

Rachel Rofe: [0:06] Hello, everyone. Today, we're here with Thai Nguyen.

[0:09] Thai's life of chasing after dreams has led him to represent Nova Scotia at the National Canadian Rugby Championships, work as a five- star chef for the Hilton Hotel, own a small café, and work as a private chef for a fine- dining institute in Texas. Where he cooked for folks like Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas, and the Duggar family from TLC's "19 Kids and Counting."

[0:32] He lived in Thailand for a year and a half as a professional kick boxer and competed internationally in Canada, Singapore, Australia and Fiji. Later, he moved to Texas to complete his bachelor's in humanities and start a master's degree.

[0:46] Going to school at a seminary, Thai was once on track for a life as a church minister, but deep down inside had the dream of becoming a writer. Now, he's moved to Cusco, Peru to finish his first book.

[0:57] I first met Thai when he reached out to me after seeing my podcast hit "New & Noteworthy." I did some research on him, and I just really loved the way he's been able to reinvent himself so many times, do so many different things, and achieve excellence in each area that he tries out. I think we're going to be able to learn a lot from him today about mindset, dedication and habits.

[1:18] Thai, thanks for being here.

Thai Nguyen: [1:20] Rachel, thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

Rachel: [1:23] Totally, this is going to be fun. One of the things I start out every podcast with is just, the intention behind a better life, is just to show people that if they have a choice, that they can choose a better life.

[1:35] In that spirit, can you just take a minute to share with us some of the things that you're most proud of in your life?

Thai: [1:42] Yeah, I think it's just being able, more so now than previously, I think, I've been able to look back and actually appreciate the randomness of my life.

[1:54] It boils down to being a little bit of an ADD kind of personality. But I guess I never appreciated the journey as much as I have now. It's hard to pull out one bit of, if I really just, if I could just call up, the reflection on the journey has been like a big aha moment for me.

[2:17] I was always so focused on the destination. But it's only been in the last year that I've really embraced the journey, and so, if I could answer it like that and just throw out, embracing the whole journey as one big highlight.

Rachel: [2:32] Yeah, totally. When you say embrace the journey, especially as somebody who has achieved excellence in so many different areas, you're obviously pretty goal focused normally, right?

Thai: [2:43] Yeah, absolutely.

[2:44] That was the flip for me this year, was looking back and realizing, as much as the goal is important, there were a lot of times when I put a lot of pressure on myself and really took away from the beauty of the journey. I didn't get to enjoy some of the experiences as much as I would have liked to.

Rachel: [3:06] How do you do that now?

Thai: [3:10] I know it's a cliché and I know it's something that's being thrown around a lot, but really, being mindful and being in the moment. Again, that gets thrown out a lot.

[3:20] Daily, being very aware and very focused about all of the things I get to do, being thankful for that. Waking up and realizing, "Hey. I'm in Cusco. I'm living my dream. If I don't hit my writing target for today, that's OK."

[3:39] There's still this element of the journey that I get to embrace and celebrate. Really, that's celebrating the little things in life. That's been a huge part of it.

Rachel: [3:50] That's great. Do you have a practice around that?

Thai: [3:52] Yeah. Every morning I write out my gratitude list. I get up and I go for a jog to this ancient ruin that is really close to my apartment. I meditate up there. I'm just giving thanks. I'm soaking that all up.

[4:06] I go back. That's when I do my journaling and my writing. I do this flow of consciousness writing, writing things out as they come to my mind. Writing out three whole pages, included in those pages are the things that I'm thankful for, reflecting on my goals, but also reflecting up on what I have been able to achieve also.

Rachel: [4:29] Wow. That's a lot that you do every morning. How long does that take you?

Thai: [4:32] It does take a while. I get up at five o'clock in the morning. I usually get back from the run at about 7:15. I spend a bit of time up there.

