

Jerry:

Daniel, it's a real delight to have you on the show today. Um, typically I ask people to introduce themselves. And I started doing that mostly because I would mangle last names. So but yours is actually easy to pronounce.

Daniel Pink:

I got a pretty easy last name.

Jerry:

Yeah. Let's see how you would do this. Why don't you take a minute and introduce yourself?

Daniel Pink:

My name is Daniel Pink and I am a writer. I write books about, um, business and behavior and the intersection thereof, books that try to help people see their lives a little more clearly and live them a little bit more fully. And that's what I've been doing for the last 20 years. Which is why I need a sabbatical, which is how you and I (laughs) connected.

Jerry:

(Laughs). All right, we're gonna go right there. Is that how we connected? I know we connected via Twitter, uh, 'cause I remember you-

Daniel Pink:

I know how we connected. I mean, I'd known of you, but what happened is I heard an interview with you where you said something that I could not get out of my head, which was the question of whether we how complicit are we in conditions we say we don't want.

Jerry:

Yeah.

Daniel Pink:

And I found that to be a profoundly important insight, one I'm still thinking about. And I happen to have listened to that because I truly, Jerry was contemplating a sabbatical and wasn't sure exactly how to do it. And so that interview was extremely... It was more enlightening than I- than I had any right to expect.

Jerry:

Ah, well.

Daniel Pink:

And it was an interview on the Tim- on the Tim- on the Tim Ferriss show, I should say for all you listeners out there.

Jerry:

That- that- that's right. Tim is a dear friend. And uh, I'll tell you how that episode came about. We were emailing back and forth and I think at some point he got my autoresponder that said something like, "Hey folks, I'm on sabbatical." And he's like, "Sabbatical, I wanna talk about sabbatical (laughs)." And uh, it took us a couple of months to schedule things as- as is [inaudible 00:02:58]. But, um, so what was it that was happening for you that drew you in first into the whole notion of sabbatical? And then maybe we can spend a little bit of time on that question.

Daniel Pink:

Well, um, what- what drew me into the topic of sabbatical was that I've been, you know, I've been writing books for, I've been writing books for 20 years.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Pink:

And it is, I feel like the amount that I'm learning, the amount that I'm growing isn't rising as sharply as I would've wanted. And so I feel like it might need a punctuation mark, um, not, uh, just punctuation mark to stop and reflect and think about, you know, what I might wanna do for the next five years, let alone the next 15, the next- next 20 years. I mean, one of the things that you write in your book is, um, somewhere in there is the I- the danger of thinking that our lives have to progress up into the right. And- and- and I feel like, you know, I think that's another profoundly important insight and so one way to interrupt that belief I think is to take a pause.

Jerry:

You said it very well. I think that that's exactly right. And- and, um, I didn't expect you to reference my own book here. We're- we're here to talk about your book, but I- I'll say this. I think that if you recall from the book, there's a- a chapter called Standing Still.

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

And, um, there is a power in the standing still, there's a power in pausing.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

There's a power in just reconsidering. And, you know, the truth is I think, um, you know, whether you call it the great resignation or the great reexamination or whatever it is that we're going through, there is a profound shift that's happened I think, in our society and the value of standing still, maybe hitting closer and closer to home.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah. And also examining the question of whether we are in motion for motions sake, not necessarily go anywhere, but for the sake be- because standing still can be uncomfortable be- and being in motion, even if it's not in any particular direction toward any kind of purpose can be soothing and reassuring.

Jerry:

I think that mistaking motion for meaning is kind of a national, maybe international, uh, epidemic. Um, not only do we need to see ourselves as moving up into the right in this constant experience, but we need to see ourselves as a kind of a machine constantly outputting in order to quiet the sense that I'm nothing unless I'm producing.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah, (laughs) right.

Jerry:

And I'm gonna talk to you like a writer, right? I'm in the middle of a second book right now, and you'll probably resonate with this. If I'm not typing on the keyboard, it doesn't feel valuable.

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Jerry:

Doesn't matter that some of my best insights come to me when I'm writing my book. And it doesn't matter if some of my best insights come after two or three days of resting, the- the sensibility I can carry is that I must be always moving forward. Does that resonate?

Daniel Pink:

Sure. That's something as a- as a writer that I think I've done a reasonably good job of reckoning with, um, just because I've been doing this very, very long time. And I do recognize that, um, when I- when I run at some level, the idea is still incubating and I will come up with a phrase or an idea or a concept or a question while I'm running. Um, and you know, and I do recognize that and I sometimes violate this, that- that- that taking breaks in the writing process is actually part of the performance, not a deviation from the work. So I've done a pretty good job of reckoning with that as a writer, as a human being, less so.

