Expectations about work in Japan are vastly different than those in the United States. We talk about them, about differences, and how our own personal histories affect our work expectations and experiences.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about work expectations in Japan and by lately, I mean since last week. I’ve been thinking about, like, what are the work expectations in Japan of employers and what are the work expectations in Japan of employees.

C: I feel like you’re really lucky that you’ve only been thinking about it for a week because the Japanese employees I know are always thinking about work expectations.

K: Yes. And so I should say that it crosses my mind from time to time because all of the people who see me, almost all of the people who see me as a therapist, are employed in Japan or employers in Japan. I do have some people who aren’t working, but the majority of people that I work with are actually working.

C: At jobs?

K: Yeah. (laughs)

C: Because I know if they come to you for therapy, they’re working their therapy.

K: Oh yes. I’m very much “we’re going to do some work today” kind of therapist. I’m not the kind of therapist- and it’s sad that I’m not the kind of therapist that you can just complain to without wanting to take action steps. I do have clients that I have to explain to them that we’re not compatible because that’s what they see a therapist as, and there are some that want analysis more than therapy. And analysis is where you just do your stream of consciousness talking and the person listening doesn’t say anything and takes notes and sometimes they like, sit behind you or out of view, and you just go in and talk about and find your own truth. And I’m also not that kind of therapist.

C: I don’t think that’s sad, I think that’s just a function of the market. That you’re trying to help the people who you can help most, and you don’t believe that that kind of thing is a urgent or as helpful to people as what you do.

K: No, I think it is as urgent and as helpful. It’s just not temperament compatible. So I don’t have the temperament for it. And I just really want action steps. I really feel satisfied with action steps, so everybody gets homework, even people who only come to see me for the free consultation, they get homework. So, looking at work expectation for the Japanese government, they actually have no expectations of me as a therapist other than keeping confidentiality. There’s no hours suggestions, there’s nothing.

C: Right.

K: So, the Japanese Psychological Association doesn’t have anything suggested hours or any of that, but the American Psychological Association does. And so I find that interestingly enough, there were more work expectations of me in the United States than there are here in Japan.

C: I think the Japanese Psychological Association is more of a… update group to keep people informed.

K: Yeah, because they do a lot of conferences, and so does the APA, the JPA does a lot of conferences. They send out a lot of reports and latest research and all of that. I think they’re comparable. I just think that the laws are different.

C: I think the APA has a large lobbying component that the JPA doesn’t.

K: Yeah, that’s true. So, for me, my work expectations are reduced being in Japan. I don’t have as many expectations of me. And before I was a therapist, I was an English teacher. And I’ve done almost every type of English teaching there is in Japan. So I’ve worked for the conversation schools, eikawa, it’s where I got my English teaching start. And then I worked in a kindergarten, an English language kindergarten that did from like eighteen months up to, I think it was grade three. And then I’ve done dispatch.

C: Right.

K: And I also worked for a company that did just a hodge-podge of different things, so I’ve done basically all of the types of just straight English teaching work. And I’ve found each company I worked for had different expectations. The one thing that was true across the board was that they expected I wouldn’t know my rights.

C: Yes. And it’s interesting because companies that do dispatch have to have a special license to do dispatch because the use of dispatch workers is so common here.

K: Yeah.

C: I know that I’ve worked at some Japanese companies, well all the companies I’ve worked at have been Japanese, but some of them have been run by Japanese people and some of them have been run by non-Japanese people but still Japanese corporations.

K: Yeah.

C: After I graduated, I interviewed at one company that I did not end up working for, for a data scientist position.

K: Yeah, they were horrible.

C: Yeah, so

K: They were horrible in the interview.

C: So, I went through six rounds of interviews. So it wasn’t an interview every time, it was like a… video interview where they sent me questions and I had to answer them to nobody. And then there was a technical test where I had to demonstrate I can program, like yes, I can program. And I finally got to the last round of interview, I hoped that was the last round because I was interviewing with the people

K: No, I think there was another round after that that you would’ve had to go through if you wanted the job.

C: Maybe. I had already gone through the interview with HR.

K: Yeah.

C: And I was going through the interview with the people who would’ve been on my team. So maybe there would’ve been another one with the person who would’ve been my boss, I’m not sure.

K: Yeah, that’s my memory of it, but I could be wrong.

