What does it mean to live your best life? It’s different for each person, and it’s not all, or even mostly, about the money. It’s a matter of perspective. Sometimes life isn’t great, other times it’s pretty wonderful.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about living your best life. I’m like, what does that phrase even mean? To live your best life.

C: You want to live my best life or your own?

K: See? Right? That’s what I mean because, like… okay, so this is something that I don’t know about you that I’d love to know. And as our listeners know, I love doing fact finding when it comes to you because I want to know everything about you. Did living your best life, that concept, change for you when living in the United States versus from living in Japan? And like… pre-child, post-child.

C: Absolutely.

K: Yeah, so I think that that’s like… an individual-bound but also culture-bound concept.

C: I don’t think it’s just culture-bound. I think it’s time-bound. I think it’s resource-bound. Because when I was living my best life when I was working at McDonald’s, it was very different than living my best life living in Japan and what I’m doing now.

K: See, for me, I think of best life as the best life that I could possibly live. But I think sometimes think that living their best life is living someone else’s life, and that always confuses me. Because I work with a lot of clients that are Instagram obsessed, right?

C: Right.

K: And I look at Instagram, and I happen to personally know a few Instagram influencers, and they’re not actually living what- the life that people think that they’re living.

C: Right.

K: But they are living their best life, and they are doing a lot of things like… one of my good Instagram people, and I know we did a podcast about how we’re not doing social media anymore, yes we are back on the ‘gram. And we’ve been back on the ‘gram for a minute. But, anyways. So, getting to know them and seeing all the work that they’re putting in and all the effort that they’re putting in, and it’s always surprising to me that a lot of people think living your best life is not having any work.

C: Mhmm.

K: (coughs) Sorry, my throat is so itchy today.

C: So your throat is not living its best life.

K: No, my throat is no- actually I think it is because it’s super active and I think, for my throat, its best life is an active life. But it’s not making my chest or lungs happy.

C: Okay.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I think that if you want to say “well the best life possible” that word possible just for me as a math person is so damning. So, the best life possible would be to go buy the winning lotto ticket and then anytime I was feeling a little low

K: No, a lot of lottery winners are not happy. They’re not living their best life.

C: Yeah, but that’s because they haven’t gone out to buy another winning lottery ticket to fix their money problems.

K: So you’re saying like every day having the winning lottery ticket, then that-

C: Just every time you feel like you’re running low on money.

K: Oh okay. So you think that if you had endless resources, because money is shorthand for resources for you, for those that don’t know you.

C: Yeah.

K: Money for you means resources. So you think a best possible life is most amount of resources?

C: Yes. In the theoretical sense.

K: Okay.

C: So what I’m saying is you can’t take the phrase “best possible life” in a theoretical sense. You have to look at it in a practical sense.

K: Okay.

C: So in a practical sense, it would not be living my best life to go spend all my money on lotto tickets because… I’m almost certainly not going to win, and then I won’t have all that money.

K: Well we know a lottery winner.

C: We know a lottery winner, but who’s to say he’s living his best life?

K: Mmm. He is. (laughs) Legit, he is. And we know he is.

C: But who’s to say that that’d be the best life for somebody else?

K: I’m sorry if you keep hearing a bunch of moving around noises. I know I keep promising to sit still. But I’m a fidgeter, I fidget. I just do. Can’t help it. So, I think that the microphone is far enough away that every time I move my hand you don’t hear it, and hopefully Chad can buffer it out. So for me, in the United States, I always thought of best life being specifically about home ownership.

C: Mmm.

K: And I thought my best life and every American’s best life was owning a home.

C: Mhmm.

K: And then, when- and for me, it was a very specific home. It was a 4 bedroom home. So, basically the house we owned in the United States.

C: Right.

K: That was for me- and you know for me it was like “this is the best life ever, this is build like the Taj Mahal, this is gorgeous, this is perfect, I absolutely love it.” I just told you the house was perfect except for how noisy the heater was.

C: Yeah and you didn’t like it when every time you said it was like the Taj Mahal I said “you remember that was a tomb right?”

K: Yeah, it’s what people (coughs) gosh. They’re going to hate me this episode.

C: I have said that I lightly edit, so I’ll try to edit out some of your coughs.

K: Thank you, I’m so sorry guys.

C: I’ll leave some in for authenticity, but I’ll try to edit out most of them.

K: Yeah, so I think I should be like sucking on a lozenge, but I think the sound of me sucking on a lozenge would be more irritating than me coughing sometimes.

C: Well, that’s just because they don’t know what that’s a euphemism for.

K: (laughs) You are such a perv.

C: That’s me living my best life.

