

# TRANSCRIPT

## SESSION 6.2 SOCIAL PRESSURES

Nate: A common theme from many of our interviews, and from many of our interviewees, is that obviously, they've broken out of the norm, the normal path. There's often a critical point, if you could call it critical, in their lives where they decide that the path that they were told to go on is not the one that they're going to go on, and we always try to bring that out, because those are seminal moments, as we say, in their lives, and if they're making it onto our podcast at Opt Out, then it most definitely was a seminal [00:00:30] moment.

It's a turning point in a story that you can always go back to and say that's when you decided to do something a little different, and that's why things have gone well, that's why you've lived this life, and that's how you've gotten in this chair, oh dear guest. We wanted to talk a lot about those social pressures and those traditional paths and those things that can be in the back of your mind or right in front of your face from a family member or friend or thing that you're reading or what have you that leads you to believe you should do [00:01:00] something, and hopefully, when you opt out, you're deciding not to.

So, I'm not sure exactly where to start on this one, Dana, but that was a great intro by me.

Dana: That was excellent.

Nate: I think that-

Dana: Let's start with Mom and Dad.

Nate: Yeah, yeah.

Dana: Mom and Dad don't really mean to do this, but they put certain pressure on their kids to grow up and be something or do something. For a lot of families, you've got a parent or grandparent that worked really hard [00:01:30] skipping, deferring the life they wanted to have. And so, they inadvertently put the pressure on their kids or grandkids to do things that they had hoped or wished they could have done. I didn't have this pressure from my grandfather, but I know my grandfather knocked up my grandma when she was like 16, and he was 17 or 18. And so, he had ambitions to go to school, go to college and smart guy. He didn't. He got [00:02:00] married and got a job at the gas company, and he really did want somebody in the family to do what he wanted to do. It was kind of cool because for me, there wasn't pressure. He was my grandfather. But he was available to help out when it came to college. I had hard times the first and second year where I was scrambling. My parents were helping a little. I didn't have any student debt, and I don't know if I could even borrow at the time.

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So, my grandfather chipped in on that, and his story [00:02:30] wasn't ... It really was instead of the pressure of having expected people to do what he wanted to do, who's more impress that somebody was trying.

So he came along and supported that. He didn't really care what the major was or what you were going to do when you grow up. He was just there to support you for doing something that he had wished he could do. But unfortunately, a lot of parents and grandparents really put this pressure on the kids that this typical line I hear is, "My parents wanted [00:03:00] me to grow up and be a doctor or a lawyer." In fact, I was just having beer with a bunch of families that we're friends with. One of them grabbed me by the arm and said, "My son would make a great lawyer. Will you talk to him?"

Nate: She hasn't heard the podcast.

Dana: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and she had good intentions, and she didn't expect him to be a lawyer, so it's not quite there. But she wanted him to know what it's like to be a lawyer, and he wasn't interested at all. So [00:03:30] even sometimes just trying to get your kids exposed to what the options are, what lawyers might do. She's like, "He's smart, he makes good arguments all the time, and he's analytical," and I'm like, "Well those are great skills. Hi Jimmy, would you like to be a lawyer?" I get this emo expression like, "Who are you and why are you talking to me?"

So even out of good intentions, sometimes, we cast pressure on our kids. And so, most people listening to this are probably nodding and thinking of the things that their parents, the pressure that [00:04:00] they put on them, and we spend years, sometimes our entire lives, trying to unlearn those.

Nate: It's interesting you mentioned good intentions because I think when people are applying these pressures, they're always coming from the position of good intentions, especially parents. But that's not intentionally trying to put you in a bad place. They will never think that what they're saying is coming from intentionally going to harm you. They think that this is the advice that you need and that this is the direction you need to go in. I think that's what ... [00:04:30] Part of what makes it hard is, like these are people that you look up to and that have done so much for you in most cases.

I mean, we're focusing on parents here. We're also talking about spouses and siblings and friends. I mean, people that care about you are the people that for the most part are providing these pressures. So yeah, I don't want to hate on those people in any way, and I want to acknowledge that the intentions are good in most cases. I think that dealing with them is your challenge and knowing that these people are trying to [00:05:00] probably help you, but sometimes, even people that are close to you that have good intentions may not know what's best for you, and that is kind of the real hurdle you have to overcome, right?

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Dana: Yeah. There are those parents that have expectations and they're hard on their kids and they think that's the way it should be. Maybe they need that. I remember playing sports, having coaches that thought that it would motivate you by yelling at you, and it did for some guys. So I guess everybody's a little different. For me, [00:05:30] I react to that and rebel against that, and I think most people do too when somebody's berating them into doing things their way. The reaction to that is to shirk from it. But I think it still embeds those seeds, those expectations. Plant roots and begin to grow and fester.

