



Guest

Daniel H. Pink is the author of five New York Times bestsellers, including his latest, *The Power of Regret: How Looking Backward Moves Us Forward*, published in February. His other books include the New York Times bestsellers *When and A Whole New Mind* — as well as the #1 New York Times bestsellers *Drive* and *To Sell is Human*. Dan's books have won multiple awards, have been translated into 42 languages, and have sold millions of copies around the world. He lives in Washington, DC, with his family.

He has been a contributing editor at Fast Company and Wired as well as a business columnist for The Sunday Telegraph. His articles and essays have also appeared in The New York Times, Harvard Business Review, The Atlantic, Slate, and other publications. He was also a Japan Society Media fellow in Tokyo, where he studied the country's massive comic industry. Before venturing out on his own 20 years ago, Dan worked in several positions in politics and government, including serving from 1995 to 1997 as chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore. He received a BA from Northwestern University, where he was a Truman Scholar and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and a JD from Yale Law School.

In our conversation, we dive into the various insights from his recently published book - *The Power of Regret*. He calls this effort a regret reclamation project and says that living a life with no regrets might be a wasted opportunity to learn about what we truly care about and therefore might be a missed opportunity in leading a life of happiness, meaning and fulfilment.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 89th conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast, a series of reflective conversations from leading people from various domains on three broad themes – Leadership, Transitions and Careers. Just like businesses think about where to play and how to win in the context of their strategy, we all think about the two questions – where to go and how to grow at various points in our lives. These questions become that much harder in a world of abundance and multiplicity of options. Through this podcast, I hope to share some insights that might help you navigate these questions in a more thoughtful way.

When I am not podcasting, I am working with leaders and organizations with a growth mindset and helping them play to their unique potential. You can learn more about the podcast and my work at www.playtopotential.com.

My guest this time is the dynamic, insightful and articulate - Dan Pink. He has been consistently rated by Thinkers50 among the Top 10 thinkers in the world. To be specific, he was ranked Number 9 in 2021 and Number 6 in 2019. He has been a prolific writer on a range of topics across Motivation, Selling, Careers, The science of timing and now he has just written a book on how we can work with Regret to move our lives forward. Just like he mentions later in the conversation, all research is “me-

search". I have been curious about understanding regret in greater granularity for the last several years. I do think it is a powerful piece of work that has the ability to help us lead powerful lives.

Without further ado, let us listen and learn from Dan Pink.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Dan, thank you so much for making the time for the Play to Potential Podcast, excited to have you.

Dan Pink (PC): I am really glad to be here Deepak.

DJ: Dan, would love to dive into your book on regret in a couple of minutes but I am curious about people's journeys in this podcast and I was just looking at the body of work and the books you have written. You have written the book Free Agent Nation in 2001, A Whole New Mind in 2006 and you wrote a book in the Japanese comic format which was interesting, The Adventures of Johnny Bunko. Then, you wrote a book on human motivation in 2011 and on selling, To Sell Is Human in 2013 and then you wrote a book on the science of timing in 2018 and now regret. Connect the dots for us.

DP: Oh, I do not know if the dots are connectable, maybe, I am not sure the dots are even meant to be connected. If there is any connection, there is certainly, you know, I know that you were at McKinsey and so you are a skilled strategist, it is not as if I have ever had a broad strategy for the books that I want to write up on a whiteboard somewhere vetted by consultants. I give you my theory here Deepak which is that, writing good books is really really hard, it is a lot of work, it is really really hard and a lot of it, you know, even though I like it in the abstract sense, sometimes day to day, it is a struggle, you are always doing battle. And so, you have to pick things that you are deeply deeply deeply deeply interested in, deeply interested in, and that is not most things. And so, I just move to whatever I am deeply interested in and write about that. And if the dots connect, great, if they do not connect, who cares.

DJ: But of the various books, I was curious about the book in the Japanese art form. Tell us what is behind that, it is not a usual choice.

DP: Okay, I am very proud of that book even though I think it sold fewer copies than any other of the books. So, what I started to do there was I wrote a career guide but in Japanese comic form manga. And what happened is that my family and I, we did a fellowship in Japan in 2007 where I studied the manga industry and I wrote some things about that. Manga is just comics in Japan but in Japan, comics are used in a much wider array of forms than certainly in the United States and probably India too. It is used for business books, in cooking guides, in relationship guides and so forth. And I thought that a business book, a career guide in manga would be a brilliant idea. And so, I hired a manga artist and we wrote a, I think, it is a pretty good book called The Adventures of Johnny Bunko, the last career guide you will ever need where this guy who is bumbling accountant named Johnny, one night he is working late and he gets some food and he snaps open these chopsticks and he has this collection of chopsticks, and each time he snaps open the chopstick, this figure, this sprightly figure named Diana emerges and she gives him a lesson to have a satisfying career. I am proud of that book. But here it goes, in the annals of bad business judgment, right when it came out, actually before it came out, a movie producer heard about and said, okay, we want to option this to turn into an animated film and they made an offer that was like a very very low offer, and I said no, that is like

way too little money and besides we are going to get plenty of other offers and we never got another one.

DJ: Fair enough. Let us move to the current book Dan. You call this regret reclamation project. Talk to us a little bit about the origins of this book, how do you end up getting curious about regret.

DP: Well, for a whole host of reasons. You know, there is an old line certainly in social science but I think in other forms of science which is that all research is mesearch. And so, for me, I think it was partly the case. I was at a point in my life where I actually, it was a weird point in my life where I had mileage behind me which kind of surprised me, I mean really surprised me, but then also mileage ahead of me, I hope. And I was dealing with some of my own regrets and just thinking about them, not just pondering them and trying to make sense of them, not debilitated by them at all. And I found something interesting that when I very very sheepishly mention them to people, very sheepishly, because nobody wants to talk about this, I found that people leaned in, they wanted to talk about it, they wanted to share their regret, and I got a kind of this, this kind of electric response that again, going back to your initial question, for a writer, it is like a really good piece of data, it is like whoa, wait a second, I have had other topics where I bring it up, I have an idea and I bring it up and people just start fleeing the room or their eyes start blazing over. And this one was just the exact opposite, people were like, whoa, hey, and I thought that was really interesting, and I really wanted to make sense of it myself. The other thing I guess, as a writer, maybe there is a little bit of dot-connecting here, is that a lot of the books that I had written were a little bit more about, they were not as much about emotions and I never really taken on writing about emotions and that is obviously really important, and this emotion of regret ends up being a very important emotion. But just to put a pin on it, to put a button on the end of it is like, I cannot imagine having written this book in my 30s, there is no way, but in my 50s, it felt almost inevitable.

