it perfectly. I don't need to see all the pieces of the puzzle. In fact, I only need to go on one thing, and one thing only.

Aaron Kennard: What's that?

Michael Sandler: Feeling. How does it feel? Not how does the body feel, the body hurt like hell. But I felt good, I felt great. And they kept on asking me, EMT after EMT, "Michael did you hit your head?". I am like "No, I didn't." but I felt good and that's a driver meaning that I'm on track. And everything else picking up the pieces, and there are a lot of pieces to pick up. They'll find their way back together.

Aaron Kennard: That's so cool. Okay, so we've been talking, we've been eluding to this latest thing that happened. Give people the kind of in between there. So you had this thing you're thankful for and all of a sudden, they are saying again that you're not gonna walk. You may not have a leg. Fill us in on the details. Because after that, you started barefoot running and writing books, and joining across the country again. I mean, obviously you walked again.

Michael Sandler: Yeah, I was there in the hospital coaching the doctor before he took me into surgery. And I am telling him, "Don't worry doc, it's going to go back together. Better than you ever expected you it would.". Because he literally x- raying one side and compairing it to the other to try figure out what to do. And I am coaching him along because I just knew. This didn't happen for me to lose my leg. No way. That's no

what's coming out of this. Something important, something that's going to have to do with my healing journey is going to come out of that. And I don't think it's my healing journey as an amputee. And so, we get through surgery, the next day I come to. I am laying in bed so weak and I still got blood transfusions because I lost so much blood. I was bleeding internally from this. And he comes into the hospital, excited he said, "Michael, Michael, you're never going to believe

it.". And the doctor throws up the x-ray and he's tapping it on the lightbox proudly and he goes, "It went back together better than I expected it would."

Aaron Kennard: Just like you told him it would, the day before huh?

Michael Sandler: It was just a knowing. And now, he still didn't expect me to be able to do much more than walk. And even that was going to be a challenge. But I have been told that so many times before. But I knew that the healing was going to only come. If I believed I was going to be able to get back to running marathons or beyond, which with my weak feet at the time, would've been a major miracle. If I believed it though, that I could get there. Conversely, if I believed, because they were going to move me to a rehab hospital, which was a nursing home. It was anything but a place to rehab and they expected me to spend a couple of months there. So, if I believed that was my path, that I'm weak, that I'm injured, that I am throw whatever label, that would have come true too. But instead I had a knowing, something great is going to come out of this. In fact, the wackiest thing just happened. There were people interviewing me, like yourself, calling me up in the hospital saying, "What are you going to do? Are you still going to do your skate?" and I said, "You know, I don't know. I don't think I'm supposed to do the skate. But you know the Boulder, Boulder 10k is coming up. Let me see if I can do that on crutches.". So fast forward to me off crutches. And yes, I did the race. It went well. I don't recommend it. But I get off the crutches, and I went through some real hardship at that time because this was a very severe injury. And so my body was completely inflamed. And so I had one overused condition after the next. Your plantar fasciitis, your tendonitis in the ankle, your shin splints, patellar tendonitis, chondromalacia, or tendonitis deep inside the knee, IT band syndrome, and hip problems. I couldn't get any of it under control. I didn't give up

but it was extremely frustrating. But I just kept on, I go into meditation and give thanks. Thank you for my strong, healthy, happy feet. See myself running along in meditation, flying along effortlessly, riding almost not even touching the ground. But wait, there's no shoes on that guy. Oh we'll ignore that part. I was seeing it I had no idea.

Aaron Kennard: Interesting.

Michael Sandler: And I just believed that I'll be fine. And finally at one point I

came to the end of the road, where I am like, none of this is working. Nature seems to be my place to heal. The Earth seems to be a healing place, I'm gonna slip off my shoes. And fast forward, I healed. All the inflammation went away. All the swelling.

Aaron Kennard: What year was this?

Michael Sandler: The accident was April 2006. So that was 2007. Summer of 2007, I became a barefoot walker and then a barefoot runner. And ran my fastest 10k ever by the end of that summer. And went on to run marathons barefoot or marathon distances. All sorts of these silly things that I was able to do, that came out of the connection with the Earth, the running barefoot, the time and nature, the more introspective journey, and that accident.

Aaron Kennard: And then as a result you ended up writing some books about it and started teaching other people.

Michael Sandler: Absolutely.

Aaron Kennard: So all as a result of that particular. It could have never have happened without that accident. That kind of led you down that path, right?

Michael Sandler: No, I was actually engaged to another girl at that time who went away after the accident. The engagement broke which left an opening years later to run into Jessica. Jessica Lee, my amazing twin flame of a wife, who met me and said, "What do we do with the stuff here?". And then one day, it was a Friday night, she goes, "Oh by the way, you're coaching a clinic about barefoot running tomorrow morning."

Aaron Kennard: So she just started setting stuff up?

