

Harper Talks: The Harper Alumni Podcast

Episode 5: Greg Cadichon

[00:00:11.590] - Brian Shelton, Host

I'm excited to speak with 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award winner Greg Cadichon. Greg is no stranger to adversity. He grew up on the south side of Chicago and his plans for the military were dashed by vision problems. And that's when his mother suggested Harper College. While training for a National Junior College Athletic Association track meet, Greg injured his hamstring and that injury led Greg to his profession. Greg Cadichon is the founder of Rebound Fitness and Rehabilitation. Greg joined me for the Harper Talks podcast over Zoom.

[00:00:48.580] - Brian Shelton, Host

Hey, thanks for being here, Greg. How's it going today?

[00:00:50.860] - Greg Cadichon

It's going well. It's going well. Can't complain.

[00:00:53.470] - Brian Shelton, Host

Can't complain. A little cold cold February day when we're recording this podcast here, so hopefully it'll be warm soon.

[00:01:01.210] - Greg Cadichon

We've got roughly six more weeks of this left.

[00:01:06.400] - Brian Shelton, Host

So I read in your bio that you're born and you grew up on the south side of Chicago. And I was curious, how did you get to Harper College from there? How did that work out?

[00:01:15.700] - Greg Cadichon

Well, my parents were divorced when I was in seventh or eighth grade, actually seventh grade. My dad died, I was lived with my dad. So after he passed away, I moved from South Side to live with my mom in Evanston. And then we subsequently we migrated from Evanston to Buffalo Grove. And I did not have the best grades, so I had to go to Harper to get my grades up.

[00:01:40.720] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's a pretty common story with a lot of our students. I hear that a lot. You know, I came to Harper because I wasn't the best high school student. And we know from our data that most community college students, when they graduate from Harper and then transfer to their four year school, wind up having a higher GPA and doing better than the students who started the four year school. So.

[00:01:59.170] - Brian Shelton, Host

So you did the right thing?

[00:02:00.220] - Greg Cadichon

I did. That's why I tried to get my son to do. I really do say I did the right thing.

[00:02:04.510] - Greg Cadichon

I got more out of Harper in the two years that I was there than four years in high school.

[00:02:08.530] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's great. So when I talk to our alumni, I'm always curious what Harper College was like when they were there as a student. What can you tell me about Harper during your time?

[00:02:18.430] - Greg Cadichon

Wow, it's a long time ago. I got to dig back. Well, during my time, you know, I had a couple of friends that went there. And the nice thing I remember is. My favorite part is doing study groups and instead of hanging out and partying all the time. We would actually do our study groups and then go out and have pizza and beer. And that's what really helped me get through the next phase of my life to learn to get my work done and then go socialize. And I still practice that I, I have focus issues. So if I'm with someone, I'll be more apt to focus. And I learned that while I was at Harper, focused with my peers and then going to play afterwards.

[00:03:00.310] - Brian Shelton, Host

So how did you come across a peer group at Harper? What kind of activities were you involved in there to do that?

[00:03:06.310] - Greg Cadichon

Well, was one of my neighbors who was a dear friend of mine. He was there and we took a class, I think was Psych 101. And I remember liking the professor putting us in groups to work on projects and did that

really well. I was getting A's I used to get Ds in high school on a good on a good semester. I'd get a C on something. And working with the peer group really motivated and stimulated me to focus because I didn't wanna let my peers down. So that one class led me to do the same in my math class, English class. I'm a personable person so I could approach people. Hey, you want to study every now and if it's a female, she will think I'm trying to hit on her. But no, I'm really trying to get a group together here. But I did that even when I left Harper, I got I went to Illinois State and I still did that. I sought out people who were looking to study groups. That's what I use as the foundation to get the material inside my head.

[00:04:12.460] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's fantastic. Yeah, I think so many of our students there just well, and especially right now, while we're pretty much doing everything online, you know, they're stuck at home and they don't have people to interact with. And even when they are on campus, there's a hesitancy to reach out to other classmates and say, hey, you want to get together and go over this material and the students are really missing out on an opportunity there to better themselves. And I think that activities on campus, you know, we have so many wonderful student involvement organizations at the college and athletics and that sort of thing where people can get involved and get to know people. It's certainly an opportunity to do better while you're there.

[00:04:49.760] - Greg Cadichon

It's interesting that you say that. Some of those people in my study course are my friends to this day. Thirty five years later, it's been it's really how I learn. My attention span is about ten minutes. However, working with someone or a group of people, you know, they gave me my assignment and I'm working hard not to let them down. And then we go. We teach each other. And before you know it, I was getting As.