C: Yeah. And so, the work expectation there.. we were chatting and I was like, you know, I’ve been in tech for a long time, so sometimes long hours were expected. But…. And in Japan, long hours are expected. But I was not prepared for what they said. So, we talked about it and they said “do you have any questions for us?” And I said “yeah, what’s the typical work hours? What are the expectations?” And they said “well, okay, everybody does their core 40. And then you pick whether you’re going to do the additional 20 in the morning or in the evening.” So their people either work from 6:30 in the morning or work until 10:30 at night. But everybody is there from 9:30 to 6:30. So, I guess 5:30 in the morning. From 9:30 to 6:30.

K: Yeah.

C: And I just at that point, I told the recruiter that I’d been working with that I’m not interested in pursuing this. Because 60 hours a week as the expected work week, I did that in Silicon Valley, and it ruined my health. And I wasn’t going to do that again.

K: Yeah. And some companies have overtime seasons.

C: Right.

K: Where you don’t work overtime all the time, but during the beginning and end of the year, it’s like, each quarter there’s a certain amount of overtime they expect you to work in the quarter. But, like, traditional company work in Japan is pretty much expected that you’re going to work overtime. What I find interesting is that when the foreigners come over here and work, most of them do not work overtime. Most of them say no thank you. Which I think is so interesting, that one, the company allows them to do it- because, like, for Toyota specifically, if you come over and work for Toyota, you don’t work for Toyota Japan even while you’re here. You still report back to HR in the States.

C: Right.

K: And you’re still under the guidelines and rules of HR in the States.

C: Right. So I think something people might not know is that in Japan, unions are typically per company. So there’s a Toyota union rather than a union of auto workers that covers people at Toyota and Mitsubishi and Honda and Nissan and all of that. So, the Toyota union would have their own agreement about how many hours overtime are required, how many hours of overtime are allowed. Whether those are paid or “sabisu” the Japanese “service” which means free overtime.

K: Yeah.

C: And so if you come over here and you’re not part of that union, then you’re not covered by those work rules. So that’s why they can say no to overtime. But people who are covered by those work rules, a lot of them can’t say no to overtime.

K: Oh, interesting thing. A friend of Rasta’s recently went through the thirty day training period, and I don’t know if you were there when Rasta and I were talking about. Something that I was like “that is whack” they had to do like, I don’t know, this really long walk or run or something. I don’t know, it was something like 20 kilometers, I don’t know, it was something really far. I’m horrible with kilometers. And one of the people physically could not do it.

C: Right.

K: Like, they were just not able to. And it was a whole thing. Like telling the person “why don’t you want to do it?” and you know, they were saying “look this person can’t do it” and they were saying “get them to the next checkpoint, get them to the next checkpoint.” Because the expectation was even if you have disability, even if you have assistance with walking, they still expected you to do this really long walk. It was like five miles, whatever that is in kilometers. Because I convert everything, I make everyone speak to me in American. (laughs)

C: Five miles is 8 kilometers.

K: Okay, yeah, it was 8 kilometers. I kept thinking 80 kilometers but that’s way too much Kisstopher, you know it’s not 80. But I have no idea what the relationship is, I still am struggling with the metric system. Bane of my existence. They should really teach it in the United States. They’re doing us a disservice. It’s all part of the conspiracy to keep Americans domestic and not let them be globally minded. Because we’re the only country in the world using the imperial system. It makes no sense. None whatsoever.

C: That’s not quite true, I don’t remember but there are a couple other countries that use it.

K: Name them.

C: Well, the UK uses stones for weight.

K: And that’s not the imperial system. We use pounds.

C: Well, stones is 14 pounds. So it’s part of the old imperial system.

K: I think you’re making this up.

C: I think Liberia uses the imperial system?

K: I think you’re making this up.

C: I’d have to wiki, and we don’t wiki on this show.

K: No. We don’t. So, I totally put you on the spot because I think you’re making it up. I think America’s the only country that uses the imperial system. If you guys know otherwise, hey hit us up on twitter or leave a comment on the website and let us know. We’ll probably wiki it after the podcast.

C: Well, and, probably Scotland must use the imperial system because, right, if I would walk five hundred miles. And I would walk five hundred more. Why weren’t they walking five hundred kilometers? Or eight hundred kilometers?