Michael Sandler: She did because she saw the power of the story of what I have gone through. And she had started running barefoot herself. Because I can teach people, we have to help others to be able to. It is really a healing journey to help others to be able to heal. And so, meeting her came out of that accident, the barefoot came out of that accident. She was the real driver of, "Ok, let's start a

club. Let's start a business. Let's run at the park.". And that all came out of. Aaron Kennard: That accident.

Michael Sandler: Shedding my skin through that accident.

Aaron Kennard: Yeah, that accident was the catalyst that led you to this amazing pesto. When you prayed that day, "Hey, just guide me, give me safety.", and then you trusted in that. It led you on this amazing journey of a path to finding your soulmate really. Like your wife and just amazing things that came out of that, right?

Michael Sandler: Yeah and it required both trust. Trust is ultimately letting go of resistance.

Aaron Kennard: Yes.

Michael Sandler: Because if you let go of resistance, it comes to you. If you resist. Aaron Kennard: It persist.

Michael Sandler: Exactly, it's a pain. So there was the trust aspect and then there was the really, I just read it recently, having that mind of a child. That open or empty mind that is willing to, not only challenge any belief of who i am, because we are not our job, our education, what we have in the drive way, our home, our family, or any definition that we give ourselves. Even our sport, our religion or not of any of those things. If we allow us to have a mind of a child which hasn't set in stone who they are at that moment. Then, so many magical things can occur because we become open to them. So for instance, for me, what was the thing that I least would've likely done? Gone barefoot. I was Mr. Plantar Fasciitis.

Aaron Kennard: Yeah, you had to get the big thick shoes with the support, and the motion control, and everything because that was

everybody says to do. The doctors and the all the running specialist right?

Michael Sandler: I had a couple of thousand dollars worth of orthotics. I had

orthotics for my running shoes, my walking shoes, different ones for my gym shoes, carbon fiber ones for my cycling shoes and skates.

Aaron Kennard: Well, I'll tell you really quick I can relate more than most people because I have, I don't know if I told you this or not, but I couldn't run at all. In 2009, I couldn't run a mile, my knees would just lock up on me. Severe pain. My buddy sent me that book, Born To Run, and then it led me to kind of reading about your stuff too. And right at that time, I just went barefoot completely. And since then, I've run ultra marathons, I've zero knee pain, I can run everyday for an hour or two hours, and it's all because I chose to go barefoot running. I don't always run barefoot now, I mean I run in flat shoes if I do. Like I run in Altras, I don't know if you seen any Altra Zero Drops. If I run in shoes, like on trails, I'm not totally a barefoot runner. But it's because I trained exclusively for like a year, in barefeet, that I was able to strengthen my feet and learn the proper running form. So anyway, I completely relate in so many ways as you're talking about this stuff ofcourse. And that's just to give other people perspective too. You know, you get all sorts of reactions as you know you're in the business and everybody thinks it's so extreme and crazy. That's because they haven't looked into it at all, hardly. In general that's what happens. So, what was I gonna say? I was thinking, so you had all these stuff happen but you were talking about resistance and how much different would it have been have you had that accident and then you sat there and said, "Why me?", and stood over it for months and years. You wouldn't been open like you were saying the mind of a child. You wouldn't been open to the guidance right? If you're sitting there in this resistance mode and cursing God for having allowed this to happen right?

Michael Sandler: So I've had some big challenges in my life and I wanna say right here, to the universe, God, everything. No more. I've had my share and I don't think we need anymore to the Michael story of he did this, he did that to be able to help people. So I'm done. With that said, in

93, I was racing bicycles in Europe. I was trying to make it to the Tour de France. And I was racing in this little town in HÈrouville and I came up on my bike. American, doing well, these people goes, "Vous a le! Vous a le!". They're cheering me on, the safety official waves me through this turn, straight into a oncoming car. An elderly woman had come up in an alley and gotten her way up on the course. And that was the end of my racing career.

Aaron Kennard: Did you broke a bunch of stuff there?

Michael Sandler: Yeah, if you ever had the chance, I don't recommend it. If seeing the movie, Misery, there's a person in that who has his leg locked in a device and then somebody takes a giant sledgehammer and take its to the leg. It's called a hobbling, I had my lower leg turned into a 90 degree angle. And then it turns out the back injuries I didn't know about at the time, because you can only see what's going on with the leg, was even worse. And at that time I thought, God is dead. There is no God. Why did this happen to me? And after that, I tried comeback, after comeback, after comeback. And for years, I couldn't get anywhere. I went to psychiatrist, after psychiatrist for post traumatic stress disorder. And you name it, because of the amount of anger, or self disappointment, or upsettedness I had towards myself. Because I turned everything inward and said this is really a negative thing, this shouldn't have happen to me. And I went into this self..

Aaron Kennard: So you went into this what?

Michael Sandler: This place of. Oh, let's see if I can get, where is the mic?