[00:05:15.730] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's great. Was it hard when you were a student in Harper? Did you find the classes difficult? It sounds like maybe you did.

[00:05:21.850] - Greg Cadichon

Yeah, some of them were. I am not the strongest math person, but I did get a B in math. I recall that. I was shocked. I couldn't believe it. But it I think it was.... I want to say calculus. I can't remember. It was one of those more difficult classes I needed as a prerequisite for another course. And I did it. I worked with the tutors at Harper and I worked with some of my peers on getting and they gave me a little formulas to do. And from then on, I feel like I can do work at any university because that's my technique, is what Harper taught me, is ... the Psych 101 class was most beneficial because it gave me the tools to approach other people and say, hey, it allowed me to find what my strengths are and how I learn. And that's been lifelong for me now. And, you know, to add to that, if I could if I may, I work overseas and I

work with people online, I've got a group of about 20 people work regularly and we've got projects that are put together and we meet just like we did at Harper. And in college we put together groups. I have my assignment, they have their assignment and we come up with a great product because everyone's responsible for their part. And I'm still using those same habits that I got there even in my work life today.

[00:06:41.350] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's great. There's a central study. Habits turn into your business habits, right?

[00:06:44.710] - Greg Cadichon

That's correct. Yes, that's correct.

[00:06:46.570] - Brian Shelton, Host

So what did you do after Harper? What was the next step for you?

[00:06:49.810] - Greg Cadichon

I went to Illinois State University and I when I got to Harper and I'm embarrassed to say this, but I'm actually proud of it now. I got to Harper and my high school GPA was 1.97. I left Harper at 3.5. And I went on to Illinois State and I graduated with 3.9.

[00:07:07.990] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's great.

[00:07:08.680] - Greg Cadichon

And it got better from there.

[00:07:10.510] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yeah. I tell my students all the time, my first semester of college, I finished with a point nine seven GPA. But, you know, I graduated. I got a master's degree. I'm a professor. It's cool. You'll be fine.

[00:07:22.540] - Greg Cadichon

It's cool. You know, I just had to find my way of learning and find my passion. I found sports medicine and I was able to find a way to learn things. Sometimes I get frustrated or I wish I knew this when I was 10 years old, that would have made my life a lot easier in high school.

[00:07:41.930] - Brian Shelton, Host

Right. So speaking of sports medicine, I read in your bio that you were on the track team at Harper when you were a student and you were injured. And that's what led to your career, right?

[00:07:54.410] - Greg Cadichon

That's correct. Originally, I wanted to... I have the gift of gab. Some people think I'm funny and some people think I'm not. I think I'm funny, but so I want to be a disc jockey. Tom Joyner and Doug Banks were my heroes. I just loved how they did it, having a good time and some of the disc jockey. But I found out there's no money in it and it takes a lot of work. And I didn't grow up with the business with the blessings of being financially secure. So I said, now, want do that on a track team. I remember we had a good meet and I was running very well and I tore my hamstring and I was impressed with how the athletic trainers were taking care of me. I didn't know what it was and I starting asking them... I thought they were doctors or physical therapist, and they said no, we're athletic trainers. And then I started asking what classes to take. I took one at Harper. Anatomy and Physiology aced it. Went on to Illinois State, majored in it. It was a struggle because the material was a little bit more challenging. But I used the skills of studying with people and using tutors, and I was able to get the grades that I need. And when I got out, I was also surprised that athletic trainers don't necessarily make that much. So I willed myself to figure out how to do a business. So I turned into a business.

[00:09:18.770] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yes, I was going to ask you about that. My next question was, how did you get from school to starting your own business? And you're talking about that. And I'm curious, did you always have the entrepreneurial spirit to to start your own thing? Is that or is it something that happened to you, as you're saying, or out of necessity? And how did that work out for you? How did that happen? Starting your own business is a daunting task.