K: We have to record even when I have a cough.

C: Yes.

K: We have to record even when Kisstopher has a cough because we care about the people.

C: Yes.

K: (laughs) We care about our listeners.

C: The people need the podcast.

K: (laughs) Because we have people just clamoring like “don’t do it Kisstopher Musick. Even if you have a cough, please record an episode for us.” I’m living my whole fantasy with this podcast. Yes, they are clamoring. Yes, they would miss us if we missed a week because I have a cough. Hey, let’s keep the conversation going about Kisstopher’s cough. You know I always shamelessly plug our social media, and now that we’re back on the ‘gram, you could even leave me an Instagram comment when we post this episode and be like “yo Kisstopher, even when you have a cough, yes mama, still please post.” You don’t have to call me mama, that’s just my thing.

C: Or you could do us a favor and do a donation on Kofi.

K: (laughs) Yes. You can buy me a cup of Kofi if you want us to keep recording even when I have a cough. Or you can hit up our Patreon, or you could tweet at us, or you can hit us up on Facebook. We’re out there in the world, baby. We’re out there.

C: Yes.

K: So, shameless plugging time over, and you know, digression about my coughs. So, for me, in the United States, it was about buying a house. I was surprised by how many people here in Japan, their dream is to buy a “manshon”.

C: Like we have, yeah.

K: And so I don’t really val- it’s so weird how my values have really shifted, like “no, do not buy me a house in Japan. It’s going to be- and this is for Nagoya” I don’t care if you disagree with me. If you disagree with me, hit us up on the above-mentioned things. I just said above-mentioned like there’s a list of our words, but on the transcript there will be a list.

C: But in person you are literally pointing at the ceiling.

K: In my mind

C: Now you’re raising your arms.

K: (laughs) In my mind, we’re on a giant iPad and so I’m raising my hands to show you how I can scroll the conversation and show you that it’s the above-mentioned.

C: Now you’re pawing like a kitten to scroll a page down.

K: Yeah, because I’m living my best life. I’m fully in my fantasy today. I am on a giant iPod and everything I say, all my words float above me. And just like on an iPad, not iPod, but on an iPad you can scroll my words. So anything I say is the above-mentioned. Isn’t that an awesome visual?

C: That is. So if you would like this to be literal, read the transcript.

K: Thank you, yeah. You can read the transcripts and it will literally be the above-mentioned.

C: Yes.

K: Yeah, see? That’s you always looking out for me.

C: Always trying to give you that best life.

K: Yeah, you are. You’re the best boo ever. But I think you’re supposed to be my bae now, but boo’s been around a lot longer than bae’s been around.

C: Yeah.

K: Because we’ve been married longer than bae’s been around.

C: Yeah we have.

K: Yeah. Sometimes I call you my bae because I’m hip, and I know how hip calling myself hip makes me.

C: Yes.

K: I’m like uber hip now.

C: Yes.

K: And the more times I say I’m hip, I just become even cooler.

C: Yes.

K: Because I’m the coolest ever.

C: You are.

K: Yeah. And so okay, I’m going to end on letting the people know a secret on why I’m feeling so like I’m living my best life and everything because if they look on our Instagram they’ll see that we have a table setup. But we also have a bed setup. And today, we are casting from bed.

C: Yes.

K: Because, what? We’re living our best life.

C: Because we can, that’s why.

K: Yeah, exactly. And I’m like so into- and I think I feel super luxurious today because I’m in my jammies, podcasting with my bae in bed.

C: Mmm.

K: And we’re both in our jammies.

C: Yup.

K: That’s freaking luxurious.

C: It is. Yes.

K: That’s like the height of luxury for me.

C: Yes.

K: And our beds are amazing. We just like stack futon on top of futon on top of futon.

C: Yes.

K: (laughs)

C: The only disadvantage to this is that each night, I have to check the bottom mattress and make sure there are no peason it.

K: (laughs) Our beds are very much, I always think they’re like Princess In The Pea beds. And they slide around a lot, and that’s annoying. So we have to readjust the stacks and realign the stacks.

C: Yeah.

K: So, like, for me, my best life truly and honestly is the life that I’m living now. And I’ll own that lately I’ve been kind of grumpykins. I think lately you’ve been kind of grumpykins too. I think it’s sort of a grumpy time of year for us because we’re both grinding hard on the things that we’re doing.

C: Yes.

K: And you know, we have some really exciting projects in the works, but having projects in the works means that all the setup that goes into bringing those projects into fruition, well all of that is being done right now in addition to me being in the thick of it in my PhD. But that’s my life for, you know, the next while.

C: Yeah, there’s no thin of it for the PhD.

