

Mark Daws: 00:00:02 It was nerve wrecking, a room full of 100 people didn't know any of them, figured in the state of mind that I was that every single person the belong there apart from me and 15 minutes in the host of the event said, OK, if we've got any new comers, put your hands up and then you can come to the front of the stage and introduce yourself and it almost felt like it was an alcoholics anonymous. Hello, my name is mark and I was in the advertising industry. I'm a recovering director and I want to get into film.

Preston Kanak: 00:00:51 My guest today is Mark Daws. In this episode we talk about the challenges and struggles Mark went through when shifting the priorities in his life. We focus on overcoming the challenges of a career shift and the impact that has on your psyche. First off, I want to thank Mark for his vulnerability in this episode as we really try gain a better understanding of the impact it has internally. My name is Preston Kanak and this is the Unspoken Podcast where we make the unspoken matter to be spoken about.

Speaker 2: 00:01:20 Gotcha.

Speaker 3: 00:01:23 Want doing great to have here. I think staying away from that and just jumping into what would be better, just jump into the inciting incident

Mark Daws: 00:01:36 incident inciting incident. It's not like I'm not read it and written it down a million times where I'm hoping to take the conversation today is talking about you've just recently or you're in the process of going through this transition from one secured guaranteed career path in the advertising industry and completely flipping that into a new industry. Can you talk a little bit about this shift and what? What sparked it? Purpose is the thing. I know that that's a term that's thrown around a lot, a hell of a lot, but I think that a personal aspect. My previous career, I don't think I was feeling a sense of purpose. I guess in terms of the asset you'd have success, you know, slight the checkbox list of yes, I'm doing well in my career and my career is in turn giving me purpose because I'm needed in the environment.

Mark Daws: 00:02:37 It was something that was a bigger question for me of if I'm going to give so much of my creativity every day. I mean some days, some days didn't give any of my credits, but if I'm to give all of my energy creative energy, that was just. This thing gets in a way inside of me of I need to be able to use my creativity in a purposeful way. There are so many jobs I used to work on the. I came out of the end of them thinking, what was this far exactly? Is this going to change anything? Is this going to change somebody's life? I have this another of these images that pop

into my mind of my eye. It was very much about my data, my funeral, and he was reading this little speech he made on any basically said mark was such a wonderful boy and he had great successes with various brands and you know, successful advertising campaigns and what have you and I, and I, it kind of put the fear of God in me. I was thinking is this, is this one? Is this what I'm going to be remembered for, for, for those things, and I, and I just started to question, I must be able to use my creativity for something more purposeful than this.

- Preston Kanak: 00:04:00 That's what drove me to make the shift. It's funny, a friend and I were talking just the other day about the mid, mid life crisis and I'm not saying this is what you were going through in this moment. Um, but he had come across as a funny definition that I think really embodies this cause it's, it's a weird thing in conversations I have with a lot of people. This whole idea of wanting to find purpose has been the central point of focus and, and, and what the, the quote or the definition of this was, as a series of life changing events that occur halfway to a midlife crisis usually denoted by a realization of how screwed up your parents were. How screwed up the world really is usually followed by marriage, divorce, spiritual awakenings, antidepressants, children, jail, or a combination
- Mark Daws: 00:04:52 that was excellent.
- Preston Kanak: 00:04:54 So it's just, it's, it's, it's just fascinating that it's just, it's, it's something that is now something that I never ever considered, but now at this point in my life is also wanting to find purpose and, and looking at the bigger picture. I'm sure it's great to have a, a, a career that allows me to be fulfilled in the sense of like financial means. But if for me now feeling of if I don't feel fulfilled in being able to provide a positive impact on the world, that it's in my actually fulfilled.
- Mark Daws: 00:05:28 No, there is also, you know, I sometimes stop myself and think that I think is there a sense of his narcissistic, the right word to use? Is there a sense of narcissism that where it could be construed as a narcissistic notion to think that I'm important enough of a person to feel like I should be remembered for this. Like all of the great characters throughout history that have been remembered is that just one side of it. But then there's also, uh, there's, you know, if, if you take that attitude then you can actually leave the world a better place. It's the same time, I guess a humbling aspect.
- Preston Kanak: 00:06:13 There's a general rule of thumb is how short of a time it is before you totally forgotten. And it's not that long. Whether it's

one generation or two. I don't remember what the. Before you forgotten the totally forgotten. Like it's, you're, you're the person totally. No matter what, how big a market you make, unless you make some crazy thing like it's, you generally are like a major percentage of society when people are forgotten pretty soon. So it's A. Yeah, it's a weird notion. Yeah,

Mark Daws: 00:06:41

it might be a maybe isn't that? Maybe isn't. I mean it's ironic isn't it, that we, you know, it's, this is the week that Stephen Hawking left was go blessing the, you know, to, to have such, to go through such pain but still have so many barriers. Boots are going to be so insightful. And so why's it comes back to purpose, doesn't it? That we all feel, we all feel like we, we ha, we're here when someone pulls hair either as a great cosmic joke or otherwise and whatever you believe spiritually or don't believe spiritually is inconsequential because as a human we all strive to feel that we're here for something. We're not just here to watch netflix until we waste away will be quite so. Yeah. But uh, yeah, I think that there's a, there's something within all of us that makes us feel, feel like we have to leave something behind and it might not necessarily be the, I want to be remembered for this and it should be written on my grave. It might just simply be a feeling that that's just what you need to do. It's the feeling of rather than, you know, see a point in a hundred years time who the hell's gonna care in 500 years time is the world actually going to exist anyway in the, in the grand scheme of things, does any of it matter? But yes, the time in the now it matters.

