

MAN ON FIRE PRESENTS  
**THE COMBUSTION  
CHRONICLES**

**EPISODE SEVEN  
MEAN IT DEEP**

HOST: SHAWN NASON  
CO-HOST: MATTHEW NADU  
GUEST: JUAN MUNIZ

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## EPISODE SEVEN Mean It Deep WITH JUAN MUNIZ

Las Vegas-based artist Juan Muniz wants people to know it's OK not to be OK. In his new book *I'm Not OK*, he utilizes simple, meaningful illustrations and quotations to create space for people to voice their own struggles with mental health. Shining a light on mental health, depression, and anxiety is a theme of much of his work, including his popular Ninobuni World lifestyle brand. We get disruptively raw on this week's episode as Juan shares his own struggles to understand feelings of loss and confusion and the importance of "Say it simple; mean it deep."



[ninobuniworld.com](http://ninobuniworld.com)



[@jmunizart](https://www.instagram.com/jmunizart)



[@juanmunizart](https://twitter.com/juanmunizart)



[J.Muniz](https://www.facebook.com/J.Muniz)

### THEMES & INSIGHTS

1. You have a story to tell. Don't try to fit in and do what's normal or expected. Share your unique story, even if it's just for yourself.
2. People don't need to be fixed; they need to be heard. Be proactive about mental health. Start early, having vulnerable conversations with your children and family.
3. Be brave enough to start something new that will help others. Some people might not like it, but if it helps one person, that's all that matters.

### COMBUSTION QUOTES



"I believe that art is more meant to start a conversation and that was the best part of it all. To me, creating this simplistic visual cartoon character with a deep message behind it, it'll open the doors in a kind of spoonful-of-sugar kind of way to let people just talk and spark a conversation."



"Yeah, well, sometimes, we don't even understand what's going on in our own head, but just being able to put it out there in the world and actually physically let these words out and say how we feel, that's very therapeutic and it helps a lot in itself. So, my goal from then on with everything that I do is to start a conversation and end the stigma behind the conversations of mental health."



"The only way that this is gonna move forward ... is if there are people that open up and speak up about it (mental health) and not be scared to open up and share their feelings and their emotions and their thoughts."

### RESOURCES

[I WANT YOU TO LOVE ME BOOK](#)

[NAMI SOUTHERN NEVADA](#)

[I'M NOT OK BOOK](#)

**Shawn:** Welcome to "The Combustion Chronicles" podcast, where bold leaders combined with big ideas to create game-changing disruption. I'm Shawn Nason, founder of Man on Fire, and your host for "The Combustion Chronicles." Throughout this series, we're bringing together the most unique and influential minds we could find to have honest conversations about not being okay with the status quo, blowing shit up, and working together to influence our shared future. We believe that when bold leaders ignite consumer-centric ideas with passion and grit, the result is an explosion that creates a better world for all of us. I'm here with my co-host Matthew Nadu.

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**Shawn:** On this episode, we're speaking with Juan Muniz, and his brand is Ninobuni World. Juan is a Las Vegas-based artist and uses art to raise awareness on mental health, depression and anxiety and hopes to give people struggling with these issues a voice and understanding. As well, Juan is bringing to life a new piece of art that we are partnering with him on around the first responders, so creator of art Ninobuni World, a lifestyle brand based of the idea of "say it simple and mean it deep."

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Juan is born in Tijuana, raised in San Diego, and moved to Las Vegas in 1998, where he attended The Art Institute of Las Vegas. Now, in his 30s, he went from working at a tattoo shop and peddling \$20 paintings at a monthly street fair to creating works that sell for thousands in galleries. Juan, welcome to this podcast.

[00:01:40]

**Juan:** Thank you guys so much for having me, really excited, really appreciate being here.

[00:01:45]

**Shawn:** Absolutely. Juan, you know, we started a movement this past fall called Truth Tellers about men and loneliness in men. It's another issue that I think is coming to life even now through this pandemic we're living through with Covid-19. But Juan, taking a step back from that and even your personal work, I met you a couple of years ago when we attended a gala in Las Vegas for Cure 4 The Kids. I saw your work and saw what incredible stuff you have done for them and for the industry.

