

The Financial Harmony Podcast

Episode 7

A Look Behind the Scenes of my Financial Harmony Dreams

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Hello and welcome to another episode of the Financial Harmony Podcast! This is episode number 7: *A look behind the scenes of my financial harmony dreams.*

So in the last few weeks we have been looking at finding financial harmony as well as starting off the new year with some clear goals, in particular regarding your income goal for 2021 as well as a net worth goal and strategy.

Now, I listen to quite a few podcasts and one of the things I always quite enjoy after I've listened to a few episodes of a particular show, is to actually get to know the host of the show a little bit better. I always enjoy the next episodes a lot more when I feel I have a better idea of who the host is, what their passions or interests are and how they are working towards new goals or projects in their life.

So with that in mind, I thought it would be interesting to do the same here on my podcast and tell you a little bit more about my personal finance story and journey. I hope you'll enjoy this, and if not, then please just tune in again next week!

Okay so I'll start at the very beginning maybe of my personal finance story, or maybe even earlier than that as there are a few contributing factors that made me become so interested in this topic. If you listened to episode 4, I talked a little bit about my professional life, so you might remember this, but since 2010 I have principally been working two jobs: one as a director of the language programmes for a big Summer Camp organization in Spain, as well as running my own language school together with my husband. Now this maybe sounds busy and actually it was! Haha. Summers were often crazy, working both for the summer camp and having a busy period in our language school. And during the year, we received school groups from abroad who came over for a cultural and linguistic experience, and that required a lot of extra hours, often really late at night as well as early in the morning. As we were - and still are - a very small team and as the overall responsible for the school groups, I was often there when the groups were there as well. Then we have an English academy which also falls under my area of responsibility, so that too required a



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lot of personal attention to the families as well as to the students and of course the staff.

So as I said, it was hard work, often very long hours and, as is usually the case in the language industry, the amount of money you can actually make there isn't all that much.. BUT I loved the job. I learned so much in so many different areas, it is crazy when I think about it. As a business owner you really are constantly learning new things. And the amount of roles you take on is just ... I don't know, I've lost track I guess of the number of things I've done.

But as I said, both me and my husband we loved running our business and shaping it the way we wanted. And although we started right in the middle of the crisis, it was great to see our business grow after a few years and I guess we felt really rewarded with what we did and had created.

I guess also the freedom of being the ones in control made it so exciting too, as although we didn't enjoy everything we had to do, it was still our decision to do those things instead of outsourcing them, because maybe that didn't feel right or we just didn't have the money to pay for it.

At the same time I was also the only one amongst my different friends who ran their own company, so whenever they had a right moan about their employers or something, I was always relieved that I didn't have to worry about that side and I guess I was also sometimes able to give a bit of a perspective from an employer's side to them too.

But, after a few years and I think this started about a year or two after I turned 30, I also became aware of the fact that although I still overall really enjoyed my job, there wasn't much financial progression. So I worked really hard and long hours and lots of responsibilities, which again I loved, but I also realized that I wasn't ever going to make much more money than I was by then. Whereas at the same time, my friends or my and my husband's siblings they all got promotions, got more money, went on more vacations or bought a second car or a bigger car. I knew that I had pretty much already reached the max of my lifetime income cap, give or take maybe a small increase still. Again, there just isn't so much profit to be made in the industry we work in and also because of the set up of our product, which was very heavy on its staffing, which was also a conscious decision we made, but that dramatically reduces margins. And that wasn't something we wanted to change either as it really identified our service let's say. And the other big factor was that we were based in southern Spain with high unemployment and low wages so for our local market for our English classes, the price we could charge wasn't all that much.

Now I didn't necessarily feel I wanted to go on 5 vacations a year, but having at least one a year would be nice, something we didn't actually have, principally because for many years we hardly took time off. And if we did, we always ended up going to one of our respective countries as we both live away from our families and friends.

So, again I wasn't necessarily jealous of everything that other people had or were earning, but it did make me realize that maybe I wasn't going to be able to save up for all those goals I had set



myself many years before, nor did I have a clue what my retirement was going to look like as I didn't have the money to invest in a retirement plan.