[4:42] Sometimes, I'll do a lot of stretching, yoga, breath work, focusing on all of that. Then, I come back, take a shower and do the writing. It does take up a fair chunk of time. I think it really sets the trajectory for the rest of the day. It's worth it. The days that I skip it, I feel off.

Rachel: [5:03] Yeah. I hear you. I'm so big on having a morning routine. Especially, for people that have a lot of different things going on. It's sometimes the only thing in the entire day that's the grounding stability.

[5:15] Of course, when you have your day set up in a way where you are doing things that are reminding you of what you are grateful for, getting you in touch with your body, you're sweating, all this stuff. The rest of your day there's going to be a landscape for positivity, for the rest of the day.

[5:30] Whereas, the days when you wake up, you don't feel like doing anything, it's just, I definitely notice the days that I miss my morning routine, same thing. It's just the rest of the day's all over the place, and I never really get my footing. It's just a wasted day, it feels like.

Thai: [5:46] Yeah, absolutely. I think if we're honest with ourselves during the course of that day, if we were to calculate all of the times that we procrastinate, we're checking social media.

[5:56] If we combine them up it really, it'd be almost double the time that we spent for our morning routine. Really, even though it is a chunk of time to be set aside, I think the value in it overshadows the rest of the way that we spend the day, easily.

Rachel: [6:11] Totally. I know that some people listening are probably like, "Two hours, two hours plus, forget it. It's not going to happen," and probably feeling disconnected.

[6:21] I'm wondering, what do you think are your high, if you could, like, if you only had half an hour to set up a routine every day, what would you do?

Thai: [6:30] Oh, half- an- hour. I would definitely get up and do the meditation and the gratitude work. I think those have been crucial.

[6:40] I'd try and squeeze in some short bits of exercise and maybe just try and stir around a whole bunch of burpees or push- ups to get the heart rate going. But I think those exercises are something crucial. I think that getting your body moving, really, just get that's blood flowing, get it's flowing to your brain and so, it gets your brain sort of charged up and ready to go.

[7:03] But I think there was some research done by, I think it's [Shawn Akers, and he has a book](#), I think the happiness, something to do with happiness. Somebody ought to find it and send it to you. But his research shows that when you start the day off with gratitude and with happiness, it really changes the outcome of everything.

[7:26] Traditionally, we viewed happiness on the other side of an activity. We think, "I need to do X and then as a result, I will be happy." But his research shows that if you place happiness before the actual activity, it completely transforms the level of productivity. Just the way that you do that is so much greater than if you put happiness on the other end.

[7:53] Gratitude, I think, is a huge part in it. It seems very intangible. We live in a world that's so focused on materialism and on empiricism and we need to see results straight away. That's why, I think, gratitude gets pushed to the side so often, it's because you can't see immediate results. But they're more subtle, immediate results, if that makes sense.

Rachel: [8:21] Totally. I'm curious as somebody who has achieved excellence in so many different areas and just reached the upper echelon in so many areas,

what are some of the things that you found that help you the most?

[8:36] Is it like, because you said that the new journey is the morning routines. Have you always done that? Or, is that something where you're just experimenting? Because I know that sometimes to get us to the next level, we have to change direction.

Thai: [8:51] Yeah, that has been something that I've always done. I think, really, the key in being able to achieve what I've achieved is honestly stop playing the comparison game with others.

[9:03] That has been crucial, and it seems sort of counter intuitive, that everything we do needs to be measurable. But in a sense, taking away that measuring stick and taking away that game of comparison that we play with so many other people has been so liberating, so helpful in me being able to achieve success. Because ultimately, I'm not trying to one up on someone else, I'm trying to one up on myself. It's this very personal focus.

[9:32] When we say everything that I do ultimately boils down to doing it, because I want to do it and doing it, because I'm competing with no one else but myself, I think relieves a lot of pressure. I think we take on a lot of undeserved pressure on ourselves by constantly comparing ourselves with others.

Rachel: [9:56] That's a great point. Then, when you were in the rugby championships, for example, and you were representing Nova Scotia, when you first starting playing rugby, were you thinking, "I want to be on a team?"