Jerry:

I was just gonna make that connection because I'm gonna feed back to you what you just said. You recognize that taking breaks is part of the process except when you're just talking about living your life.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah, that's true. I mean, when you think about it's an- it's a... I mean, I do think that there's something to that for me personally, which is that I recognize as a professional as someone who has writing as a profession, okay, that's my job, that's what I do, right? In the same way that an athlete's- it's an athlete's

job or a musician's job or an actor's job. It's what I do, it's a profession. It's something that I show up to and do my work because that's what professionals do.

And but I also recognize that being part of a- being a professional, part of that is that professionals take breaks. One of the things that I've discovered is that- is that, you know, we had it- I had it wrong for many, many years. I always thought that amateurs took breaks and professionals powered through, and that's bullshit. Professionals take breaks, professionals know how to take breaks. And so I've gotten better as a professional at- at taking breaks, whether I've gotten better as in the non-professional parts of my life of taking a pause or taking a break is a different issue.

Jerry:

So in what ways has it served you in your life to not take breaks?

Daniel Pink:

Well, I mean, it could be that it served me by replacing motion with meaning, by replacing meaning with motion, that it could be that for me being in motion and doing stuff, uh, you know, gave me an excuse not to examine deeper questions about who I was and why I was put on this planet. That could be it.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm. Sounds reasonable. What was it about the question that Tim and I were bouncing around, how have I been complicit in creating the conditions I say I don't want? What was it about that question that struck you and what [inaudible]-

Daniel Pink:

Well, what struck me, what- what struck me is that I think I listened to it at a time where I was, where- where like- like many people today, um, I felt a sense of burnout. Um, I felt a sense that I was, uh, working twice as hard to go half the speed to get half the distance. And the question then and- and it's easy to say in those kinds of circumstances that, oh, it's some kind of external force, it's some- it's circumstantial, it's about the environment, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

But it made me stop and say, okay, how- how am I complicit in creating these conditions? And I- and again, um, I- I didn't conclude from that question, oh my God, I am guilty as sin, it's entirely my fault. I am a chronic self-sabotager. You know, I didn't go, I didn't go all the way down-

Jerry:

You didn't weaponize it.

Daniel Pink:

Down that path. But it did make me stop and say, okay, you have some agency in the conditions that you're living in, so what is it about these conditions ha- have you created that you want to dial back? So again, I have no answers. I just have a lot of- I just have a lot, I... That- that- that question spurred more questions for me.

Jerry:

Well, that means it's a good question, right?

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

I wanna bring your attention to the use of the word complicit in that statement. Um, because you- you immediately went into that state that I fear people go into and you noted that you didn't go into it, which is great. I often fear 'cause I see that question now all over. I often fear that people are turning it into, how am I responsible for the conditions of my life?

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

And that's actually not the way it's phrased. And what I like to point out is when I use the word complicit, I'm referencing accomplishing.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

I'm referencing driving the getaway car, not sticking up the bank teller, right?

Daniel Pink

Although both are crimes under both federal and state statutes.

Jerry:

Yeah (laughs).

Daniel Pink:

Both are crimes. They're crimes that they're- they're crimes that have different components and they're crimes that have different penalties attached to them, but they're both crimes.

Jerry:

They're both crimes. I will grant you that, but there are different levels of agency and responsibility and that's why they have different punishments. And so the complicitness is really important because one of the phenomena that people go through is to look at their, uh, the experience, the negative experience that they might be having, burnout for example. And they- they look at it and instead of just pushing away all responsibility and continuing to move, they start to internalize, over internalize responsibility.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

And then what gets lost is the lesson. What gets lost is the ability to actually grow in that moment.

Daniel Pink:

Right. And that's a similar phenomenon to how people reckon with regret. That is- that is there are that- that in some cases there's a... In- in many realms of life, there's a third way. We tend to think of things as very, you know, in a polar way, but there's often, I don't even say a middle- middle ground, it's- it's more triangulation.

And so, you know, with regret, this, you know, negative emotion, some of us say, blot our ears, put our fingers in our ears and say, "Blah, blah, blah. I don't hear anything, no regret, no regret, no regret," and we ignore it. And others get- get captured by it and wallow in it. And that's bad too. What we want to do is we want to think about things, these- these kinds of things. We want to confront these- these kinds of things in an honest, thoughtful confrontation rather than a flight to safety by ignoring or the bashing ourselves for self-flagellation for our many weaknesses.

Jerry:

Yeah. I once had a friend call it the guilt sponge. The guilt sponge is soaking up all of the responsibility and then therefore actually being disconnected from whatever important lesson might be implicit in the whole thing.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

At the same... And it's just as, um, negative as claiming no responsibility, claiming no agency in this situation. So it's curious that that question landed for the writer of *The Power of Regret*. It's really curious for me, why did you write that book?

