

Still Small
OCT 5
Episode 6 – Mental Junk Food

A chat with Chris Blahoot

thanks so much, Chris.

Chris, is it blah who or blah shoot?

It's the phonetic phonetic spelling is

Kendall: right

thank you

Kendall: You're someone who I look up to in terms of reframing productivity and optimization. I think you have a really healthy view there. I stumbled upon your website which was called The Unconventional Route.

You've now rebranded to The Zag. Unconventional Route. still exists, but it's more travel focused. And SAG is more life operating system focused.

Your post about having an [00:01:00] unconventional wedding. Resonated so deeply with me because you were like,, why are we following this default script of this really expensive giant.

Predictable thing. And I could tell we were on the same wavelength. I was like,, Oh, this person gets it and his partner gets it too. And that's pretty rare because the wedding industry is an example of something that everyone has bought into. No one really questions. Is this something I want?

So I just went into a Chris rabbit hole,

Kendall: you just said that babies are pretty straightforward. All they do is eat, sleep, poop. I don't feel like anyone has ever described babies as straightforward. So as someone who's a little bit afraid of parenting, I appreciate you saying

Chris: that. Well, whenever it comes to that, feel free to talk to me because I feel there's a lot of BS about parenting for good and for bad.

Everyone just likes to rehash the same old cliches all the time and say the same thing just because it's easy. It's not exactly the way it was described in good ways and in bad ways.

And maybe I'm different. But when I talk to my friends that also have had kids, they tend to agree when I say it that way.

I just

Kendall: say that [00:02:00] because you just brought up your newest addition to the family. Sandy is literally on your lap right now while you do this interview. And I found that very impressive and you, you say it like it's pretty nonchalant. You're like,, yeah, he's. It's pretty good. He'll be quiet. What a champ.

Chris: Work life balance at its finest.

Kendall: Yeah. How has it been adapting to being a father of two, because I feel like two is drastically different

Chris: than one. That's what a lot of people said. It's, it's not linear. It's exponential. The change. It's going to be a big challenge right now. I consider myself on self imposed paternity leave just to avoid the stress of figuring out how the heck am I going to find time to do stuff other than.

Parent and personal life things, how to do work because we don't have our other kid in daycare very much. That's a challenge, but everyone says the first couple of years can be tough, and then afterwards it's all worth it. On the big scheme of things, when I look at it, I can afford to not be very productive the next couple of years, even if worse comes to worse, and I'll still be fine.

And potentially there's something to be said about just 80 20 ing work so that something else will come out of it just because I'm more limited in

Kendall: my time. Absolutely. Did you do a self imposed paternity leave for your first [00:03:00] child as well? For

Chris: Zach, no. That was mine. My biggest mistake, biggest source of stress early on, I mean, the biggest source of stress is feeding, but the biggest self imposed source of stress was being like,, I think I can squeeze stuff in and I'm going to try it whenever I have a free, moment, try to do some quote unquote productive work.

And then maybe I did, but I'm always thinking in the back of my head, when can I have time to do something? And then this time I'm like,, it's not worth it. I get basically nothing done anyways. You get extra stress about lack of sleep and all those things. Just give up, just give into it and not necessarily enjoy it because it's not super enjoyable.

It's just an outdoor fetus. But just don't resent it. Lesson learned the hard way.

Kendall: That makes a lot of sense.

When you tied it into Zach.

The productivity was there. You had that instinct when you had Zach to be productive and ended up biting you just because you weren't fully present for this bigger life event. Is that something that permeates in the way that you think of balancing productivity with quality of life? It's interesting when you run into a wall where you try to be too

Chris: productive.

Exactly. Fundamental. Principle is to have a positive mindset. You have to always be growing in one domain, at least [00:04:00] making progress somewhere. But I also think you can't try to make progress in multiple domains at once. It makes more sense just to focus on one in the case of having a new kid. I did give myself credit for the fact that adding a new kid is a huge growth challenge in its own right.

And that I could keep on doing, working on professional stuff. When in reality, I should just focus on that. Then the second fundamental part is what really matters in the big picture. Thinking long term, what am I going to care more about, whether I wrote a newsletter article during Zach's first week of life or whether I just chilled out.

I'm not going to remember either way, so I might as well not stress about it because I'm in

Kendall: no rush. Absolutely. Zach's probably going to have a super interesting childhood. Same with Sandy because he has fascinating parents. I'd love to hear a little bit about Your childhood. I've seen glimmers of it.

You mentioned on Twitter you quit swimming at age 11 Even though you're the best in the country and I think that takes a very specific type of person Second best, I'm so sorry, still very impressive. So what was your childhood like?? Do you have siblings? I

Chris: grew up in Vancouver, [00:05:00] Canada. I'm the oldest younger brother and younger sister.

My dad, a doctor, my mom, stay at home mom, former MBA, businessy person, ran the show in the house financially and in all regards, regular childhood, very conventionalized throughout high school and then even into college, I didn't really do a whole lot of the challenge convention. The only thing would be in grade six, my parents sent me into what's called late immersion.

Basically, you take all these English kids and put them into classes that are all entirely in French. And then from then on for the next four or five years, all classes, everything is entirely in French. So that was the one big zag in my life early on. Other than that, I was super stuck in my ways and just doing the regular old kid thing.

even my grandmother, she offered to give me scholarship in a sense to go to her homeland of Switzerland for my final year of high school because there's a Canadian high school there in Neuchâtel and I was too caught up in high school life and playing basketball [00:06:00] that I turned her down on that, which in retrospect is very dumb because it would have been an amazing experience and much more memorable then.

Coming in seventh place in the province in basketball and whatever dumb stuff you do in high school. So pretty boring in a sense, but good. No cool stories to tell from it at all.

