

Susan Cain

W: [2:25] [Susan](#), I am so happy to get to interview you.

S: I'm so happy to be here with you.

W: It's really so exciting. There's a question that I like to ask at the beginning of every episode, which is, what is the most disruptive thing you did when you were growing up?

S: When I was growing up? Huh. I don't know, but you know it's funny—I think I've always been someone who followed my own drummer probably more than your average person. And in fact, I was just taking [Gretchen Rubin's quiz](#) that helps you figure out what kind of [habit follower](#) you are, and I discovered from that that I am what she calls a rebel, which is like, I'm not going to do it just because you told me to do it; I'm going to have to have my own internal reason for doing a thing.

W: So you're a [disruptor](#)!

S: I guess so. I never really thought about it like that. And in some ways I still...I don't know—that language is probably not what I would use—it's more like following my own path, you know. So I knew from a very early age I wanted to be a writer. And I was always creating magazines and selling subscriptions to my family members and things like that, and it didn't really matter to me that other people weren't doing that same thing; that was just my thing.

W: Okay, so you...so from a young age you, you...one of the ways I describe disruption is this willingness to play where no one else is playing, where no one else has thought of playing.

S: Oh, yeah, yeah.

W: Because you're making a market.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: And so it sounds like, as a young child, you were willing to do things that other people weren't necessarily doing.

S: Oh yeah, very much so. Yeah, and I wanted to be a writer from the time I was four, so....

W: Really?

S: I don't even know really where I got that idea from at such a young age. I guess cause I loved books so much so I wanted...you know, if there's something you love doing you want to then be the creator of that thing.

W: Absolutely.

S: Yeah.

W: You knew you wanted to be a writer. What kind of writer did you know you wanted to be?

S: Oh well, when I was a kid I thought I wanted to write stories because that's what you read when you're a kid. You know, so...I actually think part of the reason that it took me so long to actually become a writer is I didn't understand until a much later age that there's such a thing as creative non-fiction, and I'm actually not really a fiction writer by nature. So, you know, I reached a point at around age 20 or something of thinking, "Oh I guess that was really just a youthful dream," and that wasn't right because I didn't really want to be writing fiction.

W: It was directionally right.

S: It was directionally right, but it took me another ten years to figure that out.

W: **[5:05]** All right, so speaking of the next ten years to figure it out, you have had this really big idea, a revolutionary idea, and over two million copies of your book have been sold—although it might be higher now; is it higher than two million?

S: I think it probably is; I kind of forget to keep track.

W: But it's at least two million?

S: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

W: So I was thinking that I could recap what your idea is, but I think it would be so much better for you to tell us in a very simple way—maybe even something that a ten year old could understand—what is your big idea?

S: Yeah, I mean, so the idea is that one out of every two or three human beings is introverted, that there is tremendous power associated with having this temperament and that we live in a culture that is telling introverts that they should turn into extroverts instead of helping them to capitalize on their powers for the benefit of themselves and of everyone.

W: How do you define introvert?

S: Well, you know, probably a lot of your listeners have heard of the idea of introverts getting their energy from being in a quieter setting. So you could be very socially skilled but you know if you're out at the dinner party for too long you start to feel like, "oh my God, I've got to go home." And so that is a...that's as good a working definition as anything else, but I think it's useful to know also that that comes from a neuro-biological difference between introverts and extroverts....

W: Oh. Tell us. We want to hear.

S: Yeah. I mean, so we really are wired differently and introverts...introverts have nervous systems that react more to stimulation so what that means is we tend to be more in our sweet spots when things are a little bit quieter around us. And when things get too chaotic, too many people, just too much going on, we start to get that kind of jangled or overwhelmed feeling, like, "I want to tone this down." And extroverts have the opposite makeup. They have nervous systems that react less to stimulation, and so that means that they're at their best when there is more happening, and for them the liability is that there's not enough going on and then they start to feel kind of listless and sluggish and unhappy.

W: **[7:23]** Alright, so it's...so the [Myers-Briggs definition](#) is helpful, but it's really helpful as a starting point, and you're saying now that the brain science really explains what's happening.

S: Yep, absolutely.

W: That's super helpful. So you had this idea, this revolutionary idea. How did you come up with it in the first place? Do you remember when you first had this kernel of, 'Mmmm, there's something here; I need to figure out what it is'?

S: Well, you know, kind of depends how...what lens I use or how far back I go, because I really do feel like I've been thinking about this all my life, you know, in terms of the follow your own drummer thing. I was really acutely...or march to your own drummer, I guess I'm mixing that up for us.