DJ: Got it. Actually, one of the things I wanted to, it struck me, in this podcast, we also talk about people's journeys and careers, you are trained as a lawyer and you have just written a book on regret, once again, I was just curious, before we dive into the book Dan, if it is okay with you, I would love to know are there one or two big pivotal choices you made that have got you to where you are now after a degree in law.

DP: I think that the two pivotal choices were a) becoming self-employed, I think that was a really important moment. That was about 25 years ago now amazingly where I have been working in some political jobs here in the United States. I became, through no fault of my own and without any planning, a political speech writer. And I realized that I did not want to do that the rest of my life at all, I did not want to do it rest of my 30s. And what I really wanted to do was go work for myself. And I think that was pivotal. And then, a few years before that, I think that marrying my wife was pivotal. To me, those are two of the most pivotal decisions that I made.

DJ: And if any may persist for a couple of minutes, in what ways did your marriage shape your career in the context of where you are now, I am curious?

DP: For a whole host of reasons. So ultimately what happened is that Jessica was working as a lawyer and then we had a kid and then I wanted to work for myself and she kept her job and she kept her health insurance because we needed to support ourselves. And that went on for a while and then ever since I really began to establish my footing, she left her job and we ended up essentially working together for the last 20 years or so, and so that was really essential. The other thing is that, you know, when you work the way that I do, there is a very porous border between work and family. And so, if on the other side of that porous border is not support and love and empathy and intelligence, it becomes very-very hard.

DJ: Got it. Let us dive into the book Dan. You call this the photographic negative of the good life one could lead. That phrase just kept percolating through my head ever since I have read your book. Talk to us about what you have in mind when you say this.

DP: Well, I am glad because, you know, the thing is Deepak you understand what a photographic negative is. People who are under 25, do not. I am not even kidding around about that. People whose only notion of photography is digital photography truly have no idea what I am talking about.

DJ: It is a good point, did not occur to me.

DP: Yeah, I have to say, in the book, I kind of felt like an idiot because as you know, like, I wrote a couple of paragraphs about what a photographic negative is and the only reason I did that was for readers, you know, basically 25 and under who would have been mystified by what I am talking about. Anyway, so what I meant by that is that, my view is that if you understand what people regret the most, you understand what they value the most. And what I did is that I went out and collected a lot of regrets from around the world. We have now, at this point, you and I are talking in early March, we have now over 19,000 regrets from 109 countries, it is unbelievable. And what I found is that around the world, people ended up regretting the same four things. But when people tell you what they regret, they tell you what matters to them. And so, if we understand these regrets, we understand what people say makes life worth living. And that was the kind of thing where I was trying to, going back to your initial question again, like one of the things I like about being a writer is being surprised, and that came as a little bit of a surprise to me because I was trying to make sense of this emotion of regret going through all of the academic research on regret to say, okay, how does this emotion operate, what does it mean, what does it do for us, how prevalent it is. I also did a piece of quantitative research here in States, a very large public opinion survey to try to get American attitudes about regret. And then, essentially, for storytelling purposes, for emotional texture, I wanted to collect a bunch of regrets from around the world. I got way more than I ever anticipated, and those ended up revealing something that surprised me which is exactly what you say which is the photographic negative.

DJ: Hmm. And you talk about the four core regrets Dan, now might be a good time just to sort of double click on that, can you give the listeners a sense of what these core types of regrets are?

DP: Sure. So, my argument, and I think I am more right than wrong, is that with a way to understand what people regret is not to look at the domains of their life and by domains, I mean, this is a career regret, this is an education regret, this is a finance regret, this is a health regret, but to go one layer beneath, and I think one layer beneath there are four core regrets. One of what I call foundation regrets. Foundation regrets are if only I had done the work. And these are people who regret not working hard enough in school or university, people who regret a lot of regrets by not saving money, by spending too much and saving too little, a lot of regrets about poor health choices. So, it is small choices early that accumulate to negative consequences later. Second one, boldness regrets. Boldness regrets are if only I had taken the chance, and these are people who regret not traveling, lot of people regret not pursuing a romantic interest, not asking somebody out on a date, a lot of people regret not speaking up, not asserting themselves, people regret not starting a business, so that is boldness regrets. Third category, moral regrets, if only I had done the right thing. Again, these are people who, you know, all these regrets begin at a juncture, so people are at a juncture, they can do the right thing and they can do the wrong thing, they do the wrong thing and they regret it. And so, we have a lot of regrets about bullying, more than I ever would have expected, a lot of regrets about marital infidelity. And then, different notions of morality that are not necessarily consistent from place to place. Moral regrets are the one area where there is some variation nationally, there is some variation based on political view, etc., etc. And then finally, connection regrets are if only I had

reached out, it is all about relationships that have come apart, usually slowly and undramatically, people want to reach out, they do not, they think it is going to be awkward, they think the other side is not going to care, so it drifts even further, and all of a sudden, the relationship, sometimes it is too late. And when we look at these things, all this triple clicks here, when you look at these things, each of these four core regrets, to me, reveals a need. Foundation regrets reveal a need for stability. A good life has some stolidity to it, some predictability to it. Second, a good life has growth and learning and psychological richness, that is boldness. A good life has goodness in the sense that, I am really convinced that most of us, the vast vast vast vast vast majority of us want to be good, we want to have a life where we are being good, and then the other one is love. And so, this negative emotion of regret, this emotion that we often say, we do not want to think about, we do not want to reckon with, actually ends up revealing the path to a life well-lived.

DJ: Lovely. And in your research Dan, is there a pattern around the incidence of these four kinds of regrets, do you see much more of one versus the other, can you give us a sense of how it...?

DP: Yeah, I think so, but here is the thing, so the regrets that I collected, it is all qualitative research, so I am loathe to make like definitive claims because it was not a random sample and all that but I have a lot of regrets, what I saw overwhelmingly is two biggest categories, the biggest category was connection regrets, the second biggest category boldness regrets, and then moral regrets was a pretty small category. It seems like connection and boldness comprise well over half of them, well over half.

DJ: Got it. And I am also curious, since you have written a book on career pathways two decades back, one of the things I notice Dan is there is a multiplicity of pathways today compared to maybe 20 or 30 years back, and I was reading this book by Barry Schwartz on Paradox of Choice. And he says, in a world with abundance, two things happen, one is this FOMO, you feel you should have done something else, and second is this decision fatigue. Specifically on this point of FOMO, I am just trying to see, in the context of regret, is there a difference to the way regret shows up today than let us say maybe it might have 20-30 years back when world was a lot more predictable?