[00:02:21]

So, Juan, we will probably consider you a bit of breakout artist and you were able to take your character to places that otherwise not possible for so many artists showing their work at the same sidewalk events you started in and around Las Vegas. You know, what have you found to be the differentiator for you and why has your work been able to be so disruptive in your space?

[00:02:42]

**Juan:** I mean, when I started like way over a decade ago, there was a specific kind of art that was being shown around in Vegas. And I always felt like, for the longest time, that my art kind of never fit in to what was popular at that time. But that, I mean, at the same time, I was like I have my stories and my characters that I want to create. And, I decided I just needed to just to do it for myself.

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And I started uh, I started with this little bunny character that I eventually named Felipe the Bunny. And I made it extremely personal. During that time in Las Vegas, a lot of people were not creating these like characters, and my art was always based on the cartoons, like, and the art that I kind of grew up with. And it's just a mixture of pop art, graffiti. You know, it's like pop surrealism. And even though I didn't fit any kind of mold, I was like, "You know what? I'm just gonna start creating this artwork for myself and make it extremely personal."

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And when I did my first show, I didn't know if anybody was gonna show up, if nobody was gonna show up. But honestly, it was such a big event for my first gallery show in Las Vegas and I ended up selling out my first show like here in Las Vegas. And from that moment on, it was just...I realized that even though I created something that's extremely personal, people tend to have a connection with it. Even if it might not be the same exact message that I was I trying to portray, to them, when they share their story of what they think the painting like was about, they would tell me their amazing story. I'm like, well, they're not wrong.

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Even though like it wasn't created for that specific message, I believe that art is more meant to start a conversation and that was the best part of it all. To me, creating this visually simplistic cartoon character with a deep message behind it, it'll open the doors in a kind of spoon-full-of-sugar kind of way to let people just talk and just spark a conversation.

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And I think that's something that was missing in Las Vegas. A lot of the art was, you know, it was very indifferent kind of styles. And personally, to me, they didn't share a deeper personal message and I felt that if I put my raw feelings out there throughout this art that, you know, people would tend to connect with it. And they did, like magically, it just happened. And from then on, it just kind of snowballed into this direction of the kind of artwork that I continue to do today.

[00:04:59]

**Matt:** Hey, Juan, Matt from the True Tellers here. And a quick question, when you were saying that you had this idea in your head and you know that this is your truth and this is what speaks to you, but it didn't fit the norm there. Could you tell us kind of like the first kinda affirmation

that you got, like, having your art out there and somebody really connecting with that, what that felt like?

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**Juan:** I think what it was is that... Before I created this character, I was just kinda doing little like art fairs and events here and there. And it was a gentleman who I really admire, this established artist in Las Vegas named Danny Roberts, who invited me to lunch and he said to me, he was like, "Dude, I like your artwork. It's very clean. But I don't remember anything when I leave." He's like, "Try to make it personal and try to share this message."

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At first, I thought like nobody's gonna care. Like, I'm gonna do this entire show and it's going to be so personal and nobody is gonna understand, nobody is gonna care. And I worked on the show for months and we launched it in probably the lowest months in Las Vegas, which is January. And actually landed on January 1st. And uh, I was like, "Man, nobody's gonna turn up to the show." And it became a party. It became, you know, what people used to call a happening. And then, all of a sudden, it's like people were going through the paintings and reading the titles.

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And when I started seeing the conversation between people, because in my first two shows, people didn't know what I look like. So, I would just kinda like hover around when people were looking at art and just sharing their feelings and like, "I think it means this." "I think it means that." When they saw these images, they were very cute. They were very simple, very pastel color. But they were going so deep into what they felt it meant to them. At that moment, I'm like, "Oh, man." It's like I was able to strike that nerve.

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And from that moment on, I realized that we live in a world where we get bombarded by, you know, it's like all this information constantly. And I wanted to take my artwork and almost create like a slow-mo button. You know, just take that time to see this message in front of you that resonates. You don't know where it comes from, you don't know where but it comes from a very internal place.