Kendall: I'm curious if you had alternative parents that modeled this for you, because clearly you were pretty self. Possessed at least from the swimming example of knowing what you didn't want to do.

I mean, everyone did conventional things and I don't fault you for not going to Switzerland because I wouldn't have wanted to trade my senior year at the time. That probably seemed so important and going and starting over seems daunting, but hearing the swimming one makes me think, Oh, this. Scott had a backbone that I definitely didn't have at that age.

Yeah,

Chris: my parents just gave me a lot of confidence. I don't even know if they gave me confidence. I was just a well disciplined child. I did my own homework. They never had to punish me for anything. I figured it out my own way, figured out my own way of studying. And I was good at most sports. So when I quit swimming, I was like,, fine, I'm going to be good at [00:07:00] basketball and soccer and football too.

Not nearly as good, unfortunately. I just never tied my identity to being a good swimmer that was striving towards the Olympics. I never really had that. That's my biggest goal. My parents helped me be very selfish in that regard, that I'm not trying to impress anybody and just do my own thing. They didn't have any approaches that I could think of where they're out of the norm or challenging me to, to be myself.

They just got out of my way in a sense and didn't put any pressure on me. And I think it was fortunate just that I'm already a self motivated person. So they didn't need to do that. And they just let me be me and make my

Kendall: decisions. I think it's also hard to Walk away when by comparison, you're, you're best at swimming.

I have a tendency to gravitate towards things that I'm the best at, regardless of if I enjoy it, just because I really like the achievement oriented aspect of it and getting gold stars. And so the fact that you were able to walk away from that, because that's pretty, seems lucrative at the time to. To be the second best and in Canada, that's, that's crazy.

Chris: [00:08:00] Yeah, but it's also swimming, , maybe it'd be a different story. If I was second best soccer player or hockey player or swimming, it's like,, Oh, you're the, you're the second best 11, 12 year old that shaves his legs and wears a Speedo. ,

Kendall: swimming was a big deal where I grew up.

So it just depends, which is why I tied my identity to it, even though I was not the second best at all.

Chris: So maybe if I grew up where you are, my, my life would be a whole different

Kendall: place. But at what cost? You clearly didn't enjoy it. The point is that you were able to think differently from a young age, which I think is really admirable.

And then you had some inklings that you wanted to leave the corporate world and you pre tired my favorite term that I've. stolen from you at 27, which again, pretty self assured and knowing not that you knew what was going to happen, but that you trusted your instinct and you were able to walk away from the default path.

Chris: In many ways, I'm very fortunate in that I didn't have any debt. My parents paid for school and school is affordable here in Canada, or at least was back when I went. And then I got a very high paying job after university working in Switzerland, which was again, me [00:09:00] making my own way. It's not a conventional thing for people to graduate in Canada to seek jobs in Europe, but.

My grandma was Swiss. Maybe I felt bad about not taking up an offer and and had the thought wave there to get my job there. Then making a lot of money way more than I deserved working in Switzerland, one of the most expensive countries in the world. And I've always been a cheapo.

So I saved a lot of money and then convinced my employer to send me to Panama City, Panama for the second half of my career. As an expat, so I was making Swiss salary living in Panama again, still as a cheap guy and saving up big money so that I could afford to easily, , with a few hundred thousand dollars saved at 27 to just do what I want and know that if I have, , I have a run rate of a thousand, thousand, 500 a month I'm not going to go broke anytime soon.

And if something bad really happens, a, I have the skillset confidence knowledge and career capital built up that I know I can get a job and be. My parents are there to support me, so I'm super well set up to, to do such a move, such a hasty move. And it really wasn't risky at all , in that regard.

Kendall: I totally [00:10:00] understand the disclosure of privilege and , you had a safety net and you had factors coming in beyond just yourself and your hard work. I appreciate that statement, but I still think. As someone who recently quit at age 31,

it still feels very risky, even though on paper, it's not for me, and I think for a lot of people, you can look at your bank account and no matter what it is, it just feels risky to walk away from a solid stream of income, at least it's been stressful for me. It wasn't just a walk in the park to just walk away from that.

My hat's off to you at 27 doing that, because I wanted to do that. I've wanted to do it for a long time, but it just felt so counter to what everyone else is doing did you have that reckoning of where do I fit in now that I don't have that soundbite, at a cocktail party of, oh, I'm in finance, , , did that happen for you or were you just always, I'm Chris, I know what path I'm on.

Chris: I'm Chris. I definitely don't know what path I'm on. still but I'm almost off the charts in terms of optimism [00:11:00] and self confidence. To a diluted naive level for sure, which certainly hold me back in many ways, and also in terms of not caring much what other people think I've never have done that ever maybe it's just the way that I'm wired I don't think it's a skill that I cultivated or developed It's just something that I'm fortunate in some ways to have I definitely has its , downsides, but that's what's led me, to make all my decisions and makes me also wonder whether some of the things I write about are actually relevant to people who read it because they may have such a different personality and wiring that might not be relevant to them.

Kendall: That's amazing that you have never really had to reckon with that. That's the ideal, , I think I'm very inundated with the messaging that I've received as a child . I'm sure I didn't come out this way. , I just kept absorbing, Oh, what other people think matters more than what I think about myself.

I think people definitely can relate to your content. At least I'll speak for myself. When I see a new thing that you've posted, I'm like,, yes. So glad he's talking about this. I'll say I'm not as confident as you in entrusting [00:12:00] myself. It's not as easy for me to just say, Oh, I believe in this.

So I'm going to do it. But. The sentiment is definitely there and shared in the common human experience. You said that it holds you back in some ways, , your called it delusion, but in what ways do you think it is holding you back?