[10:07] Or, were you just thinking, "I just want to get better and better all the time?"

Thai: [10:10] I grew up playing rugby in Australia and I guess I moved over to Canada just because I'd had this love for traveling and I had this dream of just seeing the world.

[10:22] The rugby in Canada came out of a different dream, it just came out of the desire to travel. But while I was there, I'd always had a desire to really pursue excellence in rugby. I really wanted to turn professional back in Australia, which I wasn't able to do, but I was able to play at a high level in Canada.

[10:44] I was constantly just having goals in different areas. Regardless of what I was doing, I would have a high goal and a high expectation that I was trying to reach.

Rachel: [10:55] Did you tell yourself that you wanted to be in the championships?

Thai: [11:00] No, that came out of just playing. I was playing a match for the senior men's competition in Halifax, and I played pretty well in that game.

[11:10] One of the people watching the games was the coach of the Nova Scotia provincial side. He found out that I was 18 at the time, I was eligible to play in the

U18 side, he came and talked to me about playing afterwards.

[11:25] It was really random, but again, it was in that game that I was playing, I was still pushing myself and I was still trying to achieve great things in that game. I think that's a valuable lesson in itself, that we often don't know what's on the other side of the efforts that we put into things.

[11:42] That's why it's so important to put in our best efforts in everything that we do, because we don't know what the result or what the outcome is going to be. I didn't know that there was a coach for the provincial side watching that game. But had I have slacked off or had lower expectations of myself during that game, that outcome wouldn't have come from the event.

Rachel: [12:05] That's a really good point. How did you even get into rugby? Were you just, like, following what sounded fun to you?

Thai: [12:14] Rugby's huge in Australia, pretty much every kid grows up playing rugby, it was just a natural thing, even your friends are playing it.

[12:23] From a very young age, 10 or 11- years- old, I was playing it. I guess it's comparable to American football or to ice skating in Canada.

Rachel: [12:35] Then, you were a five star chef for the Hilton hotel. How did that happen?

Thai: [12:41] I came back from that year of being overseas and, honestly, I didn't do well in high school at all.

[12:47] I was a bit of a rebellious kid. I struggled with always fitting into the mold and fitting into, I guess, the paths and the concepts that society kind of has for us. A part of me feels like I needed to get a conventional job. It was the one thing that I have a little bit of experience in. But it was something else, I was still passionate at it, and something that allowed me to express my creative self in food.

[13:15] I look back and I enjoy what it was. But I don't think I would ever do it again, to be honest.

Rachel: [13:22] Yeah, no, totally. Just interesting that you went straight to five star chef or the private chef for all these major or minor, whatever, but they were celebrities.

Thai: [13:32] Yeah, it was interesting how it played out. I honestly never thought that I would cook again. But I think some of the things in our kind of past find its way back into our present. It was just something that I went through a few different times in my life.

Rachel: [13:49] How is it, you have had all these different reinventions of yourself. There's got to be, it's got to be tough to give up who you know yourself as and then start something new so often.

[14:06] I know there's a lot of people now that have these lives that maybe they have these dreams, deep down, for something else. Like you were, deep down, dreamed for being a writer, even though you felt like you were destined to be a minister at one point.

[14:19] Can you tell us a little bit about how you're able to give up who you know yourself as in order to get to the next phase of your life?

Thai: [14:29] Yeah, absolutely, and that actually is a huge traditional point in the book that I'm writing at the moment, because it was a massive realization for me that, you said, having to give up a part of yourself.

[14:42] I don't think you have to give up a part of yourself, but it's more understanding the multidimensional aspects of who you are. One thing that I really cover in the book is differentiating your values from your vehicle. This is the point, the big crossroad that I came to, where I thought about everything that was going on in my life, destined for this one path but having this desire for something else.