Aaron Kennard: I think it was just our reception. It just sometimes goes out. So you went into this what?

Michael Sandler: Place of self pity, probably self loathing, and just incredibly dark hole of disappointment. Even though I had this on the outside, a very positive outlook at life, it was this over arching theme for everything in my life and I couldn't really get past that. I know what I was gonna say, it was propping me up the story of Michael as the Woe is Me, Poor Me.

Aaron Kennard: For how many years? For how long were you in that?

Michael Sandler: Somewhere in between 5, 6, 7 years. It wasn't till probably about 2000. By 2000 the light was starting to glow. And I was really able to heal, I did a Ironman that year. I limped through the run because I had these incredibly weak feet. But I did it and I was starting to shine again. And it was starting to gel in me that maybe my path wasn't meant to be a professional cyclist. And looking back,

And I like every cyclist out there was offered a whole bunch of stuff to take at that time. Which I didn't take which actually didn't work well with my team. And so, to say I'm disappointed that I didn't go of that route, I let go of that disappointment because I learned there is probably something much more for me. And learning that there is something much more for me. First off, if that accident happened again, I would be able to heal,[snaps fingers] like that.

Aaron Kennard: Because look at that, seven years. Like you sat there and suffered for seven years because you wouldn't let go, right?

Michael Sandler: I'm coming to a realization here that's really weird. Which is seven years is almost seven years I let go, and it was seven years until i had my accident which led to barefoot running, and then seven years.

Aaron Kennard: Till now?

Michael Sandler: One month and 17 days. 7117, till the recent accident which almost took my life. So in 7 years I think I may need to put myself in a padded room.

Aaron Kennard: Let's put a reminder on your calendar for years to stay inside for that year or something right?

Michael Sandler: Yeah, pretty much. Or go meditate on a hilltop for a year.

Aaron Kennard: Well we laugh about that but the fact is in seven years you're going to keep living fully. And if things happen again, you're gonna keep saying it as a blessing.

Michael Sandler: Amen.

Aaron Kennard: That's the fact of the matter right?

Michael Sandler: Oh yeah. And I don't think there is a part of me that needed this experience to go through. To really help me vibrate in synch with who I'm meant to be.

Aaron Kennard: And you're saying this most recent experience?

Michael Sandler: Yeah. And so I don't think, I don't feel that there is that need. As long as I stay in synch now, I don't feel that there is a need for that again. And I am not in charge.

Aaron Kennard: It's interesting to hear, and we're going to stop leaving people hanging here pretty soon and you tell about them what happened recently. We're going to keep the cliff hanger open just a little bit longer because I want to go back to that seven years, when you were struggling and not letting go, and suffering and not healing, and trying to hold on to being a professional cyclist, and holding on to what you thought you wanted to be and have right? What took you out of that? What got you finally to let go so that you could heal?

Michael Sandler: I think it was a return to spirituality. I think it was, I had started going to Native American ceremonies down on the Navaho reservation. And that was in the first time in my life that I really truly felt God or spirit with me or inside of me. Until then it was a wrote thing, you go to temple or you go to church, and I've done the both of them.

Aaron Kennard: And they didn't work for you and you hit this car and it didn't give you everything you wanted. And so, God must not exist right? That was how you.

Michael Sandler: Exactly. And so, I was growing and I was plugging back in. And I was starting to see the big picture, I was starting to read people like a Dr. Wayne Dyer.

Aaron Kennard: He's Amazing. I love his Stuff.

Michael Sandler: Yeah, more spiritual minds who are saying that this isn't all there is to life. And so, the term I started to use a lot was "I was able to step back." And I started to step back and see the big picture. And the light went on. And I got out of that place. I actually went back to grad school at that point, I started writing my first book which got

published. I was on fire in a sense. And I won state championship and did some other beautiful and amazing stuff, and cycling again.

Because I was letting go of the old and letting go of that story.

Aaron Kennard: So a lot of different things kind of led you. You needed that time for whatever reason and then you were led to books, and teachers, and mentors and really kind of plug in back in to your spirit and started to wake up to who you are.

Michael Sandler: In my maturity process, I needed that time period to.. For whatever reason, go in a cave and lick my wounds. It shouldn't have been necessary but I'm very thankful for who I am here today. And a lot of great stuff came out of it. Like, going to Navaho ceremonies which came during that time period, which were essential to who I am now. But it was a very hard challenging time.

Aaron Kennard: Cool. I mean not cool but yeah, I understand. So that's a really good picture of you've done so far. Tell us what happened then recently, and let's get in to what you are doing now. What happened in May?