W: That's okay.

S: Yeah, I was acutely aware from a pretty young age that a lot of the things that I valued and liked to do were not valued in the wider culture, and some of the time I felt bad that I wasn't, you know, conforming to the wider culture, but some of the time I really did feel like, 'Well, what's wrong with the culture?' Now I forgot the question

W: Oh, that's okay.

S: What was I answering?

W: So, okay so, we'll back up [crosstalk with David]

[8:45] How did you come up with the idea of introverts...the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking.

Crosstalk again.

W: **[9:05]** So how did you come up with this idea?

S: Well, I really have been thinking about this all my life. I have observed from the time I was a very little kid that my preferred way of spending my time was not necessarily conforming to the way our larger social structures were saying you were supposed to be. You know, so like...and I see this now with my kids. You go to summer camp, for example. You know, you get on the bus in the morning and it's this uproarious environment, and you get to camp and it's like really loud music and 'hey, we're going to have so much fun today! And we're going to go to this activity and this one and then this one.' And you don't have any time or autonomy really to do your own thing. Um, and it's just like, wow, that's a really interesting culture. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but that's the way it is. So I've been thinking about this always. Um, and when I stopped practicing law, when I was in my early thirties, I started writing and for a while I didn't come to this topic. I wrote plays and memoirs and stories and all different stuff and then somehow I came back to this idea that I've been thinking about all my life, and this was the one I knew I was going to try to publish. All the other stuff that I'd been working on is still sitting on my hard drive to this day, completely unattended to.

W: So it was warming up or kind of circling around. Do you think you were...were you not aware of it or were you afraid of it?

S: A little bit of both. The...part of being afraid of it was, you know, it was an uncomfortable subject to be talking about at the beginning because, you know, now everyone is talking about it but back then it was like a really weird, idiosyncratic topic. Um, and so I just...I felt a little uncomfortable bringing it up. And also, there is a kind of funny bi-product of all this, that now everybody is always viewing me through the lens of like, 'Here comes the introvert,' you know, and that's a strange lens to always be viewed through. And I think I kind of....

W: It's the power of...it's the downside of the power of your brand, isn't it?

S: I guess so, yeah.

W: Cause you have a really...I mean, if you say 'Susan Cain'—introversion.

S: Right, right.

W: So that's good from a market, from...Susan Cain as a product, that's really good. Susan Cain as a person, you're saying, it can get complicated.

S: Yeah. It's limiting. And I don't tend to think of life in product terms; I think much more in person terms. So, that's just a funny thing. You know, now having said that, like, I wouldn't really sit around and complain about it. It's all good.

W: Right, right.

S: Like everything has been fantastic.

W: Of course, of course.

S: But I think I probably had some kind of inkling of that from the very beginning of doing this project. But you know I will say also as a writer I've always been drawn to writing about the things that make me, or people in general, feel uncomfortable. That's always where the impulse to write has been. And in fact, I'm working on another book right now. And I can't talk about the topic.

W: I know you can't. I know you can't.

S: But it's the same feeling of like, oh, this is one of those topics that I think kind of bothers a lot of people and they don't even know it, sort of. And that just happens to be my muse as a writer and it happens to come with some discomfort and you just kind of take that as part of the package.

W: **[12:35]** I want to come back to the book in just a minute, which I know can't talk about it; I think there are some questions I can ask you about it that you can. When you had this idea, and you said it was sort of awkward to broach it with people—can you think of a conversation that you had where you said, "I'm thinking about doing this," and people kind of looked at you like, "What?"

S: With the introversion topic? Yeah. Well, even to this day—I guess a little less so now—I would say it breaks down into a few different camps. So there are some people who are like, "Oh my God, you're talking about me," or, "Oh my God, you're talking about my son or daughter or, you know, colleague. This is amazing." And then there's another group who don't get it at first, but once they hear it they're like, "Oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense." And then I think there's another group who are just totally mystified by the whole thing. Some of them are extroverts—not necessarily. But just, yeah, and it's a funny things.

You know, during the years before [the book](#) came out, so I would just sort of talk about it socially with friends, like, “Hey, what are you doing?” “Writing this book.” My husband, who is much more extroverted and just kind of a natural, not exactly a sales guy, but he’s just really great at presenting things. So I would listen to him talk about my book and think, “Wow that sounds like an amazing book.” But it was harder for me to present it in that same way.

W: Ah, interesting. Is there any way in which you would argue that introverts are uniquely suited to disruption?