Daniel Pink:

Well, I wrote it in part because, um, you know, I- I write most of my books out of a sense of- out of a sense of curiosity, uh, where, you know, I feel like if I'm curious about something, if I'm trying to work something out, if I'm trying to make sense of something, then other people are too. There's an old journalistic adage, always extrapolate from your own experience, you're not that special. And I- and I tend to, I tend to buy that.

And so what happened to me though is that I was at a point in my life where to my surprise, I had mileage on me. I sort of looked up one day and suddenly realized that you know, 20 years had gone by and I'd been engaged in this profession and I've been doing these things and suddenly there was space to look back on. And now, fortunately, I also think that there was plenty of space to look forward on. And so when you look backward, you inevitably think about what you did wrong.

And then I had some markers in my life like- like, you know, like a kid graduating from college and so forth and- and I just started thinking, reflecting on my own regrets. And thinking about what it meant. And one of my sort of theories of the case as a writer is that I believe in socializing ideas that if you have

an idea, you talk to people about it, you put it out there. Like I think too many people think, oh, I got to keep it 'cause someone's gonna steal it. They're not gonna fricking steal it. Um, and so you socialize it.

And one of the things that I noticed when I was talking to people about these- these regrets and kind of you know what? You ever thought about regret, you know, it's like... And I started talking about my regrets, is that people, they- they leaned into it, they- they welcomed it. They actually saw it in some ways as an invitation to share their own regret. And when you have that kind of... And- and again, so this is where 20 years of experience gives you some guidance where it's like, "Whoa, hold on a second. That's a serious response right there. Uh, that- that shows me that I'm onto something."

And so to make a long story longer, I actually was writing an entirely different book and I put it aside, took a month to look at the existing academic research on regret, and then I spent about another three weeks writing an entirely new book proposal. And to the surprise of my editor said, "Hey, this book that you think that I'm writing for you, I've stopped writing 'cause I think I have something better."

Jerry:

And you had enough credibility that the editor probably said, "Okay, let's go." Um, and so-

Daniel Pink:

Not immediately, not immediately, but it was the, you know, it began- it began the- it began the conversation.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm. What did- what did you discover in that- in that interim period where you were writing one thing and then moving into the other? What did you discover?

Daniel Pink:

Well, what I- what I discovered when I put away this one project and started this, and again, just looked at the academic research on regret, was there- there were a few things. Number one is that it was- it was ubiquitous that- that it was- that it was- it was more- it was a more fundamental part of our cognitive machinery than I had- had imagined, that it wasn't just kind of like... That it wasn't like an emotion that is, you know, we're gonna lie, you know, we're gonna think about the various emotions we have, and this is actually, it's an interesting one, but it's not that important.

It was like, no, this is actually an essential emotion. Uh, and- and it's essential as part of our cognitive machinery that it- that it mattered more than I thought. So- so the ubiquity of it, um, uh, really intrigued me, the complexity of it intrigued me too because it requires, you know, it requires some sophisticated thinking to experience regret. And then when you look at those two things you and look at some of the other research you realize, "Holy crap, this is actually a useful emotion if we treat it right." And so for me, there was this gap between our perception of this emotion and the- the reality- the reality that science was telling us about this emotion. And so that I found that- I found that intriguing.

Jerry:

I'm gonna extrapolate from that story and take you back just a bit to the realization, you said your daughter was graduating high school, [inaudible 00:18:14].

Daniel Pink:

College.

Jerry:

College, okay. I have three kids, 30, 29, and soon to be 25, so I- I hear your brother. Um, uh, there's this moment in time where you're sort of starting to look back on your life, you're starting to feel regret and just outta curiosity, what were the things that you were regretting?

Daniel Pink:

There was a moment actually when I'm at this graduation, um, where I started thinking about my own college experience in part because I was so flustered by the fact that this- this little kid, this person who was just born is suddenly in a cap and gown graduating from college. And also that- that- that I'm old enough to have a kid graduating from college.

Jerry:

Have a kid graduate.

Daniel Pink:

I'm like, 'cause I'm like 27, how can I have kid graduating from college when I'm 27, 28 years old? Uh, and so as I started thinking this through, I started... It's just in that moment started thinking about some of my regrets about college and I was very happy in college. Um, but I started think, "God, I wish I had been kinder." That was a big regret of mine, um, in general, in early in my life, I wish I had been a kinder person. Uh, I wish I had actually worked a little harder, I wish I'd taken more risks. And, um, and again, I started just, you know, I wasn't... Those were- these were not debilitating regrets at all. They were just... but- but they weren't positive. They were- I was... They, you know, 'cause regret is a negative emotion.