Nate: How much of this comes down to gut in your opinion, Dana? Because maybe that's not even the right question to ask. But when I think about these situations where they've been in my life, where I think about these people who have come on the podcast and [00:06:00] talked about how they're in a place now where they're happy and there was this period in their life where they were going to a job because their spouse wanted them to or they felt like that's what they needed to do at the time, you can tell that while they were living through that, like they knew it wasn't something that they wanted to do. And thankfully, for many of the people that we've talked to, they've been able to break out of that and get to a new place.

But a lot of the overarching narrative of opting out or people that want to opt out is like, "I'm doing something that [00:06:30] I don't want to do now, or I was in the past, and I'm looking to opt out of that. I've always known that it wasn't the path I wanted to be on, and it was just having the courage to follow my gut and get over the fear and opt out of that situation." So I'm wondering if we can boil it down to, if you find yourself in a situation now or in the future, and you feel like you have pressure to do something, more likely a somewhat serious life decision, a choice that is going to affect your life, and if you have a gut [00:07:00] feeling that is not what you want to do, then that's exactly what we're talking about.

And that's the point where you have to recognize that and do the hard thing and not do it, right? Because you're going to be paying for it for years afterwards whether that's in an unhappy marriage or trudging along to a job you don't like or dealing with the student debt of going to medical school and then deciding you want to be a yoga instructor. I mean, this shit has serious consequences. A lot of them are financial consequences. Let alone the emotional ones and the [00:07:30] physical ones. But yeah, I wonder if it can almost bring it down to, "My gut told me that that wasn't right. I was scared to do it because X person, I knew that's not what they wanted me to do and I should have listened to my gut."

Dana: That's a great perspective. I was talking to Paul, our mutual friend, today, about his wild idea for a podcast where you interview people that hate their job.

Nate: I was talking to him about that yesterday.

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Dana: Yes.

Nate: I'm curious to hear what your feedback was.

Dana: I think it's brilliant and his comment was ... He mentioned [00:08:00] a relative of his who hates his life every Sunday evening. I've had this before. I mean, that to me, that feeling you have on Sunday evening that says, "The world is about to get upside down." That's one of those physical signals that you're getting from your gut. That's really clear for most people. You're not doing the right thing. And certainly, there's ways to alleviate that. You can do things to deal with stress. [00:08:30] That's cool. But the fact that you have this recurring stress every Sunday night, this physical manifestation, in your gut literally, that tomorrow is the beginning of another horrible fucking week, is to me not something that you look for inspiration every Sunday.

This is your gut telling you doing the wrong thing with your life, and there's only so long you should do that because it gets harder, I think, to opt out. It gets harder to make a pivot, to [00:09:00] make the choice, to take the leap, all of these euphemisms for what you've got to do to break free from that. I think it's a cool idea for podcast because there's so many people that feel stuck right there. They're stuck despite the fact that their gut is screaming at them every Sunday that they shouldn't be doing what they're doing.

Nate: This is not a new story that we're telling or a situation that is too far from any of our lives whether it's happened to us personally, which it probably has happened to all of us or people that we know. This is a common [00:09:30] human, modern human narrative, I think. I mean, look at every Disney movie that's out there, right? Mom and Dad wanted the princess to do this and she fought her way out and because that's not who she was. There's so many things of, like this coming of age of not going to do what your parents wanted you to do or ignoring the social pressures of status or situation to be something different. I mean, that's like probably 40% of all movies ever made and stories ever told.

It's not like that this isn't common, [00:10:00] and it's not like the advice we're giving is probably even that unique. But I think that because it is so common, and so, every day with everyone that it acknowledges the fact that it's a hard thing for people to deal with. Yeah, I don't know. I think you mentioned Paul having a family member who hates his job. I think a lot of people end up in that position, because, like I said before, these decisions have serious consequences. I don't want to get away from the idea that there's probably a couple times [00:10:30] in your life where you have the best opportunity to opt out. Every time you choose not to, it gets a lot harder down the line, right? All these people that we're going to say are like, "The working stiff's in the rat race. They should come opt out," like they've wanted to opt out from the beginning.

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They didn't get there because that's what they wanted. They're now in a place where they feel obligated to continue down that path and they're listening to this and wishing that they hadn't and we're going to try to get them a way to get out of it.

But yeah, it gets harder and harder [00:11:00] once you've started, and you can understand how ... Hopefully, I mean, depending on how old you are and how much life experience you have, you can understand how someone can go from a idealistic, energetic 24-year-old that's going to take on the world and do something different and end up as a tired, angry, upset, stuck 44-year-old with debt whether that's student or mortgage and a family and/or spouse that's pressuring them to be a certain way or whatever. These pressures can come from all over the place.

