

listenN: Today in episode 12, I'm talking with digital marketing instructor, social media and business growth expert and soon to be author Richard Picart. Richard talks about connecting great ideas with the right audience, the joy of inspiring people who are developing the next phase to their lives, spirituality and the importance of kindness and how being kind truly starts before we even speak and engage with others.

listenN: Well, hello Richard. Welcome to listenN.

Richard Picart: It's great to be here, Brian.

listenN: Oh, it's great to have you here. I've been so excited to talk to you because I think that we have walked similar paths in our careers. We've never crossed. And, I think I'm going to learn a lot from you today, So I'm really looking forward to talking to you.

Richard Picart: Awesome. I'm super happy to be here.

listenN: I'm going to jump in here. A long time ago I was in the restaurant business and when I was in the restaurant business, I worked for a company and we were opening a new restaurant and we started to work with an advertising agency. And the advertising agency was so excited to work with us cause they said, you guys are in such a cool industry. You're doing new stuff, you're doing fun stuff. This is so much more fun than corporate. And so coming out of the advertising and the marketing industry, I always used to think that the people who got to work in entertainment, those were the cool people. And you've had that experience, so, walk me through that.

Richard Picart: Well, it's been great. I have spent some time in entertainment, probably in some mixed bag, probably over 20 years in entertainment, whether it be artist management, music production, consultation and even amplifying messages through the digital mediums. So working in entertainment is fun. I said to myself a long time ago that I would never take a job that I couldn't wear jeans at. And so that was kind of my criteria for how I would conduct myself and live my life in terms of the things that I would do on a day to day basis. And entertainment, it seemed to fit that criteria quite well. The interesting thing about entertainment that has been rewarding for me is that I live my life in a way that I desired to inspire people or move people forward in some way. And, you know, music, film, theater, whatever, the modality of entertainment tends to have that effect more than not. And so from a life purpose, point of view entertainment has really served me well in that regard.

listenN: So, there's a couple of things there I'd like to dive into. I want to wear jeans. What did jeans symbolize for you?

Richard Picart: For me, bearing in mind this is going back to probably the mid 90's, early 90's, when it didn't have the same, it wasn't the fashion or it was rather the fashion faux pas at the time to be in a corporate environment or a business environment with jeans. So, at that time I was working in a real estate office and had to dress up with slacks and tie and a tucked in shirt every day. And I just came to the realization that this wasn't me. It was this little bit of self-awareness. Like, I feel like I'm not being myself. So I made a simple promise to myself that I would just be myself wherever I can be and exercise my gifts, but be true to who I was. So that's kind of that expression nowadays you're seeing it more often than not. We have, you know, there's no such thing as casual Fridays anymore. I mean, every day is casual and people are, in terms of at least their attire are more relaxed. And I think society is more interested now in outcomes and outputs as opposed to the appearance of outcomes and outputs. And so I think that's probably where the shift has been.

listenN: That is such a cool way to put it. I've never thought of it that way. But you're right. It's no longer about the appearance. It's, you can be successful in a tee shirt. I know a guy who, who's a VC guy who does a lot of funding for start-ups and he shows up in these raggedy t-shirts and he says, cause if I show up in anything else, they don't trust me. You know, they think I'm putting a facade on or I'm hiding something. So that's really cool because I went through a similar experience around jeans and kind of casual funky where, because I transitioned into the advertising business from a number of other businesses that required the suit and tie and people expected you as the creative person to show up and be the one who was in a t-shirt and jeans and running shoes or whatever, you know? You had to still look good. But if I wore a dress shirt or dress shoes, they kind of look at you like, Hey, I thought you were the creative guy?

Richard Picart: Yeah, it's all about self-expression and confidence. And like I said before we are now in an age, especially in the digital space where you can measure results. It's not just about the idea of success, but success in and of itself. And also the face of success has changed. And so when you have individuals like Jay Z who was just recently crowned the latest billionaire, um, built his empire wearing a ball hat, you know, pretty much, and dressing the way he wanted and starting his own fashion alliance and other individuals who are having significant success. I mean, we look at \$1 billion and sometimes we'd kind of say, Hm, but \$1 billion is \$1 billion. Uh, and to be able to do that outside the paradigms that have been molded over a half century is exciting. So, maybe I was onto something early in the 90's, who knows.

listenN: Great. And then the other thing that you commented on was about motivating and uplifting people. And you felt that entertainment was an area that did that at that time. Um, and so what is it in you that, you know, was triggered by that or was inspired by that to motivate and uplift people? Did you have that from a young child? Was it always just who you were or is it something that you've cultivated over time?

Richard Picart: I would say both. If I were to go back to a kind of early days, you know, living in the city, coming from a single parent home. So on one side of the coin, I would say Brian is just the way my mother raised my brother and I. She always had and still has a very sweet spirit and treats people with respect. She's the lady that's going to stop and say hello to the little kids on the street. She's the lady that's going to clip a Rose from her garden and hand it to somebody walking by cause she enjoyed the moment of gratitude that she would be able to witness. And so for me, I picked up on that and have kind of carried it through. I've always tried to conduct myself in a way where people get value from the time that they spend with me.