Jerry:

They were painful.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah, they were uncomfortable. They were uncomfortable. It wasn't searing pain. It was- it was, they were uncomfortable.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Pink:

And I think in part because of that discomfort, I wanted, you know, I just mentioned it to people, and that's when I found that people really wanted to talk about this, that- that somehow this idea that this- this, the whole notion of regret has been- has been cloistered, it's been made taboo. Um, and everything I've done over the last couple of years in doing this research suggests that this is something people want to talk about. This is something that is actually healthy for people to talk about. This is something that is actually important for us to grapple with. And so that's why I decided to write a book about this and do

you know, not only look at the academic research but do two big research projects of my own to try to crack the code.

Jerry:

I'm imagining, I could be wrong, but I'm imagining that part of what people want when they want to talk about regret is they want to talk about and alleviate some of the discomfort that you were feeling.

Daniel Pink:

I think that's part of it and I think that's actually difficult. And here's the thing that- that is that the thing that we know about regret is this, that number one, it is ubiquitous. It really is. That there's a pile of- there's a pile of research showing that it is one of our most common emotions of any kind, it's arguably our most common negative emotion. Um, it is something that exists in almost all of us.

The only people without regrets are little kids 'cause their brains haven't developed, people with brain lesions and certain kinds of neurodegenerative disorders, and sociopaths. Everybody else has regrets. Uh, and- and- and the thing is it's unpleasant. And so there's a riddle here. So you have this thing that- that is- is- is universal in the human experience, at least in people with functioning brains and it's unpleasant. So what's going on here?

It's like, why is something that's so unpleasant so ubiquitous? And the answer is 'cause it's useful because regret does things that other emotions don't do. And what- what regret does is that it clarifies what we value and it instructs us on how to do better. But Jerry, to your point, it's un- it's uncomfortable. And while we want the clarity and while we want the instruction, we might not want the discomfort and I'm sorry, that's not the bargain. The clarity and the instruction comes from the discomfort.

Jerry:

So in the book, you talk about, you know, encountering people with those tattoos that they regret, which is no regrets, right? And especially the ones that are misspelled. Um, what is it that they're trying to push away when they say, when they declare no regrets, what are they pushing away?

Daniel Pink:

I think that they're pushing away the... it could be a couple of things., I think part of it is simply the way that other people perceive them.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Pink:

So if they fear that if they acknowledge regrets if they acknowledge mistakes, people will think less of them. Um, that's a mistake for reasons that we can talk about. Um, and I also think that it is a, um, it- it, there's a... They don't want to deal with the discomfort of facing up to themselves in some ways. And so what they do is they- they- they broadcast no regrets as a display of courage, but it's performed courage. It's not actual courage, it's performative courage. And what I've discovered is that real courage is looking your regrets in the eye and doing something about them.

Jerry:

So, um, I love this. We're looking at in a sense a topic I often work with clients who are leading organizations, but through the lens of regret. And so, um, you made an interesting intellectual leap. You talked about acknowledging regret and then acknowledging mistakes. And even though they're kind of like kissing cousins, right?

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

I don't know that you necessarily made mistakes by focusing on one thing versus another. But in hindsight, which is another interesting term here, I can look back and say, "I should have spent time on X, not Y."

Daniel Pink:

Yeah. There are mistakes that- there are mistakes that we make that don't trigger regret. The thing about regret that makes it meaningful is that it lingers. So I've made all kinds of mistakes. I probably, you know, I probably made mistakes last week that I've completely forgotten. I've certainly made mistakes last year that I no longer even recall. And so that's a mistake that isn't a regret, but there are other kinds of things, there are other kinds of blunders, missteps, and screwups that stick with me that I do regret.

Jerry:

Mm-mmhm.

Daniel Pink:

And those things are very telling. So the fact that something exists as a regret is itself a signal. And that's what I'm trying to get. That's what- that's the point I'm trying to make in this- in this book, that when we have regrets they are data, they are information, they are signals, they're telling us something. And if we willingly say, "Nope, I don't want to hear this signal."

Or, and- and so we blot it away or we say, "Oh my God, it's a signal, it's a signal that makes me a little uncomfortable, I'm gonna dive under the couch and try to hide from it," that's bad too. What we wanna do is we want to confront things. We want to think about things. We want to acknowledge things. And we want to hear that knock on the door and open the door and say, "Hey, what do you got to tell me?"

Jerry:

Let me build upon that and expand it into, um, the kind of advice I would give, um, a client. And that is, um, client's perception of strength and leadership correlates to that kind of no regret attitude.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

It kind- it correlates to the do not acknowledge mistakes. We've seen presidential leadership that's had trouble acknowledging mistakes. We've seen leadership in political realms, we've seen leadership all across, uh, the spectrum struggling to acknowledge mistake, uh, regret. And then- and then from that place of authentic, honest dialogue, be able to sort of say, "And therefore, we are gonna change in this way. We're gonna do something different in this way." And, uh, in my experience, those of us who have less power than those who have power, when someone who has power has the ability to internalize in your term regret, to internalize and confront the mistakes, we create the conditions of safety for those of them underneath to be able to do the same thing.