K: No, there isn’t. Because I think I’m going to be like a cat on a hot tin roof- just so nervous after I submit the dang thing.

C: After I submitted mine, even after I submitted the revisions, it was like another month before I heard whether they had accepted it, so.

K: Yeah, and that was the month of hell for you.

C: Yeah.

K: And it wasn’t until you walked. Like, until you walked and had a physical copy of it.

C: Well, they voted on it the day before I was scheduled to walk. So I scheduled to walk without knowing for sure that I had received it because of the departmental rules, they have to vote on all graduates at the departmental meeting.

K: Mhmm.

C: And so it’s not an automatic thing, like, you know, at your university, there’s an outside reviewer. And if your outside reviewer, your chair, and your co-chair all say “yes, everything’s good” then you’re good to go. They don’t gather together the entire psychology department to vote on you.

K: Yeah, no, they do not.

C: So that’s just a difference in culture and size and all of that.

K Yeah.

C: So I think that living your best life-

K: (sneezes) Now I’m sneezing. I’m coughing and sneezing. I feel like the tickles moved from my throat to my nose.

C: Maybe. My bad.

K: No, I’m tickly- tickly. Now, I’m coughing, sneezing, and sniffing. So I’m trying not to sniff into the mic.

C: Okay.

K: Okay.

C: No drugs involved.

K: Yeah, no. I don’t do drugs.

C: No.

K: I do lots of medication. Handful of pills.

C: Yeah, but those don’t-

K: That is such a great hashtag, but it’s just not going to- nobody is making it happen.

C: Handful of pills?

K: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

K: Because that has such negative connotations, right?

C: What if you talked about how rough some of your pills are?

K: All my pills are super smooth.

C: I think some of them are rough, like the tramadol is rough and chalky.

K: Okay, it’s chalky, but it’s not rough.

C: But if you broke one and then swallowed it, you could be like “aw man, that was a jagged little pill”

K: Oh my god. I didn’t even see that coming.

C: How ironic.

K: Oh my god.

C: (laughs)

K: Eyeroll up to the sky.

C: See, that’s me living my best life.

K: Yeah. But eyeroll up to the sky. And around to the side.

C: But I think living your best life is so much about expectation and contentment. So I think that this is why when they study it, they find- I read more I think the studies of reference groups than you have because I’ve edited a lot of papers on reference groups and that’s not your field of study. Happiness studies is not you. So, people like

K: Did you just look at me and pointedly say happiness studies is not me?

C: Yeah, I think it’s important for people to know- I think our regular listeners already know that you are not a positivity 100% of the time psychologist. You are not pushing positivity.

K: Yeah, no. I’m a living your truth, let’s accept your truth, let’s deal with your truth, and let’s find your way to make your truth into living your best life. Let’s take who you are and what you have and turn that into more good days than bad. That’s my thing. More good days than bad.

C: Right. And so you study culture and one of the things in culture is what makes people happy differs from culture to culture and from person to person within a culture.

K: Yeah. And so being a therapist here in Japan, there are some days where I don’t see any two people from the same country.

C: Mhmm.

K: And none of the people I see are from the same country as me.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I think I have like a whole day of being at- what’s it called, not the internations. That’s a social group. What’s it called?

C: The UN?

K: Yes, thank you. The United Nations.

C: Yes.

K: Thank you. I’m sniffly and coughy today, I can’t be on my game. You can’t expect me to know things like- I already forgot it. What is it?

C: The League of Nations.

K: You almost got me. I did a pause and my eyebrows raised, and I thought “no, the look on his face says he’s punking me” Don’t turkey permit me.

C: The United Nations. The League of Nations preceded the United Nations and failed. The United Nations was formed after World War 2.

K: Yeah. You know I know all about that.

C: I know you know all about that.

K: Yeah, I’m a little bit of a history buff.

C: Yes.

K: Yeah. So, we just had- so this I think is a relevant digression because you taught me something, and I taught you something.

C: Yes.

K: So, we had a really interesting conversation this morning about Rasputin.

C: Yes.

K: Yeah. And Lenin.

C: And whether they were contemporaries.

K: Yes.

C: And whether they were compatriots.

K: Yes.

C: And I thought they were both. And you thought they were neither.

K: Yes.

C: We were both wrong. They were contemporaries but they were not compatriots.

K: Exactly. So, that, you know, was a fun little history riff for us.

C: Yes.

K: Was it a history riff? I think we were riffing on history.

C: Yes we were riffing on history.

K: (laughs)

C: It was a little tune in the song that is the Musicks’ life.

K: Yes, I like that. That’s so pretty.