Richard Picart: And so that's been a tenant in the way that I've lived, I want individuals to have, uh, given me of their time and resources or opportunities, to find value in that before we assign value in terms of payment or in terms of opening doors, things like that. Right. and then the other part of it is that I'm a person of faith. And so because I believe that I don't just operate under my own rules, but there's rules I subscribed to as a Christian. Part of that is the way that I conduct myself with people who I view as, you know, brethren in the world that we live in. And so, because I have that lens that I look through, as often as I can, and as often as I remember, it influences how I conduct myself. And certainly I'm not a perfect individual, but I try to at least be mindful of the things that I've found important in the past.

listenN: And was there a time in your past, working in the entertainment industry where you were challenged, with those values? I know that religion and spirituality, um, however it is embraced lives very heavily in the entertainment and in the music industry. But, but there's also that darker side to that world. Right. So were you ever, were there ever any life lessons or moments where you were challenged?

Richard Picart: As I'm sitting here speaking to you, I can't say there was moments where I was specifically challenged. I would say that certainly I was in environments where I would say, you know what? I don't think I can bring my pastor here. Or, perhaps if someone from my local congregation saw me here that would give them pause. Certainly that would come to mind. But I've always had a small little mantra, which is, you know, one message, different mediums. And what that means to me is that that the message of love and hope and so forth, can be expressed in different ways at different times to different people? And so I can't be a light in what could be perceived as darkness unless I'm present. I've learned from a writer, Rob Briner an older writer, he's passed on now. One of the things that he said about the premise of being salt. Is that salt only adds savour when it's actually applied to something. And when it's rubbed into the substance, so a piece of meat or whatever the case is, it's only when you're within that environment and you're rubbing against it and you're there and you're present and you're getting that you can actually affect any sort of change. The absence of salt would cause it to be flavourless. It would cause it to

decay faster, you know? And so because I've kept these small compass points before me I'm okay in environments where it would give somebody else pause. And then it has, you know, dealing with my mom, dealing with attitudes of faith and, and there's this self-awareness, just knowing who you are and knowing your vulnerabilities. But at the same time, I'm bracing that people are different and not everyone is conforming to who you are. And you may not conform to everyone else, but as long as you're comfortable with who you are and you're able to treat people with respect, you can get ahead.

listenN: That's an interesting segue into a part of your life that you're embracing right now, which is the teacher. I know that you teach a lot of adult students and in Toronto we have such a multicultural city and a lot of newcomers to the country come through Toronto. Um, how when you're shedding, you know, when you're rubbing up against and you're shedding that light and you're helping people find their way or motivating and uplifting people, how has that affected the way that you teach or are your interactions with students?

Richard Picart: The first thing that I say to my students, usually the first class or the second class very early in the process is I asked them how many people are unemployed? And of course, nobody puts their hand up. And I nudged them, I say I know what's like to be unemployed. How many people are unemployed tomorrow morning you do not have a job to go to. And then of course sheepishly the hands start to go in the air. I say, my job is to get you prepared for your next opportunity. Mine is to help those of you that are unemployed be prepared for the next opportunity. I know you came here for a class on search marketing or you came here for a class on social media and I'm happy to teach that to you and help you prepare, but know that my responsibility is to get you to the next step.

Richard Picart: And I think that probably synthesizes my attitude towards education. When you have an individual coming into a class, you know, and in real terms traveling an hour on to GO Train or two hours from their point of origin and they come and they've been up since 5:00 AM in the morning and just to get that extra \$5 an hour and the extra \$10,000 a year, they're going to come and invest time with me. I make it my point to spend quality time with them and encourage them. Sometimes I see myself more as a therapist than I am as an educator because the knowledge will be there. But the truth is, is that the stuff I'm teaching them, they could get from reading blogs and books. What they come to the school for is that personal interaction. And I try to sow into the whole experience of the material that we cover, a little bit of hope, definitely a heavy dose of reality and to position them with good expectation once they leave. And, I very much enjoy that. The feedback I get is that it's well received and I'm also very pleased to know that many of my students have gone on to that next step in their life.

listenN: That's fantastic. You know, there's that old saying those who can't teach and I've always said, but those that can, make great teachers, right? And it's so

important to hear you embracing the purpose behind what you're doing. And seeing it more than just educating people on, you know, zeros and ones, so to speak in the digital world. So you mentioned in the class and I just love the visual of just these people not wanting to put their hand up and then you going, no, come on. I've been unemployed before.

listenN: Tell me about that. Tell me about some of your moments, your darker moments, scarier moments.