K: Ooo. Ooo. That was good.

C: Because I would walk eight hundred kilometers and I would walk eight hundred more, it’s not as catchy.

K: Okay, when I heard it, I’m going to tell you my honest thought when I heard it. This just shows how much I buy into American exceptionalism. I believed that they were saying miles because they wanted to be popular in the US market. That’s what I actually believed when I heard it.

C: I think they were just saying it because people in the UK know what miles are, and it’s more poetic. So to the Proclaimers, if you’re listening, I don’t know if you are. Let us know: why did you choose miles instead of kilometers?

K: (laughs) So, for me, I thought that that was so interesting that like, they knew the person was disabled when they hired them. But if they weren’t able to overcome and walk this eight kilometers, that the company wouldn’t value them. So this expectation of when you get hired in the traditional way in Japan is that you’re going to come in at your prime, and you’re going to give the company everything you have.

C: Yeah. So I read an interesting study, I think it’s probably been published by now, that something like eighty percent of people diagnosed with depression and who get treatment for it aren’t actually depressed according to the people diagnosing them. The doctors say they are diagnosing them with depression because what they really have is stress burnout, but you can’t get government mandated time off for stress burnout. You can protect your job if you take time off for depression.

K: Yeah.

C: But it’s only been since 2016 that the supreme court of Japan said you can’t fire people for being disabled.

K: Yeah. So, I think Japan- because we always talk about how amazing and wonderful Japan is. And on Twitter, I always talk about how amazing and wonderful Japan is, but the reason I think a large part of the reason that we find Japan so amazing and wonderful is that we’re not working for a Japanese company.

C: Yeah, so the disability rules, this stuff ties into expectations, Japanese companies with at least a hundred people

K: I like how you’re justifying it. “I’m digressing but it’s related.” (laughs) It’s a relevant digression.

C: Thank you. If a Japanese company of at least a hundred people is expected to hire, I think, 1.9% of those people need to be disabled.

K: Really?

C: Yeah. And if it’s over 300 people, it might- okay, no, if it’s over three hundred people, it’s the same amount, but the penalty is different. But the fine is something like 40,000 yen a month for every person that you’re under. And then you get 20,000 yen a month for every person that you’re over.

K: Okay, I’ve never heard anything about this. How’d you find out about this scheme?

C: Because they recently, well one they recently updated the percentages. And two, there was recently a major

K: Recently updated them where?

C: In the law.

K: Where are you reading this law?

C: I read a lot of Japanese news.

K: So I have no idea what you do with your day. I’ve said this before in the podcast. Your day is a complete mystery to me because when I leave, I just leave. And when I call you up, I am just really precious, and I came out as precious a few episodes back, so I’m just, hey, letting my precious flag fly.

C: To the audience. Because you came out as precious to me immediately.

K: Yeah because you’ve got to know what you’re getting into if you’re going to be my friend, you have to know I’m precious. And if you’re going to be my partner, you have to know I’m really precious. So when I call you up in the day it’s usually because I want something from you even if it’s just to hear your voice and it’s rare that I ask you what you’re doing, so I usually have a ten minute window, so I just I want whatever the connection is that I’m craving.

C: That’s your work expectation.

K: Yeah. And so, for me, my work-day- and I really think this important because even- that’s why I prefer being a traveling English teacher rather than being inside the school teaching was because I could call you. Because I would always call you from my lunch, and we would coordinate, because there was a time where you were working in Tokyo because you did like a month in Tokyo and I was down here, and we would every day set up a time when you were going to have lunch because we’d talk in the morning before you went, we’d talk at lunch, and then we would talk in the evening.

C: And when we met, you only had a beeper, but you were working house to house. You’d go visit clients. And I bought you a cell phone so that you could call me between clients, so that’s been our pattern ever since we met.

K: Yeah, this is just when we were just friends because I would stop- I knew where all the pay phones were on the route. This is when I was working with kids and going in, so in between I would stop at whatever gas station or convenience store or whatever and I’d use the pay phone and call you, so I’ve been calling you on my breaks for over twenty years.

C: Yes.

K: Nice.

C: And I love it.

K: Yeah, we’ve been taking, because we used to joke and say we’ve just been having one long conversation since the first day we met.

C: Yeah, basically. So, I read a lot of Japanese news.

K: Okay.