[15:08] I stopped everything and I just thought, "OK, what are the things that I'm really passionate about? What are the things that I value in life?" It was connecting with people, it was having meaningful relationships. It was writing, it was evoking positive change in people's lives through the power of words.

[15:26] As I looked back and I looked at these things that I was writing down, there was a sense of consistency all throughout everything that I'd done. I'd always enjoyed having meaningful relationships with people. I'd always journaled and always enjoyed that.

[15:41] I think it's understanding the multidimensional aspects of ourselves, that there are things that are non-negotiables, that we shouldn't compromise on, and those are our values. But then, we look at our vehicle and what brings us those values, and I think with those things, you should allow yourself to compromise on, that you should allow yourself to quit on at times, that you should allow yourself to be flexible.

[16:10] Your values are your core non-negotiables, your vehicles are these different careers that pass through your life. For me, going through the chef career, that still was able to deliver me some of my values, my elements of creativity. As strange as it sounds, the fighting was still able to deliver me, as a vehicle, with different elements of creativity. You can actually be pretty creative in the ring with different combinations, different fight moves.

[16:39] Realizing that life as a journey can be changeable in the elements of your vehicle, of your careers, but there's a sense of consistency in your values. That was huge to me. In all of these different reinventions that I wasn't really strong, in a way, myself or abandoning myself. But I was still holding onto the really important elements of myself, but I was letting this other area be flexible, which has allowed me to continue consistently through.

Rachel: [17:10] That's a great distinction, I think that's really helpful for people that you don't have to, like you can feel your core values in many different ways. I think that gives people permission to not have to tie up so much to one specific thing.

Thai: [17:24] Absolutely.

Rachel: [17:25] Which is great. I'm curious then if you are feeling the values that you wanted to feel, say, while you were fighting, then why did you go and do something else?

Thai: [17:34] Yeah, that's a great point, Rachel. I think my personality, I've always enjoyed variety and that could be due to a lack of undiagnosed ADD or something. But also, it ties into, I really, truly believe that life is about change and variety and experiencing different things.

[17:56] I think a root of a lot of dissatisfaction could be...I'm not saying this in absolute terms...but it could be because there's this massive focus in our culture to find that one job, that one meaning, that one purpose. I think there are a lot of things out there that's like, "Find your purpose. Find your meaning. Find that one thing."

[18:18] I think that's a lot of pressure to put on people. I think that breeds a lot of discomfort and a lot of frustration. For me, when I found myself, I would just consistently find myself reaching to the end of something with the cooking, I had set goals there. Finishing my apprenticeship. Once I reached them, I was just like I actually want to try something else now.

[18:43] The same thing with the fighting. I got to achieve a few goals there. I'd like to try something else out. Even then my values were still consistent through there. Personally, there was just, I guess, an expiry date on some of these vehicles. When they ran their course, and I felt the desire to do something else, I stepped down to do them.

Rachel: [19:06] That makes sense.

[19:07] For people who are listening, that...I don't know what your financial situation was, and we can get into that...but I'm curious, for people who are listening who maybe have a job where they're making X amount of money. And so, they feel like it's not easy to just give up the job to try something else, even though they might feel like they want to try different things.

[19:27] Do you think that this works the same if you're just taking care...like you're doing passions on the side? Or, did you have a strategy around setting yourself up for stability every time you went and reinvented yourself financially?

Thai: [19:41] Yeah, a lot of people have looked at my lifestyle and thought I'm some sort of...I've got like a million dollars in the bank that I'm [inaudible 0:20:03] off.

[19:51] But this is really something that you really need to set yourself up. I think

that's wise. I'm not saying don't be wise with money. But in my own personal lifestyle, I've never been rich financially. But the lifestyle that I live, I feel like it's just eclipsed a monetary value could be placed on.

[20:14] I tell people you don't need to be rich to live your dreams. I'm here in Cusco, living my dreams. It's just this constant being wise and having a fund on the side. I'd always make sure I'd never be in serious debt. At the moment, I'll pick up free lance writing gigs when I need it. There are a couple of websites that will pay me for articles. I'll fall back on that when needed.