S: Well, I do think that it’s very common for introverts to describe themselves in the way that I did—marching to their own drummer, and, you know, whether that is intrinsic property of being introverted or whether it’s just a byproduct from...of spending quite a bit of time in your own company, either way the result is that you kind of know what you think and feel about things, and you tend to develop your own view of the world, and I think that that lends itself to disruption. Because, you know, by definition, not necessarily accepting...not necessarily buying anything that people are selling you. You’re just, like, you have your own take.

W: I agree. I said a moment ago about this idea of playing where no one else is playing and one of the first accelerants of personal disruption’s framework is that a disruptor takes on market risk. So they, instead of taking on competitive risk which would be ‘everyone else is there—I’m going to go do that. I can scope it out really easily,’ you take on market risk which is you don’t know if there is a market, but if in fact there is...

S: Yeah.

W: ...you’re odds of success are six times higher.

S: Yes.

W: And so to hear you say that, I would say your answer is ‘Yes, introverts are uniquely suited to disruption because you’re comfortable playing where other people aren’t.

S: Yeah, and I don’t even think you think about it in those terms. I think you just take it for granted because that’s just the way you live. I say, by definition, you’ve been living that way from the beginning, because you’ve been in school cultures and later in work cultures where your way of doing things and your way of being was not in keeping with the norm. So you always have a different track running in your mind from the track that’s being presented to you. And it’s funny that you say all this because with [Quiet Revolution](#), when we first started the company, which is based around all these ideas, we did the thing that I think all companies ask themselves when they’re first starting, which is,

“ok, who are our competitors; who are our role models here.” And we kept scratching our heads; we couldn’t really find one, because, you know, there’s training companies, there’s lifestyle brands, I suppose, but I don’t think we’re really either of those things.

W: So you continue to take on market risk.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: So what would you say your company is? How would...how do you describe it?

S: I mean, so the following thing, I guess, is becoming king of a business cliché now days, but I really do think we are intensely mission-driven. Our mission is to unlock the power of introverts for the benefit of us all, which is an important piece of it because we really do think everybody benefits, you know, when you start using peoples’ temperaments wisely. And right now, we’re really focused on making these things happen in workplaces and in schools. Cause the idea is that those are the two places where the most humans spend the most amount of their time. So we want to transform those cultures and give the introverts and the extroverts the tools they need to really shine in those cultures.

W: **[17:35]** So you built this community, you’re building a company around the idea that we need to disrupt our view of introverts. Would you share an experience or two you’ve had where you’ve seen that these ideas are working, or how it’s made a difference as you introduce them to a particular community, whether it’s a school or a company? Can you think of one?

S: Oh, yeah. I mean, there’s so many. You know, like, I’m thinking of one company where...ok, one of the things we’re doing now is we have a quiet ambassador experience and so we go into companies and the companies identify a cohort of people who are passionate about these ideas—employees within the company—they serve as ambassadors. Which means that we train them and coach them in our methodology and our thinking and then they go and they take those ideas and implement them in their day to day life inside their companies and inside their teams. So it becomes this very cool thing; the idea is to help this mission grow organically. And I’m thinking of one young woman in a company who became an ambassador and she was quite introverted herself but suddenly she had this role. So she was going back to her team and saying, “Hey guys, you know, maybe we should think differently about the way we structure our meetings. And maybe we should sit down and have a team meeting about the way that everybody likes to work differently and how we can accommodate each other’s preferences. So not only did the team start to function better, but she herself came to be seen as a leader in a way that she hadn’t been previously. So that was very cool to me.

W: Yeah, absolutely.

S: And then we've had schools, for example, really dramatically rethink how they do class participation. Because one of the most common problems that we hear is from parents who will say, "My child is doing great in school. They know everything and they're being graded lower because they're not raising their hands as much as another child who actually is not as much in command of the material. It's very frustrating." So we've been working with schools and some schools are starting to move toward a system of classroom...thinking about classroom engagement instead of classroom participation.

W: Mmmm.

S: So it's a much broader way of assessing how a student is interacting with material and peers.

W: **[20:00]** So how are you defining engagement?

S: Well, you know, it can be things like how...raising...

W: Raising your hand.

S: ...your hand; that's the classic one, but it can also be, you know, are you chatting with fellow students after class about what just happened; are you participating in writing; are you showing the teacher even through non-vocal signs that you understand the material and that you're switched on. It's just...it's a more holistic way of thinking about the different ways people learn.

W: That would be fantastic. I have a daughter who is 16 and very much an introvert and she said that frequently her teachers will say to her, "You're doing really well in class; I wish you would speak up more."