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My artwork has always been, you know, the message behind it is "say it simple, mean it deep." So, it's visually simplistic but it has a deeper message behind it. And my regular has always been my daughters. And I would show them drawings, I would show them these illustrations where I get these pieces, and when the kids got it, when like my daughter would understand it, and she would have an emotional reaction to this simple, like, cute drawing, I knew that it was gonna like really spark something in like adults and in people when they see it.

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And when I forced it, and my daughter would be like, "All right, I don't get it. Like, I don't understand it." and I still put it out there, people didn't understand it and people didn't get it. And my idea was like, "Okay. Well, creating something that a child can have an emotional reaction to is gonna spark even more of an emotion in adults." And from that first show, when I started seeing people have almost like a moving spiritual experience by seeing specific drawings and specific paintings, I knew that I hit something in the head. And from then on, I just continued being as raw as I can with these images. But simplifying it so much where I'm not telling people what to think but I'm just giving them a platform for them to tell me what they feel the painting is.

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**Shawn:** Yeah, speaking of some of your work, Juan. I'm actually holding in my hands your first book, "I'm Not OK." And, uh, we're partnering together with you to bring this to life in a bigger way to the health community. And I wanna read something to you and these are your words, it says, "'I'm Not OK' is a book I created with the hope of helping those who can't voice their struggles with mental health. It is a collection of illustration from my perspective along with quotes that have helped me understand my own feelings of loss and confusion when I am unable to share them with my loved ones. I hope my art can help others by opening up about their struggles with mental health. My goal is to one day break the stigma that surrounds mental health and it's issues."

[00:09:09]

So, in exploring mental health through your art, what have you learned for yourself personally and for the whole industry? And where does the profound connection come from for you?

[00:09:22]

**Juan:** You know, besides the fact that I'm diagnosed uh, with severe, uh depression and anxiety. And it's something that...it took a long time before I reached out to get help and to talk to somebody about it because in our society, it has tendency of turning mental health conversations into something that's like stigmatized and like kinda like taboo. And a lot of people don't talk about it.

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Being raised the way that I was in, you know, a Hispanic household, I was kind of like told that I couldn't talk about those things. And I was made to feel bad growing up. It was a whole feeling of I bother people. So, I grew up with that mentality and I realized that it has a very, very strong effect on people when they grow up because if you... We teach kids about, you know, physical health, about your teeth, having dental health, but we really don't focus on mental health. And we kinda teach our kids to kinda hide it or bury it or they kinda feel ashamed of it. So when we grow up, we grow up with that same feeling and that fear of the stigma behind it.

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And I went through a time in my life where it was like one of the lowest moments ever. And I actually, I had an attempted suicide. You know, I actually had the gun to my head. I pulled the trigger and the bullet jammed. And right there and then, even though I was already creating artwork, I did a specific illustration right after the bullet jammed because I have a thing about me where if I get an idea in my head, I have to like to draw it, and I have to get it out.

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So when the bullet jammed, I got an idea for a drawing and I did it. And I posted it on social media and I got a huge response, bigger than normal. And then I got an idea for another one, another one, another one. And I kept posting them and somebody mentioned, "These illustrations are different than what you've normally done before. These are very deep, and uh, but they're helping me feel like you could relate to something that I don't know how I would speak about or like something that I can't put into words. But these images really, really like hit the nail on the head." He's like, "You should do a book."

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So that my idea was like, "Okay. Let's do this collection of these drawings and illustrations." And I didn't want to create a book that talks about, you know, how to fix it. It's more of like I wanted to base my artwork, from that moment on, on just starting the conversation because I believe that's one of the hardest things to do. And society today is just starting the conversation because so many people just want to keep it to themselves. Even the people that work in the industry of mental health, they feel that they can't speak about it or they're gonna be looked at a certain way by their peers.

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So, I created this book just, you know... And I didn't hold back on it because I felt that if I did then I was doing exactly what I was trying to fight. And that is letting people know that no matter how messed up feelings or thoughts you may have during those moments of deep depression or anxiety or whatever you're struggling with, that you shouldn't be afraid to talk about them.