[20:41] It was the same thing with the fighting. I would get paid per fight. I would take fights when I needed, but in terms of financially setting yourself up or doing it on the side, I think we let that eclipse the experience a lot of times. We let the fear of stability and the fear of having enough money hold us back from stepping out.

[21:08] I think you'll realize once you step out that those things have a way of falling into place. I mean, they have for me. I'm not advocating you quitting your job and just going out, although that's what I did. I'm doing OK. If inside, that's what your calling is, I would say that I'm doing it. I'm still alive and I'm not begging on the streets yet.

Rachel: [21:32] Yeah. I guess I see your point. I think err towards...and I'm usually the same way actually where I'm just like, "Let's jump off on things and see what happens and just believe that everything's going to be OK."

[21:45] If you're following your intuition and all that stuff, it's going to all work out. I've also, just for people that are listening and they have families and kids to take care of and stuff, I always, whenever I give advice, I'm always erring towards people having, I guess, plans to create income.

Thai: [22:06] Absolutely. If I wasn't a single guy, Rachel, I think my advice would be completely different.

[22:11] It would err much more on the safe side, but from a single guy kind of perspective, that's what I've done in past is just jumped out with not much saved up. And been all right. But no, I completely agree with you. If I had family, I think I'd be given very different advice.

Rachel: [22:30] What advice would you be giving then?

Thai: [22:33] I think it'd be wise to have a fund on the side saved up before you launch out, to have a safety net to fall back on.

[22:43] Ultimately, it's just going to be me that I have to get frustrated at if anything goes wrong. But if you've got kids and family, that's some added responsibility that you definitely need to take into consideration. I would definitely have a safety net in terms of finances.

[23:04] If I had family and I wanted to pursue this writing dream that I did, I mean, I would have kept my old job and really set aside time on the side. Try and bring

in, I guess, a part time income through the writing before I even considered quitting the main job. If I had family, that's what I'd do.

Rachel: [23:25] Yeah. I think that's a really good point is just, yes, it might be hard for people to go and quit their jobs and all the stuff, but you wake up early and spend time towards whatever your passion's about. That's great. Go to bed late. Whatever it is.

[23:40] It's a really good way to start feeling and just encompassing yourself with the feelings that you want to be feeling. Feeling better about your life just in general, even if it's not like you totally give up your career right away. Or, it could be something where you just get better and better until you can eventually quit your career while not having to completely lose all your stability.

Thai: [24:02] Yeah. And there's an important point in that also of just gaining validation while you do it on the side. That's something that I actually did before I actually quit.

[24:12] Once you're doing something on the side, that's a good time to really validate your idea. And see if you're on to something. Because we all have passions and hobbies. It's one thing to have them, but it's one thing to build a career on and to bring in income and to bring in a living from that. You really got to be honest with yourself and say, "You know, although I'm passionate about this, do I have what it takes to build a career on that?"

[24:36] That's something that you can learn, even if you don't have it at that point. Before launching off, I sent out a bunch of guest posts that were picked up immediately on this pretty large website. That surprised me, but at the same time, I was like, "Hang on, people actually enjoy what I write. I may be on to something."

[24:56] Before I launched out, I had that. That would be something wise to do, as well.

Rachel: [25:00] That's a great point.

[25:01] If you're listening to this and you have an inkling that you want to do something, just start getting some momentum in that direction is really a great way for it to not feel like such a scary leap when you're ready to either do it full time later on or even just for it to not be just this thing in your head where you're thinking, "One day..." or "Some day..." or "I should do this..." but actually, just getting leverage on it.

[25:24] One thing...I have a group, a Facebook group we call "[A Better Life](#)." And we talk about just what's one small thing that you can do every day that you'll feel proud of today? Just taking those small little actions, they can really make your mindset just so much better.