Preston Kanak: 00:08:13

And I think to that point is the idea of being present in the moment, being in the now know, and if, if you're not being present in the now, that's I think when issues potentially arise where it's, if you're not being an active participant in your life, what are you doing? Right? You know, for me when I'm not present, I get extremely anxious where it's just thinking of like worst case scenarios with everything, which is like does it any of those worst case scenarios ever happened? Well maybe sometimes, but the percentage is so low. So yeah,

Mark Daws: 00:08:52

it is actually, that's just, that's just not to come back to the negative. But I'm always going to do this to you. But I think the struggle for a lot of people that have, have been in those dark places, also fought with depression are still do or you know, uh, the half those, those weights. It's very difficult to be present. It's very difficult to be present and to be in the now because you're either thinking about what the overwhelming future looks like or all of the things that in the past that have gone wrong and you'll live in those worlds. You won't live in the now I don't really know where that's going, but

Preston Kanak: 00:09:31 they didn't like. It sounds like sometimes like you're in the space, sometimes yourself or it's being stuck in thinking in those ways is, is there ways in which you would offer advice and insight into how to get out of those moments and then into the now and the presence? Is there like any exercises or anything that you do to help bring you into the present?

Mark Daws: 00:09:53 For me personally, the things that bring me back into the present are the books that I've been reading even though technically speaking there in the past, um, because they'd been written, but the desire to keep improving your perspective on certain issues or two, you talked about creating a film a day. The other way of looking at that is your film a day was a learning process that I imagined on each day. You were learning something new either about the process or about yourself and I think gets to that, that creates the present moment to be able to get up and say, today I'm going to read about this on. I will have a new insight and insight in my life that I didn't have yesterday. Puts you in the present or it's not being stagnant in the past, your past self and looking at your future self and becoming a better person.

Mark Daws: 00:10:50 Yeah. Because it's easy to look at either to. It's easy to imagine what life is going to be like or uh, or it's easy to look. It's easy to look back and reflect on, on your past Dong mistakes you've made or the avenues you've taken, rightly or wrongly, and to be the judge of that and to be the judge of your future. But it's those things that distract us from, from the now and keeping keeping us on the path of, of learning. And actually some days you don't want to do it. Some day you just don't want to learn anything

Preston Kanak: 00:11:21 and that's fine too. I think that's part of the processes. Giving yourself time to breathe and take a step back. Yeah. Yeah. Paint this picture for us is to kind of where you were before you made the transition coming to the US. What W, w, what did your life look like? I was working 12 hour days on average as an art director in advertising and a fairly reputable agency. Clearly those days were um, there is no or a lack of balance potentially in your life through that. With it

Mark Daws: 00:11:54 being such long days, can you talk like what was missing? I guess creatively, I wasn't feeling fulfilled and I guess by that I mean some of the jobs that I was working on were really exciting, but sometimes the process was a lot more therapeutic than the end result. And often I felt that when it got to the end result, either the vision that you had in the first place wasn't quite as you imagined or that the end result kind of filled me

with a sense of emptiness. Like, OK, that created that, but now what does that mean? Exactly? And I, and I started to question from the why. Why did I feel so empty after those jobs? Because they were really excited to work on and I was traveling down to London and going to different countries and working with amazing people. Where did that come from? And and I, I guess I started to question, is this creative outlet fulfilling for me?

Mark Daws: 00:12:57 If not, what do I do about it and where is that creative fulfillment? Because I know I pretty much know. I think that I was put on the planet to create in some way. It's all I've ever done really. I remember being told off as a kid by my folks for I think it was being Babysat by my grandma at the time. I was maybe six or seven years old. It's one of my earliest memories. I remember grandma putting me to bed and the headboard on my bed was a blank canvas. It was just a white vinyl, cheap material, perfect for scribbling all over and I drew my whole family on the headboard and then my parents got back that evening and obviously, you know, they probably weren't too happy about it because at the time my disguise design skills weren't that great.

Mark Daws: 00:13:51 So I did that. I also asked it after seeing it, I know I'm digressing, but this is kind of cool. We went to see it for the first time. It blew me away. I was probably eight or nine by then. Somebody will do the math if I get my way my age. And I was watching cartoons the morning after and I've found a needle is either a pin our needle that from my mom's sewing kit I etched eats while I was watching cartoons into the, the white side tables basically. So I watched into the, the perfect wood on the side, on the side of this side table. I'm a little version of it and scratch my way into it and it's still there to this day basically. Um, where is that conversation going? I don't know. I totally lost. Was I talking about the idea of, of like I'd always been career. I'd always have to have a great outlet. Obviously that was destroying prophesy through those, those clear learning experiences. Like

Preston Kanak: 00:14:52 did your parents support you through those or was it like, uh, don't ever do that again? Did it like almost crush your creative dreams in?

Mark Daws: 00:15:01 No, that's all I remember. I remember the be marginally upset. Not so much with the headboard because I was a lot younger and you know, kid's drawer over things naturally. I'm not the only one. I think with the, the side tables, it was, it hit them a little bit harder because it was a wedding gift and they'd had it

at the time for 25 years I've been in the house and I decided to destroy it in one fell swoop. So they, they were a little bit hard on me on that. I think they didn't try and get it fixed. They left it there, so maybe they. Part of them thought that it was kind of a cute thing to do.