Daniel Pink:

Amen. Exactly right, exactly right. And the o- the other. And- and so, and there's, again, I think that's intuitively correct. There's also some decent research showing this, that- that when we, uh, both in terms of the- the effect, how people view us, when we disclose our mistakes, our vulnerabilities, our fear is that people will think less of it. There are 30 years of behavioral science saying that in general, not in all cases, but in general, people think more of us.

But what's more, I think even more important is what you're describing, is the knock-on effect, that taking those actions actually establishes the conditions of psychological safety that allow other people to do their best work because they are able to take sensible risks, speak up, do the kinds of things that- that otherwise they felt thwarted on because the leader is saying, "Hey, in this place, here's the way it works around here. We disclose our mistakes. We talk about them. We're honest about them. We don't ignore things. We don't cover things up, but we also don't beat ourselves up. We are actually grownups who have real conversations about real issues."

Jerry:

I think one of the prerequisites to having that kind of honest dialogue, uh, is the individual being willing to actually acknowledge the mistake to themselves first and foremost.

Daniel Pink:

Interesting, yeah.

Jerry:

Right? There's- there's a- there's a Buddhist tale that I tell in the book of a famous meditator named Milarepa. And Milarepa is famous because among his poems and songs, he wrote he spent 20 years meditating alone in a cave. And one day he goes out to gather firewood and he comes back and the cave was filled with demons. And in Buddhist cosmology, those demons represent uncomfortable thoughts, negative feelings, all sorts of things.

He looks at the- the demons and he says to them I'm gonna teach them the Dhamma. And so they all sort of sit down like little children and listen quietly, but actually they stay in the same spot. He then realizes that nothing's gonna change so he tell... He turns to them and says, "What are you here to teach me?" And one by one, they start to disappear. But there's one that remains. And the one that remains is the worst demon. It's the bo- blood-curdling monster demon.

And to that one, he puts his head up to the mouth of the demon and he says, "Eat me if you wish." And then the demon disappears. And I think embedded in- in that story is an instruction about how to actually confront remorse, confront regret, confront the mistakes that we have. It's- it's powerful

that when someone who has power is able to model that for others, but it's extremely important that we do that for ourselves.

Jerry:

The self-delusion that says I have no regrets is actually quite dangerous.

Daniel Pink:

It is extremely dangerous because it's a form of self-delusion.

Jerry:

That's right.

Daniel Pink:

And it's also- it's so it's- so there's an inherent danger in deluding ourselves, but it's also, and here's the thing that I'm trying, for- forget about, you know, maybe you wanna delude yourself, maybe- maybe you don't, some- some- some delusions are useful. However, no regrets and don't look backward, but always be positive is a terrible blueprint for being effective. It's a terrible blueprint for being a contributor. It's a terrible blueprint for fashioning a life well lived. So it's a combo platter. It is delusional and it's ineffective.

Jerry:

Okay. So I'm gonna invoke you as a dad. Your daughter graduated, she's off into the world. She's in her twenties, which by the way, as your older brother, I'll tell you the twenties are the worst. Just kidding.

Daniel Pink:

(Laughs).

Jerry:

What advice would you give her going into her twenties? And you don't get to just say, well, you know, have lots of regret on this issue.

Daniel Pink:

I wouldn't tell her to have lots of regrets. What I would tell her based on-

Jerry:

What would you tell her?

Daniel Pink):

What I would tell her based on what I know from this research and regret from the spending the last two and a half three years immersed in this, it would be a few things. My older daughter's 25, I think it's a pretty safe bet that what you regret at 25, the you of 35 isn't gonna care about. And the view of- the view of age 35 is not gonna care whether you had a blue car or a gray car, the you of 20, of- of 2032 when you're 35 years old is not going to care what you had for dinner tonight.

There's a very small number of things that that you of age 35 is gonna care about. And what that they're gonna care about is like, did you build a reasonably stable foundation for your life? Did you have a... Did you take sensible risks? Did you do stuff? Did you learn and grow and live? Did you do the right thing and did you build connections with people who you care about and who care about you? And even most of the other things in your life aren't going to matter very much.

Jerry:

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Pink:

But if you blunder any of those, it's gonna annoy you 10 years from now, 20 years from now. Take it from me and having spent 50 years on the planet and take it from... And, you know, in this book I collected regrets, we now have collected regrets from over, now over 19,000 people in 109 countries and they all regret the same kinds of things. So listen to this chorus of people, and, you know, you can make a safe bet about what's- what's gonna matter to you in 10 years and navigate your life accordingly.

Jerry:

What do they regret?

Daniel Pink:

Well, what I found is that- is that people regret these four core things, um, around the world. And it has less to do with the domain of their life than something underneath it. So one of them is what I call foundation regrets. Foundation regrets are if only I'd done the work. These are people who regret small actions early that- that screw up their lives later on, smoking, bad health decisions, um, uh, other bad health decisions.