I guess that was the start of things starting to brew a little bit. Then when you are in your 30s you hear more about how you need to make sure you have a retirement plan, but also things about mortgages and a life insurance. Now the funny thing was that by then I had already had a mortgage for about 8 years or so. But in all honesty I had no idea how a mortgage actually worked and really why I had a life insurance in the first place. This is a bit embarrassing really when I think of this now, but i guess that was reality.

So I set out on a journey to learn a little bit more about personal finances. My idea was to just read some books and articles online. But it turned out that I find it so incredibly interesting and exciting, but also I found it hard to navigate, as it's hard to find clear and practical information that you can apply to your own situation. So I decided to document what I learned, first just in a notebook, then later I turned this into blog posts on my website. Fast forward a few years, I turned those blog posts into a book that was published at the end of 2018 and then in summer 2020 I published another book. That's a very quick fast forward as it takes a long time to write a book, but as you can imagine by then I was completely enjoying anything to do with personal finance and I wanted to help others on their journey too.

So these last few years were summarized very quickly, but I just wanted to explain how and why I became so passionate about personal finance. So just to clarify, as I want to be honest about something, which is a scary thing to do, and I guess the reason I am doing is that I recently spoke to somebody in my audience on a phone call about personal finance and goals. And she told me that one of her dreams is to earn more money than her siblings, have the bigger house and have the really expensive designer's watch. She doesn't want this to show off, but just to be the one out of all of her siblings who just made more money. And I thought when I heard this that that was so super courageous of her to just state that. She told me about it, but she was also honest to herself about that, and I thought that was awesome. So inspired by that, I've decided I wanted to be honest about my principal reason to dive into personal finance, and I guess you can call it envy or jealousy or whatever you want, but yes, in big part that was inspired by me feeling that others around me were making more money and still had many more promotion opportunities in the next 30+ years to come. So even though I was the one with my own company and I was the one who over time I was sure had worked many more hours than most of them, as working evenings and weekends on top of the standard 40 hours, was pretty standard for many years. So if you're listening maybe just ask yourself whether there is some part of you, however big or small, that sometimes feels this too. I'd love to hear from you or I'd love to know that you're willing to admit this to yourself too!

The thing is, once you admit this, it's a lot easier to turn it into a more positive outcome let's say than if you try to hide from those feelings. So once I became clear on these feelings that I had, I also decided that I did not want to let these emotions affect my actions or become bitter or self-



righteous about things. I wanted to turn it into something positive, which many years later turned into those two books, this podcast and many exciting plans I have for 2021.

Now I've come clean on the origins of my passion for personal finance, which by now is no longer so inspired by feelings of inferiority to family and friends, but much more by the excitement I feel for what I do now, let's move on to the next part of this episode, which I promised to speak about a few episodes back, which are my personal financial harmony goals. Which I wanted to share with you today to maybe inspire you or just so you feel you get to know me a little bit better.

Here goes. And I'll follow the same outline i recommended in Episode 2 where i talked about how to identify 1 big exciting goal as well as 3 current focus points you want to spend time on.