C: And the percentage used to be 1.4%. But they upped it to 1.9%. They’re trying to reflect the disability within the general population.

K: Okay, and so is 1.9% of the general Japanese population disabled?

C: Not even close. But that’s the number who are certified disabled. So it’s much higher than that in reality.

K: Okay.

C: But that’s the number who are certified disabled and who are not elderly. And so as soon as you take out elderly people, now over 20% of the population is over 70 years old, so that’s a significant chunk. But there was a major scandal because it turned out that most of the prefectural governments were lying about their disability employment numbers and not actually meeting them.

K: Mmm. That is quite scandalous

C: Yeah, disabled people are chronically underemployed and unemployed in Japan. And there’s two disability systems. This is aside from pension and everything. So you can be physically disabled or you can be mentally disabled. And under the Japanese system, I’m both. I’m physically disabled by the ankylosing spondylitis. And considered mentally disabled because of the epilepsy.

K: Okay.

C: So even though in the US epilepsy isn’t considered a mental disability, it’s considered a physical one.

K: Yeah, it’s not. So, I don’t think that Japan has mental disability for PTSD or emotional trauma.

C: No, they don’t. It’s a short list. It’s like epilepsy, and

K: Well, and autism is also considered a mental disability.

C: Right. So,

K: So, everything I know about Japan’s disability is through my work with kids, and there’s a green card that if you get these different diagnoses or different diagnosis or screenings done that you can then apply for

C: The disability booklet which they’re changing to disability cards, yeah.

K: Yeah. And so I have some parents coming to me wanting that when their children don’t meet the criteria, and I have to gently but directly tell them no. And then there are other parents coming to me who don’t want that whose children do meet the criteria and I have to gently tell them no. And then there’s a whole group that come to me not knowing their rights and so I find that I’m really up on children’s rights

C: And well typically you’re just going to have to refer them out anyway because it has to be from a Japanese medical doctor.

K: But because of my relationship with several doctors, they will accept my writing and my finding. And so they just confirm my finding.

C: Yeah, that’s what I’m saying. You have to refer them out, but you’re still useful in that process.

K: So for me the whole disability system in Japan, there are a lot of things available for families with disability, but there are not a lot of educational things available. But you can get some help from the government for your child to not go to traditional Japanese school if your child has a disability because traditional Japanese learning institutions don’t really have an ability to accommodate.

C: Well and I think that’s interesting, the correlation between the expectations of the education system and the work system. And they’re both pretty much the same, which is with rare exception you’re expected to just show up and be there. And the Japanese work expectation, which is very slowly changing, is that you can’t leave until your boss leaves, and you have to arrive before your boss arrives. And so if your boss is there until ten o’clock at night because he, because most of the bosses in Japan are men, has a crappy relationship with his wife and doesn’t want to go home, then all of his employees are stuck there. And karoshi, death by overwork, makes the news on a regular basis.

K: Yeah, it does. There’s a whole movement trying to do away with that and there’s a lot of grassroots on that and improving worker’s rights. And something that I think is interesting is women’s rights in the workforce. So, I have a lot of female clients that are working for Japanese companies, and I recently had an interesting- very very interesting client in that they’re a Japanese national who had worked abroad and got transferred to Japan from their company that they worked abroad for. And they’re actually in a high-up management position, and they were told upon arriving in Japan what their duties were to be in the meetings, and they were to make tea for their subordinates. Just based on their gender, they were reduced to a tea and cakes lady. And they were not taken in consensus and none of their feedback was taken. They subsequently requested to be transferred out of Japan because it was just too psychologically damaging to them. And to me I was just like “wow that’s really bad.” That overt sexism just being in your face with it.

C: It’s only been like a decade since there stopped being women’s track and men’s track jobs.

K: Yeah.

C: and now they still have the system, but they call it something different. I forget the names but basically, the “you’ll make manager” track and the “you’ll never make manager” track. And the difference is that if you’re on the “you’ll make manager” track is you’re expected to pick up and move anywhere in Japan.

