

[00:00:00] **Stephen Calabria:** From the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, this is Road to Resilience, a podcast about facing adversity. I'm your host, Stephen Calabria, the director of Mount Sinai's podcasting. On this episode, and in honor of June being Men's Health Month, we welcome James Kelly, a professional chef from New York City.

[00:00:18] Mr. Kelly was one of the volunteers on 9-11 who raced to Ground Zero to distribute food to first responders. In 2007, James appeared on Season 4 of the hit TV show Iron Chef as a sous chef alongside his brother, chef Peter Kelly.

[00:00:33] The pair faced off against the legendary Iron Chef Bobby Flay in the cook off. Then, over a decade later, James received a devastating, life threatening-diagnosis, stemming from his work at Ground Zero.

[00:00:45] In both his professional and personal life, Mr. Kelly has been an inspiration to those having to battle against long odds, and is a living example of resilience through hardship. We're honored to have James Kelly on the show.

[00:00:57]

[00:00:58] **Stephen Calabria:** Mr. James Kelly, welcome to Road to Resilience.

[00:01:01] **James Kelly:** Thanks for having me, Steve. It's a pleasure to be here.

[00:01:04] **Stephen Calabria:** To kick things off, your career is largely as a maker of food. You come from a family of several children, is that right?

[00:01:13] **James Kelly:** I am the youngest of twelve.

[00:01:14] **Stephen Calabria:** The youngest of twelve. Okay, and was it in your family, kind of, atmosphere that you first learned, uh, or, no?

[00:01:22] **James Kelly:** No, no, no. It was, my mom couldn't boil water really? I love, she was phenomenal woman, but one of her skills was not cooking. So, you know, we kind of figured it out.

[00:01:35] A couple of us did. So, we didn't know it was, it was not in the, in the family. It's, it wasn't a family business or anything like that. My two brothers, Peter, who owns the Xavier's restaurant group, and Ned, who is the

director of service for the restaurants, he has an antique store and things like that.

[00:01:53] When we were younger, we used to play a restaurant and my brother, Paul, and I would sit on the couch and they would come in and take our order and the menu usually had peanut butter and jelly, or a peanut butter sandwich, or a jelly sandwich.

[00:02:07] **Stephen Calabria:** Depending what was available.

[00:02:09] **James Kelly:** Always available on toast. So it goes way back to, for the four of us, playing in the restaurant.

[00:02:16] **Stephen Calabria:** Now, in terms of resilience, there are a few professions I can think of that are more appropriate than a cook. What kinds of lessons do you learn in a kitchen that you can apply to everyday life?

[00:02:30] **James Kelly:** Well, you know, you have to have the ability to organize yourself, and really roll with the punches. Cause things change constantly. You know, you always have some issue going on.

[00:02:43] Whether it's with an employee or a customer, there's always something you have to learn to adapt to. You do need a certain amount of resilience.

[00:02:56] **Stephen Calabria:** When you became a maker of food, was there something that drew you to it that you found most rewarding?

[00:03:03] **James Kelly:** Yeah, coming from a family of 12, there was no allowance in my family. So it was probably money. If we wanted to get a new pair of jeans, then we had to find a way to get them.

[00:03:15] When we talk about resilience, I don't know if it's something that some people have naturally, or they learn it or it comes with time and age and experience. I learned from a young age that, I better learn to adapt.

[00:03:30] My father had passed very early. I was seven or eight years old, so I learned to get a little resilient then, because you have to start doing things for yourself. I mean, we all did, to some extent. So, of course, we had to find a way to make our own allowance.

[00:03:49] So, I delivered papers for years, before I was in the restaurant. And then one day my brother had asked me, he was working in a restaurant, along with my brother Ned, and I think my brother Paul was there too at the same time.

[00:04:03] At one time we were, there was four of us at this place, and, uh, he asked me if I wanted to wash dishes, be our downy guy, and I said sure. And, the rest is history.

[00:04:15] **Stephen Calabria:** Now before we move on to what happened, what's the most difficult meal for you to make usually?