S: Yeah.

W: And she...and yet, she's very engaged.

S: Yes. Yeah.

W: She'll go talk to the teachers after class, have these really...and she's engaged with her peers and the material. But as you say, the marker of engagement right now is did you raise your hand.

S: Yeah, it's really frustrating. It's probably the most common comment I get from parents of introverted kids, is exactly what you just said. And you know, it is true that we do want our kids to leave school with the skills they need to make their voices heard, so I'm not saying that that should be irrelevant, but

we've gone so overboard. It's so lop-sided right now in the way we think about these things.

W: Well and it also I think leads—and I'm going to hypothesize for a minute and you can tell me if it's right or wrong—

S: Yeah.

W: But I do think it leads to a situation where sometimes people interview for jobs and they get jobs they shouldn't get because they're just sort of good at talking. And people don't get jobs they should get, because they're not so good at talking.

S: Oh, my gosh, that happens all the time. And it's not just jobs; it's also start-up pitches.

W: Mmm hmmm.

S: I'm thinking of a good friend of mine who's a very senior VC guy—private equity—and he's actually...he's a very sharp guy and very attuned to these dynamics and so he says he sees this happen all the time that somebody will come in and they make a great presentation and everybody's impressed even though they haven't really said anything. And you know, I think most people....

W: Give them \$500,000!

S: Yeah, exactly. But we really are trained that way.

W: **[22:30]** Do you think it's possible for an extrovert to disrupt themselves and become an introvert?

S: Well, I don't think they're going to become an introvert but I do think that for all of us, we want to disrupt ourselves by acquiring skills that are not necessarily in our, you know, default skillset. So, yeah, I...a lot of extroverts come up to me and say, "You know what? I would really like to be more comfortable with quiet. And I'd like to be more comfortable with my own company. So how can I do that?" And so, you know, I think extroverts need to stretch in those ways the same way introverts need to stretch at a cocktail party.

W: So it's a skillset

S: And all these things are acquirable. It's much more liberating to think of these things in terms of skills instead of in terms of basic personality. Because your personality is what it is and you should love it and accept it, and then layered on top of that, you can acquire any number of skills. And some of them

will be uncomfortable for you to use, but you can use them strategically as long as you're honoring who you really are. So let's say if you're an extrovert who is not comfortable in your own company, you know, you can figure out little tricks and tweaks to make it work for you, but you should probably also schedule a dinner out with your friends for the night that...if you know you're going to spend all day in your own company, schedule the dinner out with friends afterward, to reward yourself.

W: Yeah, reward yourself for...

S: Yeah.

W: ...doing something that was hard for you.

S: Yeah, and to come back to your basic default mode.

W: **[24:12]** You always wanted to be an author from the time you were age four...

S: Yeah.

W: ...but you didn't start your career as an author?

S: That is true; very much not.

W: What was the path? What did you do, and then what did you do and then what did you do?

S: Well, you know, for a million reasons, including the one that I share with many other people, I did end up graduating college and going to law school.

W: And what was the reason?

S: Well, I mean, okay, the reason that was more idiosyncratic, was that I think there was some level on which I wanted to prove to myself that I could flourish in a kind of bolder, more alpha world than really came naturally to me. The reason I think I share in common with many people is, you know, I wanted to be able to support myself and it seemed like a solid way to do that. And once I got to law school, I think because it was such an unlikely place for me, I actually enjoyed it more than almost everyone I knew. Like all my classmates hated law school and I loved it. I really did.

W: Really?

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: What did you love?

S: I don't...to me it was just this great lark. Like I couldn't even believe this whole thing existed. I don't know. I just found it intellectually fascinating.

W: And you love books, so you got to....

S: Yeah, yeah. I mean most law students are actually introverted. Probably way more than 50 percent. And, yeah, I loved books; I loved the way of thinking that I was being trained in. Then I ended up practicing law on Wall Street for about seven years before I left to become a writer. And for a lot of that time I loved that too, you know, because now I was in this world of business which was even less likely for me and I found it fascinating to just learn all of that from scratch, you know. But I often liken it to the feeling of being in a foreign country, so I think for many people it's really enjoyable and exciting to be in a foreign country and then comes the time that you're longing for home. And so that's how it was with me. Like, I had a few years where I really loved it and then I just started itching for something else. But I didn't even know what the next thing was going to be. Like I ended up taking a leave of absence from my law firm after about seven years, thinking that I was going to go travel or something. But literally it was like one or two days into the leave of absence I suddenly found myself remembering that I had wanted to write....

W: That's all it took.