DP: I think so, it is a very very insightful point because Barry Schwartz was one of the first social psychologists to write about regret, and it informs some of his work on the Paradox of Choice. And I have actually some interesting quantitative data on that point, so I got like four different pathways here for you.

DJ: Fascinating. I did not know he had written on regret. I knew he had written about choice.

DP: No, he did. Barry was one of the first people to write about regret. He did not do a lot on it but he did some really good work on it. He has been circling this topic in a number of different ways which I will tell you about here in a moment. So let me take on FOMO here for a moment. So, FOMO is about anticipated regret, right. So here is what we got, regret itself is a backward-looking emotion. So, what happens, you look backward in time and you say, if only I had made that choice, not made that choice, taken that action, not made that action, okay, FOMO is actually more of a forward-looking thing. We are worried what is going to happen in the future, I do not want to miss out on something that is going to happen in the future. So, we can anticipate our future regrets. Now doing that, anticipating our future regrets can be very healthy behavior if we do it right. The problem is that we often do not do it right, and here is where Barry's work is very instructive on this. Barry and others have written about two different ways of making decisions, and this is in a lot of his stuff. There are people who are maximizers, they say, the people that McKinsey consultants have in their heads as consumers, right, they want to make the best choice for everything. And so, they say, what shirt I wear today, I am going to wear the best shirt I can wear today. What kind of pizza am I going

to order, I am going to have the best pizza I can possibly get tonight? What color should I paint my house, I am going to find the best kind of paint and the best painter to paint my house, right. And what Barry and others have found is that maximizers are miserable, it is miserable. Because you cannot maximize everything, there is always going to be something better, it is a perfect way to drive yourself nuts. And the people who do something else which is called satisficing, that is, make a good enough decision, generally are pretty happy. And so, when we think about FOMO, what we want to do is that, we want to actually focus on the thing, so FOMO is not all bad, but we have to think about what are we really going to miss out on. And so, when we anticipate our regret, we can use these four core regrets and say that, let us take me as an example, the me of 2032, the me of 10 years from now is not going to care about, like, should I post a picture of what I am eating for dinner on Instagram tonight or will I, oh I do not want to miss out on letting people know what I am eating, the me of 10 years from now is not going to care about that, the me of 10 years from now is not going to care about painting my house, but we do know what the me of 10 years from now is going to care about, that he will be upset if I miss out, where I should have some FOMO, alright. And that is, did I take the appropriate risk and lead a psychologically rich life, did I do the right thing, did I reach out to people I care about, I should have FOMO about those things, the core things that we know make life worth living and forget about everything else. And I say that less as a prescription and more as a, oh this is not bad, more as a prediction because we know from this body of regrets, we can make a safe bet, what the me of 10 years from now is going to care about. So, forgive me for that long-winded answer but what you want to do, and again Barry's work is instructive here, is you want to maximize on what is important and just satisfice on everything else. So have FOMO about not connecting with people you care about, have FOMO on not taking an appropriate risk, have FOMO on not building a stable foundation, but forget about most other things.

DJ: Fascinating, that is a lovely way to frame it. And I should pick on one of the terms you have used a couple of times already Dan, psychologically rich life. What does it mean to you?

DP: Yeah, that is not my term, that is a term that is emerging in the field of psychological science, and what it means is that, psychological richness is a concept that has to do with, we want to do things that are interesting, that are meaningful, so all would be part of psychological richness, learning would be part of psychological richness, personal growth would be part of psychological richness, beauty would be psychological richness, hearing a wonderful symphony, so it is things that enrich our lives in a, but not necessarily in a material way, but the kinds of things that just give us joy and meaning and that is a catch-all term, it is an emerging term right now in the world of psychological science. And I like it because I think it captures some of what is going on with those boldness regrets.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. The point that Dan makes around maximizing and satisficing also came up in a different conversation with Dr Ashley Whillans (AW) of Harvard Business School. She speaks about the notion of time poverty and how we can avoid it and links it back to the notion of satisficing versus optimizing.

AW: *"And I think in general we all fall into this maximizing trap and at least some of the dimensions it falls out for everyone a little bit differently. Maybe you are someone who really wants to have the best pair of shoes, so you will spend hours and hours and hours trying to find the perfect business shoe or the perfect sneaker. That's probably equally as good as some other shoe or a sneaker and maybe we should be spending less time searching for the absolute best in that consumption decision and instead satisfice and find a pretty good shoe that's pretty stylish. And there's good research*

suggesting that individuals in general who spend more of their time maximizing consumption decisions on an everyday basis are less happy than people who spend more of their time satisficing on the small decisions that we are all faced with on an everyday basis. And of course, it is related to time, we have actually now shown this direct link, satisfiers like the French that we studied are better able to savour and are happier as a result."

DJ: I often notice that a lot of us transition from a context of scarcity in growing up to a context of abundance when we start working. However, our operating system is still wired for the scarce context and there is a temptation to maximize and optimize despite the changed context. And that can cause significant discontent and unhappiness.

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DJ: And moving onto one of the things you say in the book, you say that leaning into regret could help us make better decisions because it slows us down and helps us gather more data. Can you say more on how this...?

DP: Exactly, yeah. There is some very good research on this and it is kind of a thing that your listeners would benefit from because there is a direct, I mean it is actually a decent coaching advice too, again, built on the research. So, for instance, there is research on negotiations. So let us say that you do negotiate, you engage in negotiation and the negotiation is over and then you stop and you think about what you regret in that negotiation. Now that is a weird move here too because remember, regret is a negative emotion, it hurts. So, you are inviting discomfort, you are inviting some negativity, you are inviting a small dose of pain when in fact, we are mostly encouraged, never look back, always be positive, alright, but what the research shows, Adam Galinsky at Columbia has done some of this research, you invite some of that pain and negative emotion, and the next time, you do better in the negotiation, right. The same thing is true with all kinds of problem solving. You are in a problem-solving exercise, instead of saying, okay, I did not do that well, I never look back, you actually say, okay, what do I regret, once again, you invite the negative emotion, do not try to bat it away, you invite it, and what does it teach me, you do better next time. There is some interesting work on senior business executives with regard to strategy, strategic thinking. And so, over and over again, and this is the key, you know, you mentioned at the top Deepak that describing this which is how I describe it and I am glad you picked up, as a reclamation project for regret, I want to reclaim this emotion. And the thing about this emotion that I want to reclaim it for is because, in some ways, we have been sold a bill of goods by saying, do not have any regrets, do not look backward, always be positive, regrets are inherently bad, they make you weak, so you have got to avoid them. And the truth is just that if we treat our regrets properly, they are a powerful force for doing better. The trouble is that they come with discomfort. So, regrets clarify what we value, that is the photographic negative, and they instruct us on how to do better, that is all of these benefits. So, we all want clarity, or most of us want clarity, and most of us want instruction, but none of us want the pain, but the problem is that is not an offer here, what is on offer is a small amount of pain and discomfort which is how you get to the clarification and the instruction.