Thai: [25:41] Yeah, absolutely. I love that. Doing that one thing that can make you feel better.

Rachel: [25:45] Yeah. I know that you do mindset coaching. I'm curious. What is the thing or maybe top three things that you feel like hold people back from pursuing their dreams the most?

Thai: [25:59] I think it's familiarity. That's one thing. We don't like stepping into the discomfort zone.

[26:06] I had a friend tell me this quote that says, "People have become comfortable with being uncomfortable." Even when your comfort zone is uncomfortable, it's not where you want to be. It's not what you want to be living. It's not pursuing your dream. Even that uncomfortability is comfortable, because it's familiar.

[26:28] Does that make any sense?

Rachel: [26:29] That actually does make a lot of sense. I thought about that a lot. I have friends that are just super kind of "Burning Man community- ish" and I love Burning Man.

[26:41] I know a lot of my friend there. They are very...it's always, "What's uncomfortable? Let's step on the edge of what we can do next. What we can do next."

[26:50] That is. They're, once you're always trying to be uncomfortable. I think that can get sensationalized just as much, because then, you're just never appreciating what you have now. It's always, "What's next? What's next?"

Thai: [27:02] Yeah. That becomes a "comfort zone," because it's familiar. As humans, we're just naturally drawn to things that are familiar. We find a sense of comfort, even when they're not the best situations for us.

[27:17] I think that's one thing that really holds people back, like stepping into uncharted territory.

[27:24] Really, just knowing the future is another thing. When you're in your job, you know when your next paycheck is going to come from. You know what work that you need to do. Just stepping out on your own feet can be a scary thing, but it's when you realize the outcome and the results of doing that so much eclipse the uncomfortable feelings of staying in that situation that people eventually overcome and step through.

Rachel: [27:54] Yeah, OK. Those are some good points.

[27:56] I think, just to step on the first thing that you mentioned again, you were saying how some people are comfortable feeling uncomfortable, and for those people, maybe the exercise is to try and figure out some stability in your life. Whereas, people that aren't comfortable being uncomfortable, then, the exercise would be to go through and get OK with being uncomfortable, huh?

Thai: [28:18] Yeah. I actually do a little exercise. They're related to neurolinguistic programming. I've done some of a course in self- hypnosis and

hypnotherapy before.

[28:32] And visualization, using the mind's, the power of imagination and visualization and metaphors has been really helpful for me.

[28:41] In terms of getting and overcoming uncomfortable situations, what I actually do once I get back from a jog is I have...and it's cold here in Cusco, I'll have a freezing cold shower, but before I turn on the cold shower, I begin to visualize and just use affirmations and tell myself, like, "I can overcome any obstacle that presents itself. I will push through any difficulty."

[29:08] I start repeating these affirmations. Then, I turn on the blistering cold water and I endure that for about 10 seconds. I'm really creating this metaphor in my life and really ingraining it, not only neurologically, but physiologically in my body, as well.

Rachel: [29:25] That's a really great point. Yeah, the reference had shown what you learned when you were learning hypnosis. Like the neurologically, the physiologically...are those different things that they teach you to make sure that you really helping make change, lasting change?

Thai: [29:40] Yeah. There's been tons of studies in neuropsychology. One famous one is they've taken two groups of people. Gotten one group to practice a melody on the piano. Got the other group to simply imagine that they were playing those same keys on the piano.

[29:54] Then, they brought them both together. It was almost identical, the results between those who physically practiced and those who imagined. Athletes will use visualization in a lot of their training.

[30:07] But basically, the brain has problems telling the difference between something physical and something imagined. You can get a little more esoteric with visualization and a lot of people will talk about how they've visualized their success before. But there seems to be this strange connection between our imagination and how things play out in reality.

[30:30] Back to with the cold shower. I'm using something imagined. I'm constantly imagining myself overcoming difficulties, but I'm also tying that in to something that's very tangible, that's very in this world with the cold feeling on my body. I am not only visually telling myself and imagining overcoming difficulties, but I'm actually physiologically enduring it and pushing through. It is combining the two elements.