K: Even if you’re on the non-management track. Because Rasta’s friend that went through that thirty-day training, at the end of their thirty days, they were assigned a company and none of them are on management track. So that was something that was really surprising to me because that’s something I thought was really antiquated. And I thought Japan had done away with that. But not only are they expected to go- because all the managers look at where the classes are, and Rasta’s friend was very fortunate in that they came in first in the class and so the manger where they wanted to go wanted them because they were number one in their class, but they have to live in a company dorm- in a company share-house. And they can’t have guests from a different gender. And they can only have guests until a certain time of night, they have a shared kitchen, they have a shared laundry facility, they have a shared bathroom, they have their own room. So some people share a room.

C: They’ve entered through the traditional system, which is everybody gets hired on April 1st. The Keidanren, the Japanese business association has rules about you can’t start recruiting them until July of their senior year of college. And you can only hire people from their senior year of college, so if you graduate without a job, you might be stuck at least as far as those companies you’ll never get a job there, so yeah the expectations are unreasonable and they go back to the time of lifetime employment. When if you got a job, no matter how badly you screwed up they could never fire you. And so, six years ago now, they passed a law that if somebody works for you for five years, you have to give them that same protection called Seishain, regular employee.

K: yeah.

C: And so a lot of people got temporarily fired at like 4 and a half years. They were laid off for three months and they were started again to keep them becoming permanent

K: Interesting there for schools, there are several international schools that will not keep someone past five years.

C: Well and for schools, it’s ten years because the schools lobbied so hard to not have to do that.

K: but they’re still limiting teachers to five years, and there’s another school that like every two years almost their entire teaching staff turns over. It’s amazing. It’s just astounding

C: I know that at Meidai, the university that I went to, they have a policy that that if you are a foreign professor, you can have two three-year contracts and then you’re fired no matter what, and then you can wait and get another two three-year contracts because they have a ten year rule, so they can go up to ten years but they’re worried that if they did that third three-year contract that it’d create that expectation of continued employment.

K: Yeah

C: because the Japanese courts have ruled you can’t just say “we didn’t fire you, we just didn’t renew your contract.” That that is the same as being fired under certain circumstances

K: It’s exactly the same as being fired because they didn’t renew your contract, you don’t have work.

C: Right. If you’re expecting it to be an ongoing renewal, that’s basically the standard is “do you expect it to be an ongoing renewal?” because I worked at places where I was only there temporarily. I was there to fix a problem. I fixed the problem, and I moved on. I was happy with it, they were happy with it.

K: So we came into Japan knowing all of this because we did a lot of research.

C: Yes.

K: So neither of us ever had the goal to be a company employee.

C: No.

K: So, I feel like I always knew that I was going to do something non-traditional in Japan. I just didn’t know what it was because I’ve always had a lot of work agency and work autonomy and work efficacy. I always felt like I can earn money. I know how to earn money, just give me a minute give me a beat to figure it out, and I will figure out a way that I can get up, go to work, and earn some money. And I think that’s because I’m at the intersection of disability and ability. And so, like, I know that I’m extremely capable but I’m also disabled.

C: As is the case for many disabled people.

K: Yeah, and so for me I know that I take a lot of enjoyment from working, it’s just something that I enjoy doing. Not everybody enjoys working, I’m very fortunate in that I’m able to, for the most, find work that I enjoy or if not find other work until I can sort of craft something or create an opportunity for myself. And I know that that’s an incredibly privileged place and space to be in. To be able to do that. Because I have the education to do it. So being college educated really affords me a lot of flexibility because in Japan- and because I have ten years’ experience in my chosen field, so in Japan it’s either ten years’ experience or a college degree, and because I have both I can do whatever, basically whatever I want to do in Japan as long as it’s related to the field of psychology. And psychology is hugely diverse.

C: And at this point as a permanent resident, you can do whatever you want to do.

K: Yeah, but when we were doing the visa hustle.

C: When we were doing the visa hustle, yeah.

K: And so being a permanent resident, just like, I don’t know. It has this weird thing of immediately creating no work expectations for me but I’ve now become more aware of what it means to be a Japanese national in things, and so even if I was to renounce my American citizenship and become a Japanese national, I still wouldn’t have these expectations because I’ve aged out of them, and I think that’s something we’re not talking about is the ageism.

C: Yeah.

K: Because the ageism hit you hard, man. (laughs) You got jacked off by the ageism, you were so personally hurt, and I think the difference was that when we came to Japan, I was already 40.

C: And part of it too is the Japanese pay system

K: Because I’m so much older than you. (laughs)

C: Yeah. The Japanese pay system at traditional companies is that a company employee who enters right out of university, so 21, 22 years old, does not make a living wage.