Michael Sandler: In May, I was still trying to swim like a fish upstream. And I was on book tour for this beautiful book that Jessica and I wrote, Barefoot Walking, which came out to Random House this spring. And it was really exciting to be out there sharing with people. It was much more than on walking, it was more of a how to book in life or how to be more of a spiritual being in everything that we do. And so, it is a beautiful book, I was extremely happy to be sharing it with others. But the book tour wasn't supposed to happen or at least in the fashion that it happened. The RV we were supposed to do a home swap for was in beautiful. People have an RV that we could borrow, their RV transmission went out two weeks before the tour was supposed to start. So I went and found another eco RV, little small RV, that I could rent for the tour which really took our savings but felt it was supposed to be out there. And Jessica, she was maybe a little bit more plugged in than me. She was like, "Hmm, you know that doesn't feel so right. So I'm going to coordinate things from home. Why don't you go out there and we're going to see what happens.". She had a feeling. She knew. And so I went out there. First, the electrical system went out on the RV, in the

Grand Canyon leaving me stuck for 2 and a half days in below freezing temperatures which left with a.

Aaron Kennard: Which left you with a what?

Michael Sandler: A fever. I got very sick. So the start of the tour, here I am with a fever. I drive into California, the cabinets pops open. All the glass inside of it comes flying out of the cabinet, shatters and explodes glass all over the inside of the RV. And I called up Jessica and I'm like, "Can you look up in the computer? What's the sign? What does it mean if there is broken glass everywhere?". So from there, I think we ran into some more electrical problems. We, I'm a plural now. Me and the person driving along, I'm cheering him on. More electrical problems get into. Oh the rule for myself giving talks is that the person, the organizer of the talk, has to be in our talk. You know that brings a good crowd. We were giving these talks at an outdoor recreation company where they let go, pretty much across the board all of their specialist who hold talks in a restructuring just as I am getting on the road. So there is nobody. so that's another red flag. I get to up by San Francicsco. The fever is finally abated, I'm feeling great. I go leave the RV by this Wetlands place to go connect with nature. I come back, the door to the RV is open. The glass has been smashed into. All of my electronics have been stolen. Computer is gone, phone's gone, Slice-o's gone, everything's gone.

Aaron Kennard: You got to start listening to Jessica more. Sounds like you're pretty tuned in but maybe this time, you were resisting it. You say you were swimming upstream. You were trying to do your own thing again. What you wanted, instead of listening.

Michael Sandler: I wanted to this book to work. And I, as a former professional athlete, knows how to get things done. I'm going to make it happen.

Aaron Kennard: Persistence. Yeah.

Michael Sandler: Wow! Two car accidents. Same day as the break in. Am I going to quit? No. We're going to keep going.

Aaron Kennard: You know it's an interesting thing though because you get this persistence. We should be persistent. And there is interesting

balance between. How do you know when to stop? How do you know when to let go? And how do you know when to really drive and not take "No" for an answer, and not stop and power through the obstacles, right?

Michael Sandler: I think there is only one time to drive. And I knew it. I was being, for a lack of a better word, a hypocrite. I wanted so hard for this book to succeed. There is only one time you drive. If you lose hours, days, weeks, years of your life doing something because it seems like so much fun that you can't picture yourself doing anything else—then you're on track! Keep going for it! If on the other hand there's self-doubt, there's pain, it becomes drudgery, work, so difficult, the doors keep closing, why am I doing this? It doesn't feel right. [screech sound] Stop! You're getting the early warning signs that you could be in for a Michael Sandler!

Aaron Kennard: And after this call, people will know, that they don't want a Michael Sandler. Unless they need it. And then you should want it because that's the best thing for you.

Michael Sandler: There's this. What's that Woody Harrelson movie? Ah, Kingpin! He becomes a professional bowler, gambles, gets his hands chopped off in this gambling calamity. And his name was Munson. And so after that, the word that came was to be "Munsoned". To have it all, like a golden spoon and to lose it. So you don't want to be Munsoned.

Aaron Kennard: Or Sandlered! But no, I loved how you said that. So in this time, you were swimming upstream. You weren't following your passion. You were trying to do something that is not lining up. And you were trying to force it.

Michael Sandler: Yes.

Aaron Kennard: And when you say that, you said when you loved it, when you're passionate about it. So obviously, you weren't super passionate about it. You wanted it for some other reason? Why were you driving so hard then?

Michael Sandler: Fear.

Aaron Kennard: Fear of what?

Michael Sandler: Fear that I would miss an opportunity, or that the book wouldn't take off, or that I'm not doing what I should be doing. And so I just kept pushing ahead.

Aaron Kennard: Why were you in that state of fear? What do you think?

Michael Sandler: Because I think we've been driving so hard over the previous two years. We put out Barefoot Running, it became a tremendous success. Then it got re-released by Random House and it had to start from scratch. So we were scrambling up the ladder again. Then we spend a year filming the most DVD, Barefoot Running the Movie, which initially started incredibly slowly. Which is not we expected but we put everything. Our heart, our time, our savings into it. And then here comes Barefoot Walking which is taken up the last little bit of resources both time and money into it. And so, we're going, "We've got to make this work.". We're best selling authors but we've gambled everything. We've got to make it work.