DJ: Hmm. And in the book, I loved an image where you have three people on a podium and you have the picture of a bronze medalist being happier than a silver medalist, and you sort of use that to make a point about how we frame regret. Can you sort of expand on this? I showed it to my 12-year-old daughter and she got it, you know, it just made it so...

DP: Oh good, but she understood the reason why?

DJ: She did, I think she may not have found the language for it but I think she got the context quickly...

DP: Yeah, that is fascinating, that is really fascinating. So this is some really interesting research started, actually the initial research on this came out in 1992, so it is 30 years ago at the Barcelona Olympics, Tom Gilovich at Cornell and Vicky Medvec, now at Northwestern, then at Cornell, did this some really interesting research and what they did is that they showed, as you say, the photographs of Olympians at a medal stand and what it showed is exactly what you said, gold medalists are ecstatic, bronze medalists are really happy and silver medalists are not that happy, even though they got the silver medal at the Olympics. And so, the reason has to do with, again, our incredible brains. Our brains are, the more I write about behavior and brains, the more I am just in awe of what our brains can do. I mean, it is extraordinary what our brains can do, it is extraordinary. And one of the things our brains can do is something known as counterfactual thinking, that is, we can imagine scenarios that run counter to the facts, and there are two kinds of counterfactual thinking. One of them is a downward counterfactual where you imagine how things could have gone worse. And so, I do not like downward counterfactual, it is too complicated, I like to call it an at-least. And so, the bronze medalists are like, ah, at least I got a bronze medal, rather than the person who finished 4th, he does not have any medal at all, so here is the thing, at-least make us feel better. And that is okay, that can be a healthy way of doing things, a healthy way of interpreting events. The silver medals are saying if only I had kicked a little harder in the final turn, I would have won the 100-meter freestyle race. And that is an upward counterfactual. If-only make us feel worse, but they make us do better. And so, regret is the quintessential upward counterfactual. It makes us feel worse and helps us do better, arguably and not arguably, it helps us do better because it makes us feel worse.

DJ: So, from a performance perspective Dan, just building on what you just said, how do you work with these two, right? At some level, there is, in a way, you are saying, we need to have some sort of switch that flips when we are practicing, you know, some sort of a, upward counterfactual is helpful, but once the results are out, it helps to take the other view. So, do you have a view on how it...?

DP: It depends. Okay, so here is the thing. Let us take an example, like, let us take a career, I think, let us see if we can figure out a career example here which might be more relevant. Okay, so here we go, so let us say that somebody, we will call him, Vishal, alright, so let us say Vishal takes a job, is a childhood friend of one of my kids, alright, so let us say Vishal takes a job and he hates it, it is a terrible job, he really does not like it, okay, and he realizes that he made some mistakes and even taking the job. It was not that there were warning signs ahead of time, okay. So, he is feeling regret about that. Now what can Vishal do about that? So, what Vishal can do about that is say, you know, if only I had done more due diligence ahead of time and researched this company a little bit more, if only I had talked to three people who were in this position before him, I would not have made this choice, okay. And he can take those lessons and carry them forward in looking for his next job, knowing now that he has to do some due diligence that he has to find surrogates for that kind of job, that he has to maybe talk to his mentor, maybe he did not talk to his mentor to get some advice on that, okay. So, like okay I really messed up here. Now, that feels bad, he can make himself feel, he can still get that instruction and mitigate some of the pain, not all of it by saying, but at least I got paid decently, so I am not in the hole, and so you can do both. Now, if he were to simply to say at least I am getting paid decently, he is not going to change, he is going to be stuck in that bad situation. So, it is possible to do an if-only without an at-least, but sometimes if you are willing to take the pain of the if-only as Vishal this did, you can mitigate some of the pain with and at-least.

DJ: Got it. And is the at-least, sort of the conceptual point there similar to the notion of gratitude, having gratitude for what we have?

DP: That is interesting, that is a really interesting way to put, I am not sure, I never thought about it that way, but I think that is a really nice way to put it. My hunch, I do not know, is that they are probably adjacent or connected in the roots of somewhere, so great point, I never thought about that, but it probably is. At least our way to essentially, forget the word but re-contextualize your situation in order to make yourself feel better. But the problem is with at-least, and that is okay sometimes, the problem is that at-least do not help you do better, at-least confer zero performance benefit. They mitigate some pain and mitigating pain is cool, but they do not offer any instruction.

DJ: Got it. In the book, you say that regret does not always have a positive effect. If you let it linger too long or if you replay the regret too often, it can have the opposite effect. How do you think about the Goldilocks balance of using regrets to improve our condition?

DP: Yeah, it is a really really important point and it is super important here. So, we have to look for sort of a third way in. So some of us are taught, okay, you have got, I think part of it is that most of us have not been taught how to deal well with negative emotions, and so at some level, some of us, you know, people who, you know, I think there is a slight, I do not know, there might be a slight bias for people who have high levels of formal education who say, well, no, emotions, no, that not a real signal, like, you ignore emotions, emotions are not real, ignore them, that is a bad idea. Then, there are other folks who think that emotions are the main source of truth, and so they wallow in their negative emotions. So, emotions are not for ignoring, they are not for wallowing, emotions are for thinking, emotions are signals, emotions are data, emotions are information that is coming in and you actually have to confront them. If you do not, and what happens sometimes is people spend so much time ignoring the emotions, then eventually the dam breaks and they cannot ignore them anymore and then they end up wallowing them. And I think a big part of it is that no one ever teaches us how to deal with negative emotions. And so, we do not have a good underlying theory about what feelings are for. You know, in my view, feelings are, especially negative feelings, negative feelings are for thinking, we got to think about our negative feelings as signals, as messages, as data, as knocks on the door, at whatever metaphor you want to, so we should not be terrified by it or brought down by it, but we should not neglect it either. It is an email that we have to answer. But the problem is that most of us have not been taught how to do that effectively, and I think that is a big problem. And I was looking for massive, again, the qualitative stuff from around the world, by its very nature, I cannot draw stark conclusions from, but now I am really curious about whether there are cultures or traditions that do a better job of dealing with helping people, equipping people deal with negative emotions.

DJ: Hmm. The related question that came up as I was reading the book Dan was in your research while you have captured a lot of the what people are saying when it comes to regrets, what have you learned about how people, are there any practices that you have discovered which helps people listen to the regrets, is it journaling, is it meditation, is it something else?