[00:09:42.500] - Greg Cadichon

All of the above and by accident. (laughs) All of the above and by accident. That's the best way to describe it. Well, you know, my first business, my first taste of entrepreneurship is when I was I was in seventh grade and I remember I used to have.... I used to be a messenger. I was it was a cold day in Chicago. And I was waiting for the bus and I was in front of a military recruiting station. The one of the Marines said, hey, come in here, kid. Its too cold. You don't have a coat on? And he said, by the way, can you run across the street and give me a cup of coffee? I ran across the street, got a cup of coffee, and he he gave me fifty cents. Well, this is 1978, so I've never had that much money before. But to me the story more interesting. They used to give me the military paraphernalia to give it to my friends. I would sell it. And before you know it, I was bringing in between 25 and 50 dollars a week. I would go every day to resupply and sell the stickers and T-shirts, the iron ons. I was like and that was the beginning of said, I want my own business. One day I didn't know what it was going to be, but I've always had that it's to have my own business. When I got injured at Harper, I didn't know that there was opportunity to do my own

business. But what frustrated me was athletic trainers don't make that much money. I saw a niche back in the early eighties, mid 80s, mid to late eighties, where a lot of people didn't have health insurance. Well, as a licensed athletic trainer, as long as I have physician supervision, I can do basic things. And people without insurance would get a script from their physician, prescription. And I didn't like well, I was working anyways. I was making ten dollars an hour, ten fifty an hour. But people were paying me fifty dollars an hour. What would you do?

[00:11:46.190] - Brian Shelton, Host

Right.

[00:11:47.210] - Greg Cadichon

It didn't take me very long to realize. I said, OK, I don't like my boss, he's not paying me very much. And the docs like me, I would ask the doc for permission to work on someone. They said, here, here's the problem. Here's the problem all the time. The stretching, the weight lifting, nothing major. And they didn't have insurance and they paid me. And within eight months I had my own business.

[00:12:10.070] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's fantastic. Love to hear that.

[00:12:12.200] - Greg Cadichon

I tripled my idea. I literally tripled my income in eight months and I never look back.

[00:12:16.700] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's fantastic. So your business is Rebound Fitness and Rehabilitation. Tell me about that.

[00:12:24.530] - Greg Cadichon

That's correct. So if you go to a fitness places. People go there to lose weight. That's not what you come to us for, a rebound, get the word? Coming back fromBack to fitness. So 90 percent of our clients are coming back from surgery, from any muscular deficiencies, neuromuscular problems. We've got three physical therapists and 10 athletic trainers and a doctor on staff, and we still cater to the people who don't have adequate insurance and provide them with the affordable cost. And that's our business model. We do have roughly 10 percent who want to lose weight, but they're coming to us because they need the medical supervision. They want to lose weight because they've got cardiac issues, renal issues, and they need supervision. So it's not a traditional place to come in. I'm 50 pounds overweight. What exercise do I do? That's not how it works.

[00:13:19.800] - Brian Shelton, Host

So you also work with I understand the Stevenson High School athletic teams.

[00:13:24.210] - Greg Cadichon

That's correct. A couple of years ago, I was given the I was honored with the contract to handle all the sports medicine. So our business model there is there's roughly 2200 athletes out of 4500 kids. We provide physical therapy, underpayments, and all of the sports medicine needs is what we take care of for them. So if you notice, if you watch sports, somebody gets hurt. You have to run out there. Those are my people working with them. They have their own head athletic trainer. But we provide ancillary support. We handle all the sports medicine issues, game preparation, preparation, physical therapy and the rehab right on campus.

[00:14:05.980] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's a big responsibility.

[00:14:07.380] - Greg Cadichon

I used to have hair down here now its gone. (laughs)

[00:14:14.460] - Brian Shelton, Host

So I know the feeling. Right.

[00:14:17.430] - Greg Cadichon

So it's just, you know, it's just cascaded from there. I see an opportunity and I go for it. That's the entrepreneurial part of me. What I'm good at is identifying muscular deficiencies and issues. And we have a team to put that back together. And I'll be able to duplicate that. We had a small university that went out of business, but we did a great job there, too. And sports medicine is our niche.

[00:14:42.270] - Brian Shelton, Host

I know you do work with an organization called the HEAR Foundation. Can you tell me about that? What do you do with that group?

[00:14:47.180] - Greg Cadichon

Oh, it's a great foundation. You know, I what I do is that they're just phenomenal. Foundation is a scholarship foundation that provides usually low income, first generation high school kids going to college that show promise. And they're giving twenty thousand dollar scholarships to that. We do about thirty kids

a year. And my part that helped raise the money and we scout the students. And I'm also a mentor while I'm there. So I had two kids that I work with and oftentimes there's not a dad in the home when there's some difficulties at home.