Aaron Kennard: So is that fear of loss? That fear of "This is our last thing" and somehow getting grapped up and caught up in it because you've put so much heart into it. That you just don't want to see it fail.

Michael Sandler: You're right, it was fear of failure. Fear of failure.

Aaron Kennard: It's so interesting how we slip back into that isn't it? In life. And then we need to be snap back out of it. So what happens? You're fighting it and then you're on this tour, and it's not working out. And then what?

Michael Sandler: Fighting it, it's not working out, all sorts of additional calamity. I get to Yellow Stone and the Grand Tetons for a few days for R&R before our talks. And I made the decision I'm like, "Jessica, come on out here.". She had been planning on it to continue the tour. I'm like, "Come on out and let's get me home and we'll do the rest of the tour.". Maybe a limited tour but we're going to do it a different way. Then I got to spend a few days meditating and running throughout these majestic places. I got to sit with a byson. They're sitting 20 feet in front of me and did a meditation with them.

Aaron Kennard: Where was this?

Michael Sandler: That's in Yellowstone. And it just opened. I slipped out my phone camera to try to take a picture of the byson. And the lead byson of the herd, he get up and he looks, and he was like [huff]. Like, "Be quiet! Sit back down. Don't interrupt anybody.". And I'm like "Sorry.". And i got this beautiful time to commune with nature. That's what it's all about, I got to stop. And when you stop and listen, something in 2000 I was saying you've got to step back. When you get to stop and listen, your guides, the inner voice inside of you, starts to tell you what you should and shouldn't be doing. And the heart is always right. We just never either listen or we're in such a place, as I was, of go, go, go, go, go, go, go.

Aaron Kennard: Or we get distracted. It's like we can't hear it because we get ourselves so busy or something right?

Michael Sandler: Yeah. We can't or don't take the time to listen. And so I'm like, "Get me out of here. Get me off of this tour.". And more calamity happened followed. I got down to Boulder, Colorado after a 14 hour drive through a freak May snow storm. In that last talk, and Jessica was there for this talk, a woman grabbed.

Aaron Kennard: A woman grabbed what?

Michael Sandler: She grabbed me by my face, and looks me in the eyes and goes, "No more Michael! No more. Stop! Just stop.". She could see it and I have this uga bugafeeling and the goose bumps. Still got them now in my arms. She saw something coming. And we packed up from that talk, we limped the RV at that point, it had a nearly dead electrical system. We limped it out of town to bring it back to California. The next day, the transmission died on it at the top of the pass of the Grand Tetons. Which was ironic because we didn't take this other RV because the transmission had died on it. You can't escape your fate in a sense. We spent a week in a rental car back in Yellow Stone and the Grand Tetons going, "Whoo! Nature!". Having the time of our lives. Got back in the RV, and rushed our way to California so I could break myself.

Aaron Kennard: So what happened?

Michael Sandler: On the day we were returning the RV and it was last. It's always

like one last ski run, it's one last hike before we return this thing. And had just this absolutely beautiful experience out on the trails. We went up to this amazing waterfalls. It was pure snowmelt just coming straight down. And there is amazing waterhole cavern below it, which I went swimming in 3 times. Turned me blue, the color of this shirt, pretty much. Because it was 32 degree water, Just moving snowmelt. I got out of the water, freezing cold. We had me put on all of my clothes, including my leather soled moccasins which I wouldn't normally wear on slick rocky surfaces we're going to be on. But I was just so cold, we wanted to keep me as warm as possible. And we hiked down and got to about a mile from the car. And there, I'm feeling just this amazing, special closeness or connection with Jessica. And I had to stop, I called her back to me. I put my arms around her. She's been wanting kids for a while now. I said, "I love you so much. I feel like it's just about time to start our family.". And she walked off in front of me and I followed behind. I crossed a little creek bed, a couple feet wide. And I was moving slowly, just taking my time. But I stepped on this rock. I stepped in the water. Probably got water on the bottom of the moccasins. Stepped in sand, got sand on the bottom of the moccasins. And there's no rubber, it's a leather sole. And then stepped on this next rock, an angled rock. My feet flew out from beneath me. I don't understand it. I really don't have a clue how it happened. From standing height, feet out beneath me, I started one place ended in another place. Landed on a pyramid shape rock on my femur.

Aaron Kennard: The same one?

Michael Sandler: The opposite one. And I saw my upper legs stopped. From my knee up mid thigh i watched it stopped. I watched from mid thigh up through the hip, it kept going about another foot and snapped back up.

Aaron Kennard: That's crazy.

Michael Sandler: I knew in that moment what happened. And I yelled to Jessica, who was up ahead of me, "Oh no, not again!". And started to

struggle and then stopped breathing. She has gotten back up to me and it was that moment. It was decision time. I could've just closed my eyes and very peacefully gone away. The body or the brain or whatever has flipped the off switch.