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So, I put all these thoughts and all these feelings in the book. And when I started releasing it and when I started talking about it, more and more people had reached out to me and be like saying, "Thank you because this is exactly how I felt but I was too scared to say anything to my loved ones or my family." Or, you know "I thought that I was the only one I thought this way," Or, "I didn't think anybody would understand." Or even looking at the drawing and saying, "I didn't know that I felt this way but this... and I still don't know how to put it into words. So, thank you because this expresses exactly how I feel."

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I've had so many parents come out to me and they bought the book and, you know, their teenage daughters or sons would, you know, look at the book and be like, "Even though I can't explain to you how I feel and what I'm going through, I could show you what this bunny is going through in this drawing right here. This is exactly how I feel."

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So, even allowing it to start that conversation, that's what this book meant to me most because that's like, again, the struggle is the silence behind it. We've lost so many friends, and family, and people that mentioned, it's like, when somebody committed suicide, they're like, "I didn't know they were depressed." And that's the biggest thing that hurts me the most is like when people don't know and people are afraid to talk about it.

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And then, some people like, "Well, they won't understand." I'm like, "Yeah, well, sometimes, we don't even understand what's going on in our own head, but just being able to put it out there in the world and actually physically let these words out and say how we feel, that's very therapeutic and like it helps a lot in itself." So, my goal from then on with everything that I do it's to start the conversation and end the stigma behind the conversations of mental health.

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**Matt:** I love that you say that because for me, the whole thing is just like creating that space for men...and especially for men because a lot of these things are stigma against men, right, that we don't want to talk about our feelings or emotions. And somehow that makes us less of a man or whatever, however we were brought up. So, I love this idea that you create this space and just whether it's looking at that book as a source of conversation or just hearing somebody like yourself telling the story, that let's all these other people out there go, "Oh, I'm not alone." Like I sit here with my thoughts and I'm going through hell internally but like there is a place for us to speak and more people than not are going through these things, which is incredible and we feel like we're so alone.

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So I love that you bring this up and that you create these conversations, especially for teenagers, who don't know how to communicate with their parents. This is very important. And looking through this book here with Shawn, it's incredible.

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Juan: Yeah, I mean, honestly, the only way that this is gonna move forward and people are gonna start speaking up and talking more about it is if there's people that open up and speak up about it and not be scared to open up and share their feelings and their emotions and their thoughts. And including, like you said, you know, men are always thought to be a certain way and just to kinda bury their feelings and their emotions. But, you know, being a single father like myself and raising two daughters... I want my kids to open up to me. I want my kids to



come to me with any issue, any struggle, any problem that they might have and not have any fear or that they're gonna be judged, that, you know, I'm gonna get mad, or that I'm not gonna understand.

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But the only way that, you know, we are able to have that relationship with not only our kids or our loved ones, or spouses or whatever is, as I like to tell people, it's kinda like a bank. You know, you can't take out money out of bank unless you deposited in it. So, how can I expect my loved ones to open up to me if I can't show that I open up to them. I can't expect my daughters to be vulnerable to me if I am not vulnerable to them.

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Yeah, it's like I want them to understand that even adults, adult men, whatever, they do suffer. They do struggle through these things. But just being able to have that space, to have that ability to allow them to open up to me, that's what's really important.

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And I realized when I really started focusing on this and I started going in that direction to where I'm like, "You know what? I'm just gonna be an open book and I'm just gonna share my feelings and my emotions. And some people might not like it, but if it helps one person, that's all it matters."

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And when I started doing that, I started getting a lot of like adult males... You know, I'm 37 years old, but I'm having like 50, 60, 70-year-old men reach out to me like, you know, in social media, like direct messages or whatever. And they open to me about their feelings about their thoughts and their insecurities. And the only reason they do that is because I'm open with them. And they don't even share these feelings and these thoughts with like the closest people around their lives but yet they're reaching out to this guy who they've never met in person but they feel a connection with me because I'm that open about it. So they could feel that they could be that open with me.