[00:04:20] **James Kelly:** The most difficult? That's a good question. You know, you take everything as a challenge. And, if something doesn't go the way you planned, you can always change it.

[00:04:32] That's one of the great things about cooking. You know, if something isn't working the way you expected it to, you can just switch it around a little bit and you can change the whole presentation or the flavor.

[00:04:45] So if you have enough things in your back pocket and you've learned enough over the years, a lot of things aren't difficult. Getting a good braised meat, or, a perfectly roast chicken, these are difficult things.

[00:05:00] Everyone roasts chicken, not everyone roasts it just right. Well, exactly. And everyone has their own different ways of doing it.

[00:05:07] And you can usually take a piece from each person, or each restaurant, or wherever you're getting these ideas, or book, and make your own adaptation of it.

[00:05:17] As far as difficulty wise, I would have to say a good hollandaise sauce is a difficult sauce to make. I, just by luck and happenstance, the very first place I was at, used a ton of it, and that was one of my jobs, and it had to be perfect, and I learned at a very young age how to make it.

[00:05:38] **Stephen Calabria:** It's one of the mother sauces, right?

[00:05:40] **James Kelly:** Well, it's derivative. You can make many things out of it. You can turn it into sauce bearnaise or sauce Chiron, all different miso hollandaise, you can add all different flavorings to it, whatever you'd like.

[00:05:52] But it's the emulsification of butter and eggs that's the difficult part and getting it just to the right consistency where it will hold and stay all through service and not separate and break, and then you have problems.

[00:06:07] **Stephen Calabria:** Yes, right. So, you were living here in New York on September 11th, 2001. The towers fell, and you decided you had to help how you could. Is that right?

[00:06:20] **James Kelly:** Yeah, pretty much. The towers came down, and I got a call from a friend and a co worker. And he had asked me if I would be available to go down and help this little restaurant that was trying to figure out what they could do.

[00:06:36] They wanted to stay open 24 7 just for the first responders, but they had been inundated with all kinds of, they had all kinds of problems, you know, least of which is, they had no power. And the deliveries people just started sending things immediately.

[00:06:51] So, they really needed some organization and how to, what to do. And they wanted to serve these first responders immediately. They wanted to give them a place to put their feet up for a minute. And, take a bite of something.

[00:07:05] So I went down, I absolutely, you know, I live right in Whitestone. Um, so I went straight down and

[00:07:11] **Stephen Calabria:** Where is Whitestone? That's -

[00:07:12] **James Kelly:** Whitestone's, it's just right over the Whitestone Bridge. About 20 minutes from, ground zero. It's in Queens. So, I went down, and as I said before, you know, I just did what I could do.

[00:07:24] **Stephen Calabria:** How long were you there?

[00:07:25] **James Kelly:** I was there about three days. The first three days.

[00:07:29] **Stephen Calabria:** What did you make?

[00:07:30] **James Kelly:** Oh, right off the bat we set up , a sandwich station in the bar area of the restaurant. A sandwich station, you know, where they're making sandwiches and a little buffet area where we put out just about anything that we had.

[00:07:44] We always had eggs going, oatmeal, pasta, a little bit of everything, but they really sent everything, including the kitchen sink, anything that could help. So, there was always something working and there just was not enough space to cook and keep up. It was very difficult to keep up.

[00:08:04] **Stephen Calabria:** To keep up with because there were so many first responders.

[00:08:07] **James Kelly:** So many, yeah. There was just tons and tons of people.

[00:08:10] **Stephen Calabria:** And what do you recall about dealing with them? Other than that, it was so cramped.

[00:08:13] **James Kelly:** Oh, just the gratitude. The silence was deafening. There was very, very little conversation being had anywhere. Not on the street, not in the restaurant. It was very solemn, you know, it was, these firemen and first responders, all the first responders, paramedics, firemen, police officers, everyone, all this coming back, just covered in soot, just covered.

[00:08:40] To have somebody just sweeping and mopping the entire time. And it was just, it was very sad, it was very sad. A lot of determined people, they really did not hang out long. They would come, get a bite to eat, and go straight back down,

[00:08:57] **Stephen Calabria:** And food usually being a communal experience, this was more just a sustenance.