Richard Picart: Sure. Um, yeah, so I've been unemployed before, not uncommon. After you've been employed, you'll quite often know what it's like to be unemployed. And so there was one particular place of work and I won't mention them cause I don't want it to be misinterpreted, but I worked there for three years and I really enjoyed the job. And at that time I didn't have as much of an appreciation for the impacts of business, the ups and downs of revenue, the impacts of taxation and things that cause business owners to have to make difficult decisions. When you're a little younger, you just think, hey man, this is my job and you're going to pay me and I'm going to love it and you're going to pay me as long as I want to be here. And so there came a point where they had to make some business adjustments and in a very warm, friendly manner, needed me to kinda, you know, move on to the next opportunity and treated me quite well.

Richard Picart: Well, for me, because I enjoyed the job, it was just, it was devastating. Right? That was my first foray into digital marketing. I'd learned a lot in that space and to now I'm kind of been shown the door in a very polite way. It kind of shook me a little bit. I tend to be a little bit of a confidence, a person of confidence. I see myself as a person of worth and of value. So when someone says, we don't need you anymore, we don't find value in you, and that we're not going to pay you anymore to do something. Um, it speaks to who you are. Um, you're going out the door with your box and even that moment, you know, Brian, where everything that you did for the three years preceding is defined within a box, little banker's box.

Richard Picart: Right. So that was a very sobering moment. And at that time I didn't see it as, uh, going out one door and looking for the next door to go through. I just saw it as going out the door. Yeah. And so it impacted me, but you know, as we all do, we tend to bounce back a little bit. And the lesson that I took out of it, one lesson I took out of it is count your value along the way. You know, don't wait until you're on the door to say, okay, now I've got to get to the next opportunity. What did I really do while I was there? No. Take an inventory of your success. Write it down, you know, what did I do this month? What did I do that was a winner? What did I do that really added value and note it along the way, Because you'll need those points to reflect on.

Richard Picart: And then prepare for the next step where you are, you know, always have a certain agility in terms of, okay, I know where I am, I'm happy, but let me always

be aware of what my next step will be so that when you have to take that step, whether it's on your own or someone gives you a little nudge, you've already been thinking that way. You've already been looking forward to the next step. So, that little nudge won't cause you to stumble. It's just a little bit of a nudge.

listenN: My experience in the advertising business, business went up and down and as a partner, I was involved in giving people that message a lot over the years. And, it's the hardest thing to do. And so I used to explain to people, there's no right way to do this. You can't communicate to people, uh, that it's, you know, it's over in a way that's going to help them understand, it's, there's always going to be something you should've said or you could have said better. And, I think that's great advice to take stock along the way because, you know, in a lot of small businesses, you're always revenue chasing and you're so busy chasing revenue, you're not celebrating your accomplishments and you need to, you need to write them down and you need to acknowledge that you had value and there was a time where what you did was valuable and important because if you do wait until the very end, like you say, it's so easy to get down and lose your self esteem and feel like there's something that you did wrong.

listenN: And a lot of times people don't understand when businesses make those kinds of decisions that it has nothing to do with you personally. You know, it's can they afford to pay that role? And because they can't, doesn't mean it wasn't of value when it was there, correct. And, I think that's something that it's hard for people that are on the employee side of a business to understand. Um, they take it very personally. And, as a business owner, it's a very hard place to navigate because you've got the bad news first, right, And you're sitting with the bad news and then you're trying to communicate it to other people who on one level get to walk away from the business and get away from whatever hole the businesses is in and the negativity that might be in that hole. They get to go and do something new and move on with their lives. And, I've always found that it's a very hard, very hard, difficult place to be.

Richard Picart: I've had to fire friends. I've had to fire friends that I brought in. And you know, those are not easy days. But you know, it, it toughens you up and it gives you this heightened sense of awareness of who you are. Even as I've been on the side where I didn't own the business, but I was a senior leader and was responsible for a team. And so in terms of acquisitions or changes in staffing, that was part of my portfolio. And so yeah, I've had to, I had to release friends and so forth. And so even in making that decision to release a friend, you now you think of the human experience, right? So now I know the child that's affected by the loss of income. I know the parent that lives at the house who's relying on this revenue to help offset normal expenses. And so it has a very human side to it. And if there's anything I took out of it is over the years is the appreciation for both sides. You know, the person that's being let go and released to a new opportunity and then the company that's making the adjustments so they can continue to provide opportunities. And so that's kind of

how I reconcile them both. And if you kind of look at it that way, you know, for every opportunity door that closes is a window that's opening. And so if you're patient enough, it'll come along.

listenN: Yeah. And I think that the biggest lesson that I took away, especially being on the creative side of the business, and I mean you were on the account services side, which is that you can never do enough. There's certain jobs in life where you just can never do enough. And, and then when you do get the short end of the stick, so to speak, you feel slighted because I gave so much. And so I've always told people that the sort of moral that I learned from that journey was you're giving for yourself. You're not doing it for somebody else. You've chosen to give 130% and you've chosen to stay up to midnight to get that done. You've chosen to over-service and be proud of those choices and don't begrudge them. So that one day, if you do end up having to find the door, you're not bitter because being bitter about the choices you make in life, I think is the worst.