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So, my thought was like, "Okay, if I could start that and then they could start opening up, then maybe family members can open up to them. They can open up to each other, and just create an effect where it's like it becomes more humanized and it's more normal for people to speak about this thing."

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**Shawn:** Yeah. Lots of power and lots of nuggets on what you just said there, Juan, to this community. You know, our tagline is living authentically in the land of bullshit. And it sounds like, um, your kind of tired of the bullshit of the world, right? So, you actually said, "I can lock them up but I can't throw away the key." **(Juan: yep)** Right? And that what you have said is

actually, "Fuck the key. Fuck the door. Let's just put it all out." And the power that its' had, is really powerful and why I'm so excited for us to have become friends on this journey and to bring this to life.

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It's a little bit of our understanding that your main bunny character Felipe is actually based on bunnies that you drew as a kid in Mexico when your family lived in Tijuana and you commuted two hours a day, uh, to go to school in San Diego. Also, that Felipe is the name of your little brother who died at birth.

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**Juan:** Yeah, he was a stillbirth. And when I created the bunny character, when I had that artist that I admired, he was like, "Hey." Like he said, "I really like your stuff, but I don't remember anything when I walk out the gallery." He's like, "Why don't you try this? Why don't you create one character and make it extremely personal? If it works, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't." And that's when I got my first show when I created this bunny character. And like I said, I grew up, you know, watching cartoons. That's how I learned how to speak English in Mexico as I was watching Saturday morning cartoons.

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So, you know, I always like to draw bunnies and then, I wanted to create a character almost like a child in a onesie, like in a bunny onesie with a mask that has no expression but only two holes for eyes. And I didn't want to like portray like their complete emotions on their face. So, I did these paintings and illustrations. And I like seeing people looking at the bunny character be like, "He looks so sad. He looks so happy." And then, I tell them, it was like, you know, the funny part is he has no expression. And you're portraying and projecting your feelings and emotions on to it, which is a great thing. That's exactly what I wanted."

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But for the first two years, the bunny didn't have a name. And this is during the days of, like, Myspace. And I remember I asked people like what I should name the bunny. And I got hundreds and hundreds of names that people recommended. And then I realized, "You know what? I'm gonna name it after my little brother." Because the whole story... And I'm actually working right now with this local theater house and I'm gonna be doing almost like a one-man show of like the story of my life and my art and all of that stuff.

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And there's a lot of people that have talked about, you know, the bunny being named after my little brother. But, well, a lot of people don't know is that my whole thing about mental health and depression and anxiety started from that. Because when my mom, you know, she went to the hospital and was stillbirth to my brother, she actually blamed me for killing my brother. So I've lived that with my entire life because I was trying to play with her and I kicked her when

she was pregnant. And til this day, like I believe I killed my brother because she told me that at very young age.

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So, I felt so much guilt and so much hurt during that time that I spoke to him as my guardian angel. And, you know, because at the point I was youngest in the family, I was able to... I didn't have any friends. My older siblings didn't want to play with me because they're just older. So, he was my guardian angel the entire time. And then when I went off to college, he was the one that I spoke to every day.

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And when I started creating this character, I realized that I hadn't speak to him that much, but I was sharing all my thoughts and my feelings to the bunny character. So, even though it was my feelings and my emotions, I'm like, "Well, you know, what better way to kind of keep his memory going than to name his character after him."

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And because this was done such a long time ago, I always thought, "Well, you know what? It would be kind of funny that if ever this character takes off in one way or another, it'll have a Hispanic last name because you don't see that much very often in television and like on stands on like Hot Topic or at Walmart, stuff like that. You know, if ever I reach that level, that'll be kinda cool to see."

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And, you know, fast forward, over a decade later, and they sell my stuff in Hot Topic and there's the name. And to a lot of people, especially from the Hispanic community, they'll look at it and you could see that just that little bit of pride because they don't see that very often. And now that it's sitting on the shelves in Hot Topic, to me, I was like, "Wow, we actually reached that goal. You know, and what better way to say thank you to my little brother for always being there for me when I needed him than to name this character after him."