C: So, I think that there are certain essentials. I think that it’s really hard, from having been there, I think that it’s really hard to be content with your life if you’re homeless.

K: Yeah. So, when I was homeless, I was not content with my life. But when I was living in the ghetto, in the projects, I was living my best life when we met.

C: Right. Like when I worked at McDonald’s when I was like 17. I was living a pretty good life. Despite the fact that I lived in a house with no heat, that I could barely afford anything, except that I had enough food because McDonald’s gave me free food because I was a manager, so I could eat all I wanted.

K: Mhmm.

C: Didn’t gain any weight because I didn’t like McDonald’s that much. But, you know, riding my bike three miles in the snow.

K: Yeah, I think that’s why you didn’t gain any weight. Because you were riding your bike three miles.

C: Yeah.

K: Because you loved you some McDonald’s.

C: Okay. So, it wasn’t downhill either way. I’m not saying it was uphill both ways, I’m just saying

K: (laughs) Uphill both ways in the snow. You know I love that saying.

C: I’m just saying it wasn’t downhill either way. It was very level.

K: So, I felt like I was living my best life when I was working at Burger King, and it was- so it was like about a ten month period because my dad was gone all the time. Little did I know that he was in the process of being evicted, and so he was out looking for his next place to live.

C: Right.

K: didn’t tell me that. But that’s a different podcast. But I was living my best life. I was going out to a club called- shoutout to Stargaze in Fremont. I don’t think they’re open anymore.

C: Probably not.

K: But it’s a, I think it’s a 16 and over dancehall.

C: Oh nice.

K: Yeah, it was from age 16 to age 22 I think.

C: I never went to dancehalls, I went to roller rinks. So the Northern Lights roller rink in North Pole. I think might still be open, but they were open like the whole time I was living in Alaska. And then there was another roller rink that lived- that was open near where I lived, but they shut pretty quickly.

K: Does Japan have roller rinks?

C: Japan has sports centers, and some of them have roller rinks. I don’t think they have any standalone roller rinks.

K: Because I think Japan has roller derby. I think derby recently came

C: It might. I know that pro wrestling is insane in Japan.

K: Are you talking about sumo or

C: No, I’m talking about western wrestling. It’s like a mix of luchadore and WWE wrestling and… like, but it’s super brutal. They do like barbed wire and they’re like slashing themselves to bleed all over.

K: Oh that’s so so gross.

C: It’s totally gross. It’s like

K: Like, what are you even talking about?

C: It’s really extreme.

K: Is this real?

C: This is real.

K: Oh my gosh.

C: Some of our twitter followers are wrestling fans. The Japanese pro wrestling is on another level from the American pro wrestling.

K: Okay.

C: It’s still scripted and such, but it’s scripted with a lot more violence than the American pro wrestling.

K: With bloodshed.

C: Yeah, with bloodshed.

K: Wow, that’s intense. So do you think those pro wrestlers are living their best life?

C: I think some of them are and some of them aren’t. I think, like, if somebody got a job in Silicon Valley being a programmer, and they were making all of their bills and they could afford to get a house and all that, for them they would be like “I’m living my best life.”

K: So you’re saying you.

C: Yeah. But for me, it was a miserable life.

K: Yeah.

C: So that’s why I say I think living your best life is so individual and contextual. And there are some things that make it very very hard to say you’re living your best life. If you’re homeless, if you’re starving. That kind of thing. But when they study it, people get jealous and they would rather, like, not get money than have somebody they know get more money than them.

K: Okay but be clear. They studied this in the United States. They haven’t studied this throughout all of

C: I’ve read studies, because that’s what I was saying I’ve read more studies on this than you have because I edit them. They’ve studied this in the United States, they’ve studied this in the U.K., they’ve studied this in Japan. And there are some differences, but it’s pretty universal, that envy. People would rather receive less to know that other people aren’t doing better than them. So the reference group with which people compare themselves. And they can manipulate the results of this by asking things like “if your neighbor got” versus “if a stranger got” and people are more jealous if their neighbor got than if a stranger got. So, and they have all kinds of theories about why, that it’s fear about what it’s going to do to their own living standard. Whatever. But, the other thing is when they studied a different thing, they found that after a certain point, more money doesn’t make people happier.

K: Mhmm.

C: And I think that’s because living your best life is about being content with what you have and feeling safe and sure that you will continue to have that.

K: Yeah. So, I’m just going to come clean. I love the show Sister Wives. I just do. And this is not me saying that all polygamy is good. Not saying that at all. There is some polygamy that is absolutely a crime, absolutely bad. But if consenting adults, because I’m a huge fan of consent, consent is the bedrock of everything I do. But if four adults consent to marry each other, regardless of gender or if they’re only married to one person, like if you consent to your spouse marrying someone else, have at it man, bang on. I’m not going to judge.