The decisions [00:11:30] that you make can add to the pressures, where it's like, "I started down this path because my parents wanted me to, and now, I have all these other social pressures or pressures I'm putting on myself because of the situation I'm in." They don't stop.

Dana: Have you ever met somebody who says, "Well I was making a lot of money and I hated what I did. And so, I stopped doing that and did this thing that I really wanted to do. And boy, I'm miserable now."

Nate: Right, no.

Dana: No.

Nate: But you do hear the story of the person that said, "Yeah, [00:12:00] I really wanted to be an artist, and I became a lawyer. Now, I've got a giant mortgage and kids and an unhappy marriage, and my life sucks, and I wish I was an artist." That's a common narrative. People somehow think that unwinding what are they going to miss? You unwind that big expense of life, the big McMansion that you're covering, the lease payments, the private education. [00:12:30] All the things that you feel obligated to do right now, you're not obligated to do.

You have the pressure from society, from family, from spouse, from yourself that these are the things that you need to do to be happy or successful that you're obligated to do. But the people that have unwound those things aren't unhappy about it. They might be making less.

Dana: They've decided to go down that path and then they've realized whether it was their plan all along or that they've been surprised [00:13:00] by it that those things aren't important. Since we have time to talk about this, like we always talk about the hating the job, the character that's a certain age, and one stopped out because they have all this crap and their parents made them do it and whatever, like that's the easiest one to point to. But what you were kind of talking about is the fact that maybe there's a bunch of unseen

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ones in many of our lives that are social pressures that were not even acknowledging are there. Like one because of where I'm at in my life, with [00:13:30] young kids that I see happening, and which is very strange to see happening because I've realized that all of a sudden, now, I'm part of this group. It's like all these parents care about where their kids are going to go to school. I think part of it is a status thing. Yeah, I mean, very much so because we're in La Jolla. La, la, la. But we're talking about three year olds, four year olds, and you can tell that hanging out with the parents, and they're asking like, "Well where's your kid going to school?"

It's like a judgy thing, where it's [00:14:00] like they're all shuffling for position on either how much they care about their kid, how much they care about their kids education, how much money they have, how much they're going to invest in that, or just like being a part of the social career that's at that school. All these schools are great schools. It's not like, "Oh this one school is a piece of shit and this other ones is that much better." They're all pretty much the same. It's interesting to see these parents, like people who are totally, in my opinion, rational about plenty of other things and would almost [00:14:30] like be my bro on the opt-out life one day, and then the next day we're talking about their kid's school.

It's like, "You sound like a completely different person." That's kind of unseen, I think, as my wife and I go through life, and we're thinking about, "Where should we send our kid to school?" We're just hanging out with our friends talking about this stuff, and every single one of their comments somehow influences what we think about what we're doing with our child. It's really interesting to even take a step back and think that this is happening to you if you realize it or not no matter [00:15:00] who you hang around. If your parents are the coolest people in the world, if you're a parent and have a kid ... I just described a situation where it's crept into my life and it took me a while to even realize it's there.

Nate: Yeah, the society builds these pressures, and in a sense, I guess it's good for business.

Dana: Yeah, right. I'm trying to think about the systemic things that drive this, right?

Nate: Yeah, marketers. You should be an expert at understanding this. The psychology of a marketer and how to get you motivated to spend your money in ways that [00:15:30] they would like you to. In my book, I think my editor made me scale back on it a little bit, but I berate people for this lavish approach to marriage and weddings. I mean, the pressure for destination weddings or expensive weddings, the ceremonies.

Dana: Where you go on your honeymoon.