Preston Kanak: 00:15:37 I was also thinking of how you, as you grow older, you're always kind of conditioned out of being creative and taking those risks and doing things like that. Do you feel like that was one of those moments where your parents are trying to almost obviously didn't like make you feel terrible about it because you're were laughing about it today, but it's like in so many ways it seems in the way you're, you're, you go to school and arts programs are being cut. How do you feel the way in which we're conditioned, you feel like that's trying to get rid of art in this world? They're like, what impact do you think these, these small things have on your life? Is that, is that going too philosophical for you? Gosh,

Mark Daws: 00:16:14 um, no, I think. I think that I, I, I don't think I was ever discouraged in pursuing a life of art and creativity. Maybe a little by my doubt in my. When things got serious and I started to look at career options, you know, around 14, 15. I said, I said that I wanted to be a cartoonist because I was drawing. Cartoons are copying illustrations out of comics, trying to perfect my cartoon skills and that's where I always saw myself leading, but my dad actually dissuaded me at the time, kind of took his typical father figure of go out and get a proper job that's not going to earn you any money. And I guess there is a, there's a shift I think probably, but not I'm, I'm not a parent yet, but parentally, that's probably, uh, a moment of panic when you know that your kids have to fend for themselves in the, in the big wide world and when you're a small child potentially in a more open world for you.

Mark Daws: 00:17:16 And then it just starts to narrow and narrow and narrow from the perspective of society and what parents tell you and responsibility. And actually all of those things are against the creative process almost. And I think actually to come more present I, that's why I ended up in the world and dull pain in terms of graphic design. It just seemed the most logical step in the creative world to say, OK, yes, I can still draw. I can manic person at my desk, but then create a solution that is going to effect the wider world positively or negatively and somebody's going to pay me for it. So I think that during that time, if you know 15, 16, you have to choose options and you have to form a path for yourself and inevitably the people that are around you and the pressures that are on you to create the life that everybody else has. Ironically as advertising dictates, this is

what you should have a car, you should have a house, you should have a family, you should have this and you need to be able to fend for yourself.

- Preston Kanak: 00:18:25 Do you find like it's a weird thing in which like when you're 15 or 16 year to decide this is what you're going to do or the idea that this is what you need to do for the rest of your life. I almost feel now in the position I'm in where the work I'm doing. Sometimes I wish shit. What if I would've went in and took school to go be a doctor? Because I almost look at situations now where I'm going to the doctor with my wife where we're going through the nuances of having a child and seeing how they interact with people and it's like, oh, I'd love to be helping people in this way, but I also feel like crap. I didn't make that decision when I was going into post. Secondary was that gave me the option. I feel like it's almost too late, but I mean looking at your situation where you've had this long career in advertising even now made this career shift, how did you overcome that idea? That and that mold you have to be in this position and doing what you're doing for the rest of your life. What made you feel like you could step out of the mold of what you're. The way you should live your life. How to take
- Mark Daws: 00:19:28 the red pill pill rather than the blue pill scenario?
- Preston Kanak: 00:19:34 Like is it ever too late to make that jump? Like in my head, I feel like in certain. In certain areas, yes, it's too late to go be a doctor because it just the amount of money it costs to go and do that now versus how long you're working for and it just doesn't necessarily make sense in my head anyways. But
- Mark Daws: 00:19:50 yeah, it's funny, isn't it? Uh, I think that the first thing, to answer your question about the doctor, I think there are, there were, there are so many outlets and options in life as all the, you know, how do you choose, I mean, I don't believe that, uh, maybe I believe that one time that your, your mind is fixed on one thing and this is what you're in the world for and that's what you're meant to be doing. And I think generationally previous generations have had that mindset because they've not really had a choice because everything has been very family oriented and probably there were more responsibilities back then to grow in a certain way that you're just, you cancel out those options. But I think now with sort of in a world where w, well literally the world has been opened to was through the digital age.
- Mark Daws: 00:20:40 We see more outside of our family unit always seemed more outside of our village or our community on that, an alluring

prospect. So to not be influenced by all of those things and everything that's happening around you is, it's harder to ignore. Second part of the question was how do you make that shift? Well, I, I can only talk about personally, I don't know anybody else that I've made may have made a career shift such a late stage in life or at any stage in life and adulthood. My personal journey I guess has been moving. He, uh, just to clarify, whereas here, like what is. Oh sorry. Yeah. Sunny California USA and, and, and where, where did you come from? Maybe paint this picture just a little bit for people. How do we end up here? How do we go from Manchester, rainy, Manchester, England to Sunny California?

Mark Daws: 00:21:31 My wife received an opportunity to work in the US seven years ago. It all seems like an amazing dream and even to people back home, the people get very envious of your situation. How wow, you're going to like the best country in the world. And it's going to be so full of opportunity for you. You're going to live the American dream. And everyone, I think that comes here, aspires to the. My actual story is when I landed here, I came over on a hate for visa. The visa from Hell for anybody that doesn't know what age for visa is, it's basically the spouse visa. So if you're married to an individual that's got a working visa, then you can hop on a plane and come and live here, which sounds great. But the reality of it is the. I've found myself in a an isolated world at the time.

Mark Daws: 00:22:18 We were actually now in Albany, New York, which has a wonderful community of people. Finding an outlet is difficult. Finding creativity in that area is also difficult. And I found myself in a, in a bit of a whole web on this visa or I couldn't earn money. I couldn't work. I didn't have a social security number. I was pretty much anonymous both to the outside world and at the time also probably to myself. So I had a period of about nine to 10 months of nothing of of not been able to work on going, going from intense 12 hour day surrounded by people to be surrounded by trees.

Mark Daws: 00:23:07 The first three weeks it was like a vacation. It's like, OK, this is cool, but I'm probably going to be home and I'll go back to my usual job. It didn't really feel real. It only felt real about two months in when I realized that I needed to start making connections and started seeing people. But my nature is I guess a very internal one. I'm not the best at making connections and making friends and and a lot of my time in my own head and spending a lot of time in your own head can be fruitful. It can be a good experience. But when there's nothing else around I nobody else to with. It kind of sent me spiraling down. And the

only thing that kind of brought me out with that was coming to the realization that I needed to do one of two things.