[00:09:03] **James Kelly:** It, it was, it was, I think over time, it got to be where, you know, they could sit and talk a little bit. They also wanted to give somebody else a chance to sit down. Nobody was being rushed or anything like that, but, everyone knew.

[00:09:16] They all pulled together and they took their time to go, to catch their breath, get a bite to eat. And it's just amazing. You know, just straight back to work. It was difficult. It was certainly nothing I'll ever forget.

[00:09:33] It was, the, the air was so heavy, you could cut it with a knife. It was, it was terrible. Inside and out. It didn't matter where you were.

[00:09:40] **Stephen Calabria:** Now, a few years later, you appeared on TV.

[00:09:45] **James Kelly:** I did, yeah.

[00:09:46] **Stephen Calabria:** How did that come about?

[00:09:47] **James Kelly:** I suppose you're talking about Iron Chef.

[00:09:49] **Stephen Calabria:** Iron Chef. Yeah, you were on Iron Chef.

[00:09:51] **James Kelly:** Everyone wants to talk about Iron Chef. Right. Yeah, it came about, they called and they called my brother, Peter, and asked if we'd be interested in doing the show and, especially at that time, I think you'd be an idiot if you said no.

[00:10:04] **Stephen Calabria:** Of course.

[00:10:05] **James Kelly:** You know, win, win, lose, or draw. It was then and I'm not sure where they are now, But yeah, it was the number one show for years. And, when you think about it, there's only a handful of chefs around the country that are asked to do it every year. So, it's, it's an honor to be asked.

[00:10:22] I was to be asked to be involved with it. And I was even more ecstatic when we won, which was nice.

[00:10:30] **Stephen Calabria:** What did you make?

[00:10:31] **James Kelly:** Well, we, you know, we did the five courses. But the one that really pushed us over the top, I guess, was the cowboy ribeye, which is a steak for two. It's a bone on ribeye that's marinated in brown sugar, cayenne pepper, and grilled and you serve it with green spinach and au gratin potatoes at the restaurant, but we did cowboy beans with smoked bacon.

[00:10:57] It was very, taxing. To say the least, it was taxing. Because when you think about it, you know, these Iron Chefs, they have their own staff that just work on that show.

[00:11:09] From the day we were asked, we started figuring out, well, how are we going to practice for this? And of course it was during restaurant week. So that's the busiest time of the year for the restaurants.

[00:11:21] And we're only closed one day a week. So on Mondays we would set up the kitchen as kitchen stadium. We would put all the ingredients there and blah, blah, blah, and we would practice what we were going to do.

[00:11:37] So it was difficult. It's difficult for the challenger, especially when he's running a restaurant. It's difficult. It's difficult for the Iron Chefs too, don't get me wrong. I don't take nothing away from them.

[00:11:49] **Stephen Calabria:** How is the experience different between cooking in just your regular environment, the restaurant, versus cooking on the show?

[00:11:57] **James Kelly:** It was difficult in the way that, there's a camera in your face the whole time. We were tripping over wires and things constantly. And what you see on TV is, that's it.

[00:12:08] I mean, there's one hour and if you're not done in an hour, you're done. You're toast. You know, it's a lot of pressure. And then you have Alton or someone else comes around and asks you questions and it's like, Oh, I don't have 30 seconds to answer. Right, right, right. You know, It was a great time.

[00:12:25] It was a lot of fun. We certainly didn't expect the outcome that we got. When they call, they ask if you want to do it. And of course you say yes. And then the next phone call you find out, so your, your battle is going to be against Bobby Flay. Oh, really? And it's going to be a battle of the grills.

[00:12:47] And this is in August. So it's like, oh, here's a setup. Bobby's, he's phenomenal and he's built his career on the grill. So, you already said, yes, what are you going to do, you know?

[00:13:00] So. Cool. It was just another thing you had to worry about. If we were gonna put us up against the world famous, you know, world master.

[00:13:11] **Stephen Calabria:** But the fact that you were with your brother, you were working with your brother, and do you think that you would have likely had the same outcome had you been working with somebody that you didn't know so well, and you didn't know each other so well?