C: As a mathematician I can say that the Sister Wives have what’s called the star topology.

K: Okay. So, for me, I’m like- we’re pro-things. You know. Pro-kink, pro-love. Pro-life. Pro-sex work. Pro-consent.

C: When you say pro-life, you mean pro-living. You don’t mean that you’re anti-abortion.

K: Right, no. Because I’m pro-choice.

C: Right.

K: Yeah. No, I’m pro- people wanting to live their best life.

C: Yeah. That’s what I was clarifying because that phrase has been coopted by the anti-abortion movement.

K: Dang, they ruin everything. They’re ruining everything.

C: They don’t ruin everything. There are other groups actively working to ruin other things.

K: But they’ve ruined a lot. They suck. Sorry if you’re a part of that group. I think you suck.

(laughter)

K: I know it’s controversial to say, and I’m sorry if it means people stop listening to us in droves, but if you are pro-life in anti-abortion, in that sense, and you hung out after the sex-work episode, then you might be more open-minded than I’ve given you credit for, and maybe I need to investigate if can I like people who are pro-life. And I immediately go to no I can’t. If you give two shits what somebody’s doing to their uterus.

C: Because you just said that one of your things is consent, so.

K: Yes. Yes. So do not force me to have a child against my consent.

C: Yes.

K: My body, my choice.

C: Well, and how many years did your doctors spend saying “don’t get pregnant or you’ll die.”

K: Yes. “But we won’t give you a hysterectomy.”

C: “But we won’t give you a hysterectomy because babies are sacred.”

K: Yes. And so, I feel like the pro-life people would be like “we know you have a child who’s healthy and young and you’re a mother, but if you get pregnant again, and you’re absolutely going to die if you have this baby, you better hang on until the baby is able to live outside of your body.”

C: Yeah, because is it 100% that you’ll die? Yes. Okay. Is it 100% that the baby would die? Yes. Okay. Is it 100% the baby will die… before it was born? Yes. Okay, then maybe… that’s a tough edge case.

K: Yeah. And so, for me, I’m like- I’m super, super bitter. Like people don’t value my life at all. So I’ll be honest. I’ll be real. I’m bitter about it.

C: Yeah.

K: I don’t have a uterus anymore, but, you know. So yeah, with me, I should’ve said I’m pro-lifestyle. I’m pro-lifestyle. And so I feel like consenting adults can choose things that make them miserable.

C: Yes.

K: And I just- I don’t know, I just feel like most polygamous women are not happy. And that’s just the ones that I’ve seen, and I’ve only seen two or three shows on it. But I believe that polyamorous women are happy. Like, letting your spouse go and be with other people while you go and be with other people, I think those people are happy.

C: I think some of them. I think everything is contextual. I think you can agree to things that would ordinarily be considered abuse, and then they end up being abusive. And you can agree to things that would not be considered abuse and they end up not being abusive. Because if we just look at your job, not to pick on you. But people pay you to manipulate them.

K: (laughs)

C: And it’s totally consensual. Right?

K: It’s completely consensual, and I’m completely transparent.

C: Yes.

K: And I tell people what my objective is, and yes. I am- so that does tie into my pro-life statement. When I have clients that are suicidal, I tell them honestly that I am pro- their life. And I want them to live, and that’s my objective. That I am going to be lobbying and actively wanting them to live. But I am also pro-choice at the end of life. Like, when my mother was dying, she was in Oregon- she could consent to be given an overdose of medication and die. And she did.

C: Mhmm. When my mother

K: If you follow us on twitter, you know why I have my opinions about my mother. She was not a nice person.

C: When my mother died, we were in Alaska where that was not legal. And she was in a coma for a couple of weeks and then just died in the coma, so.

K: Yeah. And so like, I don’t know why I’m obsessed with TV right now but in the TV show “Marry Kills People” she says that she’s all about people choosing- like having to- being able to end life the way they want. She’s just a serial killer. Because I’m like, nope, she’s into it. Spoiler alert. Mary’s a serial killer.

C: So, spoiler question, is there a time when you’re not obsessed with TV?

K: No, I’m always obsessed with TV

C: Okay.

K: I love television. You know how much I have television I have access to right now is part of my best life.

C: Yes.

K: Because I can lay in bed and Netflix and chill. I am a Netflix and chill champion.

C: Yes you are.

K: Like, I could gold medal in Netflix and chill.

C: You could.

K: Anybody who follows us on Facebook knows because every Friday there’s a new review of an entire television series.