DP: It is interesting, yeah. There is a systematic way to deal with these regrets, to deal with our retrospective regrets that we have not been taught. So, I look at it as inward, outward, forward. So inward is how do you re-frame, you have got to re-frame, how you look at the regret in yourself, that is the first step. And that, what you see is that when we make mistakes, particularly accomplish people like you listen to your podcast, when we make mistakes, the way we talk to ourselves is absurdly cruel and vicious. I mean, you would never talk that way to anybody else. And so, what you want to do initially is treat yourself with what is called self-compassion which is the work of Kristin Neff at the University of Texas in the US. And it basically means treat yourself with kindness rather

than contempt, recognize that your regrets are part of the human condition, and that any single mistake is just a moment in your life, not the full definition of your life. But what happens is that if you were to, I mean it is incredible, if you were to sort of put some kind of amplifying device in people's heads and broadcast, the way they talk to themselves and the external world, I think people would be horrified, you would be horrified to hear myself talk. If I talk to other people the way I talk to myself in an organization, I will be fired. So, my point is do not do that, treat yourself with kindness rather than contempt. Second thing, really important, is the outward. There is something important in disclosure. When we disclose things, it is an unburdening, when we disclose things, it is actually a way to build affinity. A lot of us fear that when we disclose our vulnerabilities, people will think less of us. The preponderance of evidence shows people actually think more of us when we do that. But the most important thing is this that emotions by their very nature are abstract, they are amorphous. That is what makes positive emotions feel so good and negative emotions feel so bad. So, with negative emotions what you want to do is you want to convert them, when you write about them or talk about them, you convert this blobby abstraction into words which are concrete and less fearsome, and that begins the sense making process. And finally, inward outward forward, you need to draw a lesson from it. And this is about our problem-solving skills and while human beings are pretty good problem solvers, we are pretty terrible at solving our own problems. So, what you want to do is something called self-distancing where you zoom out and look at the problem in a way as if it is somebody else's. So, you talk to yourself in the third person, you imagine having a conversation with the you of 10 years from now, you do things like, ask yourself what would I tell my best friend to do, there is a great business example of this from Andy Grove, the former CEO of Intel who always, as a decision-making tool, would say, alright, what would my successor do. And so, when we ask ourselves at a personal level, I am trying to make a decision what would I tell my best friend to do, we almost always know. Andy Grove said what would my successor do, he almost always knew. And that is because in order to solve problems for ourselves, we need to be zooming out rather than be so enmeshed in the details.

DJ: Actually, in McKinsey, one of the founding fathers of McKinsey was Marvin Bower, and one of the questions that we would be told was what would Marvin do in the situation as a frame of decision making.

DP: Oh, nice. Yeah, I did not know that, that is fascinating. Yeah, that is fascinating. But that is another way to do that and there is so much good evidence of that. And so, when we do these things, you can interrupt. Again, some people wallow and ruminate in their regrets but you can interrupt that march toward rumination if people know what to do. They say, treat yourself with kindness rather than contempt, disclose, convert your language to make sense of it, do some self-distancing to extract a lesson from it for next time, and if you do that, it becomes a ritual, and then, you get improvement, you get that initial jolt of pain from the regret because regret hurts, it is negative, but you have a systematic way to turn that pain into something productive.

DJ: Hmm. And one of the things you spoke about just now, you used a term illeism, I hope I am pronouncing it right where you talk about yourself in the third person. Can you just expand on that? There is one particular community in India in Kerala, in South India which does that in the language as a default, that is sort of the nature of the language when...

DP: Really, so they do not have a first, so first person is an exception and so third person is the default.

DJ: For example, if we were sitting in the room, I would not say would you want some coffee, I would say, would Dan want some coffee when I talk to you.

DP: Okay, so it is not, how would you refer to yourself in that language?

DJ: It is a good question. I have seen that in the context of the second person, probably not in the case of the first person, so yeah, I stand corrected.

DP: Okay but it is still very interesting because it shows, but it shows you like how we, like our language, well, this is a controversial point, but that change in language can produce a change in perspective, that is the thing about the third person. But the thing is if you ask me that question, if you and I are in, I have been to Kerala, I have been to Cochin. Kerala is famous for its Vindaloo I know that among other things. So religiously diverse state in India as well, very beautiful too. But if I were to respond to that saying, yes, Dan would like some tea, that is very interesting. I mean, that is super interesting. And again, so much of this goes to how we construe problems and we want to construe problems both, we want to have the ability, it is almost bilingualism, we want to have the ability to construe problems on both the abstract level and the concrete level, both in the micro and the macro. And sometimes, the linguistic shifts can move us there, but we need to actually, since we do not do that automatically, we need to come up with ways to do that, that is why, what would Marvin do, is such a brilliant technique, what would my successor do, what would I tell my best friend to do, it is so powerful.

DJ: Yeah, lovely, okay. Dan in the book, you refer to the Japanese art form kintsugi, and you speak about how regrets can help us discover a uniqueness and find our own pathway, and you go on to say that the cracks are how the light gets in. A lot of leaders I work with are at a point of transition and they are trying to figure out what next in their journeys, given the career they have had, given their passions and given the market and so on, and this particular phrase stood out for me. So, can you expand on this notion of kintsugi and sort of using the cracks to let the light in?

DP: Yeah, so we are spanning the cultural references here across the Pacific Ocean because the cracks are like it is a lyric from a song by Leonard Cohen, the Canadian singer, and kintsugi is an ancient form of Japanese pottery where what happened is that in the old days, the pottery would break, they sent it out to be repaired, the repair was terrible. Then they sent it instead to some artisans to repair it, and the reparations, the repaired pottery is more beautiful because they did this really elegant job of stitching up the seams and whatnot. And so, kintsugi is this gorgeous form of pottery that is broken, but despite its crack, it is beautiful because of the cracks in the way they have been joined together. And so, as a writer, I cannot resist the metaphor, and I think that that is a metaphor in some ways for what regret does for us, that if we acknowledge the cracks, if the cracks are how the light gets in, if we recognize that we have all the product of mistakes and regrets and setbacks and things like that, and instead of papering over them, instead of a smoothing over them, we actually kind of acknowledge them, there is a beauty in that. And also, there is a performance advantage in that because you are spending time moving forward rather than trying to portray this perfect image of yourself. So, I love that as a metaphor. So, if you have career, sort of, seasoned professionals in transition thinking of themselves as like, okay, where are the cracks, I think that can be a very healthy way to approach things. The other thing about, I think that comes out, sort of, if I can make a regret related point here in terms of these career transitions is that, one of the things you see more broadly is that people have many more regrets by inaction than action. They regret what they didn't do more than what they did do. And so, I think there is an argument in general in life to have at least a slight bias for action. And I think the reason for that is that in some ways, you have gotten it wrong, and here, I am going to steer this ship around to the point about career transitions, is that if you look at career transitions, I think a lot of times what we want to do is transitions of any kind. We want to think it through, plan it out, come up with a strategy and then execute on the strategy, and does not always work that way. In fact, Herminia Ibarra now at the London Business School has some great work on this which is basically like acting is a form of

discovering. That is one of the things that I have learned in my life. It is that, you cannot just figure out everything, sometimes you just have to act. And I think that the regrets that people express since it is so overwhelmingly about inactions rather than actions, to me, it says, in the grand scheme of life, you want to have a slight bias for action because actions, it is not only how you get stuff done, but it is also how you figure stuff out.

