**Motivational Mondays interview:**

**Adam Grant – *Airing* 02.01.2021 (Part 1)**

**Music intro** [00:00:00-00:00:01]

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:02] Welcome ladies and gentlemen to Motivational Mondays.

I’m your host Max Irzhak, and joining us this week is *a very* special guest.

He’s been recognized as one of the world’s10 most influential management thinkers.

He’s been the top-rated professor at Wharton for 7 years in a row.

He’s earned his place on Fortune’s 40 Under 40 list.

An author of four New York Times bestselling books that have sold millions of copies, and translated into 35 languages.

And he had a *fairly* popular TED Talk, raking in 17 million views and picking up a standing ovation along the way.

As an organizational psychologist for some of the biggest brands in the world, he is an expert on helping us find meaning at work, and live more generous and creative lives.

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce this week’s guest, Adam Grant.

**Adam Grant** [00:00:45] Thanks, Max, pleasures all mine. I'm just hoping this doesn't become a de-motivational monday.

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:50] What is Organizational Psychology? What's the root of what you try to get at?

**Adam Grant** [00:00:57] Basically, I study how to make work not suck. So I spend a lot of my time trying to redesign jobs to make them more meaningful and motivating, help teams become more creative, organizations become more collaborative—and so anything in the realm of “people at work” and trying to make all the hours we spend in our jobs a little bit better, is right up my alley.

**Max Irzhak** [00:01:20] So, you have a new book called ‘THINK AGAIN: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know’.

Can you give our listeners a quick summary? And what made you want to research this topic and write the book in the first place?

**Adam Grant** [00:01:33] Most of the horrible decisions i've made in my life came when i didn't know what i didn't know. I think probably the most formative one was in 1999 when I was shocked to get into Harvard and decided I wanted to go, but wasn't sure if i would be smart enough and also didn't know if i would have any friends there. So I started America Online searches to find people who were going to be future classmates, and we found each other, we started a little email list, and every week we added new future classmates to the list. By the time we got to campus in September, we had connected more than an eighth of the entering freshman class. And some people started calling it “Harvard’s first online social network”. But then we said “you know, we’re all here in the same town. We can walk to each other’s dorms, why do we need an online social network.” and 5 years later, Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook in the house next door.

So, a lot of us have regretted that decision and it didn’t even occur to us to rethink the assumptions we made. We assumed that an online social network was a hobby for people who were far apart. Not that it would of interest to people who were collocated. We assumed that it was only for High School Seniors, not that people all around the world, at every stage of life might use it. We assumed that it was, you know, just for fun as opposed to a potential business.

And look Max, i don't know how to code, i don't think i ever would've had the vision for what social media has become, but i think we’ve all had moments where we took for granted beliefs and assumptions and opinions that we should’ve questioned. If there’s anything this pandemic has taught us, it’s that we need to get a little more comfortable rethinking a lot of the beliefs, and even the identities that we hold dear. And so Think Again is really about what it takes to build the skill and the will to question ourselves, but also open other people’s minds, and build cultures of learning in the teams and communities and workplaces that we wander into.

**Max Irzhak** [00:03:28] And in this journey to have an open mind. What was the most surprising thing you’ve allowed yourself to change your mind about?

**Adam Grant** [00:03:37] One of the ones that surprised me the most is when i was in college, my identity was all anchored on hard work. And I thought okay, you know, I'm a great believer in luck, and I find that the harder I work the more I have of it. And I think that’s a ridiculous thing to believe at this point. I think first of all, there’s a lot of white male privilege embedded in that belief, right, because hard work doesn’t pay off equally for everyone.

Secondly, and just as importantly, i don't think that working hard is inherently virtuous anymore, right. I want to know what you’re working hard toward and whether your cause or your goal is actually going to benefit other people, or whether it’s self-serving or maybe even harmful. And so what i’ve done is i guess i've rethought my values system, and now i have a really clear hierarchy of values. Generosity is first, excellence is second, integrity is third, and freedom is fourth. And there are some days where I flip the order, and I say well actually integrity should be at the very top. But my hope is that i don't run into moments every single day where i might violate integrity, whereas i want to think on a daily basis about how i can live with generosity, and how i can strive for excellence. And so, what I direct my work ethic toward, what I invest my grit in, is much more selective than it was when I was in college and just thought “hard work is an inherent good”. I guess I was an early poster child for hustle culture, and i worshipped at the altar of grit. And now, i think i have a much more nuanced view of it.

**Max Irzhak** [00:05:10] Many times, we see disagreements and criticism as a personal attack rather than as an opportunity to learn.

How can people train themselves to follow the truth and put their feelings aside, regardless of who’s right or wrong?

**Adam Grant** [00:05:27] I think the first thing to do is to get better at knowing what you don't know. The term for that is intellectual humility. It’s being hyper-conscious of all the things that you’re completely ignorant about. So you can actually make a list of all the things that you’re clueless about. I did this while i was writing Think Again.