Aaron Kennard: So you stopped breathing because of the trauma of it? The injury was specifically located to your leg?

Michael Sandler: It exploded the femur in a way that a skiing hospital had never seen before. It was just all pieces of bone in there. And how those pieces of bone did not hit the biggest hit the biggest artery, I have no idea. Because when the EMTs later cut my pant leg off. It didn't go through the skin but you could see all the pieces of bone. To me it looked like a lotus flower all the way around sticking into the skin.

Aaron Kennard: Like you were looking at your leg and you could just see bones sticking out all over? I mean poking the skin.

Michael Sandler: Oh Yeah. They could see it too. Because at first they were like, "Oh we're gonna move your leg.". And then when they saw it they're like, "Oh my!". So they had first the helicopter flying above to rescue me.

Aaron Kennard: So Jessica ran out to get help obviously.

Michael Sandler: She actually, being ny my side, I've made a decision I'm not gonna die. I actually said it, I'm not going to effing die. And I forced myself to start breathing again. I looked up, beautiful golden sun up above her. Actually this white shimmering ball. I kind of grabbed the sun like, "Bring it in to me.", and then send out love. Light, love. Light, love. We start breathing! Light, love! And had to start to force myself to manually breath until emergency workers got there and beyond. And it was 90 minutes before the first one showed up. And I was stuck in a really ugly position and in a snowmelt creek. so freezing.

Aaron Kennard: For 90 minutes.

Michael Sandler: Yeah and everytime I tried to move because of the bones sticking into things, the whole body would spasm.

Aaron Kennard: Oh yeah.

Michael Sandler: And so there was no moving, one way or the other. And the back

started to spasm because I was trying to hold myself precariously positioned because I couldn't move anywhere. I was just stuck. But I had a hard time trying to smile, I was in so much pain, but I knew it was a tremendous gift. And one of the people.

Aaron Kennard: One of the people what?

Michael Sandler: One of the hikers who came along later. I did manage to do a short sing-a-long, I can see clearly now, the rain is gone. It did start breaking to a little bit of laughter. I had to still force the breathing but laughing pretty good by the time the cruise get there. Because I was at this point, half here, half in the you're not here anymore. And I was just soaking in this energy of the big picture. After I started breathing again, she asked me to coach her through this. Because she's thinking I've been through this before. So she took a cellphone and she wouldn't get out of site but she climbed up on some rock or something. I don't know exactly because I couldn't see her. But she screamed like I never heard her scream before and she got hikers attention who took it up higher to call help in. She came back to my side trying to find a way pin things behind me or hold me in position. And stayed by my side for that extremely long 90 minutes until the first rescue crew got there and the second rescue crew. And then she's trying to coach them and explain to them, "Michael know what happens. This might look like a simple fracture. This is incredibly severe.". And I lost over half of my blood bleeding out internally there on the trail. And they couldn't get a blood pressure on me when they first came there. So she's letting them know, "He knows how serious this is.". Had she not been there, I wouldn't even have started breathing again. I would not be suppose to be here.

Aaron Kennard: That's intense. Through that process you still knew, right? In that moment, it was harder to smile, I can relate to that. There's time when it's so painful. Even though you still know, you can't smile. You can't do anything.

Michael Sandler: I was in focus. Just focused on the breath. Focused on the breath.

Aaron Kennard: But you still felt there was something right about this? You weren't worried about it?

Michael Sandler: I was in a panic until I started breathing again. And when the body flipped the off switch, I'm in a place of "Oh my God. This could be it.". Once I started breathing again, I knew everything was going to be alright. Everything was going to be fine. I just had to find a way to get through the pain which is unlike anything I've experienced before.

Aaron Kennard: That's intense my friend. So what happens? This has been 4 or 5 months. Now what's going on?

Michael Sandler: 4 months will be Sunday. This coming Sunday. Recovery in the hospital obviously kept the leg. Let's share the wild part first which is before the accident. Because all of the titanium parts that I've got on my otherside from seven years ago. I had got an inch leg length discrepancy and a titanium rod through the whole femur. Basically a titanium femur. And a titanium through the whole hip. Basically a titanium hip but i got to keep the ball. Plus some other associated hardware. So it was very unbalanced. After this accident.

Aaron Kennard: You're Iron Man now? You're like the titanium guy.

Michael Sandler: I have a perfectly matching titanium femur, titanium hip. Even the hoops, wire hoops to tie it all together exactly the same place. And viola, the inch leg length discrepancy is completely gone. I am perfectly matching. In fact, I am human tuning fork now.

Aaron Kennard: Some people would like to get rid of that leg discrepancy because that should help ease up running quite a bit right?