DJ: Fascinating. She has been on the podcast as well and she uses a phrase, act your way into a new way of thinking, is a phrase she uses.

DP: Right, exactly. That is a better way, I mean it is her work. She started working on this, like, maybe, 20 years ago in her book, Working Identity, and it has been real, I think it is totally smart, I think it is totally on point, and again, in some ways, we have the sequence wrong. We think that yeah, exactly as she says, you have to act yourself into a new way of thinking. And so, again, it is another reason why I think in general we should have a bias for action because acting is how you figure stuff out, and also, we are more likely to regret inactions.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here once again. I learnt something similar from my conversation with Bruce Feiler (BF), author of the book Life in the Transitions. He speaks about a classic scene from Indiana Jones where he needs to take a leap of faith into the unknown first and then the bridge appears. If you have a few minutes I would strongly urge you to take out a few minutes and check this clip out on YouTube. I think that is a profound metaphor to the way transitions often play out especially when people become more experienced. Bruce Feiler expands on that notion here.

BF: *"There is something about the fact that the great stories of every faith involve going into the wilderness in some aspect. It is in the Hebrew Bible. It is in the Hindu tradition where you go into the forest. It is in the Buddhist tradition. It is in the Muslim tradition, okay. It is in the story of all of the great mythologies have somebody going on a journey of some kind and that journey in a fundamental way is leaving what is secure and safe and going into this period of lack of confidence and wilderness and transformation and fear. So, at the first phase is the long goodbye where you accept it and you use rituals in some way. The next step involves taking a step and going through that process and that brings you to the Indiana Jones scene where let's remember here, he's in one place and there's a cliff and there appears to be no bridge. He actually has to take a step and then the bridge appears after he takes the step. That's what it is like to go into this messy middle and it involves two processes fundamentally. The first is to shed some habit some way of life. Maybe it is shedding your... maybe you like having a job and it is shedding that comfort of stability. Maybe it is shedding a habit that maybe you have been a people pleaser and you have stayed around something for too long, and it is taking you too long to say goodbye and you realize you have to stop trying to please your boss. Maybe you have to stop trying to live up to the expectation of your parents that dare I say it, okay. Maybe your parents have fed you these expectations that you must have a certain status and you must bring in a certain kind of money and you must do something that you don't want to do and you are I would rather do something that I want to do or maybe you have to say I want to stop making money and I want to start giving back to society you want to shape shift. So, you have to shed some expectation. This is the first half of what the messy middle involves and then the second half is absolutely astonishing acts of creativity. Once you shed things from your life you suddenly have room to try new things, okay. Maybe it is a new habit, maybe it is a new skill, maybe you start to paint, maybe you start to dance, maybe you start to sing. Like people literally do actual things. Like think when the pandemic happened everyone was posting pictures about learning to bake,*

right? That was the... I may have been the only person who was not surprised by this because even the act of baking something small is an act of re-imagining. If you can imagine that you can bake something and that you can eat that and that little act of imagining that creation allows you to imagine that you can make and bake and create your new life. And that's what happened, it begins with small steps just like Indiana Jones sometimes on a bridge that you don't even know is there."

DJ: If you are at a point of transition, I would strongly strongly recommend the conversation with Herminia Ibarra and Bruce Feiler to give you some perspectives around how to frame your thoughts for the transition. You might also find the curated playlist Navigational Principles and Reinventing Yourself of value. You can check them out at playtopotential.com.

Let's get back to Dan Pink now.

DJ: And you speak about omission and commission. I love the phrase you use in the book Dan, you say, inaction by laying eggs under our skin, incubate endless speculation.

DP: Yeah, that is a line from American poet named Ogden Nash who wrote about why sins of omission linger more than sins of commission because they lay eggs under our skin. And I think that comes out very clearly in all the research, it came out very clearly in my quantitative survey, it come out very clearly in the interviews, especially as we age and there is an age effect here. When we are young, we tend to have relatively equal numbers of action regrets what we did and inaction regret what we did not do, as we age, the inaction regrets take over. And I think a reason for that is that with certain kinds of action regrets, you can undo some of them. So, let us say you have hurt somebody, you can make amends. I just got a note from a reader who said that he had some regrets about how he had treated people in his life, three people in particular in his life. And he read the book and he went back and he apologized to them, he made amends to them and so, in a way, like, he has not fully extinguished the regret, but he has mitigated it considerably. So, action regrets, you can make amends, you can make repairs, you can do something about, you can do some at-leasting of it to make it feel a little bit better, but with inaction regrets, as Ogden Nash says, they lay eggs under your skin, they are not going to go away.

DJ: Hmm. And moving to connection regrets Dan, you speak about open and close door regrets, and you also speak about rifts and drifts. I love the pithy words to, sort of, digest these things. Can you say more about the distinction between these kinds of regrets and how we can get the most out of them? And more specifically, you urge us to lean into awkwardness and err on the side of showing up...