[00:13:23] **James Kelly:** I don't think so. We worked well together over the years. It's been great combination. I think he might tell you something different, but they tell you ahead of time. It could be one of three different ingredients, you know, it's supposed to be, it's a surprise ingredient and it really is a surprise because they don't tell you what it is, but they have to tell you something.

[00:13:42] So they tell you it could be one of three different things. In our case it was swordfish, pork, or beef. So, because you have to make a shopping list, they allow you a 500 dollar allotment for shopping. So you submit a shopping list for all three ingredients.

[00:14:00] So, in actuality, the guest chef has to make three different menus of five courses each. So that's time consuming, and thought. So you make your three different shopping lists and you submit them and that's it. And you don't find out until that day when you're, they lift that dome, what it is.

[00:14:22] So you have to practice three different menus. You know, you have to practice all three to make sure you have the recipes down correctly, you know where all your items are, it's involved. But we did it. And we had an awful dress rehearsal. The night before we were gonna run through, we decided at some point, it's gotta be beef.

[00:14:46] We had already practiced the other two items a couple times, and the beef, and we only had maybe two weeks left. And we said, you know what, it's a gamble, but it's gotta be beef. It is Bobby Flay, it is the grill.

[00:15:00] Summertime, I don't know a lot of people that go out and buy swordfish, and do that for guests at home or whatever, but steak for sure. So, the day before, when we did our dress rehearsal, it was an absolute disaster. I mean, there's no other way to put it.

[00:15:21] **Stephen Calabria:** What happened?

[00:15:23] **James Kelly:** Just the timing was all off, but it, I think we were too nervous. I think that, , we were pretty calm, all along. But I think we just got a little bit too nervous. And it just was not, you know, I wanted to start again and do another. And Peter had said, forget it. It, it is what it is. Either we're going to do it tomorrow or not. So pack it up, let's go.

[00:15:47] And we stayed in the city, the night before. So we went, had dinner, tried to sleep. And so that was it, so the resilience kicked in at that point, and we had to trust that we were going to be resilient the next day and push through it, and overcome.

[00:16:06] And that's, resilience, you have to learn to adapt and move on from whether it's a physical situation or mental or whatever it might be.

[00:16:18] **Stephen Calabria:** So, you won. And then you, you went back to being a restaurateur.

[00:16:24] **James Kelly:** Went back to work.

[00:16:25] **Stephen Calabria:** Yeah, and

[00:16:27] **James Kelly:** Couldn't talk about it because you have to sign NDAs and all that. It took them a long time to air it.

[00:16:33] **Stephen Calabria:** And you were pent up and you were wanting to tell everybody.

[00:16:36] **James Kelly:** Well, it took them over a year, and Bobby had a book coming out, another grilling book. Yeah, I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not, but they held it up for a long time. We had luckily, a lot of different papers and magazines that were there at Kitchen Stadium were following us for a story leading up to the show.

[00:16:57] So, I think that they put a little pressure on them to, can we have a date? Well, we like to finish our articles, too. So, I think that helped getting it out and it's been out and it was great.

[00:17:08] **Stephen Calabria:** Within a few years, you started having some health problems.

[00:17:12] **James Kelly:** I did, I did. It really didn't start until I guess around 2016. I mean bad, where it was affecting work and my activity levels and things like that dropping. So, it was a long time off. Actually in 2004, I had had some issues and the doctors were doing all kinds of tests. They were looking for cancer.

[00:17:37] You know, I had, I was tired and chills and this and that, and they were being very thorough, and they found some swollen lymph nodes, and in those lymph nodes was silica, which is ground glass and, and chemicals, things like this, the things that I'm not around.

[00:17:57] So, when he found that, he was very surprised, the surgeon was, so he went through my history again with me, my work history, and, I just don't deal with anything that would cause silica to be in my lungs. And he finally asked me, he said, Were you anywhere near ground zero?

[00:18:14] I said, well, yeah, I was right there. So right after the towers came down, and he said, well, that's the answer, that's what it is. This couldn't have come from anywhere else, but I didn't have any issues. I was fine, worked like it is normal, it was 14, 15 hour days or, never an issue.