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- Nate: Yeah, yes, and how long you're going to be on your honeymoon, the size of your ring. I mean, the size of the rock on the ring. I mean, you might have large fingers.
- Dana: No, no, for sure.
- Nate: But we're talking about the rock. [00:16:00] The destination bachelor and bachelorette parties, the kind of money that gets spent. I have a lawyer that works for me who's around that age where everyone seems to be getting married. So she's got a bachelorette party and a wedding to attend about every six weeks, it seems like, and it's horrifying to think of the amount of money people are spending when they could do this in La Jolla, for example, where I was talking about La Jolla. When I take a walk or go for a run, there's a little spot that I think cost 100 bucks to rent.
- Dana: And a grill of Grassy Knoll [00:16:30] out of the cove.
- Nate: Little Grassy Knoll out of the cove.
- Dana: It's cheap, beautiful, elegant.
- Nate: It's funny that you mention that spot because I've visited La Jolla before I got married. It was like, "You know? I'd really just rather get married right there."
- Dana: Right there.
- Nate: As long before I knew you or much about La Jolla, and yeah because I was caught up in the ... I mean, I could give you a soliloquy about weddings for sure. Not just my own but my contemporaries, at least friends of my wife's and my wife's family. I wonder if they're going to buy this course and get access to this. [00:17:00] It was where's your wedding, where's the venue because we all know how much each venue costs. Do you have a band or a DJ? Because bands are more expensive and those are better. Do you have plated, sit-down dinners or is it a buffet? Because cheap people have buffets and nice people have sit-down dinners. Is there a cocktail reception before and is there dessert after? Because both those things are nice.
- How much was the dress? Where's the dress from? Those are just some of the things that are related to the money itself. But even the practice of it and the conventions of, "Well you have to do that for your wedding [00:17:30] because that's what your parents did and that's what your grandparents did," as far as like where it was at and all the different things you have to do leading up to it — the photo shoots and the invitations and the lighting and the cake. You have to get your cake from this place and you have to get the nice cake.



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- Dana: It's a scam. You're being sold a scam. Do you know where everybody really wants to be? Hennessey's after the wedding is over. I know because I've been there with friends, around the fire, having a cigar. When the bus drops off 30 or 40 [00:18:00] people, they're the happiest they've ever been because that other shit is done, and they get to sit around and have a cheap drink, sit by the fire, listen to some music. That's what people really want to do.
- Nate: Yeah.
- Dana: The people that are at your wedding that you just dropped \$50,000 are so excited to be done with it. That's not cool. That's a scam, right?
- Nate: Yeah, it is.
- Dana: There's social pressures there, but I think it's largely been driven by an increased marketing effort in the wedding industry. There's [00:18:30] a lot of money to be made in weddings and marriages.
- Nate: Okay, we better stop talking about wedding before we get [inaudible 00:18:37]. We could keep going here.
- Dana: We could edit that down.
- Nate: Yeah, no. It's good. I think people appreciate it, but does the marketing tie to the job types? We had Bryan Rahn on, and he was the first guest who I think may be talk about this. Well actually, our first guest Aneesh talked about it too. So Bryan applied for a job at a bank, and he applied for a job at a unconventional internet company, right? His [00:19:00] parents wanted him to take the job at the bank, and he just decided to take the job at the internet company and the rest is history because he's got this cool life now. Why did his parents want him to take the job at the bank? Because it's not necessarily marketing, I guess, but it sounds safe, right?
- Dana: Yeah.
- Nate: Banks are safe, I guess. It sounds like something that they can tell their friends.
- Dana: Yeah, a little bit of social, their own sort of social status.
- Nate: I think that is actually a big part of it as well, now that I just told my little parent story. I think I can [00:19:30] deduce that a lot of the things that people I know are friends with that their parents have tried to make them do. It's because what they want to tell their friends at the club.



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Dana: Nathaniel's a doctor.

Nate: Tell me about him. Well he's a dentist, and my other daughter, I don't know what she does. But you know, not to get too personal. Yeah, I think that matters a lot, dude. That's actually one thing that's always kind of bugged me about conventional conversation and stuff.

Dana: What do you do?

Nate: [00:20:00] Yeah. It's like, "You're not asking that to be nice. You're asking that to judge what I do or because you want to put me in a little box. Don't act like that's a friendly question. That's a rude question, if you ask me. I don't want to answer it." Or like, "Well what's your cousin Jimmy up to?" I'm like, "Well he's ... We don't really know what he's up to." It's like fucking cousin Jimmy's 19, like let him be. Let him do his thing. He'll figure it out. I know plenty of 38 year olds that are extremely successful that were like, "I got kicked out [00:20:30] of college because I had weed, and when I was 19, I had to move back home." Let him be.

Yeah, I think a lot ... It comes down to those you're on stage in a social situation and you want to have the answers, and your kids or your spouse or even your friends are pawns in your own little game of projecting who you want to be, and I think that's where a lot of this come from. If it's affecting you, if you're the pawn, realize that you're the pawn and fuck what they have to tell those people. You got to do what's the best for you and [00:21:00] follow your gut.

Dana: What about girls? Guys want to have a job title. That's an easy one.

Nate: Sure. So what do girls get told to do?

Dana: No. What do we tell the guys? Because you got the guys who are like, "You don't need to be a doctor or a lawyer." But they know if they show up at the bar and they're like, "Hey baby, I'm a doctor. I'm a lawyer," or whatever.

Nate: Oh what do you tell the girls.