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**Matt:** And what you bring here with this book is so incredible. And I love how you said it spans throughout older people and with younger people. And you brought up something a little bit earlier about talking with your daughters and bringing up the emotions and stuff that come up. What is that like being able to have like that communication like that special type of language to be able to draw this and be able to have them help you develop you know some of these characters as well? But still having this open dialog?

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Juan: Well, it was a thing that was like with the way that I was brought up in my family. For the longest time, I was always the black sheep. I was always just kinda like the one pushed aside. I was always in my own world and I was just drawing, drawing in my own room. And I didn't

really...I wasn't what they felt I was really connected and part of the family because I was always very independent.

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When I moved to the United States, they said I was very, very Americanized because I wanted to graduate in high school and go to college and move away. And that's just not what it was not done in our family. You know, my siblings, even though they graduated high school, they stayed there, they worked, they lived under the same roof. And I saw what the relationship I didn't have with my mom or with my dad. And that's what kinda taught me of like that's what's exactly what I don't want to be when I grow up, when I have kids.

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And it came in a place of, you know, hurt and anger. And it isn't so recently that I came to conclusion that you know my parents tried their best. And if they were to have been different people to me growing up, then I wouldn't become the man that I became today. And all I knew was that I wanted to be there for my kids and not have them be afraid to talk to me or to open up to me.

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And I don't bullshit my kids. I talk to them like people. You know, I don't ignore their feelings, I don't ignore their thoughts. But at the same time, I'm still there to be a parent to discipline them. But it's not that difficult when you have an honest conversation and you have an honest relationship with your kids.

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And, you know, my oldest daughter, you know, she's 12 years old, she's gonna be 13. My youngest daughter, she just turned 7. And they know that they can open up and talk to me about everything. And they have. And it's because of that that I have that relationship towards like, "Yeah, I'm their dad. But they're also my best critics and my best friends." And I do everything for them and they know it and they see it.

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And I just want to give them the cheap coats as much as I can in life. You know, I want them to learn. I want them to go through their own struggles, and to learn their own lessons. But if I could help them along, you know, kinda guiding them. And, like every parent, you know, you want to help them and so they don't make the same mistakes as you do. But I want to be completely honest with them and help them in the way that I didn't get help growing up.

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So, you know, we all want to do better for our children, you know, than our parents did for us. But at that point, I just want to be able to make sure that they grow up to be good people. And the only way that I could do that is by setting an example and not just telling them to do it.

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**Shawn:** Yeah, not to leave this, but, Juan, with what's been happening in our world today. You are also inspired to, to take on another big challenge. And again, with our connections to Cure 4 The Kids, and meeting your niece, and the tragedy that happened in that space in your life, you've been inspired to take on a new project. I'd love for you to talk about what that project looks and how that was birthed through so much of what happened during, you know, Cure 4 The Kids and everything in that experience.

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**Juan:** Well, it was, um, my niece, she passed away this February. She's been battling cancer for three years. And, um, it got to the point where, like, in the middle of February, she just, her body just kinda gave up. And it was a hard time. During that time, I... The past three years of my life have been a roller coaster from the lowest lows to the highest high, back to the lowest low, back to the highest high.

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And now, I'm like, in the past six months, I've been on this new trajectory of like, "Okay, let's pick ourselves up again and let's keep moving forward." Because I just don't have it in me to like stay down and being with my niece, you know, her last few days, and seeing the strength and the love that she had, I remember just being completely lost when she passed away. And then, literally days after that, some of the biggest like jobs and contracts came my way. And I again I felt like her passing then she became almost like a guardian angel again. Like her and my little brother was looking out for me.

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And then, right when everything was, you know, about to just blow up in an insane way that was gonna change my life, and this constantly keeps happening where it's like, giant things happen and then they come crumbling down. In this instance, when it happened, I wasn't alone, you know, because everything shut down as soon as, you know, the pandemic hit. And I lost all the jobs and I lost all the gigs. And I'm sitting there. And instead of falling into my usual hole of like depression and all that stuff, I kind of just took a hold of myself and really took inventory of my feelings and my thoughts. And I started seeing what was going on in the world. And the one thing I've always done to try to give back is the only thing that I've been doing my entire life and that's creating artwork.