[00:18:31] I do a lot of stairs at work, never had an issue, ever, up until around 2016. And then, it started to get a little bit tough. Yeah, I would get the flu, and the flu would turn into pneumonia, and I got a bit that would turn into a lung infection, and the next thing I know, I'm in the hospital on the usual courses of steroids and all that stuff.

[00:18:55] And that came to a point where, it was probably twice a year from 2017, 16, 17, twice a year, and then it was three times a year, it just progressively got worse quickly, and then particularly in 2018, 19, it just got out of hand.

[00:19:16] I was in the hospital, I think, three or four times in 2018, and it turned out to be my lungs were in very bad shape. They were going back and forth thinking it's my heart, because I had another issue at the time that had all the same symptoms.

[00:19:36] So, they went back and forth between heart, lungs, this, and, uh, it was the lungs. So, it was shocking. It wasn't as shocking to me as I, as you would think. Because, I figured something was wrong, right? I mean, certainly there's something wrong. So, I've always kept reading and staying ahead of the game.

[00:20:00] I tried to stay just a step or two ahead, just in case, I had to figure out a way to explain things to my wife and my son, you know, but I never ever thought that I would come to a lung transplant. I would, got myself fully versed on lung volume reduction.

[00:20:18] Zephyr valves had just come out that year. I think it was 18. They were just approved. So, I had that conversation with my wife, and that was upsetting enough. So, I couldn't imagine, if I ever had to have a transplant, and guess what? I had to have a transplant.

[00:20:39] **Stephen Calabria:** You had to have a transplant.

[00:20:40] **James Kelly:** Yeah. Doctor came in and said, you have the lungs of an 80-year-old man who smoked six packs of cigarettes a day.

[00:20:47] **Stephen Calabria:** Which is not you.

[00:20:48] **James Kelly:** No, it, I'm not that old and I didn't smoke that much. But, uh, it was just. It was shocking to me. Yeah, it's gotta be kidding.

[00:21:00] **Stephen Calabria:** So, you're told that you have to have a lung transplant. And not just a lung.

[00:21:07] **James Kelly:** A double lung.

[00:21:08] **Stephen Calabria:** Double lung. How do you process that? How do you prepare for something like that?

[00:21:15] **James Kelly:** Well, you know, Stephen, like I said, I was reading constantly, tried to stay ahead of it as much as I could and get as much information as I could in case it ever came to lung volume reduction.

[00:21:27] I thought, really, I thought that would be the worst of what I might have to go through, which is still, that's a traumatic experience. Or Zephyr valves. They're valves that they install and they help your breathing, but I wasn't a candidate for any of that.

[00:21:45] **Stephen Calabria:** Why not?

[00:21:46] **James Kelly:** I also had interstitial lung disease. Lung volumes, it's the top of the lungs that they would take, so when your issues are throughout the lung, you're not really a candidate. And the valves, I don't even know how well they work, but it's kind of like a stopgap.

[00:22:03] It's a bridge. But I wanted those bridges. If someday it came to a transplant, I certainly wanted all those bridges I could take because it would extend my, my time.

[00:22:16] **Stephen Calabria:** Now, you were given the diagnosis, and you were told that you had to have a double lung transplant. What was the period of time between when you were told that and when you actually got it?

[00:22:32] **James Kelly:** About three years . I was told, May 4th, 2019, and I received my transplant on March 3rd, 2022.

[00:22:44] **Stephen Calabria:** Why did it take so long?

[00:22:45] **James Kelly:** Well, lungs are a difficult organ to transplant, for many reasons. Aside from the type and match, you have to have the right size. As you can see, I'm not that big that big of a guy. But, in that respect I was lucky because my chest cavity they told me was hyperextended because of the issue that I had for years.

[00:23:05] So the cavity itself had gotten bigger. So I could take a set of lungs from somebody that was much taller than me. But, you know, the lungs are difficult because just the nature of how they're, procured, you it's usually a tragedy, you whether it be a car accident or whatever it might be.

