

S1 E4 A Question Of Time – A Conversation For the Masses

Hello Quiet Bohemians!

Do you ever feel that being introverted, highly sensitive, or wanting to break away from the status quo and how things should be done stops you from keeping up with everybody else.? Do you ever feel that you should be much more successful or settled in life than you are now? Or do you ever feel that you're trailing behind people that you know?

Let's Dive Right into our second conversation for the masses and turn to Depeche Mode's song A Question of Time. Last week when we looked at See You I said that the lyric was simple and had no deeper meaning. This week there might be a deeper meaning and if there is I'm not quite sure that I like it. So I'll leave it up to you if you want to listen to the song to decide for yourself, and I would encourage you to listen to it, because it is a great song. But for our purposes today, let's talk simply about:

“it's a question of time and it's running out for you”.

Time is running out for you. That's what it feels like. It feels like we should have done more by now. We feel we're behind. Maybe we feel like it's a race.

A race has competitors. People we're trying to win against, people were trying to beat. We look around at our friends, our peers or colleagues and we can start to think we should be much further ahead compared to where they are now.

But when we tell ourselves the story that we should be level with (or ahead) of other people, do you realize that there's a story inside the story? Like the wooden Russian dolls, one sitting inside another. When we envy or make judgments about someone else's life, it's all made up in our head.

Yes, we can see that somebody has a specific job, drives a particular car or where they go on holiday. But notice that those things are not their life. They are things they do or buy. We tend to look at other people through rose-tinted glasses and yet we look at ourselves through muddy spectacles. We imagine other people are living non-stop singing and dancing lives., carefree always enjoying themselves. Whereas we see all the stress and worry loneliness, fear and doubt we sometimes feel. And we imagine both are true much more often than they are.

Really our lives are just the same as everyone else's. Sure some people might be living life from slightly more plush surroundings or exotic locations, but we all have a mixture of joy pleasure and contentment along with some stress overwhelm and doubt.

It's also a story that we need to be any particular place relative to other people. They do their thing and we do ours and when we compare ourselves to others and measure our progress or success accordingly, the story we are telling ourselves now is the familiar refrain for introverts and highly sensitive people:

We should be able to move as quickly as they do. We should be able to do things their way. We should be able to get along in a noisy extrovert world. We should follow the crowd instead of following our dreams.

All not true.

And the other thing a race has is a finish line. Are you trying to get yourself across a finish line that doesn't exist?

We think that all of our hopes and dreams are places to get to and often that place is called happy or satisfied. How many times have you told yourself that you'd be happy when - fill in the blank? You got the job, the house, the guy or the girl? When you reached a certain weight or earned a certain amount of money.

And how many times did you get the thing only to realise that the happiness didn't last and it wasn't long before you were off chasing the next thing. I'm a life coach, so my stock in trade is helping you reach your goals. But beyond that it is to help you stop striving and looking to achieving those goals as the be-all and end-all. To stop tying up your self-worth in achieving those goals and to stop putting your happiness on hold until you get them.

There is always the next thing. Our brains are seeking machines. As soon as you achieve a goal. Your brain is moving on making you feel dissatisfied. Tricking you into thinking your happiness or peace of mind rests on something bigger and better; rests on something more; rests on the next thing. So there is no finish line where if you cross it everything is great for evermore and you're now done. You can rest easy because now you're successful or confident or thin enough or good enough and there's nothing left to do.

And I know you know this. But I'm reminding you because I think when we get up in our stories it is all too easy to forget that.

So when we feel that time is running out and we're not as far forward as we want to be I think there are two common ways to go. The striving, hustling, convinced everything is going to be okay if only we can get to the next level or we do nothing. Thinking that time is running out can make us feel unhappy and sometimes that unhappiness galvanizes us into action, but sometimes we're just feeling stuck.

We wish things were different, but we're not doing anything about it. And the thought of time running out makes us panic.

When I get the initial idea for these conversations, I have no idea where they'll end up and today I find that the path has brought me to another great song, funnily enough, called Time by Pink Floyd.

So today Martin Gore has to share the stage with Roger Waters. And apparently he wrote this song when he was 29 and he realised he wasn't doing anything with his life and he thought he was halfway through it. Well, I really hope 29 isn't halfway through life.

But I think we all do get to a point where we start to see that we have more life behind us than we do ahead of us and that can put extra pressure on us to achieve more before it's too late.