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So, I started focusing on the people that were going out there that are keeping, you know, the world going when we were all going through this. And we still are. But, you know, the essential workers and with everybody going out there. I have a lot of friends that are, you know, they're nurses, or, you know, they're police officers, and just seeing them going out there on a daily basis and putting their life on the line, I wanted to create something.

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So, I came up with the idea of, you know, doing a book where even if it's just for children, even if it's for the moment in time where it's like allowing these kids to see the people that are going out there. So, I created these characters, these anthropomorphic like little cartoon animal characters and you know, I made them a nurse, I made them a doctor, the truck drivers. And I was like, "Okay. Let's do this book full of illustrations."

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Not only that, because during that time I was also giving away free coloring book pages to kids, you know, to pass the time during, you know, the quarantine, and I'm like I want to illustrate half of this books with like, all these essential like jobs. And then the other half, I wanted to be able to create it so they could color it into and so they're not just looking at it, but, you know, they go in there and they color them as well. And the last page on the book was almost like a silhouette and I wanted the kids to draw who was essential to them.

[00:28:34]

Like, because, and the list that was released by the U.S. government of what essential jobs are, there's about 1200 different job titles. So, of course, I can't put 1200, you know, different jobs in this book. So, this is what I consider to be like all-in-one and taking like 20-different like what the essential jobs that are out there and then having them color it in. And in the last page, because I didn't want them to feel like left out or limited to just the characters in the book, I'm like, take the time right here and create something who is essential to you? Because even though the people that are at home, the people who can't go to work, just because they're not considered "essential" doesn't mean that they're not essential to their family. And everybody is essential to somebody else.

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And that's why the last page was kind of like do-it-yourself, DIY thing just to create this book to again not forget the people that were going out there, you know, putting their life on the line for us just to make us have somewhat of normal life. And that's where the idea of "Essential Heroes," the book, came out.

[00:29:33]

**Shawn:** Yeah, I'm so excited to be partnering with you. And we're gonna get that out soon, very soon, right? And that my daughter, just two weekends ago, on a rainy day, she saw me looking at the proof of the book that you'd send over to me. She's like, "Hey, daddy, can you print some of those out?" And it was pretty cool to see her sit there and color those things as they had come to life to you.

[00:29:59]

So, thank you immensely for your positive attitude and what you're doing to change so many issues that people don't want to talk about but just getting real with us.

[00:30:10]

**Matt:** And just saying that and just being real, I was thinking about like, and I'm not a father yet, but I can't wait to have a family. And I was thinking about like how amazing it's gonna be that I can like sit down with my kids at night, read them a book and it's one of your books. And we don't even have to... Like these things won't be even like an issue as they hit their teens because we have emotional intelligence that like they learn that from the get-go. And they learn how to just speak and communicate the way that like humans are supposed to. So that brings me a lot of joy, man.

[00:30:42]

**Juan:** I mean, honestly, I have so many ideas of what I want to do. You know, I'm launching my brand based on all those artwork. And it's the idea of, just like as that sparking the conversation. It doesn't have to be completely deep, just planting that seed that, you know, we could have this communication.

[00:31:01]

And besides the "I'm not OK" book and besides the "Essential Heroes" book, I'm actually talking with this group of people because... I'm actually on the board of directors for NAMI, the National Alliance for Mental Illness, and with one of the people from NAMI, I'm actually partnering up to write a children's book that's specifically be there for children. And it talks about their feelings and their emotions on how they're able to take control of them because their feelings and emotions are theirs and they're not completely helpless against it.

[00:31:32]

You know, just starting them young to talk about how to have a positive mental health and how to care of it, just like we teach them to brush their teeth, just like we teach them, you know, to eat healthy, this is just another aspect of taking care of yourself. And I feel that if we focus on that with children at a young age and kind of instill it in them to look at the positive things to take care of themselves, in a healthy way, for their mental aspect. Then, it's gonna put them in a good position to move forward and as a... We shouldn't have to wait till we are like in our 30s, 40s, 50s to realize that we're fucked up and we need to go get help.