Um, a lot of regrets about spending too much and saving too little. Um, there was nobody who regretted being too frugal. There was nobody who regretted, you know, oh, I saved too much money, I was too frugal, I was, you know, nobody had any regrets about that. Um, so that's foundation regrets.

Second regret, very important, very important one, our boldness regrets. Boldness regrets run the gamut. So I have people a lot like in my database, a lot of American college graduates, uh, who regret not studying abroad when they were in college, that- that's an education regret.

Then I have people who a lot of regrets about people who didn't ask somebody out on a date 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago, a lot of those. A lot of regrets relevant to your audience about people who stayed in lackluster jobs and didn't go out on their own, who didn't start a business, who weren't entrepreneurs, who didn't act entrepreneurial, who focused more on not failing rather than on succeeding. So all those regrets to me are the same, it's if only I had taken the chance.

You're at a juncture in your life, you can play it safe, you can take the chance and- and overwhelmingly people regret not taking the chance. Third category, moral regrets, very interesting category. And this goes to some of your questions about- about guilt and remorse. Again, a lot of these regrets begin at a juncture. You can do the right thing, you can do the wrong thing. People do the wrong thing, not everybody, but a lot ultimately regret it. And so I have a lot of regrets about bullying, lot of regrets about marital infidelity, lot of regrets are just about like just being a- a- a bad person, not-

Jerry:

Not their best self. Yeah.

Daniel Pink:

They're not their best self and actually sort of knowingly doing something wrong. It was not like they, "Oh my God, I had no idea this was a getaway car." You know, you talk about, it's like, you know, you knew exactly what you were doing and at the time you knew it was wrong, you did it anyway.

The fourth category are connection regrets. These are regrets about relationships, not only romantic relationships, I mean, mostly not romantic relationships that were intact, but that come apart usually slowly and undramatically, and people don't do anything about it.

And it bugs 'em. And sometimes it's the drift is so great or people die, or there's conditions change where you can't do anything about it. And so over and over again, these are the things that people regret and what they- what these regrets tell us, I think Jerry is that they tell us what, again, I think regret is a clarifying emotion.

These regrets are telling us, people are telling me what they value most, that- that these four core regrets operate as a photographic negative of the good life. That when people tell you what they regret the most, they're telling you what they value the most. And that way, and that's another way that regret is clarifying and instructive about how to lead a better life.

Jerry:

How does this loop back into you were listening to Tim and I have a conversation about the sabbatical, you're understanding the value of taking a pause as a writer. How does this loop back? How might it loop back into your own sense of what you might be regretting?

Daniel Pink:

Yeah, I think it's a really interesting point. Um, and- and I think that for me, what it might be, is that, okay, am I simply, um, sort of going- sort of... Do I have so much, um, momentum is- is there- is there inertia in that there's something that I know how to do reasonably well, and I do it reasonably well and I can keep doing it, but is that actually the- the best move, the- the thing that I should be doing for the next 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, uh, and the only way to stop doing that is to affirmatively interrupt that, and there might be regrets for me about boldness. You know, was, you know, was I appropriately bold? Did I use this...

These boldness regrets are very interesting 'cause I think they're mostly about mortal- I- I think they're- they're largely about mortality, that is we recognize that we are on this planet for a vanishingly short amount of time. And so we want do something, we wanna live, we want to grow, we want to contribute. And so for me, it's like I don't... A sabbatical might be a pause where I can say, okay, is this- is this pause brief couple month pause a way to avert bonus regrets later on?

And then certainly connection. I mean the two biggest categories are boldness regrets and connection regrets. And one of the things that you see in connection regrets is that what gives our life, and- and we know this at some level, what gives our life wholeness are people who care about us and people we care about, period. That's it. Um, the rest it's- it's about all these- these four core regrets reveal a need and the need and connection is love.

And the thing about love is that to me and this is in my view, at some level, we are over-indexed on romantic love. When we think about love, we think about- about romantic love. And we're not

thinking about love in the fuller sense, the love we have for, you know, our, I- I think forget about the love we have for our kids or our parents, but just the love we have for other people in our lives who are not our romantic partners and who are not our kids but who are our friends, who are our companions, who are our coworkers and so forth. And, um, and- and so for me, perhaps the sabbatical is a way to avert boldness regrets of the future and connection regrets of the future.

Jerry:

And so what stands in the way of you taking that sabbatical?

Daniel Pink:

Nothing.

Jerry:

I don't mean intellectually.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

I know that nothing financially, what's the emotional block?

Daniel Pink:

The, I guess the emotional block if there is one and I'm not even sure there is an emotional block, it just, you know, I think there's a logistical block and that I have- I have obligations I need to execute before I can actually do that. Now it's possible that I can actually keep bringing on those obligations as a way to keep that at bay. But- but-

Jerry:

Thank you.