DP: Yeah. I think to me, that was a big takeaway from these, especially from the connection regrets. So let me start with the second part. So, we can talk about open doors and close doors, we are going to talk about rifts and drifts, and we are going to talk about awkwardness. Let me start with the second one first. So connection regrets are about these relationships that have come apart, and one of the things, it surprised me, that when you read people's regrets and then, you know, I interviewed couple hundred and ninety of these people, what you find is that, the way these relationships come apart is not especially dramatic, it is much more likely to be a drift than a rift, it is much more likely to come apart slowly, imperceptibly, spreading apart like this rather than, you know, some kind of cataclysm, and I think that is very telling. And so, what happens then, to the third part of your question, as these relationships come apart, they drift apart, what happens is that one side wants to reach out and they say, it is going to be really awkward to reach out and the other side is not going to care. And here is where we are wrong on so many different levels. I heard anecdotally, you see it in the research, we woefully over-predict our feelings of awkwardness. When we reach out, it is not

nearly as awkward as we think, number one, but number two and perhaps even more important, the other side almost always cares. And so, we are wrong and you think, it is going to be awkward and they are not going to care, but you know what, it is not very awkward and they always care. So, this is interesting, it is sort of like the bias for action. So, to me, it is like, when in doubt reach out. you know, if you are at a juncture where you are thinking about reaching out, should I reach out, you may answer the question by being at the juncture. Now the trouble here is that, let us go to the first part of your question, open doors and close doors. There is a story in the book of a woman who had a friend, a childhood friend she grew up with, actually New Jersey where used to live. And she had this childhood friend who she grew up with. They were very good friends as kids and they stayed in touch as young women, not super close but stayed in touch. She found out that her friend had a very serious form of cancer and this woman wanted to reach out, I am going to reach out, oh, but it is going to be awkward, she is going to think it is weird that I am calling her, and finally when she decides to call, she finds out her friend had died that morning. And so, that is a close door, you cannot do anything about that. And the only thing you do with a close door regret is learn from it. And this woman Amy, she actually did learn from it. But with the open-door regrets, you still have a chance to do something. And I think for a lot of our relationships, the door is still open. But, as you say, we have to push past our awkwardness and reach out.

DJ: And on a related note, Dan, you say you refer to disclosure, compassion and distance in the way we deal with regret, are these related points in terms of how we make sense of regret and use that to move forward?

DP: Well, yeah, that is what I was talking about before, sort of, refine my thinking a little bit about inward, outward and forward. But yeah, so inward is self-compassion, sort of, treat ourselves with kindness. Self-disclosure is just revealing it or even just converting it to language. And then self-distancing is zooming out and making sense of it. And I really do think that there is a systematic way to deal with this. The problem is that most of us never learn how to do it. And one of my concerns is among younger people who seem to be getting just debilitated by negative emotions because they feel a negative emotion, they feel a regret, they made a mistake, and they think that there is something wrong with them because they look around and feel like everybody else's life is so perfect that they are somehow broken, and that is debilitating, and that can actually lead them into dangerous rumination.

DJ: And that observation, is that linked or is that amplified by the social media where people end up posting, sort of, positive side of the elements of their life and there are people having distorted perception of how others are doing, are these connected?

DP: I do not know but I think so. And I think that if you look at social media, you would think that individuals never have anything bad happen to them except that they have a political opponent who is a terrible person, like, that is the only negative. So political discussions are entirely negative. But when you look at people's presentation of self, it is almost uniformly positive. I have this idea, one of the many academics have been on this show will hear this and do something, I want to know, okay, so here is my research project for you to figure out, here is what I want you to know, let us take something like Instagram, I want someone to do, you can probably do this with some kind of AI, here is what you do, you take a billion Instagram photographic posts, and what you do is you reconfigure the images, so you take out the people, alright, and all you are doing is an evaluation of the weather in the background. And I am convinced that you will have, then you say, oh, what proportion of the days are sunny, rainy, cloudy, alright. And then, my guess is that if you look at, you can narrow it by geography, alright, you can do every post in Mumbai for three years and then you compare that to the actual weather in Mumbai for the last three years, and it is going to be like, oh, it never rains in Mumbai, it is never cloudy, it is always sunny, every single day. So my true answer honestly, so I

have not done the research, and some of the research on the effects of social media is very very mixed, my own instinctive response is that it does not help, it does not help in people doing the endless social comparison and the endless FOMO that is distracting and then, sort of, does not allow them to focus on, what the evidence tells us really matters in life.

DJ: Got it. Going back to one of the things you mentioned Dan about how regrets, especially in the context of drifts, you know, sometimes, it is like a frog in the boiling water kind of a thing, I think you make that broader point about some of the regrets, the core regrets, you say that they creep up on us over time. In these kinds of situations, I am curious about, as journeymen and journeywomen, as we go through our life, how do we ensure we catch ourselves and not succumb to the frog in a boiling water situation when it comes to some of these regrets.

DP: Yeah, that is a really good question. I do not know; I actually have a systematic way to do that. I mean, I do think that there is something to be said for regular self-assessments. Peter Drucker has a technique that I use, because Peter Drucker figured out everything that you and I thought we figured out 50 years ago, I cannot think of what it is called Deepak but I do it myself, is that, what you do is you write a memo or you say, here is my prediction of how the next six months are going to go, this is what I do, and I cannot think what, it is not my idea, it is Drucker's idea, I am going to think through the next six months and here is my prediction of how things are going to go. And then, I put it in drop box and I never look at it, except those six months from that date, I put a tickler in my calendar to look at that. And then I see, okay, so where were my forecasts right, where were they not. And at some level, that kind of punctuation mark, that kind of assessment might allow us to do that. I feel like there is the way to avoid the frog in the boiling water, is to, sort of, set up a timer and stick your finger in to see how hot the water is getting.

DJ: Lovely, I love the phrase punctuation mark, just an ability to pause and reflect and take stock and move.

DP: I have become a bigger believer in various kinds of punctuation marks because otherwise, our lives are just, it is like free verse, and it is hard to, you know. I think what Robert Frost said, so I am going to get all the hate mail from poets, but Robert Frost said that free verse is like playing tennis without a net.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here again. I love the point about punctuation marks that Dan makes here. These sometimes provide us the discrete opportunities in a continuum to take action. In this context, I heard something valuable from Katy Milkman (KM), a Professor at Wharton and the author of the book – How to Change. She speaks about the notion of a Fresh Start and the fact that if we look carefully enough, there are enough and fresher start opportunities around us.

KM: *"What we found is that there are moments, this would not surprise you at all that feel more like fresh starts to people. And the one that we are all familiar with already is New Years. This is a moment when around the world people are setting resolutions at a higher rate than usual, trying to pursue goals at a higher rate than usual, and it feels like a fresh start. The psychology of New Year's actually turns out to be familiar and extends to many other moments, but the psychology of New Years is you can say, sort of, well, that was the old me last year, the old me could not achieve this, you know, the old me tried to quit smoking and failed, but that was a whole different person. The new me in the New Year can do it. And you feel this dissociation from your past failures in this renewed optimism as you open a new chapter in life. What we found is that New Years is actually*

just one moment that has that new chapter fresh start feeling. There are lots of other moments on the calendar and in life when we also feel we are turning a page and can get that same dissociation from past failures and motivation, and also the likelihood that we might actually step back and think big picture about our lives is greater. So some of those moments include, according to our research, the start of a new week or a new month, the celebration of holidays that feel like fresh starts in our culture, the celebration of birthdays. And, of course, there is other research looking not only at these psychological or temporal markers that give us the sense of a clean slate and a fresh start, but if you physically change environments, that has not only psychological appeal and helps you, but it can literally disrupt routines in a way that is helpful as well."