- Mark Daws: 00:23:56 I either stay in this zone, this unfriendly zone, or start to ask the question, what is it that I want to do here? Do I want to stay in advertising eventually when I get a working visa and go and live the life in New York? Is that a possibility? Everything at the time was telling me no, I'm gonna get I'm. I'm too old. I'm going to get chewed up in New York in a competitive environment and I may end up making it in an agency, but then I will definitely be stuck there for the rest of my days. That will be it for me. It could have been a good option. I'm not saying that it wasn't at the time my head was telling me yes and my heart was telling me no. My heart was saying you don't want to do this anymore and actually what you do want to do is move into film and that's going to be your next creative outlet.
- Preston Kanak: 00:24:55 You obviously, I mean you leverage this opportunity or this move instead of looking at it as a terrible point in your life. You saw it as a point that you could either go take the the path most traveled in, in knowing you go into advertising, you're going to have a successful career, but you're also not going to have the work-life balance. You then said that you saw this other opportunity of film where where did this idea of of film come from, etc.
- Mark Daws: 00:25:25 You know, I've been a movie lover since I was a kid. I mean, You know, there are a lot of movie lovers out there that doesn't mean you should go and get a career in film a the same time. I think that I come to the realization that my frustration was out with advertising. All the creativity within my job wasn't giving me a true voice. I was working for clients. We had a specific job to do on a specific question to answer, but they weren't the questions that I wanted to ask or answer, and so I'd always seen film as a form of escapism. I used to go to the movies like a subtle, so by myself every weekend. In my mind it was, this is true escapism for me. This is what, this is where I hide away, but actually I think what it was was the.
- Mark Daws: 00:26:15 I went there, the answers I went to look at that big screen and see different perspectives on issues or subjects and that excited me. I just didn't realize at the time in advertising I'd, well we've been in the digital arena creating websites and apps and that kind of thing and touched on branding, but then in my previous job I got to work on set and worked on a few different advertising campaigns and being on set. It triggered something in me that was too exciting to hold back. I have to somehow get into that arena of being able to see people running around each

of the. Bringing this vision to life in such a cool environment and I wanted some of that on to wallowing in self-pity and albania wondering how the hell I'm going to achieve it. According to my. I'm saying that I. There was nobody around that time, but my wife was around having her support throughout the process that I go through.

Mark Daws: 00:27:11

My head was invaluable on having somebody around. So demonstrative is a godsend to me. I mean I, I wouldn't probably be here if she wasn't there. I mean that's a great point. We've come from very similar places where we had a very, I guess the path was written for both of us and we made the transition to a new country and basically were forced to start over. And I mean for me, I look at it the same way is without my wife. I would be literally going crazy and I would be stuck in this stuck in my head, you know, and, and having that person to be able to bounce things off of and someone keeps you saying I think is so, so invaluable. She saw something in me that was hungry for something else in my life in order to make it feel satisfying and that can be frustrating.

Mark Daws: 00:28:00

You know, it's not just to clean cook conversation of ok yeah, let's just go and do that and saw in me that I needed to step into this other world and that my previous career or the career that I've been in is not fulfilling enough for me. And she was open enough to accept that and to allow me to explore the world of film. Having that full support from her. she, she actually had the conversation with me, well, you know, far there must be something in albania. There must be something hiding away, some kind of network or some kind of event that you can go to or other filmmakers or the amateurs that want to spread their wings and go and experience film making that it must. It must exist without her asking that question. I wouldn't have found the answer basically. And I went on.

Mark Daws: 00:28:52

I drove around the internet. I was on linkedin and google various phrases for filmmaking in the albania area and I hit upon independent film making network and found that they were hosting every first tuesday of the month, they have this networking event where people show that little short films and you get a networking break and you can hang out and make connections again. Something that I'm terrible at. So it took me about two weeks to get into the mindset of actually deciding to go with the place that I was in and attended this event and it was nerve racking. A roomful of hundred people didn't know any of them, figured in the state of mind that I was in the every single person there belong there apart from me and 15 in the host of the event said, ok, if we've got any new comers, put

your hands up and then you can come to the front of the stage and introduce yourself, who you are, where you've come from, and what you want to get out of this.

- Mark Daws: 00:29:53 never done that in my life before. I presented it to clients in, in agencies fairly confidently, but never stood up as a vulnerable person. Not really having anything to offer or feeling like I'm not getting anything. So offer another mindset and introducing myself and it almost felt like it was alcoholics anonymous. Hello. My name is mark and I was in the advertising industry. I'm a. I'm a recovering art director and I want to get into film because I couldn't earn any money at the time I volunteered my services. I literally pimp myself out to people and obviously people love getting stuff for free, so I got inundated by by five or six different people that offered me different opportunities either to work on set to do voiceover work because somebody who's engaged with my british accent, it was great. I broke through a wall that was there for for a good eight months of my life. that really changed the course of particularly my attitude of can I go from one career into another career? Can I step out of this arena and jump into this or the unknown world, which I know very little of. I know some of through my experience in advertising, but really very little technically very little in terms of how things were concept. Very little in terms of the creative process in film, which I'm still learning, but I didn't really look back from that point forward.
- Preston Kanak: 00:31:22 I want to talk more about that moment of realization, but before we go there, can we round back to the moment when you were, when you were you open yourself up to being vulnerable, what was it that allowed you to to get up and go to the front of the room and and, and make yourself vulnerable? It obviously took some courage to go and do that.
- Mark Daws: 00:31:45 I think desperation actually, I think. I think that I was in such a bad place that I was desperate to find some things clinging on to through fear of just going insane. As much as my wife have been supportive at one point it starts to effect both of you. It starts so if you know you'll mood brings, can bring the whole crowd down. At times it can have that stronger hold on you. So it w it was out of really looking to somehow find a way out of that swamp that gave me the courage to stand up in front of people and say, ok, take a deep breath. This is the current be cAn't get any worse. You know, I might say the wrong thing, but it can't get any worse. I guess that's what it was, was it? I
- Preston Kanak: 00:32:28 somewhat freeing to to let the world know that you're ready for a change and wanting this new thing in your life.