[00:32:12]

It's like, "Why do we have to completely be that messed up before we start focusing on our mental health?" We're not going to wait until all of our teeth completely fall out before we go to the dentist. You know, we take care of it before hand. So, it's something that I feel is very important that we need to start them young and we need to start teaching them that it's okay to speak about their feelings and their emotions, and, healthy mechanisms on how to take care of their feelings, when they're, you know, when they're hurting or when they're upset or when they're sad, you know.

[00:32:38]

So, that's what this next book that I want to create is for children, hopefully get into the hands of schools, of therapists, or whoever we can to just help them, guide them in the right direction to have a positive like outlook and a positive coping mechanism to deal with their health problems, if they have any.

[00:32:53]

**Shawn:** Well, thank you so much, Juan for sharing your story and journey with us, and excited to be on part of it with you and see what happens. So, before we wrap up here, Juan, we have three questions called the combustion questions that we'd like to ask you. And, uh, some of them are fun, some of them are just some information. So, combustion question number one, what would be the ideal way to spend the weekend?

[00:33:22]

**Juan:** To me, the ideal way to spend the weekend is, right now, especially during the quarantine, I spend it with my family. I spend it with my daughters. Speaking with them, talking with them, I tend to learn more about myself and how to become a better person with them. So, making memories is the most important thing to me. And making memories with my kids to me is the most important part because we're never gonna have this time again. So that's the best way for me to spend the weekend.

[00:33:46]

**Shawn:** Awesome. Love that. Question number two, what's your favorite Disney movie or song?

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**Juan:** I'm a huge, massive Disney freak, like extremely, massive Disney freak. And um, it's hard to pick just one. But right now, the one that I'm completely addicted to would be "Coco" and "Remember Me" would be one of the main ones because there was a time when "Coco" came out that my kids were actually not living with me and they are in a different state. And that song "Remember Me" came on and that just meant so much more to me because of what I was going through of my life.

[00:34:19]

**Shawn:** Remind me, Juan, I'll send you a video of my son. Colby, who, you know, has autism, where he sings that to my wife and grabs her face close, so...(Shawn chuckles).

[00:34:31]

**Juan:** That's awesome.

[00:34:31]

**Shawn:** Yeah, had to get another tear in my eye there today, Juan. So, thanks for that one. Okay the last one, and this is gonna take a lot of thinking for you here, Juan. What do you think about umbrellas?



[00:34:45]

**Juan:** You know it actually... I had this conversation with somebody yesterday and they actually reached out to me about mental health and they were talking about, you know, it's like, "Sometimes, you have to like ride the wave or handle the storm." And I was like, you know, "How do we handle the storm when your umbrella falls away or flies away or gets destroyed?" And I actually told her this, I was like, "Well, I feel that personally, when you feel the storm is too much where your umbrella that you're holding on to kinda flies away, then you kinda need to learn to become your own umbrella and take care of yourself and protect yourself. Because, at the end of the day, that's who's gonna take care of you the most. You become your own umbrella."

[00:35:24]

**Shawn:** Wow, we'll end on that one. There's nothing else to ask. Juan, thank you again. Thank you for um, spending your time with us. And again, we look forward to where you're flying to in this journey. So, stay safe and be well there in Vegas. And, um, I hope to see you real soon, brother.

[00:35:43]

**Juan:** Definitely, thank you, guys so much for having me.

[00:35:45]

**Matt:** Yeah, it was a real pleasure.

[00:35:47]

**Shawn:** Bye.

**Shawn:** Thank you so much for listening to this episode of "The Combustion Chronicles." None of this is possible without you the listener. If you'd like to keep the conversation going, look up Man on Fire on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and at [manonfire.co](http://manonfire.co). Give us a shout. Let us know what you think. And please, subscribe, rate, and review if you like what we're doing and if you don't do it anyways. And remember, always stay safe and be well.