S: That's all it took.

W: Just a little bit of decompression.

S: Yeah, yeah. And I'm telling you, before that I had spent like a year or two, three years thinking, 'okay, what do I want to do next? This isn't right, but I can't figure out what the next thing should be.' And it never was clear until I actually had the leave. Cause I think what happens is, you know, when you're immersed in a career, it becomes such a socially hermetic bubble that you can't really see very far beyond it. So all I could really envision at that point was, well, "Maybe I'll leave my Wall Street firm and go take a job as an in-house counsel at a company where the hours aren't so bad." And, you know, I couldn't think more creatively than that.

W: Right. It's hard, and it's...and at some level there's a lot of adrenaline from...I mean, I'm not trained as a lawyer, but I worked as a banker and an equity analyst on Wall Street and there's a lot of adrenaline that comes from this kind of job.

S: Yes, yeah.

W: You feel kind of awesome.

S: That's so true. You feel alive and I will say—I still say this to this day—I don't think I ever laughed as much as I did during those seven years as a lawyer. And I think it's because when it's that intense and you're working 17 hours a day, like, you get to that point where you're so punchy and everything is hilarious.

W: Yes.

S: And you have all these colleagues around and they've been through the same ridiculous scenario, you know, so it was really fun in some ways.

W: Yeah, it is fun. **[28:18]** So you, you took that leave of absence; did you immediately become an author or did you...how did you make that transition?

S: Well, so I signed up for this class at NYU in creative nonfiction. And, I went to that class on the first day, and it really was like, you know, one of those cinematic epiphanies where I felt like, 'oh my gosh, this really is what I need to be doing.'

W: So what would the soundtrack have been? What would the music have been?

S: I don't know. Something very, like, you know, thunderous and uplifting. Yeah, I really felt like 'this is it.' But I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I could actually make a living as a writer, so instead I thought, 'okay, this is going to be my hobby and now I have to figure out a way to support myself that will give me enough time to write.' And so, I, like, I sort of figured out this freelance consulting that I could do on the side, but I really thought of writing as my thing, and I did that for about four years before I started working on [Quiet](#).

W: Now was it negotiation? Is that right?

S: Yeah, exactly. So, I had done a lot of work studying how to negotiate, dating back to when I was in law school, so I started training people in negotiation skills. Yeah.

W: **[29:39]** Do you use any of your...no, let me rephrase. How do you use your legal background, and your negotiation background today, as a business owner?

S: I think you just use it in all kinds of ways you're not even aware of. Like I'm such a...I think I started out as a very analytical person. You know, you go to law school and practice as a lawyer and it takes it to the Nth degree. So I'm

analyzing everything, you know, as my colleagues will tell you. It's sometimes good and sometimes it can drive you crazy. You know, and I'll always see the problems with any particular scenario because lawyers are trained to think, "What if this? What if that?" And, yeah, I think it can be maddening and it can be useful. So I use it in all those ways. I would say also we're now working with so many business people and...cause what I was saying before that I'm not really a natural business person...I think had I not had all those years in that world I would have found it kind of intimidating, or at least mystifying, whereas now I understand that world pretty well because I lived in it for so long.

W: So you may not know how to do something but you think, 'oh, I'll figure it out.'

S: Yeah, and I know the people, like I understand them.

W: **[31:09]** You created a diagnostic.

S: Yes.

W: I would like to put you on the spot a little bit. First of all, tell us about the diagnostic and then, I've taken the diagnostic and I want to see if you can guess what I am.

S: Oh wow. Okay.

W: But what I'll do to make it easier is I'll tell you what I am and then you can tell me if it's what you thought.

S: Okay, sounds good.

W: Okay?

S: Cause I already, I already have an idea.

W: Yeah. So tell me about...tell all of us about [the diagnostic](#). Where people can go to take it, because I think it's fantastic and I want everybody else to know about it as well.

S: Oh, thank you. Okay, so yes, [we have this personality test](#) that helps you understand where you fall on the introvert/extrovert spectrum and there are lots of these tests out there, but...first I'll say, the way you can take ours is you go to our website, which is quietrev.com and it's right up on the homepage. There are others of these tests out there but the reason that we did our own is that the two...you know, based on all these years of research it became clear that the two really important facets of introversion that people I think don't talk about enough ...there are two. One is stimulation and one is deliberation. So

stimulation is what we were talking about earlier, like, how do you react to all the stuff that's coming at you day to day in your environment. But there's also a quality of deliberation which is, you know, when you're going to move forward and do something, as a business person especially. You're going to take a risk, you're going to take an action. Are you more the person who just do it? Seize the day? Or are you look before you leap, I'm going to think this through, I'm going to approach this very deliberately. And in general, introverts and extroverts are really quite different when it comes to that kind of risk-taking. And it doesn't mean, by the way, that introverts don't take risks or that extroverts take them all, but it does mean that we approach risk-taking pretty differently.