K: Why do I have it stuck in my head that people graduate at 24. Like, I just cannot

C: That’s a master’s. That’s somebody who goes straight from high school through to a master’s.

K: No, I think that’s a bachelor’s. Like, I really I cannot get it in my head that 21 is graduating from college. That just doesn’t make any sense to me. 19, 20, 21, 22. That- I feel like 21 is when you go into college.

C: No, most people go, at least in the US, go in at 18 and most people graduate at 23 now.

K: and so then I think, don’t most people go in at 19. Even though so I know that if I had graduated high school, I would have graduated high school right before my 18th birthday. And then if I had gone straight into college, I would’ve gone in right after my 18th birthday, in September, but I don’t know, I just can’t get my head around it because I feel like if 21 is when you become a full-fledged adult in the United States, shouldn’t you get from like 18 to 21 to find yourself and figure some stuff out so you don’t end up with a degree that’s completely useless to you?

C: You should, but you don’t.

K: But I really feel like that’s confusing to me. And I don’t know why it’s confusing to me because our son got his college degree when he was 16, so he graduated university at 16. So, okay, if you had gone straight form high school to college, how old would you have been when you graduated?

C: I would’ve been 19 when I graduated.

K: (laughs) That’s so hella young. That is so hella young.

C: Because I already had a year of credits from AP.

K: Okay, so you would’ve been 19. What would you have majored in?

C: I actually majored in mining engineering.

K: What? Say that again.

C: I majored briefly in mining engineering.

K: Oh my god, I never asked you what you were majoring in the first time you went to college. All these years, for twenty years I assumed it was math.

C: Nope. Nope. And the reason was that it was the only department that would give you money just for being in that department.

K: What?

C: Yeah, you could get a scholarship just for being in that department if you just wrote a letter of thank you.

K: (laughs) What are you talking about? This is just bizarro world to me. What are you on about?

C: So, I was in Fairbanks at the time that I graduated. At University of Alaska Fairbanks, if you have at least a 3.5 from your high school and you graduate from Alaska, then you get a free-ride scholarship to UAF if you want it.

K: Really?

C: Yes. I did not have a 3.5. I had like a 2.4 or maybe 2.6. A terrible, terrible GPA. I flunked many of my classes after my mother died. But, I- you know, AP, ACT and stuff.

K: And so AP classes don’t, like, count extra on your GPA?

C: AP classes count extra by bumping you up by one point. So if you get a 4 in a regular class, and this was system when I went, if you get a 4 in a regular class, that’s 4 points towards your GPA.

K: Okay.

C: If you get an A in a regular class, that’s 4 points towards your GPA. If you get an A in an AP class, that’s 5 points towards your GPA.

K: Okay.

C: So the valedictorian at our high school, her GPA was something like 4.34 because they had taken so many AP classes. So I took 7 AP classes, and I finished six of them. AP chemistry, I dropped out really quickly, I transferred out of that class in like a week. But the other six, so I had six AP tests that I’d taken, and I got passing scores on all of them.

K: Okay, so why was your GPA so busted?

C: My GPA was busted because I wouldn’t do homework. So, just autism and everything

K: I thought for AP classes the only thing that counts is your final test grade.

C: No, I had one test, one class that was like that. It was AP econ. And I was not doing well grade-wise. I think I had like a very low C in the class. And somebody else who was not doing well grade-wise said “hey Mr. R” not going to say his name but “Mr. R, can I take my final as my total grade?” And he said “Yes, if you’re willing to take that risk, but if you flunk the final, I really will give you an F in the class” and then he said in class the next day “a student has asked if he can do this and so I’m going to offer it to everybody” and so I said “yes please.” And we had three hours for the final and I finished in like 45 minutes and aced the final because economics just makes total, complete sense to me. It’s one of the reasons I have a post-graduate certification in business is it just- my brain vibes on that level, and so I got an A in that class. But the teachers were allowed to set their own things. So, the AP tests were separate from the AP class. So, I failed one of my AP classes but got a 5 on the test, so even though I failed the class I still got the college credits- I still got excused from English composition 101 and 201.