Mark Daws: 00:32:40 My declaration with the creative independence. Yeah. Yeah. It was temporarily, I must say temporarily it did. And then after I panicked, like how it's like, oh no, now I've actually got to show up

Preston Kanak: 00:32:55 when I think that's super important to um, maybe if you don't have those people in your life that are posing those questions to you, it's super, super easy to fall into a life of complacency. What does this idea of showing up mean to you? Do you want to talk a little bit more about this idea?

Mark Daws: 00:33:15 Even if you're feeling down, show up. If you're feeling like you can't communicate such an event, show up because in doing that you're at least forming a bridge from the place into a, into a brighter place and it's something I still struggle with. I don't, I didn't particularly want to show up to this. I, I didn't, I didn't grow up thinking, awesome, we're going to do a podcast today. This is going to be so cool because my mind doesn't work like that. My mind works in a very dark way. It says, this is going to be terrible. You're going to have nothing to say. You're going to have absolutely nothing to say you're going to. You can talk to preston all the time in the car because that's easy, but getting in front of a microphone now, you're not going to be able to do. There's no way. just don't just call them and say that I, you know, you've got youtube busy with something else. I go through that process as I'm sure other people do. It's just that people don't talk about it very much. I go through that process with everything even, you know, stupid things like what we're having for dinner. I don't know, we can't have chicken because we had that three days ago.

Mark Daws: 00:34:25 You know? It can become quite debilitating, that sort of mindset, but the, I guess the tools that I'm learning currently and having those people around me having, you know, having people who encouraged me is invaluable. I mean it, you know, I think that that's what people need more, but the, I guess the key is that you have to be able to let those people in and you have to be vulnerable with those people in order for them to realize that you need the help and the guidance and I think as soon as you do that, that you've got a better footing to move forward.

Preston Kanak: 00:35:01 So one thing that you've clearly relied on in this transition is having a support team to get you through this. And one of the things that you've relied on is, is a creative coach. Can you talk about What that experience is like for people that might not know what a creative coach or, or what role they would play for you through this transition?

- Mark Daws: 00:35:18 Coming back to the premise of being on this journey, but almost feeling sometimes that yo, you're not on a happy, jolly yellow brick road, your slouching through mud trying to get there and make it and some days you just get stuck and you don't really know what to do locally and I guess the lesson here is allowing to be open to people and being completely honest with your feelings because that's hard in itself. I had a friend who shouts me back to manchester on facebook who's also in the creative world, and she. She asked me how I was doing. The usual answer to that is, everything's fine. Everything's cool. I'm ok. How are you an I? She just hit me at that point where I was like, oh, I'm actually having a pretty crappy times and I, I'm trying to write and I can, I, I, I've got all of this negative energy flowing through me.
- Mark Daws: 00:36:14 I just can't get there, and I, it's beating me in. And she said, oh, I'm sorry to hear that horn. It just so happens that eight months ago I took a course on creative coaching and I'm going to willingly give, give you my time. Let's give it a go. It started me off on this side, so plot if you like, of me trying to get through the blocks that I had in my head and talk through this coaching session and we had one session about a month ago and what the creative coaching is offering is almost a kind of a mirror to your thoughts. She sat there on the screen looking back at me, but really she's just there to listen much like any therapist, but we're the creative mindset or a creative goal and to nurture that creativity and so I've been relaying to her my struggles and where those.
- Mark Daws: 00:37:04 This is where obviously gregor came from and I'm naming your naming your beast as it were on various other mechanisms to help me through things like don't start writing with the intention of going, I'm going to work on this all day. Because the reality is you're not going to be able to think creatively 24 hours a day or even 12 hours in a day or eight hours in the day. They were going to be specific times when your mind is more active and she wants me to identify what those time slots are. Um, is, is my creative mind more active in the morning or is it more active in the evening and tools like that that have helped create a pathway if you called little stepping stones, small tools that I can draw upon to set me off on the right path when I wake up rather than trudging through the swamp, which I often do. Earlier. You had said that working in the creative industry or, or being in this space can be very isolating and lonely. What was it that allowed you to be vulnerable when that message was sent? To be like, here's actually how I'm feeling? Cause you could have easily said, nah, I'm good. I'm good. You know, and kept on your, your a fairy way stuck in your head without having your

friend on your side. But I mean, without going there, it's like what? What was it that allows you to be vulnerable

Preston Kanak: 00:38:36 because vulnerability is so important.

Mark Daws: 00:38:39 Wow, that's a really good question.

Preston Kanak: 00:38:45 Challenging. But there was something that like something that she hits you at the right time where you felt you could open up like w w. Was it the right person that reached out at the right time? Was it just the perfect storm? Like what? What was it? I think it probably was the fact that

Mark Daws: 00:39:01 I just reached that point again of being so terrified the I'm making a mistake that I could feel myself slipping back into through the door fair. Let's say the lore of fear can be so powerful at times. Fear is almost like a door way that you've. You've got a choice to fall into. Go through the door. You're not in it, you choose to walk into it, but it's alluring and it's comfortable and I could feel myself slipping into that comfortable place of not doing anything basically of deciding not to show up and not to do the work. Today. It's so easy not to do the work.