W: It's how you approach the risk.

S: It's how you approach it.

W: So it doesn't necessarily more of a risk-taker or less of a risk-taker; that's not what it's measuring?

S: I mean it's a little bit of both. There's a lot of data out there actually showing extroverts are more likely to get into car accidents. If you give them a financial risk they're much more likely to take larger bets, but it doesn't mean that extroverts are always doing that and that introverts will never take a risk.

W: Right, right.

S: You know, it's more subtle than that.

W: So what you're saying, just to be very clear for our listeners then, is that there's the one scale of are you an introvert or an extrovert and then there's the other scale of do you analyze a lot and deliberate or do you just start.

S: Well, I guess it's more...there's the scale of are you introvert or are you an extrovert and there's a number of different components that help you know whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, and one of those components is how you react to stimulation and the other is how much do you deliberate before taking an action or risk.

W: Okay, okay.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: Alright, good. Thank you for clarifying that.

S: Yeah, sure.

W: Okay - so people can go to your webpage, quietrev.com, and take it.

S: Yep.

W: Very cool. Okay, so now I'm going to tell you what I am. So on the introvert/extrovert spectrum, if you have...I'm basically right in the middle...

S: That's what I thought.

W: ...slightly to introvert.

S: Yep, that's exactly what I thought. And, by the way, I cannot always read people, even after all these years I'm still fooled. Often by...I'm often fooled by people who are actually more introverted than I would have thought and that's because, you know, so many of us learn how to pass as being more extroverted.

W: Right, right. I bet, though, because we've had a couple of conversations just one-on-one...

S: Yep.

W: ...you were probably able to diagnose it better.

S: I think so, yeah, yeah. Because I've gotten to know you. Exactly. But that's really exactly what I would have said.

W: Yeah, okay.

S: And you know that I...did I tell you that there's a word for people who are kind of in the middle like you? And the word is ambivert.

W: Yes, yes. So I'm pretty much an ambivert.

S: Yep.

W: Now on the do you deliberate or do you analyze before you take actions—is that what it is?

S: Hm mmm.

W: I'm off the charts on 'Just Go.'

S: Oh really?

W: Yes.

S: That's so interesting. In what way?

W: I think I am very much of the mindset of just, you know, minimum viable product here. Let's just take one action forward right now and see what we've got. It's not, like, jump in willy nilly, but like, let's just start to do something today, analyzing it too much I get paralyzed by the analysis so I prefer to just start.

S: So does that mean you actually would analyze but you've kind of learned through experience about the paralysis problem?

W: It might be.

S: Or do you just instinctively....

W: Oh, that's actually a really good question. It could be, because I tend to be a perfectionist, and so maybe...oh, how fascinating. It may be a coping mechanism for perfectionism of just start.

S: Yeah, yeah. A lot of introverts tend toward perfectionism. Yeah, it's a really common liability.

W: Fascinating. **[36:20]** We're going to play a game.

S: Okay.

W: A really fun game. So this is a game that David Klatt, my producer, came up with. I have not seen these questions, so we each...so he's giving each of us six questions and kind of like, rapid-fire, we just have to answer the questions.

S: Okay.

D: So you can't look at the questions before you ask the questions.

S: This is like the Oscars.

W: You just have to get it right. Okay, I'll go first.

[Cross-talking discussion of the 'rules' of the game.]

W: **[37:08]** Susan, what country have you been to that you think I haven't been to?

S: I don't know. Let's see. I'm going to Portugal this summer and I'm going to guess you haven't been to Portugal.

W: I haven't been to Portugal. Columbia.

S: You're right. Though I have to say it—my husband loves Cartagena; like he really loves it. So it's high on our list to go there...

W: It's beautiful.

S: ...but we haven't done it yet.

W: Okay. All right, your turn.

S: Okay. What's one book you read at a young age that you still think about?

W: Oh, [*A Wrinkle in Time*](#).

S: Ah, I was thinking of that one too; that's so funny.

W: What's yours?

S: Well, I really was thinking of [*A Wrinkle in Time*](#).

W: Oh, okay.

S: My son just asked me what a wrinkle in time is, in fact. I was like, huh...

W: Okay, I'm fist-bumping you. Fist bump.