C: Yes.

K: I think I binge watch- I don’t binge watch once a week like I used to, but sometimes I would binge watch two or three times a week.

C: And you’ve got such a backlog.

K: I do, I do.

C: Sometimes you’re reviewing a show like six months after you watched it just because you haven’t gotten to it yet. I think it’s like me with books. Sometimes when I review a book, yeah, I read the book a year ago, but I hadn’t felt like reviewing.

K: Yeah.

C: Now I feel like reviewing it.

K: Yeah. And for me, I don’t know, actually I can’t think of when the last time I binge watched something. That’s a tough one. I feel like since my dissertation proper- since I’ve been all but dissertation, I haven’t really binge watched anything. But I do like sometimes to save up shows until I have two or three episodes. Because I really do like watching multiple episodes of a single show.

C: Yeah, we do that often. I don’t think of that as binge watching. When you save an entire season even though it comes out one episode at a time, I feel like that’s binge watching. Like, it’s been a few years now, but you would binge watch Sherlock.

K: Oh, in a heartbeat baby.

C: Yeah.

K: Oh, Sherlock’s my jam. But you know what? I have not watched the last episode of Luther.

C: ahhh.

K: I’ve been saving it for like a special occasion.

C: A special occasion, okay.

K: Because like, mmm. Mmm. So, here’s the thing. And this is going to be controversial. Do not send me hate, I am entitled to my opinions. Stringer Bell. Sexy. Luther. Sexy. But I do not find Idris’ personality to be sexy. There’s no danger in him.

C: Mhmm.

K: And Stringer Bell was dangerous and twisted up. I find that sexy. You’re dangerous and twisted up. I find that sexy.

C: See, now you’re spilling my secrets.

K: (laughs) You can be dangerous.

C: How can I live my best life as a masked vigilante if you’re going to tell people I’m dangerous?

K: see, now you’re outing yourself with the vigilante stuff.

C: I didn’t say what kind of mask.

K: (laughs) Your beard though, like what would you do with the beard if you were going to go vigilante, if you were going to be like a superhero. What would you do with the beard? Like, a face-kini or something?

C: No, French braid to the face.

K: You would do what?

C: I would French braid it so that it was flat against my face, and then I would just wear like a mask. There’s enough masked vigilantes running around Nagoya.

K: (laughs) There is not. Do not make people think they can come to Nagoya and see superheroes.

C: No, it’s like Gotham out here.

K: (laughs) There was somebody that said they were so disappointed because they were expecting like Bladerunner when they came to Japan. And it was nothing like Bladerunner. And I was like “okay” and they were like “yes, and I even went to Shibuya looking for the technology, like the above rails.” And I was like “there are raised trains.”

C: Yeah. Not many because it’s unstable.

K: Yeah. I’m like “the shinkansen’s pretty high-tech.”

C: Yeah, but it’s not a raised train. I think the only raised train we have in Nagoya is the linimo.

K: Ah, yeah, the linimo is very high-tech.

C: The linimo is very high-tech. Yeah. It’s a maglev train.

K: Right? That’s high-tech. But they were just like so disappointed at like, technology doesn’t come out that much faster.

C: Yeah, it comes out differently because the population density is so high in the big city that services that aren’t economical in the U.S. because of the population sparsity are economical in Japan. For people who live in big cities.

K: You’re like fact purse today.

C: Yeah, which is like everybody.

K: (laughs) You just like

C: Yes, I am.

K: You’re just like “thank you very much for noticing.”

C: Thank you very much.

K: I am the fact purse.

C: Did you know that more than 30% of people who live in Japan live in Tokyo?

K: (laughs) Hit me with them sexy facts baby. Hit me with them facts.

C: If you take Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Yokohama, and Kyoto, you capture like 80% of the population.

K: You capture. Gotta catch’em all, gotta- like the Japanese are pokemon.

C: In a demographic sense.

K: Okay. So, for me, people that come to Japan expecting to live their best high-tech life, I think will always be disappointed. But people who are expecting to come to Japan and find themselves, I think that’s really possible.

C: I think that’s possible too. I think if you come expecting to maintain everything you had in the U.S. and then pad, then you need to come on a really good ex-pat deal.

K: Yeah.

C: Which means you’re going to be working a lot of hours, so if you’re already working a lot of hours for an international company and they offer you an ex-pat deal, they guarantee you a certain apartment size, and they guarantee you a salary and vacations home and all of that, then you can come here and live your best life without giving up anything.

K: Yeah.

C: But I think if you come over here independently, you’re probably going to be moving into a smaller place than you’re used to.

K: And, you know, you’re going to have to understand a futon closet.