Mark Daws: 00:39:51 I was just at that moment when she, when I got a ping through on facebook, um, I've not even been using facebook as much, but it happens to be open. I've read a lot about, uh, about doubts and I'm actually fascinated by the more, the more I, the more I read, the more I become my own psychologists, so that's where offer worse and I think I'm lucky enough to recognize when I know I'm slipping and a lot of people don't recognize that and I didn't use to be able to recognize it, but I, I guess I've through having gone through it so many times, I'm wanting to learn about w, why I know when it's coming. And I guess I just wanted a, some wants to throw a rope and she happens to be the rope at that particular moment in time. Although people have been the rope.

Mark Daws: 00:40:41 You've been the rope. My wife's been the rope, you know, it all comes back to I guess the just having the ability or the vulnerability to recognize that you're vulnerable, if that makes sense. The, you know, being vulnerabilities, volume thing, but there's almost, you have to be able to accept it. I think that's, especially in a male environment, you know, society tells us that guys need to be strong and guys need to carry the weight and guys need to stand up or be a man, whatever the hell that means. I've heard that recently and it really annoyed me. What does that even mean? But because we're all human and we

what we've all got, you know, pains that we carry with us and we're all vulnerable to a certain extent. So I think it's hard for guys to accept the vulnerable and that's the first step and after that it gets easier because you become more open and it's ok to have a conversation. No one going to think you're less of a man to not have the conversation. So I guess it's probably that I've just been through it so often that one point you currently get sick of it.

Preston Kanak: 00:41:59

And what is this vault vulnerable given you?

Mark Daws: 00:42:03

I guess it's given me a way to battle a way to lock the door rather than wanting to stay with that metaphor, a way to put a, uh, a police sign. Do not cross tape across the door, the door or fear of over the door. Fear not that you don't talk into the tape every now and again and try and get in and bang on the door kicking and screaming, but talking about it with other people is the first tool, I think to steer you away from that place. I seen a picture of gundalow for some reason now. Amazing.

Preston Kanak: 00:42:44

How deep do you like? Do you have these moments as you go through this journey of self discovery or whatever you want to call it, where it's you, you, you get the affirmation that yes, I am on the right path. I am making the right decision and heading where I'm wanting to be. Clearly it's still a journey, but like, do you have those moments? You're like, oh, it clicks. This is it.

Mark Daws: 00:43:06

Is it not all doubters? Yes. Yes. It goes, I think. I think that there, ah, there are moments when you feel giddy like a kid, like that kid that was into the side table that you, you get the feeling that you know you're, you're doing the right thing and when those moments occur, you know, it makes everything worth it and it might not necessarily be as big as, wow, I'm on set and this amazing environment and, and we were on an exotic location. I mean, I'm sure that's amazing, but sometimes it can be small so it doesn't have to. It doesn't have to be some grandiose thing to feel success or to feel fulfilled that, that you're moving forward. It can be small,

Preston Kanak: 00:43:56

small moment where you have this whole vision that you see in your head coming together.

Mark Daws: 00:44:01

Yeah. Yeah. The one piece of the puzzle right there in one piece of that puzzles that are the no pieces

Preston Kanak: 00:44:10

and then those one moment or that one moment you have. Do you feel like that level of gratification and fulfillment as it was

more than you were getting with your last job? Is it that that's the moment where you're like, you know what, this is all worth it. Sure. There's still a big path and lots of obstacles ahead of me, but something about this creative process is

Mark Daws: 00:44:33 fulfilling to the point of continuing you wanting to to, to follow this path. Yes. I mean, I guess there's more of a sense of a positive, I guess is cathartic, but I guess mostly every step you take forward as you're building a picture of something you want to say what you want your life to look like to. Yeah. I guess there's that as well. Yeah. The, you know, that becomes a bigger picture of this. This is. This is part of going back to the puzzle. This is part of a big wider aspect of things or bigger vista. Yeah. I think it's those moments that make it worth it, that make it worth the journey, but it's a process and I think that. I think actually just on that point, there's this. Anybody that's learning something new, there's this constant rush to want to know it right away, to want to know, to be neo in the chair that gets injected with the kung fu chip.

Mark Daws: 00:45:33 And, and now all of a sudden, I know kung fu. Um, that's terrible. Calgary's impression. Um, and uh, it's like keanu reeves doing account and reason impression, there's this constant longing to know some things straight away and a frustration that comes with it. And I think that must happen all the time with everybody in whatever career they're in or every whatever creative arena that they're in, they see a goal and they want to be at the goal not to take the journey because they know the journey's going to be really hard. Coming to that realization, I guess allows you to celebrate the smaller moments. And actually there's a. I'm not very good at appreciating what I've done even when I've done it subliminally. Self criticize myself like I've not got the best thing in the world, which is what I want to create. And because I don't have that yet, I'm not going to celebrate it.