Time really is a great song. I think it's from one of the best albums of all time, Dark Side of the Moon by Pink Floyd, and I'd always assumed it was a single. But I've just checked and it turns out it was the B-side to Us and Them

And if you remember what a B-side is, you're probably one of those people like me who sees more life behind them than there probably is ahead of them.

I won't take the time to recite the whole lyric now, but I will just take you through some of my favourite and, I think, more poignant lines. Roger Waters says to us:

Ticking away the moments that make up a dull day. Fritter and waste the hours in an offhand way. You are young and life is long and there is time to kill today. And then one day you find ten years have got behind you. No one told you when to run you missed the starting gun. So you run and you run to catch up with the Sun but it's sinking racing around to come up behind you again. The sun is the same in a relative way, but you're older, Shorter of breath and one day closer to death.

I realise it sounds a little bit morbid, but I really do love the poetry in this lyric. It does bring us back to the idea of a race though. But what if we don't want to race, we don't want to run and run to catch up with the sun as it's sinking; but we're sick of not doing anything to make our Big Dreams come true.

What options are we left with then? I see two options for us. Number one is to make a commitment and number two is to allow ourselves to be guided by inspiration in the moment.

For me as a highly sensitive person. I have often found the idea of making a commitment, the idea that you're kind of going big, going all-in - I find that really exhausting and so I've tended not to do that. I've much preferred the idea of following my inspiration seeing where I feel drawn to go in any moment and going down that path.

It has felt much more freeing for me, but I think the downside to that is that perhaps my attention has been scattered in a lot of different directions, and I've never made the progress that I wanted to in any one direction. And whilst I certainly revel in doing my own thing, my own way, in my own time and not being tied down to having to follow one course of action and having different passions different directions different projects that I'm working on - I think if I'm honest with myself, it's also true to say that I've perhaps used that as a little bit of an excuse to veer off the path and veer off course.

When things got a little bit too difficult, too tough to handle, instead of seeing it through I've just changed direction. So I don't want that for you. I want you to know that you don't need to pull away from anything that you feel drawn to do because you think your introversion or being highly sensitive is stopping you from making it all the way.

So given that our goals are not things that we will achieve to make ourselves feel better they're things to follow simply for the fun of them because we're curious, because we feel drawn to them. We have both those paths to choose from we can either make a commitment or we can allow ourselves to be guided by inspiration.

Making a commitment means choosing a milestone goal or choosing an outcome a specific outcome that we want to achieve and committing to taking whatever steps is necessary every day every week until we get there and committing to keeping going no matter how difficult it gets.

When we talk about that commitment and about things getting tough, I don't mean that we need to motivate ourselves to do things we don't want to do. If that's what you want to do: try and find a way to do something you don't want to do, then I am not the coach for you.

But sometimes we don't feel in the mood to do the things we really want to do, or we don't feel in the mood to do the things we need to do to get to where we genuinely want to be and that is something slightly different and that is where we remember that we do not need to listen to our thinking. We can just take action regardless of any thinking we have that might be trying to persuade us otherwise. Any thinking that might be telling us that we have to be motivated to do this, or have to be in the mood, or have to feel inspired in the moment, or have to feel more confident, or more equipped to take on this challenge.

So that's commitment and our alternative is allowing ourselves to be guided by inspiration in the moment and that could be with an end goal in mind or it could literally be from moment to moment with no thought of where we might want to get to or where we might end up.

And it seems as if following that inspiration means we won't find ourselves, like our colleagues taking their make a commitment path, we won't find ourselves ever at a point where we're not in the mood to take some action, but that isn't true either. Even when we feel inspired to do something to create something there could still be times when in the moment we're not feeling the enthusiasm that we might do to take that very next step in front of us and we will need to put our thinking aside to make things happen as well.

The difference that I see between those two choices is whether we're working backwards from a desired goal and working out the steps that we need to and we'll take to get there and being guided by inspiration is more about following what is in front of us in the moment and not necessarily knowing exactly where we want to go, or being too prescriptive about what that will look like and being more open to a much more meandering path to get to wherever it is we might be going.

And because there is no particular place that we need to be and no particular time that we need to get there, I don't think it really matters which path we choose.

I think what matters is being engaged with life, not taking life too seriously, but taking part. Being playful being curious and not making excuses for not following our dreams. And the final thought I'll leave you with this week is sometimes following our inspiration leads us to making a commitment!