Dana: There's some social pressure.

Nate: Yeah.

Dana: So do we need to help our opt-out dudes with some title crafting to avoid the social pressure?

Nate: Does it really matter what the title is as long as you got some money to spend? Isn't it about having a little money-

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- Dana: There's the line. Does it matter what I do? I have the money.
- Nate: Right, yeah.
- Dana: That might shut them up.
- Nate: It might. I'm not good at the girl game. I don't know. I feel like, "Yeah, if you can project that you have money, then you've got a chance to win that whether that's good or bad." We say that the opt-out life will eventually lead to a decent amount of money anyway. I mean, I think banker jobs are fine and cute, but [00:22:00] it's just the easy road to the middle, and it's not a way to have a great life or really a way to make a great income. I think it's actually kind of a scam to think that you can go be a banker and become anything close to wealthy. You got a better chance trying to start your own business. I mean, that's, I believe, that long before we've tried to call this thing the opt-out life.
- So yeah, I believe that you'll be better off financially if you do choose to go down the path of greater resistance as far as social pressure is concerned.
- Dana: Yeah, and some of those parents [00:22:30] and grandparents don't understand that, right?
- Nate: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dana: They want a title so they can talk about you or understand you. Most of our guests, their parents still hint at like, "When are you going to grow up and get a real job?"
- Nate: Yeah, yeah, for sure.
- Dana: These are guys that are making hundreds of thousands of dollars who have done deals and made millions and their parents still are waiting for them to settle into something that they understand.
- Nate: Right. It was only until I had the conventional markers of success that anyone [00:23:00] gave any credence to what I was working on. They'd be like, "Oh shit, man. I saw you got a nice Beemer out front." It's like, "Yeah, so what, dude? Like now, you're interested in what I'm doing? Now, I'm not just some weirdo that's doing things on the internet?" It's because you see this thing that is a marker of success? That became the thing that was like, "Oh what's Nate doing?" "Oh well he's got a nice car." Like, "Oh now, it's all okay because it wasn't okay last week until he had the car."
- Dana: Yeah, again, social pressure. The social pressure meeting expectations

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[00:23:30] with the fancy car helped people to understand you must be doing something right.

Nate: Right, yeah, yeah.

Dana: But why couldn't you just drive a beat-up Volvo?

Nate: Yeah, I don't know. Someone gave me the car so I took it.

Dana: That's right.

Nate: I know you're not asking me, but that was interesting to go through. It's been interesting to go through the whole process of like perception of what I've been doing over the years to see how people's reactions have changed based on things that have nothing really to do with what I'm doing. And ultimately, [00:24:00] I never really cared anyway, and I think that's a part of what I think people have to come around to. It's just you got to let some of that stuff go. If you're going to opt out, maybe your parents are always going to be slightly disappointed in you, but hopefully, they'll come around to it, right? I don't know. I want to end somewhat on some things that are a little more instructive on what to do.

I think it's helpful to just give people reassurance that it's a to join our tribe and do it this way. How do you deal with it? What do you do? I mean, [00:24:30] listen to your gut. Yeah, it's a very human piece of advice that they've heard a million times and you do have to do it.

Dana: I think honesty ... This is the Sunday night dilemma or making that choice, "should I stay in medical school?" Making big choices or small choices, you've got this wisdom within you. We're not always honest about it though. I think being objective helps. Being honest about it helps. Putting it on the table helps. Talking to someone who is also honest helps. My brother was always a good [00:25:00] sounding board for me and I've been for him. We whiteboard things like that. Big life decisions. Let's talk about it and then be honest. As part of that, for example, you're listening to this, understand these pressures are there and be real about them.

Is that important to you? If it is, then maybe being a hack entrepreneur isn't the right path. Maybe you'd be more happy being an investment banker because you get to say, "I'm an investment banker."

Nate: Right, [00:25:30] but know that you are mortgaging having that with having to put up with the parts that you don't like ultimately, right? Don't complain about the things that you don't like if you're doing it for those reasons. I guess I don't want to hear the parents that are telling me, "No," that they're putting their kids in the Uber expensive preschool whine about money. I guess own it if you're going to make that decision.

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I don't want to hear the friends or our friends who are parents of the kids that they're putting in the Uber expensive preschool and not kind own up [00:26:00] to that decision in as much as like them complaining about money down the line or whining about it in some way, or if it doesn't pan out the right way, their lives or their kids lives ... It's like, you're making this decision. You're giving up other things to have it. Your reasons are your own perhaps, but yeah. It's like ... That's your choice, right? That's okay.

Dana: Yeah.

Nate: That's okay, but don't complain about it down the line when you're not happy about it.