K: I feel like that’s burnt. If I was an AP teacher, I’d be like “don’t do homework” because why aren’t teachers more motivated to not give homework unless they have to? Because that’s more homework for them and if they assign one paper to thirty kids, that’s thirty papers they have to grade. And most teachers are teaching six classes. So, you know, 30 times 6 is 180.

C: Yeah, so when I was teaching, I wasn’t a big fan of homework. I would do an inverted class most of the time, where they would read about what we were going to talk about and then we would do homework during class so that I could help each individual student. That’s a whole other thing.

K: Yeah, that is. That’s a different cast. So what were we talking about? We were talking about what you would’ve done and you did some random mining thing.

C: Yeah, mining engineering because Fairbanks had, at the time, just recently opened the Fort Knox gold mine. So as soon as I turned 18, I would’ve easily had a job. So,

K: I don’t know why I’m like “oo, oo, Fort Knox. You said gold, that’s sexy.” (laughs)

C: As part of my schooling, I got a certification in explosives.

K: A certification with what?

C: Explosives.

K: Okay. Let’s go blow some stuff up.

C: So I was certified to use low-grade explosives. That expired a long time ago.

K: Okay, so don’t go blow anything up.

C: Yeah, but I was certified for like dynamite but not for plastic explosives.

K: Mhmm.

C: And I went to mines and I also took classes on mining theory, and I also took other classes, like I took math and stuff.

K: So how long did you actually go?

C: I actually went for one semester.

K: Okay, because that’s what I thought.

C: Yeah.

K Okay, how many classes did you take?

C: I took four classes, and I failed all of them.

K: (laughs) I shouldn’t laugh but it doesn’t cause you any pain. You have a PhD now. I’m not a villain, I’m not villainous. So, before this digression, I forgot what we were on about. We were on about how old people are when they go to college and graduate because I just think 24. I don’t know why but I’m fixated on 24 being the year that someone launches, which our son milked for all its worth.

C: In Japan it’s 22, and it doesn’t really matter what you get your degree in, they don’t care. They will just assign you to whatever job they want you to have.

K: What are you talking about? When companies recruit, you think they don’t care about the major.

C: They do not care about the major in the least bit and the reason is that for undergraduate universities, most of them have no expectations of you other than that you show up. When I’ve taught at Japanese universities, I’m not allowed to fail any student who shows up every time.

K: Yeah.

C: It’s just not allowed. You cannot fail them. So, to graduate from a Japanese university with a couple of exceptions, you only just have to show up. And that’s it.

K: Which is pretty sweet.

C: Which is pretty sweet, but it’s pretty much the same system as the work system. You just have to show up. And so, if you can endure being yelled at and maybe even slapped around by your boss, you don’t have to

K: (laughs) They don’t slap people around anymore. That’s against the law.

C: It is against the law, but a survey that came out in May of this year, like twenty percent of people reported being physically abused by their boss.

K: (laughs) I think you’re creating this- okay, I just have to remind everybody who’s listening to this that Chad has autism, and he is so literal. So, I’m telling you. I talk with, I actually talk to people who are employed at Japanese companies, and the emotional abuse is real, but very few people are getting slapped around.

C: The people that you’re talking to, the level that they’re at, their bosses don’t slap them around. I’m talking about

K: You’re saying I don’t talk to freshman employees. I don’t talk to first-year employees.

C: And you don’t talk to people who are willfully not doing their job but just showing up knowing they can’t be fired.

K: Okay, yeah, so paint the picture accurately. So, there’s the thing, I don’t think you should be slapped around by your boss for any reason. But, okay, so they get slapped around because they have that college mentality of being burnt out on life in general and just wanting to sit and their desk and do nothing and their boss comes up and what slaps them across the face?

C: Sometimes, yeah.

K: Okay, and says what after they get slapped across the face?

C: Do your work.

K: okay.

C: But this goes back to the ageism that you mentioned. Which is

K: Okay, way to bring it around.

C: Thank you. The Japanese pay system is that new employees don’t get a living wage.

K: No they do not

C: That’s why they’re put in dorms and things. But your wage is almost directly tied to your age, so you get a raise every year no matter what.

K: Most places

C: Most places. The big places. Smaller employers are more flexible, but the big places you get seniority based races. And so, they’re aged based. So, me now in my 40s, I would have to be paid higher than someone in their 30s with exactly the same skills and exactly the same amount of experience.

K: Yes.