Michael Sandler: It should. The physicians assistant came in two days after the surgery. And said, "You know, I was on your website and I was surprised you already had gotten up the new x-rays on the website. Until I realised, that was from your last accident.". Basically, the doctor said there are no odds of having this exact same thing, the exact same way, and the exact same hardware. And we take that very clearly as a sign post or one deja vu moments that is trying to tell you something. And that is very clear. This was no accident. There is no way, that I could've

thrown myself down on a rock just right. Even if I wanted to, to explode the femur and just the right way that it didn't kill me, but left me with the exactly

the same hardware and exactly the same fracture spot.

Aaron Kennard: I think it just intriguing to hear how right before that happened, you just had this feeling. And you give Jessica a big hug and talk about that. It amazing how. I don't know. I t's just cool to hear that.

Michael Sandler: We're 4 months now. We'll call it day 17. It might actually be day 19. Somewhere in there that I've been back in my own two feet. Meaning off of crutches. I went from a little bit ahead of schedule, to something happened. I fell way behind schedule. It felt like my leg had refractured and yet I stayed tremendously positive. And now we are way, way. Infinitely ahead of schedule on healing to where it is dumbfounding. Because last time it was a year of pain and a year of struggle. And I still have a lot of pain that I'm dealing with and I'm still trying to figure out how to get perfectly balanced. But we're 4 months out. I have jogged up and down my porch a few time.

Aaron Kennard: You jogged already? Barefoot ofcourse.

Michael Sandler: Ofcourse. I look a 90 year old wobbling but I am doing it.

Aaron Kennard: I got to tell you when you are on that mode. I don't think I've told you my story. We don't talk much. But I don't know if you saw my story but I had this incident last fall. When I came back, when you talked about jogging. When I can run again after I thought I was going to die, like my feet literally wouldn't even pass farther than each other. It was like such a slowed small jog. I ran a 17 minute mile which means my feet would barely like getting farther than the foot behind it. And I was jogging the Bear Creek path in Boulder in December Last year. That slow, I was balling. I had tears pouring down my face because I was alive. I was taking steps and I was like in this running motion. And just picturing you runing down your porch. Was it emotional to be running again after that?

Michael Sandler: Each steps has been emotional. But each step like your tears have been, tears of pure joy. And pinche me, I can't believe I'm doing this.

Aaron Kennard: So you're running 4 months later. I mean not far yet but you've taken a few jogging steps. And you're on the path to healing yet again.

Michael Sandler: So a few things. I know I'll be as strong as I ever was before. If not, stronger. I have absolutely zero desire to prove myself or to anything at this point. It's all coming from this place of surrender, or of humbleness, of gratitude. Maybe it's not so different but it's completely different. Jessica and I, because she went through this as much as me. She's there on the trail, I might die next to her. This is an absolute life changing experience. We look back at who we were before. Like we made an indiegogo campaign liek before the tour. And we look back at what was video taped then and we look at who we are now. We're not the same people. Those people died on the trail literally. In a beautiful way so every motion, every step is coming from a very very different place now.

Aaron Kennard: And what is that place?

Michael Sandler: If you don't want to be spiritual about it you call it heart-centered.

Aaron Kennard: What is it for you? We're gonna get real here. What is it in real for Michael Sandler

Michael Sandler: We're connected. We're all connected. We couldn't be disconnected from source, from energy, from love, from God, from what makes a tree grow, from what makes a seed sprout, from what makes a flower blossom. We couldn't be disconnected from that no matter how much we try. And I get it. I have no choice but to get it. It took me a while but I get it.

Aaron Kennard: Let me read you something because what you are talking about is in the New Testament. It is one of my favorite verses of all time. And it says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors

through him that loved us. 38For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Michael Sandler: Amen.

Aaron Kennard: I love that when you are saying we're connected to God's love. However people want to see that or believe that is respected and embraced. And that's what you are coming from. Now your new book that your working on writing as we speak is, Breath Love, right? And that's seems to me the place you're coming from now. You've got in to that place where it's just you're open to love. Tell me more about that. What does that mean? Why the title, Breath Love? And what's the mission? What's the passion behind this book now?

Michael Sandler: There is a friend of ours, Sean Simmons, who put the music to our recent indiegogo campaign and he would say the mission is love. That's his line and really it is. Breath Love means so many different things and so many different directions to go with it. But in most simplistic terms, if I wasn't breathing love, if I wasn't realizing I'm connected to source, connect to God, in the moments that I was out on that trail there, I wouldn't be here now.

Aaron Kennard: I lost you for a second.

Michael Sandler: Then I started breathing love. I drew back into that connection, to that heart-space. And that is the secret to living. That heart-centered life is connecting to that love that's inside and outside and surrounding each one of us. And that love is real, It is so real. You know if you feel somebody is good that you want to be around. You can sense the love. You also know the reverse or by going that dark alley or you're not feeling the love. That's probably not where you want to go. We're all completely connected to this special thing. And so, Breath Love is the act of breathing, is both the simplest act in the world but also the most beautiful. If we didn't do it, we wouldn't be here. And by doing it, it nourishes our soul, it nourishes our mind. And if we focus it on that breath, it give us that infinite pause button. Sort of like a drop call does. To be able to step back and see the big picture. Feel the big picture. And

so in any time of difficulty, If you can focus on the breath. If you can breath in that love that keeps you alive, everything is perfect in that moment. No matter how difficult that moment may be.