C: You’re going to have to understand a lot of things.

K: Yeah, but the futon closet specifically.

C: Yeah.

K: I’m just saying get into it. You’re going to have a really deep, really long closet with no poles to hang stuff.

C: And all your Japanese friends, they are going to be joggingu and runningu.

K: Joggingu and shoppingu. Not running.

C: Yeah.

K: Joggingu, shopping.

C: And many people also like readingu.

K: (laughs) It’s not reading. They don’t say it that way. And we are actually pronouncing correctly. We are not making fun of the Japanese language. We’re making fun of the first thing that they teach you in Japanese class. It’s the first thing that they teach you when they go to English class, and they teach you that your hobbies are running and shopping. And that’s what they want you to say your hobbies are.

C: Yes.

K: You can say that your hobbies are running, shopping, reading, or painting. Those were like the four choices they gave me, but I was like “no, those aren’t my hobbies. My hobby is watching TV” and they were like “no, watching TV is not a good hobby.” And I said “okay, my hobby’s traveling.” And they were like “ooh, good hobby, where did you go?” So, the Japanese teachers said “okay you can also do traveling.” And so most beginning English speakers, Japanese nationals who speak English, will have that set. My hobbies are, and then they’ll just say these pat phrases, but they will teach you my hobby is jogging. Joggingu and jogging and shopping.

C: And it’s interesting how universal that experience is because if you meet somebody new who’s Japanese and you’re having a casual conversation outside of work or anything, often their first question will be “what are your hobbies?”

K: Yes. What are your hobbies and how much money do you make?

C: Yes.

K: That one threw me for a loop. I was like “in my family you do not ask people their religion, how much money they make, or their political affiliations.” Just don’t ask those three things.

C: And you can tell a lot about people and whether they’re living their best life by how they ask it. Because if they’re like “shumi wa?” Then you know they don’t speak very much English at all. Shumi is Japanese for hobbies. And that they’re just curious about you and that this is the icebreaker.

K: Yeah.

C: But if they’re like “hobbies wa” then they know the English word hobbies, but they haven’t quite switched to asking in English. And then if you answer it in English and they ask you “what’s your salary” then you know that they’re curious how they compare.

K: That’s not true.

C: Well sometimes it’s an indirect way of asking your age.

K: Yes. Because I think something important for everybody to know is that salaries are publicly posted in Japan.

C: Yeah.

K: Like if you have a specific job title, you’re a specific age, and a specific branch. If you’re interesting about that you should check out our podcast on job expectations in Japan, and Chad does a really good job explaining how everything is posted and public knowledge. So, that just goes to culture.

C: And anybody in the U.S. that’s a government worker is familiar with this. You have your designation, whether you know you’re a GS-standard or a GS-13, you know somebody in that range or in that level makes a certain amount of money with adjustments for where they live and that kind of stuff. So it’s not like your personal salary is posted everywhere. It’s just that by knowing your age and your job, people can have a pretty accurate understanding of how much money you make.

K: Yeah. So, are you living your best life?

C: I feel like I’m living my best life, yes.

K: Okay.

C: Are you living your best life?

K: Oh absolutely. Were you living your best life in the United States before we came?

C: I don’t think I was.

K: I don’t think you were either.

C: And that’s part of the reason why we came.

K: Yeah. So, in the United States, you had everything that you needed to be happy. Well, you were back in school because you decided to go back to school. But we had a house, we were married, we had a kid, we didn’t have pets which I think we need to discuss on a different podcast. On a different episode, rather.

C: Yeah.

K: So for me, that was really hard because my American concept of the American Dream. We had achieved it.

C: Right.

K: We had several vehicles, we had a home, we had stable income, we had like, everything that America tells you will make you happy. Everything that pop culture in America tells you will make you happy. We had it, and you were so incredibly unhappy and really just unfulfilled and bored.

C: Yes.

K: So do you think, what aspect of it was keeping you from feeling like it was your best life?

C: I think I was feeling like creatively, I didn’t know what to do. And I think too that there were environmental stressors that I didn’t realize how much they played on me. At the time, I wasn’t as in touch. So, I know that we knew for example that when I went to the grocery store that was always going to be a problem for me. But we didn’t quite think to understand why. Or what to do about it. So, while I was content with most of what I had, I felt like it was not an upward trajectory. So it didn’t feel stable. And that’s what I was saying earlier about being both content and having some sense of safety that that contentment will continue.

K: Yeah.

C: Because I think some of- I know a lot of people in Silicon Valley who were invested in companies that weren’t yet public, but that the valuation meant that they would be multi-multi-millionaires as soon as the company went public.