S: ...I'm not sure I can tell you.

W: Which of your family members do you think of when you hear the word 'disruptor?' Mmmm.

S: Hmmm. I would say my husband, because...my husband even more than the way I was describing myself...

W: Even more so?

S: ... would...really does his own thing.

W: Really?

S: Yeah. And he has a very strong personality to go with that quality, so, you know, between the two that can have an outsized impact.

W: Right, right. It gets magnified. My mom, actually. Because my mom grew up in rural, rural Arizona. Very, very small town. She graduated from high school

in 1955 and she left the state to go to college. Not only to go to college, but she went to college out of state. That's disruptive.

S: Ah yeah, she sounds very brave.

W: Yeah.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: Ok, your turn.

S: Do you find your current work challenging?

W: Yes! And I love it. What about you?

S: Yeah, absolutely. Same, same, same.

W: I can't believe...like I can't believe how much I love my work.

S: Yeah, yeah. No, I really feel that way. And, like, despite what I said about all those years where I liked practicing law, you know, by the end I really did not, and therefore, there's now, like, not a day that goes by where I'm not aware of how lucky I am to be doing stuff that I love so much.

W: Yeah, and I actually feel the same...working on Wall Street, I loved being an equity analyst—like loved it. I think it's similar, where I'm glad that I'm not doing it anymore even though I loved it.

S: Yeah.

W: Okay. Which of these two people do you think of as the biggest disruptor, your mom or your dad?

S: Hmm. Honestly, neither of my parents is really a disruptor, I don't think. Yeah, they really are not. How about you?

W: I answered it. Definitely my mom.

S: Okay, oh yes you did, okay. Do you speak a language other than English? If yes, how do you say disruption? That's hilarious.

W: I do speak a language other than English; I speak Spanish. Probably it's a cognate, so it would be *disruption*—I don't think there's a word for it, but we can pretend.

S: I speak a smattering of French and of Spanish, but not well enough to know how to say disruption in either one.

W: **[40:40]** So just say it with a...say it with a French accent.

S: Yeah, exactly.

W: All right. What did your best boss offer you that no one else has matched? Ah, that's a great question.

S: Gosh, it's been so long since I had a boss, so I have to go back in time. I think really believing that I had capabilities that I did not know that I had. I'm thinking of somebody I worked with back when I was a lawyer. Um....

W: Do you want to say their name? Give them a shout out?

S: Yeah, I'll do that. His name was Peter Darrow...so if you're out there, Peter. Yeah, I always felt that about him. Yeah, he always had these grand visions of my capabilities. I'd be like, 'really?'

W: Well, I'm going to say something similar. I had a boss, Michael Brown, when I was working at Merrill Lynch, and he...he's the first boss I thought, he saw something in me, like I could be something much bigger and better than I...it's almost like my world went from, sort of this very small, myopic view, to like, 'Wow!' I could do these things. And I was already at least ten-twelve years into my career.

S: Wow. Wow.

W: It took a while.

S: Good for him.

W: I'm definitely a late bloomer. Okay, your turn.

S: Okay, which celebrity do you get mistaken for? This actually happens to me...not mistaken, but people tell me all the time that I remind them of the hippie character in Friends, the Lisa Kudrow one.

W: Really?

S: Yes.

W: I can see that.

S: I hear that all the time.

W: I can see that. More the looks than the personality? Both.

S: I hear the looks and the sound of my voice, is what I hear. And I see your producer, David, is nodding his head...

W: Nodding his head.

S: ...very emphatically.

W: Well there you go; it's been corroborated. I have been told that I look...oh, actually I get confused with...no, not confused with, but I've been told that I look like Hugh Grant.

S: What?

W: I mean, like his sister, not him. Um, I don't know, maybe a leaf, but that's what I've been told. Yeah, I don't see it either.

S: I guess I can vaguely see it.

W: Yeah, yeah.

S: I don't know, it wouldn't really come to mind

W: No. No, no, no.

S: Ok, name one job that you've always wanted to do. I don't know. I'm really doing the job that I've always wanted to do.

W: One job that I would love to do, which would not be possible...well, part of it would be possible...would be to be a jazz pianist. That would be...so actually a hyphenate like Diana Krall. So, the...

S: Right.

W: So the piano part I could probably eventually pull off cause I studied music in college, but the singing part...yeah, that's not going to happen. But I would love that job. **[43:25]** Ok, what is your best boss...oh, no, I already read that question. Name something you want to be able to do but don't have the time to learn.

