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## Context to the nugget conversation

Dan speaks about his journey from qualifying as a lawyer to what he does now. He also shares his insights around what drives his wide arc of curiosity which has led to him writing about the Mind, the process of Selling, Regret, the Science of Timing and a book about careers in the Japanese comic art form – Manga!

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (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.

Dan Pink (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 hard, it is a lot of work, it is 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 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.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the point Dan makes about a porous border between work and home. I guess even people who worked in Corporations experienced it given the Work from Home Context in Covid. Having made the shift to becoming an Independent Consultant about 6 years back, I couldn't agree more about the role that a spouse plays in navigating the vagaries of that journey.

He also speaks about how his wife provided a bit of a buffer that gave him the ability to take the plunge. This came up in my conversation with Jennifer Petriglieri (JP) of INSEAD who was in the podcast to discuss about how dual career couples navigate key transitions in their life.

*JP: "So the couples who do very well I found are those who flick their model of support from that to a model of support called a secure base. Now secure means three things first it means of course there is that level of comfort that level of support but layer on top of that are another two things. One is an if I can think if there is a loving kick away from a relationship so loving persuade say you know I'll be here to dust you off but you get out there and figure it out so if you aren't sure if you are having these existential questions the response is don't worry, we will be fine. It's okay gets out there then and figures something else this push to explore a push away from the safety of the relationship away from the comfort zone and into that learning there are not risk zone. Now this a bit counterintuitive because in a relationship when our partner feeling a little bit uncertain and a little bit wobbly our natural instincts just like that with our children is to hold them close is to give them a cuddle you know metaphor and this is quite the opposite when we see our partner struggling with something feeling a little bit unsure instead of pulling them close, we actually push them away and in a loving way and to it's quite a different model of support."*

DJ: Jennifer speaks about three key transitions that all couples go through and speaks about how they could navigate those. Do look up that conversation if that is of interest.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Jennifer Petriglieri that is referenced: [Securing the base for the other to explore](#).

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- 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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