K: Mhmm.

C: But they didn’t actually have that money, and a lot of the companies went broke before going public.

K: Yeah. Because this was back during the dot com bubble.

C: Right. And I knew people who had done what’s called 83 B, an exemption where they had vested a bunch of stock and they had paid the taxes on the capital gains on that stock, but they couldn’t actually sell it. So I knew one woman who had paid, I think like 150,000 dollars in taxes, and then the company went under.

K: Ouch.

C: So she had paid 150,000 dollars in taxes to try and avoid capital gains when that stock became worth even more. But the thing about that election is that you don’t get the money back if the stock becomes worthless. So, she was not living her best life at that moment.

K: (laughs) But how does that relate to you? So I think the creative part- because I don’t think it’s the money. I think having enough money to pay all of the bills and travel a little bit and not feel pinched and be able to save for our retirement and save towards our future and all of that, I think yeah that’s important. But once you have that base, right? It’s, for you, you’re such a creative being, and, you know, you wrote five books. You’re creative with more to come, another one’s already in the works. So I feel like that part of you wasn’t being fed and nurtured, but you felt like you should- and then also, too, you had always wanted some educational goals, so to me it felt like it was the mix of earning your PhD, because that gave you a lot of intellectual, um

C: Fulfillment.

K: Yeah, kind of. Because then you went and started earning your MBA, but then after that when we started switching away from education to creativity, I’ve seen you really blossom and grow and come into yourself in some really beautiful ways as a writer. And you know I love you writing. I’m a huge fan. And, you know, I don’t think it’s just because you’re my husband. Because, you know, there’s the trauma book, that I think we’ve talked about before.

C: Yeah we talked about that before.

K: But, you know, there are other books that I just really enjoy, and I just really enjoy the way you write characters and stuff. So I feel like once you started getting creatively fulfilled, that you got content on a level that I’d never seen you content before. And I feel like for the first time ever, I’m seeing you live your best life.

C: Yeah.

K: Which you deserve.

C: Because I feel like that contentment, I can maintain that even if things change. Even if finances change, even if finances got tough for us. I could still write.

K: Yeah.

C: And I would love it if my books would sell in the millions and be made into movies.

K: Yes, please buy his books. (laughs)

C: Yes.

K: We both want that, please buy his books. Or please contribute to our Patreon or ko-fi and allow him to write more books.

C: Thank you, yes. Because I want to write more books.

K: Yeah. And allow us to continue the podcast and everything.

C: Yeah. Because I like talking to you on the podcast.

K: I like talking to you. And we appreciate each and every single person who gives us a listen, gives us a retweet, you know, gives us a like on social media. WE appreciate each and every single person, we have so much love to everyone who contributes to our ko-fi and our Patreon. We are so humbled and honored that you take time out every week to listen and that you share your valuable resources and time and energy with us, and money.

C: Well and we use the Castos podcasting service, which means we can see geographically. So, like, you know, if you live in Ireland and you say “I listen to your podcast” and we look and there’s no listens from Ireland….

K: (laughs) But we have listens form Ireland we have listeners from South Africa, we have listeners from all over the world.

C: Yes. I’m just saying, if you say you listened to a specific episode on a specific day, and I check, and there’s no new listens…. I’m going to doubt your veracity.

K: It’s not that serious. (laughs) We’re not calling people out for not listening.

C: We’re not calling people out because they might have meant they read the transcript. We’re okay with that.

K: We are not that intense. (laughs)

C: No, the only thing I’m that intense about is if you follow us on twitter and I look at your account and I’m like “oh this is a cool account” and you immediately unfollow us. I will unfollow you back.

K: Yeah, that’s shady.

C: It is shady. I might even block you depending on the person.

K: (laughs) You will block a fool.

C: You don’t even have to be a fool to get blocked.

K: Yeah, no. I block people, I do. I block also. I can’t say you’re the only one who blocks.

C: Blocking is self-care.

K: It is. Oh that’s beautiful. So I feel like I’m living my best life.

C: Me too.

K: Yeah. So we hope that you’re living your best life, so get out there and live your best life. Come back and check us out next week. We love that you listen. We need the affection, we need the attention. (laughs)

C: Please validate us.

K: Yeah. Your attention is part of our best life.

C: Please validate our continued existence.

K: No, you know. Ever since that one client told me “do not validate your existence” you know that’s my mantra. I do not validate my existence. I exist because I am, what? Get into it. So, thanks for sitting through another digression. I think we did pretty good staying for the most part we stayed on topic talking about best lives.

C: I think so.

K: And we hope you listen next week, so have a great week. Bye.

C: Bye-bye.