Daniel Pink:

On the other hand, I'm conscious of the dangers of doing that, so that might be a way to avert that.

Jerry:

One of your value systems is to live up to obligations. You say you're gonna do something, you do it.

Daniel Pink:

Absolutely. That's huge, I mean, for me personally, that's- that is-

Jerry:

So that's a huge belief system.

Daniel Pink:

Like that's a- that's a core- that's a core belief system of mine. Listeners, your mileage may vary. I'm not suggesting that as a- as a course for everybody else, but for me, absolutely, that's a huge, that's hugely important to me.

Jerry:

So let's explore that just for, let's just stay with this for a moment. You- you, um, you're intrigued by the possibility of taking a sabbatical. You know that you might be subjected to mistaking motion for meaning, that there is an opportunity and you're- you're- you're you want to avoid a boldness regret.

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

You were drawn into that conversation. You were particularly drawn into the question of complicitness. And so here we are, I'm imagining I could be wrong, I'm imagining like you listened to Tim Ferriss and you're like, "Hey, I'm gonna take a sabbatical." You're thinking about it. But all those obligations, which feel like real structural things, I have to do these things and just a little bit of poking, we said, oh, wait, wait, that's actually a belief system, one that's really important for you to hold onto. And so part of the potential tension that might exist here is that if I take the sabbatical, I might have to go up against my stated commitment and obligation, right?

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

And that tension is real, that's a difficult tension to resolve.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah. I think it's reconcilable. I mean, you know, I can, I- I think one can reconcile taking into sabbatical with fulfilling your obligation to be in- in Milwaukee on October 13th to go do something that you agreed to do a year ago. I mean, I- I think those are- I think those are reconcilable. I think the bigger issue is for me and maybe for other people, is that is what happens when you're not in motion.

Jerry:

What happens to you?

Daniel Pink:

How does it feel to be, how does it feel to be not in motion?

Jerry:

Daniel, answer the question.

Daniel Pink:

And how does it feel to be not in motion?

Jerry:

(Laughs).

Daniel Pink:

How does it feel not to be at least trying to go up into the right. And- and to me-

Jerry:

And how does it feel for you? Yeah.

Daniel Pink:

It feels a little freaky. It feels a little unnatural. It feels part in that carefully chosen word.

Jerry:

Yeah.

Daniel Pink:

That is maybe so, and it's an interesting philosophical, theological epistemological question of when I say natural, which I, you know, is- is- is it my nature to be in motion or is that something that I voice it on myself? And the answer is yes.

Jerry:

Is that learned nature, if you will. So where did you learn this?

Daniel Pink:

You know what I think part of it is, is that I like being in motion. I like doing stuff 'cause when I'm in motion, I'm learning. When I'm in motion, I am, I- I feel like it's some- sometimes I'm contributing. I feel like I'm actually growing. Um, that- that for me, not being in motion is- is- is in some ways not... means I'm not- I'm not growing. That could be a miscalculation on my part, that it might be a different- it might be a different kind of growth that comes from not being in motion. But for me being in motion is fulfilling. Being in motion is fulfilling because I'm learning, I'm growing, I'm achieving, I'm contributing, I'm doing stuff, I like that.

Jerry:

I think that's a genuinely held belief and- and- and we benefit, your readers benefit from your curiosity from this- this- this- this drive around the curiosity and- and learning and growing, and- and you're probably a really good friend because you say what you mean and you mean what you say and you deliver. If you said you're gonna be in Milwaukee in October, you're gonna be in Milwaukee in October.

Daniel Pink:

That's totally the case.

Jerry:

And so you're reliable in that way and I'm just lifting up some of the possible threads that could actually, if you want, um, uh, uh, fuel some of the complicitness in the conditions you say you don't want, right? The thing I think it's really important to understand is- is that many of the things that, uh, uh, create those tension points are actually positive things. They're not all negative.

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Jerry:

Right? So there's an opportunity, I think, in the tension point to really grow even more and learn even more about oneself so that you're then lifting them up and to reference back to the- to my book quoting Carl Jung, until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate, right? By- by leaning into those tension points, you get the opportunity to sort of come back and say, "Why is it so important to me to be in Milwaukee in October?" I know it's important that I follow through on a contract, but why do I hold that so firmly? And what does it cost me when I hold that so firmly?

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

'Cause it may be a cost that, um, may go back into the boldness regrets. Does this have any resonance with you?