Richard Picart: Aye. I'm not bitter. I try not to be. Of course I've been bitter at times, but I try not to be bitter over those choices that are without my control. I strive to use them as stepping stones. And this is where I of course pull out my faith strings and I pull on the influences that are around me to see this as, you know what? This sucks right now. But, hey, you know what? Nothing a good bottle of wine can't fix it, a night of sleep, you know, tomorrow's another day. Not to take this on a down note, but when you attend enough funerals and you go to enough ICU wards to see the state of humans in different conditions, you're like, you know what? I'm all right. Yeah, I'm inconvenienced. Yeah, certainly. I'm definitely inconvenienced. And that little shiny thing I like to have once a month or this little thing in my pocket I like to pay for every month. Maybe I can't have the worldwide plan on my phone anymore. Maybe I only can get Canada wide, you know? So when you really take a stock of it, you realize, you know what, we're not doing too bad. We're inconvenience, but we're not down trodden.

listenN: I want to talk a little bit more about the teaching side of things. Because I think you are unique in the classroom. I think the way that you're helping people is very special. And so, you know, today in the digital world, there's all of these people out there that are selling the fast track to success on the internet. Take this course, do this seminar. I can show you the trick that I learned, look at my money in my account. You know, you see that nonstop now. So I'm sure a lot of the people that come into your classroom kind of come in with a little bit of rose colored glasses. Like, you're the guy who's going to teach me or give me that little thing that's now going to get me to become rich on the internet. And what you give them instead is that little bit of encouragement or that little secret that they might need to actually be successful in life. Right. So talk to me about that. You know, like, do you get a lot of that, a lot of people like, Oh, I'm going to be the next millionaire on the internet coming into your classes?

Richard Picart: I don't get that so much, although I appreciate completely what you're saying, right. There's lots of folks on the Instagram that in 30 or 90 seconds can promise you a brand new life. And I've seen it and certainly I've watched some of the videos behind the scenes. Okay, how does that really work? You know, how do you actually go from nothing to 5 Lamborghinis? But when people come into my class the first thing is if I was promising you that I wouldn't be teaching the class, right? So it would be one of my staff members teaching the class. And so right away, you know, you're not going to get that from me. Uh, what I try and teach them is the idea of how do you connect great ideas to the right audience.

Richard Picart: That's really what I teach them is how do you connect a fantastic concept, a new product, a sunglasses brand, new restaurant, a conference, whatever. It is a great idea to the right audience and do it in such a way that's respectful. Doing it in such a way that it's efficient, it's accurate, and it deals a result that's measurable. What I strip away in my classes, the fluff of digital, right. You know, I get down to how are you going to deliver value? How are you going to identify what value looks like before you get started? And what is your expectation? Like when you have Johnny's flower shop coming to you and saying, I'd like to hire you Richard, to do my digital marketing. I'm going to give you \$20,000 and it's January, but I need to see return on this by July because this \$20,000 is when I'm going to use to pay my daughter Lucy's tuition.

Richard Picart: Can you do that for me, Richard? That's where rubber meets the road because now you have to go into the marketplace, try and generate the ads, try and generate the response online to that particular product or a flower shop in this case in such a way that you get back that 20 grand plus in order to help that business move along if you're not successful, that has real impact. Right? I've been in situations as a client service manager where due to changes in the digital landscape and even maybe the under performance of the client. Um, they didn't meet their goal. And I go in and I see cubicles that were once full empty. And so I teach the real aspect of marketing and the human impact of doing the right thing. Identifying the right audience. Don't get caught up in the speed of digital, right?

Richard Picart: Get caught up in delivering value and meaningful results and being able to convey the need for patience and understanding as you navigate together with your client. Ways to reach that correct audience. And so when people kind of slow it down a little bit, um, it's like walking and driving, right? You see different things on the same road. And so when you get them down to a walking pace, they see different things. Oh, let me pay attention to that. Oh, let me do some iteration here. Let me adjust some AB testing. Maybe we can squeeze a little bit more out of that campaign. You know, perhaps we can use this platform. Let's experiment with this. No, Snapchat's not the right platform. Let's go with this one. There's a reason why we will do that. This is the reason why. So I get them to think it through a little bit and be able to be equipped and confident enough

to have those conversations once they leave the class and get into the workforce.

listenN: Digitals kind of folded back in on itself. So back in the early days of the internet, right, everybody loved it. Marketers loved it because it was measurable. They could measure everything. But back then what they were measuring were things like, did they open my email? Did they click through to my website? Did they buy a product? So it was still very much like bricks and mortar retail, like did they buy something from me? So you know, you put an ad in a newspaper, they came in and they bought something. You put in, you know, an email blast out, or you did something on the web with a banner ad or whatever they click through. They bought something from me. It was very, very tangible. But then digital became kind of more complex when social came around. And now it's more about like, okay, I do an Instagram post and does that really? And, yes, it's measurable, but what's measurable isn't necessarily a cash register ringing. It's Likes and it's Shares and does that then transition into something of value and it's become murky again. And so as a marketer, I kind of love that because there was a time with digital that it got a little bit too measurable and too analytical and it became something that lost a little bit of that magic. Right? So when you see it and you see it work, it's just such a gratifying experience I find.