Mark Daws: 00:46:27 You should allow yourself permission to celebrate that you've done that. It's because it's an achievement. All the small victories are so important and I think we forget that along the, along the journey because we're always looking at that end goal. We're always looking at the end final products, wherever it may be, and also comparing yourself to other people that have already achieved it where it's like one, they're here and I'm not. So yeah, I've got nothing. Can we parson that's a really good point. I, I, I have stopped comparing in our current society, w there's comparisons everywhere. You know, in social world it can become a monster if you, if you let it. And I think that, you know, stepping away sometimes is a healthy thing to do, I guess

to allow you the space to see your path, you need to kind of clear out all the clutter and there's a lot of noise in the world and to help get traction

Preston Kanak: 00:47:30 as well. It's obviously the path to be straight. So clearing that path so you can at least take some risks is. Yeah. Yeah, sure. One point I, I guess want to make clear with this, all this too, is you're still on this journey of self discovery and finding out what actually does that fill you. At what point did you realize, oh shit, I can't just do this alone and I do need the support. I mean, there's obviously been this thing that's happened where it's not only have you shown up, but you've, you've reached out further to to get support to, to help accelerate this learning process. For you, w, w was there a moment that you're just like, oh, I think, I think, I think this is what's needed to ensure that there is this progression happening.

Mark Daws: 00:48:12 Yeah. It's like, it's almost like, oh, I can see. It's that sort of a huge youtube attitude, isn't it? Where, where you want to learn piano. It's a learning piano. It was easy. I'm just going to buy a piano and then go and find someone that's teaching piano on youtube and then all of my problems will be solved. I'll be a concert pianist by, you know, next, this time next year, and the reality is that it can get you a certain way. You can find things online and read all the articles and get inspired and that helps to get us a certain way or in a certain mindset because there are a, I guess a lot of people wanting to get into this industry and they can't find the avenues. I guess I've been lucky in the respect that I've reached out to people and that was putting me in touch with other people and those people have been really supportive

Preston Kanak: 00:49:00 and I guess one main points out of this too that I think is fascinating that I've almost. Whether it's learning through you or whatever it is, this idea. Like I, I did the film at a project based on malcolm gladwell's 10,000 hour rule and my whole approach to that project was like, oh, I'm just going to go out and shoot every day and try something new with every project, but just simply doing 10,000 hours of something. Isn't gonna make you a professional in that area? There's so many other things I need to fall into place and one of those main things is having somebody help support you through your learning process, so they're very focused learning so it's not just doing something for the sake of doing something, but if you go and say you're playing an instrument and you play the wrong note is taking time to realize what was the reasoning that cause you to play the wrong notes and then ensuring you avoid that mistake the next time you do

it. So I think like the fact that you've reached out to somebody for support as you've, you've understood this.

Mark Daws: 00:50:00 I remember meeting you that first day in the app or I think it was oakland airport. Is that the first time we met? I think it was, yeah, we definitely met in an airport and uh, I knew and I think you probably within five minutes, so how are you feeling about this? Because that's what you do. You like kind of guy in a very reassuring way. And I said I'm terrified. I just, you know, I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know. I'm really nervous. I you confidence in me with the fact that you feel exactly the same way every time you go on set and the because you don't know what's going to happen. There's always this sense of of potential dread that something's gonna go wrong. Then you've got to think about it and then you've got to fix it. And to hear that vulnerability is, I think is key to getting in back into the mindset of positivity.

Mark Daws: 00:50:53 I think probably the one of the issues is that may be not enough. People know that I'm just going from personal experiences, but not enough people talk to each other in the environment. So you just assume looking at everybody else that everyone's in full control. Everyone knows exactly what they're doing when actually when you get to talk to people, everyone then starts to admit, well, yeah, I know certain skills, but to a certain extent I'm just winging it like everybody else is here and, and then. And I think that then creates this environment that we're all in it together and we're all on the same team and that you kind of make it through and hopefully make something really awesome. And actually when there's that openness that it probably does create more awesome results.

Preston Kanak: 00:51:37 For me, it's, I find the one thing somewhat lacking with the industry that we're in is this ability to be vulnerable where it almost feels like you need to prove yourself everyday because I'm gonna need. You do need to prove yourself and ensure that you are offering the value that's there. But I think I'm more stronger trade to bring forth is the vulnerability and being like, we're all in this together. We're likely all going to make mistakes at some point, but what we all got your back. You know? And I think that's, that's so, so important for people that are considering to make this the shift with their life. Do you have any words of advice for, for people that are thinking of making the jump, knowing that you're still in the transition and you're trying to still figure it out yourself? I mean, that's, I think that's part of the magic in this.

Mark Daws: 00:52:27 I have a real big issue with self belief on it gets in the way all the damn time. I think there's so much talent out there that it can be intimidating on the thing that stops people from all. Certainly has stopped me from making that move. Even now, you know, you'll say film something and now go, I don't feel like I can, uh, maybe that comes from a place of feeling slightly intimidated, not by you, but just by the process. And it can be a barrier I guess. Mentally. I'm sure there are other people like me that have the same mindset that they know that they've got something in them to be creative in a certain area, but there's always this niggling voice on the shoulder. Mine's called gregor. By the way, my creative coach asked me to name him, which has helped

Preston Kanak: 00:53:18 a little more about that. Talk about gregor, what is the intent and why? Which she asked you to, to, to name this like fictitious person or this voice.

Mark Daws: 00:53:29 Great. Because she, she, she, she actually, we talked about that same question of why have we gone through the process of naming your doubt and the reason is to separate that feeling from your internal self because internally you get very confused. You know you've got one voice telling us you can do it. You've got this other voice, gregor who telling you that you can't do it, and in your internally, in your inner world, your, you see that as just two different parts of yourself and you have no choice but to listen to those two different parts and naming that doubt or naming the negative aspects of you brings it out of your internal life onto the desk or until your shoulder or next to you while you're drinking your coffee. It becomes an entity and an entity that you can then have a con. It sounds nuts, but then you can have a conversation with it or you can choose to ignore them or you can just say no, you're absolutely wrong, greg, because you told me that yesterday and I didn't get very far.