[00:23:27] And usually there's damage to the chest, which in turn damages your organs. So the percentage of organs that are available, it's very low. And the percentage of people that need them is high. So all these things have to match, from not just the blood and all that, but the size. And how bad you are.

[00:23:49] You know, your lung allocation score, the higher the score, the hopefully the sooner you'll get your lungs. But I think the average wait is, you know, two years, sometimes a little more.

[00:24:03] **Stephen Calabria:** And so, you being of such a big family at that time, I suspect that your family, was present during this.

[00:24:13] **James Kelly:** Oh, yeah, I would say so. My family's the best. I'm very blessed that I have such great support from my family and my friends, and all the phone rang every day with, you know, Where do you want to go? Who do you want to see? We can get you here, we can get you there.

[00:24:32] I could have gone anywhere, literally, and we would have found a way. That's just who they are, we really, very tight family.

[00:24:41] **Stephen Calabria:** So, Operation Day comes. How do you feel?

[00:24:46] **James Kelly:** I felt great. I got to tell you that my doctors at Mount Sinai in general, they're phenomenal. They're just, the level of confidence that they have instilled in me is just, it's indescribable. I mean, they really, really exude their passion, their confidence in themselves and in me, in my case.

[00:25:11] It was just, I was so at ease with the whole process. I knew how serious it was, and I, I was really declining quickly. I did not have a lot of time. If there was ever a time for resilience, this was it. I just stayed resilient through the whole process.

[00:25:30] Whatever they asked me to do, I did. Because that's what you have to do.

[00:25:34] **Stephen Calabria:** What's the alternative?

[00:25:35] **James Kelly:** Exactly. I mean, giving up is not an option. It just isn't. Not for me. I tried to keep myself in the best shape I could, between pulmonary rehab and working out at home, so I went into it in the best shape I probably I could be.

[00:25:49] **Stephen Calabria:** It was probably difficult to work with-

[00:25:52] **James Kelly:** When they diagnosed me, when he came in and told me, when the pulmonologist at that time told me, you know, this is, you know, you need plunge, I was told then, right then and there, that you, I still want to kind of get out of here so I can do what I have to do.

[00:26:10] He said, you're not going anywhere. He said, you're not going back to work. And that was probably the hardest hit that I got. But when he told me that you won't be returning to work. And that was like somebody hit me with a hammer. Because that's what I did.

[00:26:27] **Stephen Calabria:** And it's what you love, and it's

[00:26:28] **James Kelly:** Exactly.

[00:26:29] **Stephen Calabria:** you derive so much meaning and purpose from your work.

[00:26:31] **James Kelly:** Exactly. Yeah, I, I do. I, I truly enjoy working. You know, when, When you're ready to retire, or you're ready to switch gears and do something else, that's different. That's your choice.

[00:26:45] But when somebody tells you, you have to do this, you have no say in it, it's like somebody really just took all the gas out of your tank. And again, you have to be resilient and say,

[00:26:55] Well, okay, so then here's my option. I get through this and I'll do whatever it is I want to do. I'm certainly meant to do something.

[00:27:05] Don't know what that is yet. But I've had little roadblocks put in front of me along the way. Nothing to do with the lungs, just other issues. As we get old, you know, you know. But life on happens and you deal with life on life's terms.

[00:27:20] **Stephen Calabria:** Around the time of your transplant, before the operation happened, how did it feel? What did your lungs feel like? Was it painful? tight, constricted? Did it hurt?

[00:27:30] **James Kelly:** They felt heavy and, and yes, constricted. That's a good way to put it. You could just tell that you were not at anywhere near capacity.

[00:27:41] **Stephen Calabria:** So you wake up with two new lungs. How'd you feel?

[00:27:46] **James Kelly:** I felt phenomenal. Just waking up was a feat. I thought to myself, I said, Wow, I woke up, I said, everything's got to be great, right? And as it turns out, everything was great. When I took that first breath, it was, I hadn't felt that in years.

[00:28:03] you It had been so long since I was able to actually take a deep breath and without, I think they took me off the oxygen within a day or two. It was very quick and I was only on a minimal amount.