Richard Picart: I think it's important to also recognize that as much as the numbers are important in terms of being able to tell a meaningful story and to prove it. Uh, social media especially for me is a conversation offline that you take online.

Richard Picart: And so when it comes to marketing, I tried to be the type of marketer that tries to establish a conversation with my audience, recognizing that they're all at various stages of their own sales funnel, right? Nobody wants to walk into the Hudson's Bay and as soon as you step foot in the door, somebody is rushing you to the cash register. You don't even know whether you want shoes or a shirt that day. You just know that you wanted to go pick up something new. Right? And so have the conversation, through the digital media is how can I help you today? How can this add value to your life? What information do you need to help you make a meaningful decision and then making that meaningful decision. How can we guide you through the various modalities of that decision making so that you really truly end up as a satisfied individual.

Richard Picart: When you start from that perspective, which is where I start everything, you use digital media to help accelerate that process and the journey that you're going on, right? So now I don't need to, buy a whole bunch of ads on television and radio and hope that it works cause I've already signed my contract. I can be a little bit more fluid and say, okay, this may not be working. Like we're making an adjustment and really, uh, tweak it in real time. Certainly much love to my TV and Radio people that have been in TV and Radio in the past and certainly appreciate those platforms. But, you know, so that's what I try to convey is have

a conversation through the ideas that you're putting forth in digital marketing. How are you nurturing people's decision making?

Richard Picart: How are you endearing yourself? How are you touching the heart of the individual so that you can touch the hand of the individual? Right? And so if you can master that, and do that well, you truly have a customer presuming you've served them well and the product serve them well and the experience was awesome. You've truly will have a customer for life. They'll come back, they'll buy again. There's a reason why we continue to go to the corner dry cleaner. There's a reason we have our favorite restaurant where we want to celebrate an occasion. Why is that? Well, let's take those principles and apply it to digital and take that stranger and turn them into a friend.

listenN: I think that that's an interesting approach because I think that what social media did for us is it created a new level of engagement that didn't exist before. And hence, the word social. It existed in our social life. It existed within our personal life with who we knew and who we interacted with. But it didn't exist on the large scale with big companies and corporations and brands and things like that. And then social media came along and it says hey, you can now have a conversation with somebody and make their day better and service them better through this platform. And everybody was like, great, how do we, and then we all walked around and bumped into each other for a number of years, not knowing how to do it and thinking that, you know, cause I remember years ago I had a client and I asked if they were on Twitter and this is when Twitter had first started out and he was like, no, I don't care if any of my friends are having coffee. And I was like, well that's interesting because I get all of my news off of Twitter. I get most of my editorial that I was reading at that time came through Twitter. And so it was just, we just had these two different relationships with this social media platform. And so, I think that's a great way to put it, that it's something that you're getting the opportunity to engage with people in a very intimate personal way and treat them that way. Just like you would if you walked into a room and met them face to face. You wouldn't scream at them. You wouldn't berate them. You wouldn't beg them.

Richard Picart: You know, last night I was teaching an aspect of my social media course that talked about the 80/20 rule and the 80/20 rule as it relates to social media. You should only ask people to do something 20% of the time. And so doing something could be anything from an overt ask to buy something or to go somewhere, liking or engaging. Cause I think when you ask somebody to like, there's a currency of credibility that you're asking them to spend on your behalf. And so, the other 80% of the time you should be giving to them, educating them, nurturing them, informing them, bringing up their IQ with regards to what it is that you do in your company and how your company affects lives. If you can do that, you qualify that cause the 80% comes first. You qualify for the backend, 20% to say, now that I've educated you and brought you up to a speed, there is this something I'd like for you to do for me. Some folks on social

media don't understand that paradigm yet. They use it as an amplifier of just their constant sales message. They probably realized that it's not as effective. And they quite often walking away saying that social media doesn't work. But just like in real life, if every time I came up to you, Brian and asked you for five bucks, you probably would dodge me after a while. And so, it's the same type of thing.

listenN: The other thing that I think that a lot of people don't understand, and this is what drives me crazy about YouTube, where people will be like, you know, give us a thumbs up. Right. But that thumbs up stays with me. Right? It becomes something that's part of my brand. Like, Oh, Brian liked this video. Well maybe I don't want to be a social, like I might've enjoyed your video. But do I want to be associated with whatever the content was? So, I'm a big lover of sailboats and stuff. And so I watch a lot of the YouTube stuff for the people that are sailing around the world and they all at the end of each video will say give us a thumbs up, like share, do all that stuff.

listenN: But something as simple as a thumbs up. It's like, no, because you know, I liked that video, but I don't necessarily want to be, like why did Brian liked that video so much? I don't want to give away that so freely. And so I think that understanding what you're asking from people, and doing the 80/20 rule is very valuable because at least, if you're doing the 80/20 rule, you're not asking all the time. You can't be mathematically.