C: So they want to hire younger employees. There’s a strong bias against hiring older employees, and there’s no law against age discrimination.

K: Right. And so the motivation is financial. But it’s the same thing in the United States, they just cover it up. So I don’t feel like the US is so different in this.

C: I feel like the US is different in this because in the US age discrimination doesn’t apply until you’re 40. You literally cannot- I mean, in a social sense you can discriminate against young people for employment, but you can’t legally. You can legally say “if you’re under 40, we won’t hire you.” You can’t legally say “if you’re over 40, we won’t hire you.”

K: So I feel like in the United States, that people in their 20s aren’t as valued as someone who has 5 years’ experience, so I guess technically in your 20s because I feel like 28 to 33 is like, prime everybody wants to hire you in that age bracket if you have a college degree because you’ve got five years’ experience, yeah. So I think there’s ageism in the United States as well, I think they just do a better job of hiding it. Because what they say in the United States is that you’re overqualified for this position.

C: Right. Meaning we think you’re going to get bored and quit.

K: yes.

C: Which I don’t feel like you owe companies loyalty unless the company shows you loyalty.

K: I don’t either. We’re very pro-workers.

C: Yes.

K: So I’m also- I’m just going to come out, I’m pro a lot of socialism too.

C: Yeah.

K: So I don’t know how socialism works in the workforce, though. That’s always confused me. And I’ve read Marx and all of that stuff and it still just confuses me.

C: Okay, I’m going to say two words to you and it’s going to blow your mind.

K: Okay.

C: Labor Unions.

K: (laughs)

C: That’s how socialism works in the workplace, especially in Japan, is labor unions. The labor unions establish and negotiates what the work rules are.

K: No but what I’m saying is like when socialism is healthy. I don’t know what healthy socialism looks like in the workforce. I don’t know if it looks like a living wage, if it looks like good worker hours, if it looks like appropriate compensation.

C: I think healthy socialism in the workforce would look like appropriate compensation, a good work-life balance, and equality among workers and management. I think it would result in a much flatter structure. I think you’d have a lot more cooperatives.

K: Mmm. I understand cooperatives.

C: Yeah. And you would also, in a healthy socialist society, have protections for people who can’t work at all. So a lot of people who call themselves socialist focus entirely on work as if, like, fixing work via labor unions and things would make a country socialist. But if your country is socialist but disabled people are just out of luck, just screwed, just go away and die, I don’t think you’re really a socialist country. And that’s why I distinguish between being pro-labor and being socialist.

K: Yeah. So I’m rethinking, because I feel like I’m fiscally conservative but I’m not sure what that kind of conservatism means to me. So I’m like trying to redefine it and I’m trying to snatch back the word conservative from the grasp of Fox News because I don’t feel like they have conservative values. I feel like they have Evangelical Christian values. And that’s not the same thing as being a conservative, in my mind. At least not the way that I’m using it. So lately I’ve been really kind of thinking about politics. As soon as I said the phrase, “so lately I’ve been thinking about,” that clues me that dang this should probably be a different topic because this topic was about work expectations. This podcast was about work expectations in Japan. I think we did a good job summing it up.

C: I think we did too.

K And we also did a deep dive into Chad’s college history.

C: Yeah. So in the future we’ll talk about the difference between a liberal in the US and a liberal in Australia for example. Because liberal in Australia means something different.

K: Yes. Ooo, that would be a good podcast. I’m going to make a note of that. But it’d have to be way in the future because I don’t know- I’d have to do some studying. I’m going to have to educate myself on that.

C: For those who aren’t aware, we have a list of topics and we go through that list unless we get something super hot. We don’t bump the list.

K: Yes, so why are you like revealing my panty drawer? Like, that’s our secret sauce.

C: Because people need to know if they come back every week, there will be an episode every week. We are reliable.

K: Yes, we are reliable. We do have a plan. We have a plan to the madness.

C: we’ve been on the air for six months, trust us. We’re here to stay.

K: (laughs) Yes. We’re going to be around for a while because I love doing this. I love any excuse to sit down and talk to my beautiful husband. Because this is an ongoing conversation that we don’t ever plan to end because we don’t know, we might live forever. We don’t know.

C: That’s our love expectation.

K: Yes. On that happy note, please check us out next week.

C: Talk to you then.

K: Bye.

C: Bye-bye.