Chris: Yeah, because I'm more self confident to the extent of lacking self awareness,

and so when I do write something or create something, I think, hell yeah, this is awesome. Everyone's going to go viral every single time I've very few doubts. I get the doubts after it gets published and like this crickets, no one really cares. And it's like,, what the hell?

The best idea this is this had my mind racing the whole time I was writing and I was like I can't wait so clearly there's a gap between reality and my perception or what other people think and what I think and that holds me back a lot because my objective is to inspire people

to take their lives in extraordinary directions and But if it's not resonating with them, then I'm not doing as good a job as I'd [00:13:00] like to.

Kendall: And what's your metric for that? Is it number of people who are seeing your work? Because you say that you get a lot of feedback of people saying, Hey, this was really important to me, myself included. You were a big inspiration for me to publish my own newsletter because you helped me see that all of my delusions of keeping myself stuck were not benefiting me.

So what metric do you use .

Chris: I don't track a metric I think that if I'm doing a good job, people would share it more and it would grow faster and I would get more invites on to podcasts like yours, that's not happening. So. I'm not interesting is the way I take it. Cause I'm practical enough to, to listen to outside feedback.

And I think that's a problem that a lot of other creators have is that they don't listen to it or they listen too much, one or the other. So I'm practical enough to listen to it. I try catering to it and it just doesn't. Seemed to, to hit,

I don't have the right product to market fit in a sense of what I'm doing,

Holding me back in that regard. Also just , it depends on , what's holding me back from what, what's the ultimate goal,

, is [00:14:00] it mm-hmm. Living the best possible life. My life's freaking awesome. I have very little to complain about. I wake up every day pretty, except for now with this new baby. But generally I wake up every day and. Feeling great and I do stuff that I would like to do 85 to 90 percent of my day.

it's wonderful in almost all respects. It's just that I would like to make a little bit more money and to make a little bit more money, I have to be a little bit more useful to people. Right. And that's where my content and even some of the program challenges, if people don't find them useful, then I'm not making money.

So then I'm living in a one bedroom apartment with.

Kendall: Yeah, I think the reality of the situation of needing to make money in this world is It's obviously not something you can just ignore when you walk away from corporate, , that you have to do something to make money, but is it the ultimate metric of success of if you're making a difference? I don't think so.

For me, I'm not relying on my blog as a source of income right now. It's more just a creative expression. And so if someone reaches out to me and says that they [00:15:00] enjoyed it,

that's the mark of success for me or is, or if it resonated. So there's different goals to what you're doing in different steps along the way.

And that makes sense. Yeah.

Chris: Yeah, it does. I do wonder how much they value it if they don't, if they want to pay for it, , there's some marketing question, how much would they pay for you to come back if you're gone or how much would they miss you if you're gone type of thing.

There is certainly a monetary value, you should be able to monetize your value in some way, even if it's not. A hundred percent correlated, there is some correlation there,

Kendall: yeah, I think it's also a shift in consumer mentality. At least for me, when I first heard of Substack just as an example, paying the creator directly, I was super offended.

I was like,, why would I pay? Yeah. And then my husband was like,, why wouldn't you, you would pay for the New York times, but this is a person who was writing for the New York times and now wants to write for their, for themselves. And you would pay for that subscription. Don't you want to support the work that they want to do without the gatekeeping of an institution?

And I was like,, of course I needed that explanation though, because I'm so used to seeing things from institutions. [00:16:00] And at first, I saw people. On substack saying support me for what could buy a cup of coffee? It's not the way that it's traditionally been done.

So I think it's changing people are so used to getting content for free. And so I think it's just hard to make the switch but The more people get away from these big gatekeep kept institutions the Economist or whatever, they can support the content that they .

like.

Chris: That would be nice.

I'm not convinced. It comes down to the idea of content, is either to improve people's life in some way. And I think you can only improve your life by. Taking action on something most news is, a distraction. Most of these magazines mm-hmm. are distraction. They're educated entertainment.

The challenge of a creator or someone who's trying to sell their, ideas and their thoughts is to make those, ideas and thoughts actionable. Then if they are actionable, that's where you can make your money.

By showing the results. . Yeah. And I just don't see that happening with, with most content. If you think back, how many, how many of the emails or articles or even books do you read

that have actually shifted your actions on a day to day basis [00:17:00] or even once, it's, it's at least in my case, it's pretty limited.

And it's something I wonder about what I write to, like how many people are actually taking action. I try to challenge people to do stuff, but how many people are actually doing it? Are they just reading it saying, that's an interesting idea, or that's a dumb idea, and then moving on and saying, what's next?

What else, what else can I read, that's it.

Kendall: I think it all is a marination point too. , you can read something, and you might not be ready to take action until later. And so, it's a bunch of different pieces that you're taking in, and then eventually... The shift happens, but are all the people going to be able to trace it back and say, oh, it's because I read this in the zag.

Not necessarily, so it's untraceable in some

Chris: ways. Yeah,

that's a good thought and hopefully some day artificial intelligence will be able to attribute all this and, right, value and all this content that you consume and put out and everything like that,

because it's a tough thing to trace back, like you

Kendall: say. Yeah. I've taken action and I know there are people out there that have, and so I definitely think what you're doing. Makes a difference. And you said, at the end of the day, you are happy with the [00:18:00] life that you're living and not a lot of people can say that in terms of how they spend their time, because the way I try to frame it now, when people ask, what do you do?

I say, well, I'm currently not selling my time for money and. It feels really good to not have to do that right now. Because when you are in a corporate environment, that's essentially what you're doing. You are trading your time for money and you're really valuable time. I just think people have forgotten how that's our only resource at the end of the day that.

