

Justin Paul Ervin

Habitual Roots Inc., Co-Founder and Executive Director

Age: 26

WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

Winston-Salem, NC

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CHARLOTTE AREA?

8 Years- I moved to Charlotte to attend UNC Charlotte's William States Lee Engineering Program from 2012 - 2016 and have not left the QC since!

TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOU?

I grew up in a little country town just outside of Winston-Salem called East Bend, NC. It is one of those places where everyone knows everyone, with the closest grocery store being 20 minutes away. Growing up I was mostly involved in sports, spending time with friends, and family.

In 2009, I lost my father to alcohol addiction. This is something that has always weighed heavily on me and has engaged a sense of intention behind the decisions I make in my life. I believe there is a lesson to be learned in almost everything we encounter if we are open enough to receive it and wise enough to grow from it.

Being raised in a blended family has brought many lessons. I have been blessed with parents and siblings with different views. Based on that, I have learned how to openly love and care for others using empathy and compassion. Having two older sisters, one little brother, caring parents, and one tight knit community, I'm beyond blessed to have a dense network of individuals who have always been there to love and support me.

In high school, I worked laying tile, as a landscaper for my stepfather's business (TCJ Landscape Management), and at the local Pizza Hut. I cannot express how much I value each of these roles as they showed me early on the importance of hard work, communication, and the power of working smarter not harder.

In 2012, I joined UNC Charlotte as a 49er and have not looked back since. I started as an electrical engineering student, but after a year and half into the program, found my way to systems engineering. I can honestly say that if it weren't for the applied knowledge taught by professors like Dr. Jonathan Mayhorn, I would not have the mindset I have today. I graduated in 2016, coming out of UNC Charlotte with a great friend group, a bachelor's degree in Systems Engineering, and a Green Belt in Lean Six Sigma.

I landed my first corporate job out of school at Bank of America, where I found myself as an Operations Analyst within the Accounting department working in Global Banking and Markets (GBAM) Reconciliations. Finding myself in the business world with an engineering background officially opened me up to the concept of continuous improvement.

Throughout college, I worked for startup companies VRG Components and Fridayd. Though the startup game is fierce, and entrepreneurs must be beyond resourceful and not afraid to wear multiple hats, working in corporate was a whole new animal. That said, I believe that what I learned from the founders of both startups I was involved in, helped shape my experience as a leader and in making a difference in corporate America.

One day on the job at BOA, I had a meeting with VP, Will Nova, who broke down the “Life cycle of a trade” during our one-on-one. I remember the “aha moment” I experienced that day. After being in the job for almost seven months, it finally clicked as to what the actual purpose of my job was. I was taken aback at how narrow minded I had been working day in and day out without asking bigger questions that corresponded to things outside of my role.

After my meeting, I spoke with a few members on my team. I figured that if I had been there seven months and did not realize the big picture, the colleague next to me who had only been there for four months did not know either. This thought process led me to speak with other teams as well, ultimately revealing a gap in the on-boarding process at Bank of America.

I took it upon myself to create a New Hire Orientation that (to my knowledge) is currently used to this day for all GBAM new hires. It was designed as a full day of training so they may understand their purpose within the company while in tandem serving as a platform to speak with BOA veterans to help each new hire shape their career using the power of intention.

Creating this program is something that ignited a fire within me. I never again wanted to do anything mindlessly without understanding the big picture. Have I mastered this? Absolutely not. However, I have made it an objective of mine to always ask why questions and get to the root cause. This is how I found myself creating and running Habitual Roots, encouraging others to dive into the world of mindfulness and emotional intelligence for the sake of both their personal and professional lives.

I’m currently running Habitual Roots while working with RoundPoint Mortgage Servicing Corp. as the Business Analyst overseeing their Retention Sales, Marketing, and Portfolio Management Departments.

DURING YOUR TIME VOLUNTEERING FOR A COMMUNITY ACTIVITY OR PROJECT, WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

Billingsville-Cotswold Elementary has an amazing program known as HYPE (Helping Youth Pursue Excellence). Once a week I would meet with my mentee for lunch where we would

catch up and speak about what was happening within our lives. He'd share about his home life, the latest drama in the 6th grade, and who his girlfriend was at the time. After closing our conversations on what we recently had learned and what we were grateful for, we would play outside either shooting hoops or kicking soccer.

When it came time to play outside, it was never just my mentee and myself. Oh no, I had to play pick-up 21 with all the kids (while being in my business clothes since this was over my lunch break). I remember one day when it hit me. It hit me hard. I had the epiphany through which I realized that I had just been one of these kids, playing outside with my friends and eating school lunches from Styrofoam trays.

In my moment of awe, I realized how lucky I am. I was blessed to be given the opportunity to play once again as a kid, with kids, and be accepted into the group. I will always cherish those moments of pick-up basketball with the 5th and 6th graders of Billingsville-Cotswold Elementary because they taught me how thin the line between being an adult and a child really is. Since recognizing this, I have made it a point to plan fun into my days in order to keep my inner-child alive and well. It is amazing the curiosity and sincere amazement that can be cultivated while performing the simplest of tasks.

It's ironic how you show up to teach and provide guidance; and it's you that ends up leaving with the new perspective and heightened awareness. I am forever grateful for those chicken nugget lunches with my mentee and the confidence we both were able to instill in each other.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY? PLEASE BE AS DETAILED AS YOU CAN.

I am one the co-founders of Habitual Roots Inc. a nonprofit community focused on building positive habits of self-care using emotional intelligence and mindfulness. It's founded on the belief that our daily habits, create the lives we experience. So, for those interested in creating positive change and unsure where to start, we are here. Taking that approach, I have created programs (with the help of my amazing team) designed to help people know themselves well and improve their sense of inner peace.