Richard Picart: You just can't be. And it forces you to talk about other things. So what is the news within your industry? What is the charitable aspect of your industry, how have you educating people about what it is that you do? And I don't care if it's a flower shop on the corner or a sophisticated banking operation that has a social media division. To me, the question on the table is still the same. The scale may be different, but the approach to engaging your audiences is the same.

listenN: So on a soulful, personal level we're always being asked to do stuff like you just described, Like ,Share. Um, but if there was one thing, and I'm talking outside the digital world, just in general, if there was one thing that you would say that people should do that would make the world a better place, what's the one thing that you would say to people.

Richard Picart: if you're going to do just one thing? Do this, be kind, be kind. Yeah. I would say be kind to people. Um, and presume the best in people. I've given you two things, but I would say, you know, be kind to people as one single thing.

listenN: Well, they're connected though. They're connected. To be kind to somebody is to assume that they're a nice person and they're doing good things or they're coming from an honest place.

Richard Picart: I should add as an addendum to that being kind to somebody doesn't mean you have to engage them. Right? I think being kind starts in your thoughts. When you walk down the street what are the unconscious biases you have, you know, what are the conscious biases that you have when you see somebody, what do you say about them before you even know them in your mind? Start there, you know, and catch yourself there to say, you know what? Like, even on my way to doing this recording with you today, I saw a young lady on the street and she was just screaming and crying. And so my first human response was clearly she's upset and as I got closer, I can see there is probably some influence of drugs or substance abuse somewhere they're just represented and how her body presented itself. And I said, okay, this young ladies challenged. She probably needs some help. I didn't stop to help her, but I at least said to myself, she may not be just crazy. She's somebody who needs some help that maybe has a mental health challenge. And I kept going. Um, just being aware of that. And especially for me, I've had friends who've had mental health challenges so you become hypersensitive, you know what, my friend wasn't crazy, quote unquote, they had some health issues. So I try to slow walk my kindness and make sure that my kindness starts before I speak. Um, that my kindness is not measured in how people perceive their interaction with me. But how do I think towards other people because it actually influences my action. If I think that person is a complete idiot, my disposition to them will be framed that way. The lens through which I see them will be framed that way even though I haven't qualified whether they are, whether they are not. And so I try to treat people with kindness and I try to realize most of us are one or two steps away from where they are. And if you realize that, whether it's poverty, whether it's loneliness, whatever it is even extreme wealth, it doesn't always have to be on the downslope, right? You know, we're sometimes one or two steps away, just a couple of degrees away meeting that right person sitting in a coffee shop and somebody hears a conversation, says, Hey, I'd love to hire you. We're just a couple of degrees away from that next dimension of our life. That could be absolutely amazing or the greatest challenge of our life. And so when you kind of walk through your experience in your journey with that level of humility and with a desire to be kind, even kind to yourself as you're walking out the door with your box from the job you just got fired. Be kind to yourself. You know? I don't mean to drift on this, but on the day that you lose your job is the day you should go to your favorite restaurant. The day that something bad happens to you is the day. I think you should offset that with something that is going to kind of bring you a little bit of joy and reminds you of your humanity and your capacity to be great. So, you know, if you try to offset those things, the deep isn't as deep and the highs are controlled knowing that there's a downslope.

listenN: I loved, I loved the way that you put that about be kind in your mind. I had a very sort of eye-opening experience. I left my job of 21 years in the high stressed advertising business and I just stopped. I didn't plan, it wasn't really planned. It was more just an abrupt, like this is over and I'm onto something new. And part of it was I'm just going to free fall and float for a while. And all of

a sudden, I noticed I was having conversations with the cashier at the grocery store and it was just these subtle little differences and I found I was treating people nicer and I thought to myself, this is so weird because my mind isn't stressed and worried and anxious about the next thing that I have to do.

listenN: I'm just taking more time with people. And so whatever happened in my brain that clicked over, I just found myself being more engaged, kinder and much more socially aware of other people and what was going on in their world. And it was just the subtle little shift in my brain. And so I think that's a great, great way to look at it. And I love to ask people that question because it almost always comes down to something like be kind or say hello to people or smile more. Or it's these little basic things that us human beings know we should be doing but we don't do. And when you ask people that it's surprising how many people know this is what is the one thing we need to do more of. We need to just be nicer to each other. Be happier to see each other, smile more. So thank you for sharing that. That was a really nice piece of wisdom.

listenN: You've done a lot of transitions in your life and I know that you have a passion for helping people and helping people navigate through those difficult times. Is there anything that you're working on or doing outside of the teaching that is a channel for that for you?