We can decide to control in the way that we, in ways that we can

that you have autonomy over your time makes your life richer than the dollar. Sure.

Chris: Yeah. I mean, I don't want to disparage too much working, I got a job. You can say time for money, but you could also say time for, for contribution.

I think a lot of jobs, you're contributing something and you're getting paid for it. So it's true. It comes back to that correlation between usefulness and, and income. So if you can find that. Purpose within your job, and you would do it in a sense for whatever your pay might be, or [00:19:00] to us up to a certain range, , then it's not so much training your time for money.

It's just feeling the pull to, make a contribution and helping other people or helping something, some, some cause greater than yourself. Which you can do for sure in any job.

Kendall: I forget that you are not as burned on corporate America. Your, your post on pre retirement has a lot of positives, whereas at least for me, I feel I was in the, I haven't read this book, but bullshit jobs.

I feel I was in that category where it was just like,, what am I doing? , I'm getting paid a lot, but am I really contributing very much at the end of the day? I felt I was basically a passive participant in my life where I was just like,, I have enough of my. needs being met, but my overall fulfillment gauge is so low, but that's okay, , and I finally reached a point of, wow, I don't, I don't want to live passively in my own life.

And so I don't know, not everyone feels that way, but that was definitely my take.

Chris: Were you, were you developing skills during that time? Or are you also just coasting by and doing anything useful? I

Kendall: was coasting. Yeah, that was like quitting. [00:20:00] Yeah. Good, good thing

Chris: you left that job then.

Kendall: Yeah.

it wasn't good for anyone. And, and I was just like,, is this what corporate is? You just do enough and , I just. Had gotten too far away from , feeling like my contribution mattered. And I think especially with remote work, I just felt , Oh my gosh, I'm not interacting with anyone.

I'm just on my computer and I feel very sad. Do you feel isolated as a solo creator who works mainly behind a screen? I know you do a really good job of getting out when you exercise and maintaining your personal network, but do you feel a little bit sad that you don't have coworkers sometimes?

Chris: Sad is probably not the word. I would love to have a stronger network of people who are working on similar things to me. And that's definitely. Something that I've been working on the most since July when I did a net workout. So I tried to challenge myself to do that more because that's one of the things that's holding me back the most is just a collaboration

and getting [00:21:00] feedback from, from other people who are working on something similar.

Because yeah, I'm fine. I have my, my wife, my kids live around family. We split our time between Cape Town and Vancouver, and so I, in that way, I, I make more attempts to spend more time with the people in Cape Town and the people in Vancouver. So I spend more time around other people that I care about than other people who are just sitting in the same city all the time and maybe getting complacent with the, having their friends and family around.

And so that's all good. It's just from a professional standpoint, I try hard to reach out to people who are working on the same thing but have a hard time really connecting with people who are on the same level and same desires maybe it's just me because I've met a lot of cool people But it never connects for whatever reason so it's gotta be my fault.

Kendall: No, I think it's really hard to Make virtual connections because they're just different than your friends that you see in person and , they live in a different realm And it's interesting that you say that you are [00:22:00] working harder Or, it's something you prioritize, making your connections, even though you split your time half the year into different places.

As someone who just did a year and a half of nomad life, it felt very isolating. Granted, I was moving around, , month to month, so it was very hard to meet people. But, do you feel , There's a switching cost when you are going back and forth and, and because of that, you try to be really intentional, like you're not going to see some people for the holidays do you feel any FOMO or do you wish you could change it? You've talked about how. Living in two places is having one and a half lives, , which I think is awesome. And so true. I want to emulate that. I want to do a snowbird situation as well and get out of the Pacific Northwest winter situation.

So you're definitely an inspiration, but Can you talk about some of the costs associated

Chris: with that? Yeah. There's definitely, , not FOMO, I've researched enough FOMO to, to get over any FOMO stuff. And yeah, and , , brainwashed myself into believing not in FOMO, but in the good FOMO, focus on meaningful objectives,

so I'm pretty clear on what I , what I want, so [00:23:00] I don't worry about what I'm missing out on. And I make my decisions pretty intentionally. There is a huge switching cost for sure. Especially given our lack of hundreds of millions of dollars. To, to find places to stay in both cities every time right now we're, we're working on that.

And it's, it's, it's tough where these are two of the most sought after places to be in the world for the summers. We go there and that's why we go there because they're awesome, Cape Town and Vancouver. But that also makes it very difficult, very cost prohibitive and

competitive to get, to get the exact spots we want to be because we, I, we prioritize heavily location over anything else.

I hate cars, to just walk around and live close to our friends and family that are in specific areas. So we have no choice and we're just, we're price takers, so the, the hunt for a good place to stay and then the, the cost of it and the mental stress that comes with the uncertainty of, of, yeah.

Are we gonna find a place this time? Or are we gonna find a be where we want to be? That, that takes a good month and a half of productivity. Mm-hmm. . [00:24:00] Out of both my wife and my life, for sure, I think it's worth it, but again, if we had more money, we just own two places in both cities and be done with it, but I don't think that's in the cards right now

Kendall: I think it's good that you at least voice that there is a mental cost, because when I was traveling for a year and a half, everyone was like,, that's so amazing.

And , actually, there's a huge mental cost of just having to pack up all the time and having to figure out where you're going to go. The logistics, you said, it can take a month and a half of your bandwidth in some capacity. So it's

Chris: real. Yeah, there's the benefit though.

The benefits I weighed by far in terms of, okay. Weather obviously, number one. Weather, being outside, fresh air. I strongly believe that if you're not getting enough fresh air, that's the biggest, one of the biggest causes of discontent for people everywhere. But then just, just that, just the shift of environment is a shift that shifts your mindset.