And i came up with “i know nothing about art, music, financial markets, chemistry”—and the longer i thought about it, the longer the list became. And that did 2 things for me. One is, it made me curious about why I've stayed so ignorant about those areas, and what knowledge I might be missing. And two is it led me to look at my network differently, and think about the people in my life who are pretty well-informed about some of those topics. And so now when somebody asks a question about any of those issues, i try to resist the Joey Tribbiani instinct on Friends, to nod and smile and go along like i know what im talking about, and instead say “i actually know embarrassingly little about that topic” and then I ask a bunch of questions and I get to learn something.

And so I think that’s helpful, and I would say in an ideal world, that list is ever-growing, not shrinking. That every time you learn something, you should become more aware of how many things you don't understand yet. And to me, that's the mark of being an expert. You don't marvel at how much you know, you marvel at how little you know. And then I think beyond that, it’s helpful to think about being wrong differently. Not as a threat to your ego, but as an opportunity for discovery. I’ve spent time with Nobel prize winning scientists like Danny Conoman, with some of the worlds best super-forecasters who actually compete in tournaments to predict who’s going to win a Presidential election for example. And one of the things they have in common is when they find out they’re wrong, they actually feel joy because they’ll say “well, this is a clue that now im less wrong than i was before”. And I think that’s a mindset that we could all try to adopt a little more of, and one of the ways they do it is when they form an opinion, they actually make a list of the conditions where they would change their mind. And that way, they’re keeping themselves honest about “hey, if i learn something new, or if i discover threatening information, i'm not immediately going to dismiss that because that might fall into one of my criteria for when i would rethink my views”.

**Max Irzhak** [00:07:44] Let’s say everyone listening to the episode today becomes more open-minded. How can they teach *others* to keep an open mind? What are the practical steps?

**Adam Grant** [00:07:55] One of my biggest lessons when i was writing Think Again is that it’s pretty rare that you can change somebody else's mind. What’s more common is that you can help them find their own motivation to change their own mind. And that means you probably want to spend less time telling people what they should think, and more time asking them how they form their opinions, and what would lead them to change their mind. So one of the questions that I've started asking people more often is when I get in the middle of a heated debate.

First of all, I have to remember that I can lead a horse to water, but I can't make it think. And then, I have to say okay let’s have a conversation about the conversation. Let's agree on those conditions for when we would both change our mind and i might say “Hey Max, i feel like we’ve landed in a place where the temptation is either get mad at each other or to say, whoa let's just agree to disagree.” And I think that’s a travesty because if we agree to disagree, we’re closing the door to future learning from each other, and we’re saying neither of us is open to even doing a little bit or revision to what we think. And so what I would say instead is “what would lead you to change your mind?” And then I might answer the same question back, or I might even lead with it, and say “Okay, here are the opinions I have right now based on where we’ve landed in this disagreement”. And I would love to say, okay, “here are some scenarios where I can imagine shifting my views. Are you aware of any data that really challenged one of the points that i made?” And I think the mistake a lot of us make when we go into disagreements is we think that our job is to replace somebody else’s beliefs with something better. And I've made this mistake over and over again throughout my life. And so I think that it's probably worth remembering that any time you get into a debate or a disagreement with somebody else, you can't expect them to change their mind if you’re not willing to change yours.

**Max Irzhak** [00:09:59] The premise of your new book is being open to rethinking and relearning.

We live in a culture where people are frequently criticized for flip-flopping and changing their minds on something they said or thought 10 years ago.

How do we make that change as a society, and start embracing this concept of mental evolution and mental flexibility?

**Adam Grant** [00:10:21] I think that changing your mind gets a bad rap because people say “well that’s not consistent with what you said 2 weeks ago, or what you did 2 years ago, and so you look like a hypocrite. And sometimes, you are being a hypocrite, right? If you’ve abandoned a set of values that were important to you, then you’re probably violating your principles. But there’s such a thing as evolving your values, and more importantly there's such a thing as evolving your beliefs. And i actually think the way to look at this idea of flip-flopping is to say instead of just having a knee-jerk reaction where somebody changes their mind they’re a flip-flopper and they’re a hypocrite… we should ask *why* they changed their mind. If they did it in politician mode because they’re trying to please an audience, then yep, probably a hypocrite. If they did it because they were thinking like a scientist, and they found more rigorous evidence, more compelling logic, they were actually putting the truth above their tribe, then that’s growth. That means they’ve evolved their opinions based on the best information available. And I think that we should stop rewarding leaders for being consistent. We should start rewarding leaders for being willing to update their views as the information around them changes, and especially as the world around them changes.

**Max Irzhak** [00:11:43] Adam, it has been a true pleasure. Thank you for encouraging everyone to get a little better each day, to keep pursuing the truth, and helping us all to keep an open mind.

**Adam Grant** [00:11:51] Thank you for having me. I hope there’s some things I said that you’ll help me rethink next time we talk.

**Max Irzhak** [00:11:56] I encourage all of our listeners to buy Adam’s new book “THINK AGAIN: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know” available February 2nd.

We’ll also be giving away free copies of THINK AGAIN to 20 lucky NSLS members on social media.

To enter, share 1 thing you’ve rethought in the last year using #theNSLS and tagging us @theNSLS on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

Thank you everyone for listening. We’ll see you next week for Part 2 of Adam’s interview on Motivational Mondays.

**Music intro** [00:12:25-00:12:30]