Richard Picart: You know, it's interesting, Brian, um, I have no problem saying that I'm 48 years old and so I'm at a stage of my life where you lived long enough to have a enough in the rear view mirror to see what you've done well and what hasn't worked out so well. But you are also at a stage in your life that with good health, I mean my father lived to 94, I can put in another 35 or 40 years. And so what do you do when you have concerns about the future? What do you do? When you feel that there may not be a place for you in society anymore. The job that I used to do is being done by a different generation. Uh, the things that you found important, those conversations aren't as fluid with the folks that are about nowadays. What do you do when there's been tremendous loss? Maybe bankruptcy, loss of property, the fracture of a relationship, even significant health challenges. What do you do to prepare to live for the next half of your life? And so I've wrestled with those questions along the way. And I've felt that perhaps it would be an area to explore how to empower people to use the experience they've had up to that point to fuel the rest of their life. It came from a conversation I had with a friend that I was trying to encourage where I said, if you could start today, and I think there were 45 at the time, I said, if you can start today with zero, you have zero money, you own zero property, you have nothing. You were just starting and not as zero, but you're starting with zero. But you have the benefit of 25 years of adult life and all of the experience that's encompassed, whether it's good or bad, bankruptcy, divorce, somebody cheated on you, you know, you have two babies, whatever it is, all of it put together, what would you do right now? What could you do right now? Knowing what you know, and being able to explore that question in different verticals in

finance and health in love, uh, in career development, in spirituality, looking at all the core verticals in our life and saying, how do you start from the middle, right? The paradigm is you start from the beginning, but how do you start from the middle? And looking at starting from the middle and living your best life to the end is something that I'm going to explore. So, I'm qualified. I think the book is targeted to the 38 to 55 range so I'm going to be making my thoughts in that age and because I'm 48, I feel that I've got some clout in that area and it won't just be my musings, it'll be something that I'll take the opportunity to have a lot of conversations about and conversations from different people, different ages, different people at various parts of that age spectrum and also different cultures.

Richard Picart: Cause I think there's intersectionality there that should be explored. Let's see what happens. For me, it's not about being rich, it's not about being famous. It certainly doesn't hurt, but it's really about exploring that thought space. I think more people are going to be entering that space and if they can realize that it's not over. You know, I lost that house. Yeah, I got bankrupt. Or you know, that business that was going so well, the industry turned and all of a sudden I've got nothing except photos and invoices. What do I do now? Yes, I'm 51, I'm full of health, but I've got nothing. My credit is zero. Like what do I do now? There's enough people out there that if I can strike a conversation, I think there's enough people that would listen.

listenN: I totally agree. And I think that the thing that happens for a lot of people during those moments in life is when the world no longer sees you, the way that you see yourself. That's starting in the middle to me. Whereas, when you're in your 20s, you come out of university, let's say, or you've got a degree or you've come out of the military or whatever you've done, and you're like, the world sees me as a young person who's educated, who's now capable of doing and learning and developing and etc. And so opportunity just seems to be everywhere for those types of people. And then when you are in the middle, so to speak, when life hands you a change and the world's looking at you differently. How do you navigate from there? And I think what you're talking about in exploring that and going into that space with people, I think there'll be a huge appetite for that because it seems right now that's the world that we're living in, a lot of people are being offered that opportunity to start from the middle, whether they like it or not.

listenN: It's a very needed space to be in. Gary V talks about this. He has one of his little blurbs or video blogs where he talks to people that are, you know, 40, 50, 60 years old, don't miss this amazing opportunity. There's so much going on right now. I know in the podcasting world, for example, there's still a huge void of old people talking to old people. So there's a huge opportunity there for people to start to talk about the concerns and the things that are going on for people that are in a part of their life where, you know, 50 years ago we didn't really exist. You know, you couldn't be 60 and still think, oh, I've got 20, 30, 40 years ahead

of me. You know, people didn't think that way. You know, 50 years ago they were like, Oh, I'm 60, I'm going to retire sooner and I'm going to just go to Florida and I'm going to wrap this life up. And so I think helping people embrace that period. I mean, that's good. Good on you. That sounds like a really great idea. I'm speaking of books, what are you reading right now?

Richard Picart:

Great question. First thing is I try to read and listen to books at the same time. So, I'm listening to a book called, Hollywood Success by DeVon Franklin. And so DaVon Franklin is a Hollywood executive, but he's also a person of faith. So it kind of taps into something we talked about earlier where how does somebody who is devout in their faith, navigate a world that can be seen as a cesspool of the dark side. Right. And so he does a fantastic job. He's a very well respected person in the industry. So I've been listening to his book. I'm about three quarters through definitely a recommended read DaVon Franklin, and then I am reading a book called The Happiness Equation and so that's been actually a really good read. Familiar ideas. There wasn't a lot of new light in that book that I hadn't discovered before but I enjoyed definitely the reminder. I've got about a quarter of the book left but I'm enjoying, uh, especially the part that I'm at right now that talks about the decisions and the volume of decisions we make every day, every single decision we make. So, I'm turning into a little bit more of a minimalist. I might be that Mark Zuckerberg person that wears the same gray shirt every single day to reduce my decision making. But the spirit of it is, you know, finding the right combinations that can lead to a higher degree of happiness, a little bit more streamlined lifestyle. Uh, and it kinda leads into, you know, some of, even theming of some of the aspects that I'm going to write about in the coming months and year. With regards to starting from the middle, you know, streamlining yourself a little bit, taking some of that stress off and not impose certain decisions on yourself that you don't need to, you've made some decisions along the way. You'll need to continue to make them. But, just kind of streamlining that. So those are the two books I'm diving into. I try to read at least a book a month and listen to a book a month.