Aaron Kennard: I'm stoked to read the book when you finish it. And when it comes out because every morning for me, that particular word and that exact process is what I do. For 15 to 30 minutes is a medidtaion of me focusing on my breath and that particular word. I've been doing that for this entire year. So literally, breathing

love and so I know what exactly what you're saying. And it's amazing and it's so grounding. I just do that every morning no matter what. I'm fanatical about it now because it feels so good to me. It's like if I don't do that I'm feel like I'm selling my self short. I don't want to miss that for anything. It's my favorite part of the day to be able to just stop and breath. And not thinking about anything but to kind of breath in that word and just be in that. So I can totally relate. I'm stoked to read your thoughts on it fully on that book.

Michael Sandler: You hit the nail on the head and it's very special because both of us have learned so much laying on the trail. Every step being in that place of grace since then and then having both unique and completely not unique ability to go through this together. Both Jessica and I. Which is another means of love, of this sacred connection. We're putting it all out there in this book because we've all gone through serious stuff. People in Boulder are going through really, really, really serious stuff right now. I don't want to belittle it on any level, but can be an incredibly beautiful experience in the long run. In the short run, it's a lot of pain and I wouldn't wish that on anybody. But there is so much we can learn, and gain, and grow from each of our challenging experiences if we do that. If we connect, if we draw in that breath and that love. I can only speak for my case. I am so thankful! So incredibly thankful for this accident! And to steal Jessica's words, sorry baby, "It's the best thing that ever happened to us."

Aaron Kennard: And when did you start feeling incredibly grateful for it?
Michael Sandler: The moment it happened.

Aaron Kennard: That's amazing. And you get more and more grateful for it. Because you see and know that it's all perfect. That it's all guiding you to closer to love and a feeling of joy in your life.

Michael Sandler: It's all energy and we're able to shed away more layers of that onion. And to see and feel that energy. That love.

Aaron Kennard: That's amazing. We're running overtime here of what we planned. We'll wrap up. There is no way we could cut that off. There is so much to hear there. I'm so grateful for you for sharing it, for coming on the line with me. I'm

looking forward to share this with everybody else and everybody needs to hear your perspective. Like I said, I'm super appreciative of having you here. Can you leave us Michael with just one final parting thought? What's the most important thing you learned? And you've probably told us this but let's just recap it briefly. What's the most important thing you learned from your experience about how to live truly an amazing life of joy?

Michael Sandler: Nothing else matters. None of the crap that we think is important in our lives. Except for our loved ones, except for our friends, our family, our spiritual practice. Nothing else matters. Let it go. Let it all go. That means be detached from your job, your car, your home, your anything. Your need to be here, your need to be there. Whatever it is, if you love doing it do it. If not, let's shed it because ultimately you can't take it with you. But this, this is everything this is all that we need. This is all that matters. All we have is love.

Aaron Kennard: Awesome my friend. That is so cool. Let us know briefly Michael how can people learn about your new book and get in touch with you if they want to?

Michael Sandler: They can learn about our new book on our website which is runbare.com. That is the first place. We may depending one of this airs have an indiegogo campaign still running which is helping bring in funds to get that book out. I'll give you the short url: tinyurl.com/breathelove. And if you google around the web you should be able to find it as well. But I'd go to runbare.com and on our facebook pages as well.

Aaron Kennard: And I'll put link to this on the show notes at trulyamazinglife.com/podcast. And you'll be able to see the link to this show with Michael Sandler and I'll have the links to all of his sites and his books so you can see what he's doing. Let me try to get this up as soon as I can because you're doing an indiegogo campaign where you're raising money for the marketing of spreading the message of this book.

Michael Sandler: Yeah and that actually only runs for the next three days. Aaron Kennard: It probably won't be up by then but people can still go and look

what you are doing and get in touch with you there.

Michael Sandler: And we'll have a way they can donate through our website as well to help us get going. To help this project. This project is too hard for it not to get out.

Aaron Kennard: Yeah absolutley. One final thing for me is when you come to Boulder next time, we got to go for a barefoot run. So make sure to let me know when you're in town because I know you'll be running.

Michael Sandler: Woohoo! I look forward to it. I'm wondering what the trail is going to look like. I look forward to it very very much.

Aaron Kennard: So great meeting you Michael. I'll let you go. Have a fantastic day. Michael Sandler: You too Aaron. Thanks so much.

Aaron Kennard: Alright. It's been a pleasure. See you.



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