You pointed out me saying, it's, it's living in one and a half lives in one. So one and a half lives in one minus the month and a half. So it gets down to 1. 3 lives in one. [00:25:00] So that's worth it.

Kendall: How did you guys choose Cape Town?

Because you guys are big travelers. You and Kim, you knew each other before because your cousin's married to her cousin or something silly. But you met in, in Jordan. Tell me,

Chris: yeah, sure. Yeah, so my cousin is married to Kim's, my wife's sister, and so back in 2000.

13 December, Kim was studying in Dubai and I was in my early stages of retirement. So I was just all over the place doing whatever I wanted to do. And so my cousin and his then girlfriend invited me for dinner in Vancouver and at the same time they invited Kim and so we met there and She, she told me of how she studied Spanish and then I was recently in Panama.

So we actually started speaking in Spanish and we just really hit it off. And she told me that she was planning a trip to Jordan in February, February, March of the coming year. And a couple of my [00:26:00] friends had told me that Jordan was an amazing place to visit. So it was high on my list of destinations to go to.

And so she told me that, and then I was , Oh, can I come? She said, yeah. And so the next day I bought a flight. And to join her and

Kendall: you met you met her one night bought a flight the next morning.

Chris: Yeah. Yeah the next morning Wow, okay. Let's meet up and talk about our trip now because i'm coming with you and she was going with another Actually at the time it was supposed to be two other friends, it ended up being one friend and I was going to be the third wheel.

And then that switched by the time I got there, she ended up being the third wheel, but it was a great, she got along, but yeah, that gave me two months to chat with her back and forth and put the, put the kindling on our relationship. So by the time we got there, it was raging, a raging fire of passion and then the rest is history.

Yeah. So she stayed in Dubai and then we, we went, met another wedding in Sri Lanka because she was in Dubai for that year and. And so we both liked it to travel around and then she came back to Vancouver and eventually we, we moved in together [00:27:00] and agreed to live this, this somewhat unconventional life.

in terms of Cape Town, a friend of mine who was a model cause in Cape Town, , everyone shoots in the winter for the summer season upcoming year. And so my friend of mine from university, who's a model, spent a couple of seasons there and said it was amazing.

He said, Chris, you're going to love it there. And then Kim's friend from Dubai got married down there. And so we decided, hey, let's go check it out. We'd spent the previous Canadian winter in Medellin, Colombia, and we're looking for another place to check out. So we hadn't really heard anything from a digital nomad at that point.

I mean, it's just so far from Vancouver, it's the other side of the world, literally, and but , my friend had told me that it's a great place to be and why not? So we decided to check it out. And then Kim, Kim had the idea of taking beach volleyball lessons when we got there because we didn't, we just wanted something to do.

And so we signed up for beach volleyball lessons and it was a great community. It's maybe , , it was 150 people that are pretty keen on beach volleyball in Cape town. And we got connected with all those people. And pretty [00:28:00] soon we had a big group of friends and something to do and, and we loved it a lot and got addicted to the cheap South African wine, the really good food there.

And, and there's the contrast of South Africa versus Vancouver. And so we just came back the next year and the more you go there, the more we feel. Almost obliged the desire to go back because it's basically where our second life is now. Mm hmm

Kendall: how many years now have you been living the dual city life?

Chris: This will be our sixth year going to Cape Town if we can make it. Yeah We'll see how it goes as the kids get older, but yeah, optimistic about the potential of remote education and using AI for those types of purposes and all that and , and being flexible in educating our kids. I used to be very anti.

I'm homeschooling as a kid who went to public school.

changing on it. But now I'm sort of coming around to it it is a huge amount of time and it's basically babysitting and I think, sure there's a socialization aspect to it, but as long as you get our kids [00:29:00] involved in other areas of life sports and volunteering and whatever else it may be, you can socialize them in other ways than just going to school and sitting around and being cooped up in the, daycare of quasi education, I learned a lot, I'm sure, but I'm sure you can learn faster and more practical stuff in other ways.

Kendall: Yeah, and I think that, at least for me, was definitely a big factor in absorbing, , not to trust my intuition and to just look to authority figures to tell me what to do, because that was how. The public school is set up. And so, yeah, I've definitely flipped on homeschool too. I used to be scoffing at it.

, homeschools for weirdos! And now I'm , I'm a weirdo. Because, yeah, I don't see the benefit so

Chris: much. Apparently, yeah, there's 5 million kids in America that are being homeschooled now. Which is Oh yeah. Wow. Huge, huge number. So it's just one of those things that everyone else, it's a cognitive illusion, I think is the term that Todd Rose writes about.

Everyone thinks everyone else thinks it's weird, but everyone else is sort of,, Coming to [00:30:00] to embrace it pretty slowly and so yeah, it seems to be the future

Kendall: and so you said Kim was studying abroad in Dubai Was she still in school and she met this 27 year old retired guy did she think?

Anything about the fact that you were taking an alternative path? What was the dialogue there about what you were doing?

Chris: We never really had any conversations about that stuff funnily enough. Good. It just went with it. Yeah.

Maybe that's the reason that Kim and I have stayed together for so long is that more than anything is that status, making money, those things have never been a priority for us whatsoever. And so it's never, been a topic of conversation.

I mean, the only topic of conversation we have now is. How are we going to afford to raise two kids with the paltry income that we make? But that doesn't stop us from continuing to do what we want to do. We, our priority is first quality of life, second income to afford that quality of [00:31:00] life.

Kendall: I think that's really rare that you both have that mentality.