[00:28:17] So I was on room air in short order. I gotta say I was watched like a hawk the whole time. I kind of felt like a fish in a bowl, you know? Everybody was coming around to take a look. But it was amazing. It really, really was.

[00:28:31] **Stephen Calabria:** Now, I'm curious to know, resilience through food. So, after the operation, were there any foods you found to be healing in your recovery, and did you crave anything? Did you crave to cook anything?

[00:28:44] **James Kelly:** I don't know that I had cravings. I did start eating more fish, for some reason, I don't know why. But, no, I mean, two days later, I was cooking for the family, after I got home. I mean, within two days. My wife loves showing people that picture.

[00:29:02] But, it was, it was a good feeling. It was a good feeling coming home. When you think about what just happened and to be able to be fixing dinner for my wife and son and enjoying it. I was ecstatic.

[00:29:17] **Stephen Calabria:** Well, food is not just, as we said, a communal experience, but also you're providing sustenance to others, to your people.

[00:29:26] **James Kelly:** It's a labor of love. It's a way, if you can't find a way to show thanks to someone or how much you love them or, or whatever it might be, to fix them something from your heart, I think it speaks volumes, that I didn't just go out and buy this for you and here it is. I took the time to do this for you.

[00:29:45] **Stephen Calabria:** I guess that was it for my questions. Was there anything else you wanted to say?

[00:29:49] **James Kelly:** I really do want to get the message out there of donation. It is so important and I can't think of any other crusade, if I was to pick a crusade, that would be a organ donation, yeah, for sure. And when I'm able to, I hope to be able to be able to spread the word some more.

[00:30:12] Because it's just, to me, it's the ultimate gift you can give someone. You know, not just the major solid organs, just skin and eyes and all different things, it's vitally important. There's so many people waiting, and there's so many people that are passing because of the wait, and they're really, we can improve the numbers.

[00:30:37] It doesn't have to be that way. I don't think so. I don't know if it's true still, but in Europe, when you get your license, you're automatically a donor. Unless you uncheck the box. Over there you have to uncheck the box. Here you have to check the box.

[00:30:55] Mount Sinai adding, Dr. Harish Seethamraju and Dr. Scheinin and the whole transplant team to their mix, it's a phenomenal addition to the transplant scene in New York.

[00:31:08] They are great. I'm not just saying that because I've had a phenomenal outcome and things have been going well for me. They're on top of the game. They really, really are.

[00:31:21] There isn't anything that I have asked that he hasn't answered and put me to rest on. My visits are not short. And it's, a lot of it is catch up. How's your son, how's your wife, how's the dog. It's like seeing an old friend

[00:31:38] I ran into Dr. Scheinin a couple of months ago when I was leaving clinic and, you know, I was on Madison and he was walking one way, I was

walking the other and normally you'd see a doctor that you know and you'd say hi and he'd say hi and you'd wave and you'd just keep walking.

[00:31:58] That's not who he is. That is not him. He stopped, we talked, we leaned up against the building, and, whatever it was, 10, 15 minutes, just chit chat, like two old friends that hadn't seen each other in a year, and not one mention of transplant.

[00:32:16] Or, nothing medical. It was just, talking about cars and, homes and taxes and all kinds of things, but nothing about business.

[00:32:25] It's a little fearful at times. There's resilience. Hopefully everyone has something in their life that helps them with that. It could be anything. For me, it's my wife and son, the thought of me not being here.

[00:32:39] But just, I couldn't go there. And I wasn't going to go there and I still not going to go there. So, keep pushing.

[00:32:47]

[00:32:47] **James Kelly:** Thanks again to James Kelly for appearing on today's show. That's all for this episode of Road to Resilience. If you enjoyed it, please rate, review, and subscribe to our podcast on your favorite podcast platform.

[00:33:00] Want to share some feedback or an idea for a future episode? Email us at podcasts@mountsinai.org. Road to Resilience is a production of the Mount Sinai Health System.

[00:33:09] It's produced by me, Stephen Calabria, and our Executive Producer Lucia Lee. From all of us here at Mount Sinai, thanks for listening, and we'll catch you next time.