[00:15:28.980] - Greg Cadichon

And they use me not only to help them raise money, but figure out problems and work through issues. I tend to get the African-American males because they're similar to my background and they want to have their own business. They want to grow and I have to with decision making because a lot of times they don't have the best skills of making the best decisions. I have three of them, the one currently he just finished his the and then another one. I just have a young man. I worked with him, father was incarcerated and he's gone to and Ivy league law school and I one I work with currently. He was a valedictorian and he's struggling, Dad is not around. I'm not I don't pretend to be dad, but I'm just that male figure that they can reach out to and say, hey, I'm having a hard time with this class in our time with physics. And physics was one of my better classes, but only because I've worked with tutors and I gave him some of my techniques, exactly what I use at Harper. I said here, here's what had helped me with the more difficult classes. Do you have friends as well? I do, but we're all virtual, I think. Can you ask the professor if you can start a virtual. Group, is it the fact that they've done that he was getting he started out getting a C in the D? This is a Valentine that was traumatizing for him. Those same techniques worked. And now he said he finished the semester. He got it did get a B plus in the physics class. So those are the things I use my own experiences to help them progress in life.

[00:17:12.060] - Brian Shelton, Host

Well, I have to ask Greg, you know, you've got a business that you're running. You've got employees that you've got to mentor. You've got two kids, one in college, one in high school. Your plate is rather full. So what drives you to work with these students and these folks in the HEAR Foundation? What's the root cause of that?

[00:17:31.350] - Greg Cadichon

I have never been asked that question before. Let me think about that. What drives me is I remember how difficult it was for me. My father, my own father passed away when I was 14 years old and my mom worked really hard. She a strong woman that helped push us. I can say she's one of my role models because no matter how hard things were, she kept pushing. I've always had that desire to help other people. I really I'm a sensitive guy. I don't like to see people suffer. If I can help you, I will. And. I think that's the best answer I have. I really take pride and I enjoy helping someone come from a low point to a high point. My two kids, I mentor them. I'm great at compartmentalizing. I take naps every day to keep the energy going. One of the nice things about being my own boss, it's I take two hour lunches daily, but no one knows. My day starts at six o'clock in the morning. So if I stop, I don't at 1:00 and come back at 3:00. That's OK, because I'm going to work for eight or nine o'clock at night.

[00:18:37.670] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yeah, it's funny that you say that my kid, every once in a while she'll say to me, Dad, did you work today? And I'm like, Yeah, I got up at 4:00 and worked for four hours before you got out of bed, you know.

[00:18:48.570] - Greg Cadichon

Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. I'm up by five thirty, six o'clock every day. And I remember the old military ad. We do more by nine o'clock than you do all day.

[00:19:00.090] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yep. I'm the same way. I've always been a morning person. I like to tackle everything before anybody else is up. I like to get it done. So.

[00:19:06.300] - Greg Cadichon

Exactly. I'm wide awake, the house is quiet. I get a lot of things done between six and eight thirty in the morning.

[00:19:13.470] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yeah. So I was reading up about you and there's a quote from you and one of the pieces from the Harper College Foundation. I'm going to read it to you. OK?

[00:19:24.090] - Greg Cadichon

OK.

[00:19:24.900] - Brian Shelton, Host

You might remember this. You might not.

[00:19:26.400] - Greg Cadichon

OK, ok.

[00:19:27.990] - Brian Shelton, Host

You said quote, "It's supposed to be hard. You have to work at it. Money is not necessarily what makes life easier. Experiences make life easier. That's what I've learned." You still feel that way?

[00:19:44.730] - Greg Cadichon

I still feel that way. I still feel that way. You know, I'm I have several of my clients. I know a lot of wealthy people, and I tend to be happier. And I've noticed that, yes, they can buy more things, but I could do more things. So you take your pick. Money doesn't make you happier. There is a saying you've heard of is ..More money, more problems. Well, that applies to me, too. I'm doing a little better financially now, but I've got fourteen, fifteen employees. I've got two kids in college and it's especially with COVID. It's if you didn't have so much you wouldn't need so much. That means you wouldn't have any problems.

[00:20:26.490] - Brian Shelton, Host

Right.

[00:20:27.870] - Greg Cadichon

So I still feel that one.

[00:20:30.030] - Brian Shelton, Host

More money, more problems.

[00:20:30.840] - Greg Cadichon

More money, more problems. And it's nice to have the money to be able to fix it. But you lose your hair, you lose sleep, and it's definitely stressful. So I don't really focus on money. You know, going back to the question you asked earlier, what motivates me to help other people? It's not the money. I get more joy from helping someone that's in a difficult situation. That was similar to what I had to go through in life, that's more a stimulating to me than making more money.