Daniel Pink:

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think part of it, you know, let's, you know, I- I just, and I- I think if you look at these, if you look at these regrets that I've collected from around the world and uh, uh, is that what- what they- what do they- they reveal... They, as I said, they operate as a reverse image, a photographic negative of the good life. And so what is the good life? Good life is life with love. Good life is life with learning and growth and psychological richness. Good life is a life with some stability, that's foundation regrets. But a good life is also where we're doing the right thing. And for me, for whatever, you know, whatever reason, it's like keeping your word is doing the right thing. And if you make a promise, you keep your promise, uh, as a, and there's a moral- there's a moral obligation to that.

Jerry:

What was it like when you had to go back to the editor and tell the editor that you weren't gonna keep the promise with the first contract?

Daniel Pink:

Oh, I was fine on that because I had something- because I had something- I had something so much better. Like that was... Like I- I didn't feel like I was betraying, I- I didn't feel like I was betraying a promise. If I had gone back to him and said, "You know what? I don't wanna write a book." I would've had a trouble with that.

Jerry:

I see. So I like that's an adaptation.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

Like you give yourself a little bit of flexibility around which is you're still meeting the obligation of delivering a manuscript to the editor. You've grown and what the right manuscript is has changed.

Daniel Pink:

Right.

Jerry:

Well, I appreciate your, um, ending up writing, uh, the book you did write because I thoroughly enjoyed it. I sat down and I didn't stop reading until, you know, my back was just creaky and I couldn't stand and do this thing (laughs).

Daniel Pink:

(Laughs).

Jerry:

But I really enjoyed it because as I said, you know, at the top, you know, and even in some of the conversations that we've had, you know, uh, now I think it's actually a really relevant message, um, for the people who are struggling to sort of find their way as leaders to, for people to who are struggling to find their way as adults, how to navigate this- this space. And I'm particularly, um, moved by the universality issue. Uh, I think that one of the under-explored aspects of being human and the struggles that we have in being human is the realization that we have empathetic connection. You struggle with regrets, I struggle with regrets so let's hang out together.

Daniel Pink:

Yeah.

Jerry:

And be human together instead of judging myself because I think you don't have any regrets. We're just gonna hang out together and we're gonna- we're going to be a little gentle with ourselves. Um, the last thing I'll say, and then I'll start to wrap us up. Um, our conversation was also reminded me of a conversation I had with a dear friend Parker Palmer, the Quaker writer that, um, I often, uh, refer to. He just turned 83 and he came on the podcast. Uh, and again, we were talking about his book *On the Brink of Everything* and about basically turning 80 and what life was like for him at that point. And we had this lovely, lovely conversation where we both laughed about the fact that so many people are come- come to us in- in one form or another, ask ourself, uh, mortality related questions like-

Daniel Pink:

Mm-hmm.

Jerry:

Um, you know, what do you regret or, um, uh, uh, what is- what is the purpose of life? What should we be focused on? And we just laughed. And we said there's really just a simple question, which is have I been kind. And I- I think that there's something lovely in that hearkening back to your- your observation about love. Um, can, if- if- if- if I can look back on my life and accept the mistakes that I've made, accept the times when I've failed to live up to my aspirational values as a person, but I can say to myself with honesty that in the end, I always try to, or I did my best to move towards kindness, to move towards understanding, um, that then feels like a life that I can be proud of. Regrets and all.

Daniel Pink:

I agree.

Jerry:

Yeah.

Daniel Pink:

I agree. You know, and again, I think that regret is- is very clarifying in that- in that way. Because as I mentioned earlier, Jerry, I have regrets about kindness. That tells me something. It tells me what I value. And the other thing about it on the universality is I go to this database of 19,000 people, and I might feel bad that I have regrets about kindness, but looking at this database, I realize I'm not that special because a lot of people have these-

Jerry:

(Laughs).

Daniel Pink:

A lot of people have these regrets. And so in what it's, I think what it tells us is that a life well lived is a life where we are kind, uh, a life where we have people who love us and who- who we love and where we treat people with respect and we treat people with dignity, we treat people with kindness. Um, and, you know, as- as- as- as- as woo-woo as that might sound, or as- as sort of almost sugary as that might sound, I do think that those are the components of a- of a life well lived. Um, you know, you see this sometimes.

I mean, David Brooks has a lovely way of putting this where he talks about resume virtues and eulogy virtues, you know? And so you- you think about, you know, what- what kind of what's on your resume, but also what are people gonna say about you at your funeral and what people are gonna people. People aren't gonna say at your funeral, "Oh, Jerry had a net worth of such and such, and he sold it." They're gonna say, they're gonna testify to your character, they're gonna testify to whether you were loved and had people and- and- and loved others. They're gonna testify to your kindness, they're gonna testify to the contribution you made to lift up other people, that's it.

Jerry:

That's it. And that- and that's what defines us. Well, Daniel, I wanna thank you for coming on this show. It's- it's a- it's a terrific book, but more important, I want to thank you for the work that you've done over these last 20 years.

Daniel Pink:

Well, thanks, I appreciate that.