We have created our first two chapters in Charlotte, NC and Denver, CO where we host a myriad of programs catering to mindful millennials and mind-level managers [*Mind-Level Managers know the benefits of mental health or is at least willing to learn*]. Our programs vary from community yoga and guided meditations, to outdoor wellness hikes, to professional coaching and training for individuals and groups. Additionally, developed our own ROOTS Methodology to heighten self-awareness and mental resilience.

My goal is to add value. I do this mostly through servant leadership by empowering others to become intentional with their lives. As a certified life coach, my goal is to help others shift their perspective into breaking their habitual patterns and reconstruct their environment so that it may support, and not hinder them. I use my time mostly coaching

young professionals, mid-level managers, corporate executives, couples, and mothers. I have also been known to help a friend in need with their resume.

Whether it be asking thought-provoking questions to kids, challenging adults to explore their feelings, or encouraging senior citizens to enjoy something as simple as deep breathing, creating a harmonious environment for deeper connection is how I do my best to contribute back to the community.

Connection is something we all crave and whether that be through a yoga class, bible study, hike, disc golf game, or planned day for picking up trash, we are all in this together. If I feel I have connected with someone, whether that being a simple thank you at the grocery store or a 2-hour conversation about how they may build better habits of positive self-care, I feel I am contributing. Where-ever I am, no matter the form, I am there to add value.

PLEASE LET US KNOW ANY AWARDS OR RECOGNITIONS YOU'VE RECEIVED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

As a nonprofit and community leader, personal accolades are not my focus. When my team wins, I'm victorious.

That said, if I am to mention any recognitions it would be being named Bank of America's Teammate of the Month (*August 2017*), CLT Burger Week winner (*August 2019*), and having my non-profit, Habitual Roots, featured in WCCB Charlotte's CW, on QC@3 Life News, awarded a HUG Grant by CharlotteisCreative, chosen as a Google Ads Grant Recipient, as well as being selected to participate in UNC Charlotte's *Ventureprise Launch NC IDEA* in the Fall of 2020.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTEREST?

I enjoy morning walks with my cup of French pressed coffee followed by allocated time for prayer and devotion. Additionally, I'm always down for a game of disc golf, pick-up soccer, Mexican food, or sushi. You'll often find me at a Habitual Roots yoga class and/or nature walk. Outside of the city, you may find me back in East Bend either hunting, fishing, or off in the woods on a four-wheeler.

I am also marrying a librarian, so books and philosophical debates are an apparent thing in my household.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE THAT YOU STAND BY?

"A man is what he thinks about all day long" –Ralph Waldo Emerson

As stated, I'm very intentional with my work to the point of applying that to my thoughts. This quote along with others by Emerson and Earl Nightingale have helped me shift my perspective into creating a life of "get to's" instead of having a life of "got to's." *i.e. I get to do ... vs. I've got to do*

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS? 10 YEARS?

Professionally, I do not have a set expectation as much as a set intention. I intend to continue to provide value within whatever environment I found myself in. I'd like to see Habitual Roots being found in more states outside of NC and CO; while I look ahead to create a practice and mastermind for future life coaches that continues to focus on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and the ROOTS Methodology. I'd love to continue to host retreats and partner on events like FeelGoodFest, Sonic Movement, and other ways to creatively connect with the community.

Academically, I'm looking into to acquiring an additional degree in counselling and/or psychology, but we are going to take this one step at a time.

As far as my personal life is concerned, I have no clue, which I find exhilarating. I see myself being involved within my church community alongside my beautiful wife. The thought of tending to a garden, staying in touch with close friends, and potentially owning a few rental properties around Charlotte brings me feelings of joy and excitement. I'm not going to write kids into my future just yet as I have 13 (or so) nieces and nephews currently, but I'm sure I'll be hearing the pitter patter of little feet running down the hallway in my household before I know it.

CAN YOU SHARE ONE THING THAT IS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

As someone who is grateful for something as simple as the sun being on my skin, I have not built an extravagant list of to-dos. If anything comes to mind, it would be to do mission work in another country and maybe write a book one day.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED YOUR PASSPORT?

It was back in 2019 for my first cruise experience where my fiancé and I explored Key West, FL and Cozumel, MX. I highly recommend the snorkeling in Cozumel.

WHAT IS A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF THAT NO ONE KNOWS?

When I was a kid, we had a U.S. Presidents placemat that lived on the dinner table. I stared at this thing so much while eating as a kid that I now have all the presidents memorized.

Seriously, you pick a number between 1 and 45 and I have got you covered.

WHO IS YOUR HERO?

I'm blessed with a large group of people who I find admirable. I have connected with many men and women around my hometown and within the Charlotte area who have shed light on how to be within your community and homestead. However, if I were to spotlight one, it would be my neighbor next-door to my parents, Steve Johnson.

Steve has always been like a grandfather to me. I have stayed at his house countless nights watching the Yankees followed by westerns. I have never met a more god-fearing, family loving, giving, and compassionate person as Steve.

On top of his personal values, Steve has a professional career that is commendable. He built Johnson's Modern Electric from scratch that now generates \$35M in revenue and serves as a community sponsor for almost any event held in East Bend, NC.

I have learned how to put first what matters in life through mentors like Steve and will always cherish the moments of us sitting on his front porch, rocking in rocking chairs as he shared his love and knowledge with me.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?

I'm currently diving into the New Testament as well as bouncing between *NLP: The Essential Guide* and *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents*. I've recently finished *How to Die* by Seneca and *Teaching Your Team to Fish* by Laurie Beth Jones.

WHAT WAS THE LAST MOVIE YOU SAW?

Get him to the Greek

WHAT WAS THE LAST CONCERT YOU SAW?

The Black Keys at PNC Arena in Raleigh, NC.

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