Rachel: [30:58] That is a great call. I think that is a good point about the visualization. Have you read "[Psycho Cybernetics](#)?"

Thai: [31:06] I've heard of it. It is on my reading list. I will definitely have to pick your brain on it.

Rachel: [31:11] Yeah, it sounds like you already know a lot of the main point of it, which is just about how powerful visualization is.

[31:18] If you do decide to read it, there is the older version and then the Dan Kennedy, I think Dan Kennedy revised version, which is a lot less dry so I recommend that one. [laughs]

[31:29] It is amazing just how many studies are out there about the power of visualization and just having your mind go through and look at outcomes and play them out the way that you want them. It's especially helpful when you visualize what you want but then also feel the feelings that you would feel, in that visualization.

Thai: [31:49] Yeah, absolutely.

Rachel: [31:51] Super, super helpful. I am glad that you brought that up. That is something that I don't think has come up on the podcast yet, which is interesting because it is such a powerful piece.

Thai: [32:00] Fantastic. That is awesome.

Rachel: [32:02] Totally. What is the one thing, in your experience, that people don't usually share about improving themselves, whether it is not sexy or it just doesn't paint the rainbows and butterflies picture that everything is great when you start working in personal development?

Thai: [laughs] [32:18] I think you'd agree, as well, there are elements of the daily grind that. Like I quoted, it takes 10 years to be an overnight success.

[32:32] I think Muhammad Ali has got another quote that is really profound in terms of the grind. He says "A fight is won or lost far away from weaknesses, away from all of the lights, long before I danced in the ring," something along those lines.

[32:48] I think I butchered it. But basically, it is just saying that the road to success really includes a lot of menial, grinding away tasks. It is easy to look at people's, I guess, highlight reels and base the whole experience off that. It is easy to look at our Rachel and her success and her podcast and just see her cruising around in her nice, fancy car and living that life and not see what is behind the scenes.

[33:22] I think that is one thing that a lot of people don't realize. Constantly the work that we do is very much in public and it is easy to base everything off that small tip of the iceberg.

Rachel: [33:33] I think that is so valid and especially coming from you, because you have gotten to so many different areas and done so well in so many different areas.

[33:43] I really like that you acknowledge the grind, but then, you also set yourself up each morning with gratitude and the exercise and all these things so that you always have a layer of a richness in your life. Does that make sense?

Thai: [33:58] Yeah. I think what you mentioned earlier on that, just finding that

one thing to celebrate is crucial to get through those tough times daily. If you can find one thing to be thankful about, I think it makes everything else worth it.

Rachel: [34:14] Totally. I am glad you mentioned the grind, because, yes, for some people they get to be in this period where they only do the work that they love and all this stuff.

[34:22] But I think a lot of times that comes after you have your initial hustle and you kind of pay your dues to the universe or something. [laughs]

Thai: [laughs] [34:30] Yeah, absolutely. Even though I get to tell people that I am living my dream, living here in Cusco and picking up and just writing all day, there's elements of it where it is so tough.

[34:44] You're constantly drawn back into the temptation of going back to the safe zone, back to familiarity. Back to the old job, where I knew how much I was getting paid. I was getting paid well. I had my housing covered. I had all of that. It is a whisper in your ear constantly.

[35:05] It's tough. It's not easy and that is one thing that I am sure to tell a lot of people. It is not going to be easy at all. It is going to be a tough walk until you can enjoy those moments that you are hoping to get to.

Rachel: [35:21] When you're doing something and you're feeling like, "Ugh, I don't want to do whatever I am about to do," and you just feel like every part of your body is just like, "I am not in the mood for this," what do you do?

Thai: [35:34] A couple of things. One thing that I've been constantly trying to do is just creating these habits, and creating the habit of pushing through uncomfortableness.