[00:21:01.000] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's great. We need more people like you, Greg. Hey, so as we've gone through all this, I was thinking just talking to you, I can tell you're a natural born mentor. You're a natural born teacher. I can tell that you like to give back. I'm curious, what advice would you have for Harper College students who are either just starting out or maybe they're about to graduate? What's the key advice that you would give them?

[00:21:26.460] - Greg Cadichon

The number one thing I tell my kids, I tell them I could never give up and back to my quote. It's supposed to be hard. Difficulty is part of the journey. Every new step is a new opportunity to learn something. What I mean by that, it's OK to fail. Failure is not a bad thing when you fail that chance to learn something you didn't know. If you think you know everything, you will never learn anything. So embrace your failures, work at it and do better next time. Understand what you did wrong and try something different. Never stop trying because I've had people look at me and say, well, you've got this business, you're doing this. I've I have many, many things I was so sure I was going to work out. Did not. I try something a little different,

tweak a little bit and it moves on. And I was like a failure is my friend and I put aside the fact that I failed or I didn't know. We all don't know something. You should have things you don't know, correct?

[00:22:22.720] - Greg Cadichon

That's right.

[00:22:24.700] - Brian Shelton, Host

OK, so that's why I say never give up and don't be afraid to fail. That's a chance to learn something new.

[00:22:31.360] - Brian Shelton, Host

Yeah, I think that's great advice. And I and I have to say, I have this conversation with students all the time that because they sometimes will get upset or defensive when you are academically critical of some work that they've done or a project that they're working on, especially when you work in the creative fields. Right. Because they take it so personally. But no one gets better by being told they're great. I mean, it's good to hear that you're great, right? It makes you feel good. Right.

[00:22:56.830] - Greg Cadichon

But that's correct.

[00:22:57.910] - Brian Shelton, Host

You improve when someone talks to you about where it is that you can improve if it's done in a constructive and professional manner. Right.

[00:23:05.500] - Greg Cadichon

The person that cares about me the most is the person that's going to tell me exactly like it is. Not like I want to hear it.

[00:23:11.120] - Brian Shelton, Host

That's right. Well, Greg, I absolutely enjoyed talking to you today. This has been fantastic. You're very inspirational. I'm going to take I'm going to take your words with me today, and I'm going to be positive and I'm going to reach out to my OMD scholars today who I haven't talked to this week, my one million degrees scholars that I mentor, because you're making me realize that I've been a bad mentor. So I'm going to reach out to them this week. So I appreciate your motivation.

[00:23:36.580] - Greg Cadichon

Yes. I appreciate talking to you also.

[00:23:38.920] - Brian Shelton, Host

All right. Take care.

[00:23:39.910] - Greg Cadichon

OK, all right. Be good. Have a good day.

[00:23:41.590] - Brian Shelton, Host

Seemingly every time we finish recording an interview for Harper Talks, my guest tells me a great story after I press stop on the record button. Same thing happened here with Greg, but I got him to talk about his work in China.

[00:23:56.830] - Greg Cadichon

About ten years ago I was on a different trip and I realized, to China I should say, and I realized they don't have physical therapy in sports medicine like we have it here. And this is my passion. I love fixing people. And I got to talking to one of my counterparts. He also is an athletic trainer. And he was telling me what how they do things. And I said, no, that's how we do things. And I said, help me organize a lecture circuit over in Taiwan or in China. And within a year we went there. We were teaching them how we in the US practice sports medicine. And our first time out, we had about 100 hundred attendees and subsequently we graduated to over three hundred, and now we're doing online courses, teaching them how we practice sports medicine, injury recovery, injury management or injury avoidance. And that's worked out really well. So we're starting an online course to certify them to do things that we do. And alot of them speak English. But they give us people how to speak the language. Well, they have we have interpreters that simultaneously will interpret as I speak and they'll email me questions and scenarios and myself and the doc, we can answer them back. And it's been working really well for us. You know, they say. Do something you love and you never work a day in your life. When I'm when I'm in front of a camera teaching anywhere between 50 and 500 kids that are in China and China through the WebEx. It's an hour goes by in like 15 minutes. I have that good of a time with it.

[00:25:40.680] - Brian Shelton, Host

Greg Cadichon is the founder of Rebound Fitness and a 2019 Harper College Distinguished Alumni. You can learn more about his work at ReboundFitness.com. Harper Talks is a co-production of Harper College Alumni Relations and WHCM Harper Radio. Our show is produced by Shannon Hynes. Our technical producer is Eric Bonilla Sanchez. Our theme music was created by Aidan Cashman. I'm Brian Shelton.

[00:26:08.100]

Thanks for listening.