DJ: Finding punctuation marks like Dan says or Fresh Start opportunities like Katy says could be interesting approaches to deal with the awkwardness of drifts and the regret that comes with it.

Let's get back to Dan Pink to wrap up our conversation.

DJ: Couple of questions before we wrap up Dan, you say that we need to adopt a journey mindset as we go through life, and I was processing that in the context of regrets, give us a sense of what you have in mind when you say journey - mindset.

DP: Well, this is from some work by Jennifer Aaker at Stanford University who found something pretty interesting is that, when people pursue goals and they reach the goal, reaching the goal is often somewhat unsatisfying and in a weird way, demotivating afterwards. And what she said is that what you really want to do is actually think of things from a journey mindset, that is, the whole point is to continue the journey, to keep going on the journey. And I think that is a useful way, I mean you use that word Deepak multiple times in this interview, you know, what is the journey that you are on. Because I am not sure if we ever know the specific destination. I mean, I think there are some way- stations along the way where you want to actually aim toward that destination. But once we hit that destination, that destination is only sort of a stop along another kind of journey. There is another metaphor that I like from James Carse who wrote a book, 40 years, 50 years ago maybe, that he calls Finite and Infinite games. So finite game, the goal is to win, and infinite game, the goal is to keep playing. Goals and destinations are useful in certain circumstances, I do not want to bypass them entirely, but I think more broadly, we want to actually look at our lives as a journey, as an infinite game where the goal is to keep playing.

DJ: Lovely. Dan as we wrap up, just five quick questions, top of mind answers, one line, two lines, whatever, just brief.

DP: Okay, I will try to be more concise than I usually am.

DJ: No no no, if you need to expand, feel free.

DP: Okay, do not say that to me.

DJ: Okay, first, what surprised you the most in your findings about regrets?

DP: How universal they were. In a quantitative survey, I did a very large sample of US population in part, so I could look at demographic subgroups for differences and there were not that many. If you look at the World Regret Survey, the national differences were scant.

DJ: Hmm. While Jeff Bezos is known to use regret for decision making, are there other well-known leaders that stand out for using regret as a decision-making tool?

DP: I think Andy Grove's idea which we talked about about what would my successor do is a really good one. And I think that Bezos' idea that you want to minimize your future regrets is right if we focus on the core regrets and not on every regret.

DJ: Hmm, got it. Which of the four types of regrets have you personally found most challenging to deal with?

DP: Interesting question, I think the moral regrets in part because I have some regrets about kindness that I would put in that category, and it is a peculiar kind of moral regret in that. A lot of moral regrets are about actions rather than inactions, and my moral regret is actually about inaction, having to do with kindness where I was in many situations when I was a younger person, where people, I never bullied anybody, but where people were being mistreated or being excluded and I knew it and I did not do anything, and that really bugs me, and it is something that I try to work on. But I still feel that little spear of pain each time I think about it which is good.

DJ: It goes back to an earlier point about omission regrets laying eggs under the skin, I guess it is one of...

DP: Yeah, that is a good point, right, but what is interesting about that is that many moral regrets are I bullied somebody, I cheated on my spouse, I hurt somebody, you know, whereas for me, I am not the only one, but for me, my moral regret was a moral regret of inaction. I stood by while people were being mistreated, I knew it was wrong and I did not do anything.

DJ: Hmm, fascinating. What is the most common misconception you see people having about regret?

DP: Oh, that it should be avoided, and it is inherently destructive, and that is wrong on both counts, that it should be reckoned with properly, and when we do that, it is actually extremely constructive.

DJ: Hmm. And last, if we want to understand the power of regret, is there a movie or a book that comes to mind that sort of illustrates this?

DP: You know, the one that comes to mind is an American movie called It's a Wonderful Life which is a good movie about counterfactual thinking and it is a good movie about at-least, and it is a movie about this guy who decides that he is going to kill himself and he is visited by an angel, and the angel shows him what life would be like had he never been born, and it is a terrible dark and situation he realizes that his life has value. You know, regret hinders on storytelling, so there are a lot of, there are movies and things that show what would have happened if you had made this choice or that choice or that choice. I think that is one of the reasons why it is such a compelling topic because it is into so much on storytelling.

DJ: True. Groundhog Day was another movie that...

DP: Oh, Groundhog Day is a great one, yeah.

DJ: As I was reading a book. Just as we wrap up Dan, this podcast is titled Play to Potential. Given all the work you have done along the way including regret, for the purpose of listeners, what does the phrase Play to Potential mean to you?

DP: Hmm. It is interesting question. I think that what it means is, I do not want to get overly deep on you, you could have a companion podcast called Deep With Deepak, but I do not want to get overly deep on you, but I think what it says to me is that, you know, we are not here forever, we are on this

planet for a vanishingly short amount of time, and you need to use your gifts, you need to not sleepwalk through life, you need to offer as much to the world as you possibly can by playing to your potential. And so, to me, it is a reminder of a mortality. We are reminded that we need to be our very best selves and contribute as much as we can during that very very short stint we have here on this planet.

DJ: On that note Dan, pleasure having you at the Play to Potential Podcast. Thank you so much for making time.

DP: Thank you for having me. I really enjoyed it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. Hope you found the conversation purposeful.

To know more about what is in the podcast archives and the nature of my advisory work, you can just visit www.playtopotential.com.

Thank you and look forward to having you at one of the subsequent conversations at the podcast.

End of transcription

Nugget from Ashley Whillans that is referenced: [Optimizing versus Satisficing mindset](#).

Nugget from Bruce Feiler that is referenced: [Taking a leap of faith](#).

Nugget from Katy Milkman that is referenced: [Taking a leap of faith](#).

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Dan Pink - Nuggets

- 89.01 Dan Pink - Lawyer to Leadership Thinker
- 89.02 Dan Pink - Regret - The photographic negative
- 89.03 Dan Pink - Four Core Regrets
- 89.04 Dan Pink - Regrets and Choice
- 89.05 Dan Pink - Counterfactual thinking
- 89.06 Dan Pink - Goldilocks balance in handling regret
- 89.07 Dan Pink - Inward Outward Forward
- 89.08 Dan Pink - Regrets and Transitions
- 89.09 Dan Pink - Rifts and Drifts

About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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Podcast Transcript [89.00 Dan Pink - The Full Conversation](#)

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