listenN:

That's fantastic. I went through a phase where I was listening to audio books a lot and because I was walking to and from work in the winter so I would just put a big winter coat on, put a hood up, put in my headphones and go. The thing that I love about listening to a book, just like when you're reading a book, you can't put it down. So you end up reading into the wee hours of the night and not getting a good night's sleep. I'd find myself walking a longer route to get to work cause I didn't want the book to end. Right. And, just on a side note, I was into running, I still am into running, but I was into more long distance running years ago there was a book called Born to Run. A great book and I was listening to it while I was running and I would end up running, you know, three, four or five kilometers longer than I was supposed to cause I didn't want to stop listening. And so that's the thing that I find fascinating about audio books is that you'll find yourself doing things like walking or running or maybe it's exercising at the

gym or whatever more just because you're engaged in what you're listening to and you don't want to stop.

Richard Picart: Totally identify with that. I was driving to Alabama where my daughter lives and it's about an 18 hour drive. And I was doing it by myself. I was bringing her a car. And so I, you know, you listen to the radio, but after a while it's like, yeah, let me put it in a book. So I threw in a book, it was a book by Sheryl Sandberg, Option B, a fantastic book. And, so I started it. It's seven hours long. Well, man, did it ever make the drive go by quick? I was like, wow, I'm already at my checkpoint and the book is done. I felt so accomplished that day. I listened to a whole book.

listenN: It's awesome. So, in the nature of books and that sort of thing, do you have any favorite quotes?

Richard Picart: Oh, you're challenging me. My short term memory is terrible. So I'm probably gonna pass. I would probably, you know, modify my answer. I would say, I'll talk about maybe genres that I like in terms of favorite genres from which I get a lot of quotes and insights from would definitely be, I don't know if it's called self-help, that seems super broad to me, but books where people are trying to help me be better pour back into me because I find myself in a situation where I'm pouring out a lot. You know, getting those refreshers coming back in is, I find it to be a filling experience. So I enjoy that. I don't do horror books. I don't do super fantasy. I don't do super romance. I don't do that type of stuff. Just not things I gravitate towards. I find that I gravitate towards either books that help me with how I'm engaged with other human beings or how I engage with my creator. And so that's kind of the genres I slosh around in. I don't mind a little tongue in cheek, you know, so, I'll read a little bit of humor from now and then. Uh, but generally that's what you'll usually find me consuming from time to time.

listenN: I'm, I'm very much the same. I read a lot of what you would call self-help to the point of, it's almost depressing cause you're like, you know, like, could I just pick up a book that's for enjoyment only. And so a couple of years ago we went on a vacation and I ended up just reading a book that was a novel and it was quite enjoyable to just get lost in something where you're truly being just entertained. So Richard it has been a real pleasure chatting with you. I love your outlook on life and education and spirituality. Um, if people want to reach out to you, connect with you, what's the best way, how can they find you?

Richard Picart: Just reach out and email me. I mean, I'm pretty easy to get a hold of. You can reach me, Richard Picart dot com. So that's R I C H A R D P as in Paul, I C A R T as in Tom dot com. That'll lead you to my LinkedIn. You can hit me that way. Or Richard@RichardPicart.com. I'll respond. I try not to put too many degrees between me and people, feel free to reach out and if I could put my shameless plug in I'm pretty good at education, pretty good at consulting. I help a lot of

companies and people who are innovating, reach new audiences and develop new products and develop their businesses, design their business in such a way so that they can get ahead. So folks are looking for fresh ideas, are looking for someone who can help connect their ideas to the right audience. I'm happy to help.

listenN: That's great. And I hope that they do, because I think that you do have a very fresh way of looking at things. And, in this day and age, there's so much going on for businesses and for people, they just can't know everything. And, we were talking earlier about television, radio, digital and all that kind of stuff. And, I think that the hardest thing for businesses to grasp right now is that it all works. You know, newspapers didn't go away, magazines didn't go away. They still work, they just don't work like they used to. And so we're just getting so many layers of things that a business has to be good at. And now they have to be content creators and they have to be storytellers and they have to be showing up in all of these places and doing the right thing.

listenN: So to find your tribe or the people that are on your team to help you excel in certain areas is so important in today's economy for people to be successful. So yes, it's great to find people like yourself where it's like, okay, you got my back over here. You got my back there. Um, so yeah, that's great that you're able to give a shout out for that. I appreciate your time and I've really enjoyed chatting with you. Thank you so much for being on listenN.

Richard Picart: It's my pleasure to be here on listenN and I'm happy to come back anytime.

listenN: Yeah. Well when your books ready to go, we'll have you back and we'll chat.

Richard Picart: All right,

listenN: Thanks Richard. Take care.

Richard Picart: Bye.

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