Mark Daws: 00:54:39 So I think that you're actually wrong on that one. So I'm just going to go and do the opposite and I've only learned this over the past couple of weeks. It's very fresh, very excited about talking about that. That process has just opened up this much more positive attitude to my approach, to the creative process. It's been easier for a person like me in advertising and being in the environment that you naturally have a support network around you in an agency to support everywhere from your colleagues because we were all in the same boat from you, creative directors, et cetera, et cetera. The creative process becomes a lot easier because people can give you clarity, but when you're by yourself and you're down on your thinking about writing or you're thinking about creating a design or

whatever it might be, you're staring at that blank page and the only person you've got to talk to is gregor. He's a nightmare and so you have to be able to almost use him as much as he's using you for.

Preston Kanak: 00:55:45 I mean for, for clarity, for people that don't quite understand this, I mean if you're. If you don't come from the creative field is you always have this self doubt and I see this as a too old to almost overcome that self doubt or gregor basically being able to tell gregor you're wrong. Yeah. Have you seen, uh, like since you've now named this crazy character in your life? Yeah. Has it helped in, in your creative block, if you want to call it that? Do you find like that's, it's, it's been a help in that way?

Mark Daws: 00:56:25 Yes, it has definitely helped, but I, I'm not gonna allow people to see it through rose tinted glasses. Um, a, it's a constant battle. It doesn't, it's not like now I know greg is there. I can shoot him down every time and I also have a conversation with this last just a few days ago with my creative coach that some days you're going to lose the battle. I got up and with the intention of writing and look to cross at the desk who sat on the stool, but gregor tapping his fingers ongoing. Not today. Dude, it's not going to happen today. Obviously he wasn't there in reality, but your thought process is this is too much and I'm not going to achieve what I need to achieve the instant thought as soon as you get up, but it's not like that every day. You know,

Preston Kanak: 00:57:14 we've even take like, let's, let's maybe wine back or, or take the 30,000 foot view here and it's beyond just this crate of block and this character that's there blocking you in the situation where you're, you're going down, you're playing the traditional route of, you see the path ahead of you tie this back to that and how, how you were able to overcome this, this barrier where it's like for people that are maybe feeling they want to take the leap but they've got this person is greg or telling them, no, no, no. You can't do it. The self doubt. How do you feel or what needs to be done for them to feel comfortable to make the leap? Um, be. Yeah. Because it's not easy. You're always have this character saying he's going to fail. You're gonna fail. Yeah. Yeah. What I'm thinking here is more of like if you don't, if you don't take, if you don't live a fulfilled life, you don't. If you don't take that chance and that leap, are you gonna do it in the next life,

Mark Daws: 00:58:13 like what do you have to lose? Yeah, I mean, I mean, you know, we don't have a lot of time doing in the scheme of things,

Preston Kanak: 00:58:21 but looking back on your life where you feel more fulfilled with having taken a chance and failed and not ever taken the chance.

Mark Daws: 00:58:28 well, I, I, if you want me to talk completely honestly about it, which are doing yes is the answer. I think that I, I often, I will think I'm in such a lucky position to be able to embrace this new journey and I wouldn't have been able to do it without the ori or to be able to start doing it without the support network around me and without the people that I've met and without the support of my [inaudible]. There is always another version of me which says, how you doing? You crazy person. You left this, you were totally stable. If you believe in in the realms of parallel universes and quantum physics and having those quantum moments in life where one version of view stays in, the other version of you goes off to on the big adventure, I think now, not always, but sometimes on the on the rainy days looking back and going, I could have been that person and actually if I.

Mark Daws: 00:59:30 If I'd have sTayed there, I could have been this person by now. I don't want to give the illusion to people that you just sat on a new path and everything's rosy and you look towards the future with a bright gaze and it's all gonna. Be cool because the reality that shifting is a constantly scary place and the only thing that you can keep telling yourself is I must be doing the right thing because some things brought me here and this is the decision that I've taken and we're just going to have to run with it much into the realms of as a, as a huge metaphor around that. in the world of creativity, it's exactly the same. You come up with three ideas or three thoughts, so whatever it might be and go, that's the one that's the one we're going to take. And every now and again you'll look back and go, oh, what's that?

Mark Daws: 01:00:21 The right idea. Maybe we should have gone with one of the other two. you know, there are always choices and those choices are never totally clear. You just have to sort of, I guess, run with your gut and hope for the best for god asks a question at this point. For people that are considering the leap, like, what, what do you tell them? What do I tell those people? Um, I think you just have to be able to trust In your instincts to be able to trust in the deep voice inside that saying, I'm hungry to do this. This is really what I want to do right now. And I think there are so many people, even people that I've had a school friends that had so much potential and they don't do it either out of fear, out of fear of failure or it's just too much.

Mark Daws: 01:01:15 And the only thing I can say is you just have to make a go of it, just try and do it. And as to the old phrase, you know, it's better

to try than failed and not try at all. I don't know who said that someone did someone very wise, but it's true. You know, you've just got, you've just got to try and do it and it's a fight, you know, but you always come away from a job or an experience in your new life feeling that much more fulfilled that you're continuing on that journey. And I guess in essence, that's what life's about, isn't it? This way for the whiskey, when we get really philosophical,

Preston Kanak: 01:01:53 I can't think of a better place to end it in there. Thanks so much Mark.

Preston Kanak: 01:02:14 And that was another episode of the unspoken podcast. We will definitely be following up with mark. This journey continues. I want to thank him again for his openness. I'll include links to find out more about mark and the current journey he is on in the show notes below. as always, thanks for listening.