S: Gardening. I always have this vision of a beautiful garden full of flowers and it's so ridiculous that I even have this idea, because I don't even have five minutes to really learn anything about soil and sunlight and whatever it is that you need to know.

W: But you want to do that.

S: But I do want to do it, yeah.

W: Ok, mine is something I know how to do kind of, but I want to do more of it: tennis.

S: Oh yeah, yeah.

W: Tennis.

S: We share that.

W: Okay, yeah. Go.

S: What's one thing people get wrong about you? I don't know.

W: I do.

S: What's yours?

W: No, I know what they get wrong about you.

S: Oh, what?

W: Well you said that people see you only through the lens of being an introvert.

S: Oh, that's true. That's true.

W: And that's not the sum total of who you are.

S: Right, right. Yeah, that's true. I mean, it's not so much the...yeah.

W: Go ahead.

S: I don't even know what I was going to say.

W: Okay. Something that people get wrong about me, um, hmmm. That's a really good question: what do they get wrong about me? I was going to say...I think...okay, I'm going to say this. People think I'm really, really serious, and I am serious, but I'm not always serious. I think they sometimes get that wrong, so...Ok, here's the last one. What food have you never eaten?

S: Wow. I don't know. I can't think of something because I really love so many foods. Um....

W: Have you eaten shark?

S: Probably not, so we can go with shark.

W: Have you eaten kimchee?

S: Yes. Yeah, I've had kimchee.

W: Alright, I haven't eaten kimchee.

S: Really? How come?

W: I don't know, just haven't.

S: So you should go have some kimchee today.

W: I've heard it's terrible.

S: I really love Korean food.

W: Oh, you do?

S: I love all Korean food; I love it.

W: Okay. Alright, well maybe I'll have to try it. **[45:35]** Ok, last question. What are you going to do to disrupt yourself in 2017?

S: In 2017? I mean, I think part of the way I'm disrupting myself is, I guess I alluded to it before, but I'm really starting to get back into writing now. So [Quiet](#) came out in 2012 and I had initially thought I was going to go start writing another book right away, but the...kind of the call of the Quiet Revolution was so compelling that I really stopped writing and now I'm easing back into it and it feels really good.

W: So you've started to write this next book?

S: I've started to research it.

W: You've started to research.

S: I haven't started writing really yet.

W: Okay

S: Yeah, cause my process is that I have an idea and then I like to walk around the world for a year or two, just seeing everything through the lens of that idea. So lots of interviews and I read a ton and all kinds of research.

W: So you're in the middle of that process.

S: I'm in the middle of that process which is so much fun. You know, and then I take all my notes and stick them in a document and then I have a document that's like thousands of pages long at the end and I have to figure out what to do with it.

W: Oh, I'm so excited. Congratulations.

S: Oh, thank you.

W: Yeah, that's really great...and that's a great...so you're going to disrupt yourself by moving back into writer mode.

S: Yeah, that's right. While I'll also, you know, continue to build out the Quiet Revolution. How about you?

W: **[47:12]** Ah, I wasn't expecting that question. I...I have the manuscript for my next book, which is due on 2017...actually not 2017 but in May of this year.

S: May of this year? Wait, that's in like two months. Wow.

W: I think I write a little bit differently than you do.

S: Okay.

W: Yeah, so, I mean I've been working on it, but I think I have a different writing process than you do. But here's the thing, unlike you, I've never thought of myself as a writer, so we write for different reasons.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: You're a writer and I write more to get an idea across and so my process is...it's just different.

S: Yeah, no, that makes total sense to me. Yeah.

W: So, but what am I going to do? I guess one thing I have done is I get up at like five or five-thirty, which I didn't do last year, and that's been really important to my productivity going way up.

S: Wow. And do you like getting up that early?

W: I do. I do.

S: I mean, do you have to haul yourself out of bed, or it's natural?

W: It's getting easier as long as I go to bed somewhat early, because I used to get up really early growing up and practicing the piano, and so I have that habit and I'm so productive. And I'm a lot less anxious in the morning, so if I get up early I get a lot done.

S: Interesting.

W: Yeah.

S: Wow, I'm exactly the opposite.

W: So you....

S: I mean, I do get up early because I have kids, but if left to my own devices I would get up late and work until late.

W: You would?

S: Yeah.

W: Totally different body clocks.

S: Yeah, I'm a total night owl. Yeah.

W: Yeah. Well, thank you again. And it's been wonderful, super, and, like I said, I'm super excited for your next book and I'll look forward to following up with you in six or nine months to see how your book is coming.

S: That sounds great. Thank you so much for having me.