And, and I know she's a graphic designer and she has her own Pleasure project feed my friends. She really likes to Help people host dinner parties. You both have your own interests and Don't fall into the trap of keeping up with the joneses in terms of success My husband and I both Want to hold that?

As a core belief, but the, the hooks of what other people think are still very much embedded in our perception of ourselves. And so we're trying to get away from that and focus on quality of life and, and not care what other people think. But I think I'm still much more insecure of not having a soundbite of where I fit in,

in a way that other people will easily understand.

Chris: Who's thinking and do you care about?

Kendall: Even just my friends and my family. They are definitely like,, what are you doing your a, leech on society right now?

Chris: Yeah, it's about just embracing that identity that [00:32:00] I certainly have amongst my friends as being , Chris is the guy who doesn't care what people think,

so, they don't. Think I care about, what people think, , it's just how it mm-hmm. how it goes. It just takes a bit of time to, , break down some other identities that you've had in its place or that prevent you from holding that identity. And then once your friends realize that, that's cool.

If they, if they don't like that side of you, then well, they, they have to adapt or they're not maybe the, the best friends to have, right. Yeah.

Kendall: And it's not because my friends are, , rejecting who I am. It's more. of my own insecurity because I used to be on the treadmill and I used to define myself by the same metrics that they use and now I've stepped off and I'm using a whole different metric system and I feel there's a disconnect there of translation.

Chris: It might be harder because if you have a bit more self doubt about it, because for me, my fallback is if , someone doubts me, it's , , like,, are you going to ever go back to working corporate? Maybe, I don't know, but I love my life.

It's awesome. I am Very solid mentally, and my wife is too. So, and when my [00:33:00] friends look at me, they can say, well, Chris, , at least, he may be a loser professionally, but he seems , always to be in a good mood, has good relationships with his friends and family, and is in very good physical shape.

So, can't begrudge him for that. So. Those are the things that I have going in my advantage where and part of that is just I think personality based in terms of my my mindset there that maybe some people just cannot cope with and have to find other ways to. To make it, make it work. Right. But who knows?

Kendall: Yeah. And at the end of the day, those attributes that you just listed are what people want and purport to value. We just put corporate up there because of capitalism and , what have you. But , if you're fulfilled in other ways ways that matter more, I'm grappling with the, what if I don't have a big career?

You wrote about this. When you retired, you thought you were going to be this amazing entrepreneur. And so did I, I thought in this year that I quit, I would have my own business. I'd be rolling in the dough as soon as I quit, , that would all just [00:34:00] manifest.

I've listened to a lot of podcasts of people who have done that and made their business super successful, but at a cost to a really high cost. We, we glorify that. , if you're going to step away from corporate, you got to be your own boss and you basically replicate the corporate structure, but you are everything, all this to say I'm stepping away from thinking that that is the only way to succeed by quitting a corporate job is you don't have to be the successful entrepreneur.

And what if I'm not a career person. Does that make me a bad person? I don't think it does, but it's never been how I see myself. So it's a transition to get there for

Chris: me. Yeah, absolutely I would recommend a book called the good life about the Harvard adult development study that one it sounded to me boring I almost didn't read it.

When it comes all it comes down to this study That's been going on since 1930 something Following people very closely and then their offspring very closely and doing all sorts of crazy studies of them. The, the one thing that matters most is relationships. , [00:35:00] okay, cool.

Yeah. Boring. But then I read it and it was , like, you know what, that's what it is. Right. So career stuff is, fine , for passing your time and for contributing and having some purpose. Ultimately though, the, greatest purpose you can have and the most usefulness you have is.

To the people that you are close with in your life. Right. And very rarely do at least do my friends and family care much about what I'm doing for the Zach, they, they're more caring more about my kids, Kim, our travels, other things we do for fun, not that. So it did read that book.

I think it really helped me also just know, okay, at the end of the day, I'm doing. What matters most, even if I suck it at, at what I do professionally, that's fine.

Kendall: that's not at all what I was saying that you suck professionally by any means, but you did recommend that book and I have it on my Kindle and I fell into that same trap of , Oh, Harvard study of what matters. Do I want to read that but I definitely know that and I mentioned in my blog that I'm taking a Training on how to be an end of life [00:36:00] doula and I think that's another thing that comes up there are a lot of books on death about what matters most at the end and that's what people say , I wish I had worked less

Chris: didn't really that book the five top five regrets of the dying because all those people were super rich.

It's , okay cool good for you for regretting the geeks being so successful in your in your life from a professional and social standpoint great, , It's it's not exactly as As representative as the Harvard study is yeah And the Harvard study isn't necessarily that was a representative either because it's all white kids from Boston But, I mean, they look at other studies from all over the world, too, and corroborate their evidence and their findings, but I think, , when you're dying, that's one point in your life,

and you're going to remember your life differently than you did when you were 37 years old, the way I try to look at it, it's hard, obviously, is every version of me for every day. Every 30, 000 days that I have live or whatever it is has a vote and which one will make give me the most thumbs up From all those people,

so that guy who's dying has one but there's also the guy today and there's a guy tomorrow and which one can get the most Thumbs up. Those are the actions to take [00:37:00] and and getting the most thumbs up Overall is there's the way to have the best over best well being overall in life. However long it lasts and whatever happens

Kendall: Ooh, I am totally stealing that years It equates to a vote over your life.

That's such a great reframe because so much of the education that I've absorbed has been delayed gratification and the whole idea of retirement, , work really hard. And then by the time you're 65, maybe you can go on that trip to Europe I think if a lot of people really did that exercise of evaluating each year of your life with just even thumbs up, thumbs down, how did that go based on was I living in alignment with my values that would be illuminating and maybe sad ways, maybe really not sad ways, but it just seems it would be a great exercise

Chris: to take.