[35:44] In the morning constantly even trying to set my alarm a little bit earlier, every now, and then, I am always trying to create these little scenarios that are going to build, I guess, muscle memory and build a habit of pushing through these stages that inevitably we will face.

[36:03] Every time I notice myself feeling like I don't want to get out of bed that is when I jump out of bed. I consistently try to do that. That is when the old shower comes in, as well. Because I don't want to have a cold shower. But what I am doing is creating all of these different habitual acts and metaphors to help with the times I sit down and I don't feel like writing.

[36:26] I am creating this, I guess strengthening that muscle to push through the laziness and the times that I just don't feel like doing it. By creating these other acts, I am really helping to push through that.

[36:41] That is one thing that I do and I definitely would recommend people to do is create these little scenarios for yourself where you're becoming better at dealing with the times that you feel like crap and you just don't want to do something. You're building this discipline into yourself.

[36:57] The other thing is just remembering why I am doing it, constantly going back to that. The whole reason I left and came here is just my love for writing. That is a question that you really have to ask yourself in everything you do.

[37:12] If the money wasn't going to come, which I'm not saying that that is not an important element, it is, but if that isn't going to come, if everything else, the extraneous things, if they don't come in, would you still do what you want to do?

[37:32] For me, it came back to the writing and the answer was yes, you know? If all of the other success that I'm aiming for doesn't come, would I still love what I am doing here? The answer is yeah. That has been really helpful in pushing through those moments.

Rachel: [37:47] That is extremely helpful, because if you're constantly engulfed in whatever your values are, it makes life a lot easier.

[37:54] To touch on the first thing that you said, like showing yourself that you can do things even when you don't feel like it, I think it is really helpful. Because I talk about this book, "The Slight Edge" all the time, it is amazing. One of the biggest takeaways that I got from that is that the road to excellence is made up of decisions that are easy to do and they're also easy not to do.

Thai: [38:18] Yeah, that is huge.

Rachel: [38:19] It is huge. It would be so easy to just stay in bed or to not do whatever you don't feel like doing. But when you just start building up that muscle memory of doing the things that don't give you that instant gratification that is really when you start to maximize your excellence.

Thai: [38:33] Yeah, absolutely.

Rachel: [38:35] Awesome. What would you say to somebody now who is listening and just struggling, feeling trapped by their circumstances?

Thai: [38:47] I have to say life is difficult, I think. Regardless of doing what you love or doing what you don't love, you are going to encounter difficulties, frustrations, struggles, obstacles, regrets.

[39:02] But at the end of the day, don't you think it is going to be better to endure all of that and still be able to do what you absolutely love rather than doing something that you don't love. That would be a question that I'd ask them.

[39:16] Anyone struggling, anyone sitting on the fence, anyone that is asking these questions about whether I should or should not, I think, ultimately, when you lay your head down at night to sleep it would be a much better night knowing that you did what you love during the day, even though you endured difficulties.

Rachel: [39:38] Absolutely. To add onto that, even if it is just taking that couple hours a day and just working on the things that you have values around, even if it is not your core job, or whatever it is, but just something that you can feel proud of at the end of the day, have that, is a lot better than living a life full of regrets. It

is great advice.

Thai: [39:57] Yeah, that is a good point.

Rachel: [39:58] Yeah, thank you. Thai, you have given some really great tips here. I think there are some really tangible takeaways for people.

[40:06] Can you just take us back to let people know where they can go to find out more about you?

Thai: [40:11] Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having me on and I definitely would love to connect with your listeners. I write over at theutopianlife.com.

[40:20] I've recently started to focus a little bit more on [Twitter, you can find me over @Thaiwins, which is T- H- A- I- W- I- N- S.](#)

[40:28] Those are probably the two best ways to connect with me. But definitely I would love to hear from your listeners and if there is any more advice I can give, I am more than willing.

Rachel: [40:37] Perfect. Thank you so much.

Thai: [40:39] Thank you, appreciate it.

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