Yeah. I can give you a suggestion on how to make it more. Tangible and real, which is, how I came to that thought exercise is, is by September [00:38:00] 22nd, 2015, I started writing down every single thing that I do. I call it life logging,

and so, , after I finished talking with you, I'm going to write down, , the time and talked with Ken Mill about XYZ. And then I'll go on and maybe have my lunch and write down the next time I had lunch and I just, I keep log up every single thing I do. And the way that ties into this whole voting, social media approval amongst my past and future selves is that.

I have a log of my entire life since 2015, so I do regularly go back and say, , what did I do in this day in 2016, And it gives me a a broader, wider, more detailed, more accurate perspective on what I was thinking then, what I was doing then, and what I'm glad that I did back then. What I'm wish I hadn't done back then and see things from a multiple Chris's standpoint, rather than just a Chris in this very moment standpoint.

Yeah,

Kendall: that is such a good point. And as someone who's been focusing on [00:39:00] death and that last year of your, your life reflection, it's so different and it's so emotionally. Tinged in a different way. So that's a really important distinction to make of 90 year old Chris is going to think about 30 year old Chris differently than how 30 year old Chris saw it.

So yeah, I mean, I was going to ask you about life logging because I. Got obsessed with it. I read the bullet journal method and then I also read your articles about life logging and I went full send and I was just logging everything and it definitely gives me a dopamine hit. I do love checking a box and all those types of things, but I made a little prison out of it for myself, .

I set up all these boxes of , what success is for a day, , and I had to, if I didn't do all these things, then I didn't feel good. And then I was like,, I don't think I want to log everything. And I took a break, but now I feel I miss having that rigor and that structure. I think I wasn't writing it for the reflection.

And I think that's the critical piece that you're, you're looking back at what you've written and deciding if [00:40:00] that. Is in alignment with how you want to be spending your time, whereas I was just being someone who captures data for the sake of capturing data, but if you don't analyze it, it doesn't tell you anything,

Chris: Yeah, when I try to convince other people to give it a try, my, my top recommendation is just to write what you do and try to avoid all judgment, and just keep it very brief and succinct the idea is to help you value your time more, not to take a whole bunch of your time and energy,

so keep it super simple and then just go from there and do what you find is useful. And after a certain time you , you structure the, the, the process, the system. In a way that works for you, because yeah, you can, you can easily overdo it. And I certainly did early on too, just by wanting to write everything down, but learned what's, what's going to be matter, what's important to, to keep note of for the future and, and what is just me just rambling to myself and . Meaningless words that take time

Kendall: I definitely waste time on things that don't really matter. I can go down to minute levels that are just not, [00:41:00] it's the needle and I'll spend way too much time, so. You got to learn how to take insights from it versus wasting time.

Chris: It's also just about the appreciation for time, , if I, if I spend an hour, if I, instead, instead of talking with you. So if I'd spend that time just dicking around on YouTube or reading emails,

and I had to write down, okay, what did I do this last hour? Oh, I, if I'm racking my brain for what I just did, that's, that's a slap to my brain. It's like,, you idiot. Why did you do that? And it's just trained me, conditioned me to, to not do those things ever. So now if I do read emails to go back to what we were talking about earlier I have to take notes on them and if I don't, then I realize I'm just doing it as. Mental masturbation, it's just , it's whatever feels good, but I'm not actually doing anything with it or making any relationships out of it or getting anything, any value out of it, if anything, it's, it's a negative.

I learned that through my life logging that just what works and what doesn't, what's valuable, what's not in the long run and getting better and better at. at honing in on, on the things that that in a sense that I enjoy doing and that I'm going to enjoy having [00:42:00] done at the same time, that balance as we get to about the whole votes from all your future and past selves.

Kendall: So you take notes on all of your emails?

Chris: The ones that, that I care that are good and if they're not good, then I have to think about. Well,, getting from this? And that's why I'm so interested in your point on how it how these ideas just seep into you in some ways that you can't really, that you can feel, but you can't really.

Put words to or really express, then I do think there's something to that. I don't know how good of a use of time that is compared to doing other things like , going out and talking to people, going for a walk and thinking to yourself

maybe trying a picture, who knows? There's so many other things you can be doing with that time. That you could convince yourself that this is all is all seeping in, , I'm becoming more knowledgeable, but then they, if it's, if he's hard to tie back to, to actions in the future or tie forward to action in the future, then maybe it's nonsense.

My favorite challenges I did back when Zach came out was to do a pod fast. So I just, I did no podcasts for a month. Cause I tend to, to [00:43:00] overlisten to podcasts whenever I have a free moment, I'll just put it in double speed because I'd like to learn things and hear what other people are talking about.

And that podcast, instead of that, I would just do empty pocket walks. Along the beach or the woods or whatever. That was surprisingly refreshing and something I should probably get back to with number two here. Actually, I haven't done this in four days, so it's just naturally happening.

Yeah. You realize that, okay, maybe all that information that you're just bombarding yourself with is, it's just just cause for, for mental diabetes,

Kendall: when you listen to a podcast you take notes so you make everything useful.

Chris: I never do it on the first run a book podcast anything that But if I if I think wow, this is this is good this is something I want to remember then I Email it to myself and I go back and and put it in my my to dos for the future to to take notes on it briefly To capture those things.

Kendall: Because I was going to ask, do you read novels? Because I have a hard time imagining those fitting your framework that you just said about what you consume.

Chris: Yeah I'm moving towards that a little bit more [00:44:00] now. Ted Chiang's short stories.

I actually went to a bookstore last week to just ask them to give me just a book that I would generally not be interested in that they think that I would be interested in. I got a book

it's not a novel, but something about wild woman that I'm trying to get my way through. So I'm trying to be less in a sense, practical and pragmatic with my information diet.

Kendall: I was just curious if you do pleasure entertainment the way you described other substacks in the beginning, you said, it's wasteful content.

Chris: is if you're not, if you're not doing anything about it, I think. Yeah. And so for entertainment, I don't have a hard time.

I do. I watch TV. I watched MTV is a challenge with Kim every week and we look forward to that a lot. Right. Is that okay?

Kendall: You're not a total robot.

Chris: Yeah, no, I follow the NBA pretty seriously and those things are just like in a sense waste of time. You have to live a little.

I think you can live a little by doing other things , , playing games, , going for walks, , playing sports, hanging out with friends I have yet to figure out , How to justify that time spent watching stupid shows , but I, I can't stop it.

Kendall: Do you have to justify [00:45:00] everything you do? Cause I think that was where life logging got oppressive to me because I was feeling trapped by. Sometimes poor choices, or I didn't want to face the reality of how I spend my time. And so not to say you should just spend all your time watching TV by any means, but you can do things guilt free without having to learn something

Chris: I would say it's almost the other way is that it allows me to do stuff like that. Watch the challenge guilt free because I don't feel time is flying by. I have a good grasp of what I'm doing with my time. So if I decide to quote unquote, waste an hour watching the challenge or reading, entertaining gossipy nonsense, going on Twitter,

I don't feel as bad about it as I might, if I didn't really remember what I did last week. I was , ah, what did I actually do that was useful last week? But I can look back and see and justify my little bit of indulgences in mental junk food.

Kendall: That's really a good way to look at it. Sometimes I, I think I have to earn it. , I have to earn eating ice cream or I have to earn watching reality [00:46:00] TV. And so I think that's where it can get a little.

A slippery slope of , you have to be productive to get it. But the way you flipped it about, am I aware of how I'm spending my time? Because there's been so many weeks where I've just looked back and been like,, what did I even do last week? And I do have notes, but the fact that nothing comes to mind shows that I'm not being that intentional and, evaluating if it makes sense to continue to do.

going forward.

Chris: Keeping that perspective,, every week. I review my days and say what went right, what didn't go right.

What did I do in each different bucket that's important to me? And then every month I review every week and every year I review every month. And it just keeps things in check that I, that I know what I'm, what I'm up to and what I find what I'm doing well, I try to do more of that. What I'm glad I did, and I tried to do more of that, and I find what didn't go well, and I try to avoid doing that.

And stuff the challenge doesn't go in either box, it's just a, just a time filler, so it's not something that I feel bad about, yeah, or eating ice cream, I love Dairy Queen Blizzards and

eating ice cream often, it's until it starts hurting me, then, then I would say, that's not going so well, , , [00:47:00] social media has hurt me, so I cut it out.

It just been a waste of my time or I felt the pain of it much more so than other things late in the evening.

Kendall: You hit on the difference between our personalities I'll be like,, Oh, why did I do that? And you will just move on, which is much healthier.

Chris: Yeah, it comes down to personality. I think it's maybe it's a level of neuroticism, if you study the big personality traits, it comes down, it comes down to that. I think I might be one of the lowest people in the world out there. Something, will happen.

Maybe make you feel bad for a second and then go away. The half life is, is five seconds. And for other people, they'll feel it stronger and the half life will be much, much longer. So it just, I, I, I sympathize with them. It's tough, , because a lot of bad things happen to everybody, especially if you empathize with other people's misfortunes.

Luckily for me, I'm in that regard. Ignorant or naive or optimistic

Kendall: like you said, it comes down to , your own wiring, but you don't have to feel bad about not ruminating on the plights of other people. I don't think that does anyone any good.

Fact that you can move on from embarrassment pain or adversity without personalizing it is. It's definitely a strength,

Chris: [00:48:00] Plot twist, right? the story of your life. That's my biggest life model, anything that goes wrong, it just makes for a better story. It's hard to have that perspective when it's going on. And sometimes you can't even realize that it is happening when it's happening. But when you look at it like that, just do the things that make for the better story and plot twist that you didn't hope for or didn't anticipate may suck, but five years from now, 10 years from now, you're gonna look back and be like,, huh, that was, that was crazy.

But it's a good story to tell.

Kendall: I think that's a great place to end plot twist and more to the story and the unfolding and not over identifying with the good or the bad at the current moment.

And just knowing that this is all how it's supposed to unfold and, it's what you make of it too because you're going to be dealt different cards and you can use it as a learning and growing experience

you opened with, that's your number one thing.

As long as I'm growing and learning, it doesn't all have to be smooth sailing.

Exactly.

It shouldn't be.

If it's smooth sailing, that's a boring story, right?

Totally.

Totally.

But I think that's what success has been sold to us in some ways.

As long [00:49:00] as nothing is going wrong, that's happiness.

That's baseline.

, no, that's not possible.

Yeah.

So you gotta find that sense of adventure and convince the people around you that you care about that that's also a good thing so that they don't look down on you and make you feel bad about it too.

Yeah, and again, no one I think is outwardly making me feel bad.

It's my own shit that I'm putting on other people and reflecting back to me.

It's just not helping anyone.

I'm going to definitely write about this and reflect on what I like and try to steal some good nuggets in there.

And I will read *The Good Life*.

Please tell me if you think it's good or not and what you think about it.

I look forward to hearing that.

Well, again, thanks so much, Chris.

It was a joy chatting with you .

I appreciate the opportunity

it's been great.

Thanks so much for listening.

Until next time, bye.

[00:50:00]