My number 1 BIG goal, is to own a house with a big garden, I'm talking about at least 1000m², so that's about 10.000 square feet. And here's my why: I currently have a small garden of about 15 m², which was great when we moved in, as my garden actually connects to a forest behind our house, which was fabulous as when we bought our house we had two cats, so it was easy for them to go out and have the freedom to wander around. Turned out only of the two cats actually ventured out as the other one wasn't really brave enough, but anyway. Then after about a year, we found this really small kitten in our street, like really weak and ill and tiny and pussy-eyed. So we took her in and obviously adopted her. Then another two years later, we were on our way to see some friends in a town about 20 minutes from us, and I was driving when I saw something move on the road. So I pulled over, with the idea of making sure that whatever it was, it had made it safely to the other side of the road. But when I stopped I couldn't see it anymore. So I got out of the car and walked all the way around to car to see where it was, and just when I got back to the driver's side of the car I pretty much had already decided that I had seen something that wasn't actually there, so I'm about to get back into my car and I see this skinny little dog with a massive bite mark on her back sit on my husband's lap. Haha. There were absolutely no houses in the area whatsoever, so as you can guess, we took her with us. Now she didn't have a chip or anything and she looked really poorly and underfed and everything, so we ended up adopting her too. Now she is quite a small dog, a terrier, so the small garden wasn't such a problem and we take her on several walks each in the forest so that is fine. Then another few years after that, we ended up adopting another dog - I know it's a bit of a zoo in my house people say. So by then one of my cats had sadly passed away so there were 2 cats still, then my little terrier and now the other dog that had grown up in a pound and was 1.5 years when we adopted him, all skin and bones and super scared of everything, including music (especially Beyonce's Halo for some reason), he was also scared of the reflection in windows, and also of staircases. Now we have a small house, which consists of 3 floors, so each floor is really quite small. So the fact that this dog was so scared of staircases, meant that he only ever was on one floor in our house for over a year, as he didn't venture up nor down really. After a year he suddenly decided to overcome his fear and ever since he's been fine, but that first year he was just always in the same place in our house. He is a mix of a lab and a greyhound, so a little bigger than my terrier. Of course he still got his walkies in the forest every day but still. Then another year after that, I had the crazy idea of fostering a dog that had been surrendered by its



previous owners. Now quite a few of our close friends as well as our family instantly said: ah so you've adopted another dog. Which I categorically denied and said it was just temporarily. But of course, me and my husband we really are suckers for when it comes to taking in animals, so yes, we ended up adopting that one too. He this one's a big lab, so he has a lot of energy, he was still relatively young when we got him and with him we definitely notice the space issue in our house. Now was it clever to adopt so many animals, well maybe not, but the pounds here in southern Spain are super full, and many animals are sacrificed each year, and I know they've got a much better life now than before. So I think overall, it was the right decision.

But anyway, that is my principal reason for wanting a bigger garden as I would love to see my doggies just being able to potter around much more instead of having to wait for one of their daily walks. And that is my big dream. I am not so looking forward to having to maintain a big garden, but I guess that's a side point. Then once we've got a bigger garden, then maybe my husband can also complete the zoo, as he's always wanted to have a rescue sheep. I don't even know whether that's a thing and how that works or even why he wants this, but one is allowed to dream I guess, so that's okay. And he also really wants a duck, and again don't really know why or how. So maybe we'd need a pond in our garden, if anybody knows anything about this then absolutely let me know, obviously ideally it would be a rescue duck and a rescue sheep I guess, but that's to be seen still. And I would love some chickens. Especially I think, the chickens would need a protected space from the dogs I imagine. But anyway, that's my BIG dream and that is the one I am working towards most of all!

Then I've also got some smaller goals. I won't go into as much detail maybe for these ones, so I'll go through them a little bit faster.

The first one is to turn my personal finance business into a full-time endeavour. So I've set different long term goals on this one, but for 2021 I want to create a turnover of €20k. That's a lot of money, but I wanted to set an exciting goal, of course I've still got my language school that I run with my husband, and my new business is far from being full time, but it is a goal I am working towards.

My second day-to-day goal is to keep investing time in our youngest dog, that is the last addition I mentioned before, that we first only fostered but then ended up adopting. The black labrador mix, he is also a reactive dog, meaning he reacts to most other dogs, men with hats, beards or anything out of the ordinary really, by barking really loudly. This has been something that became quite a problem about 6 months ago, it had been building up for a while, but then it really became too much. But I have been working together with him for the last 4 months or so following this really good online programme and I've seen a lot of improvement already, but I know it's an ongoing process. I love that dog to bits but he can be a real pain in the neck, but I want to continue to invest time in him. Which isn't always easy, with our company that we run, then also this business I am expanding, the podcast, as well just having 3 dogs in general, but to me this is absolutely essential, as this goes back to the concept of Financial Harmony I described in episode 1 and 2 of



this show, which is all about knowing how to spend your money, time and energy on both short term and long term dreams.

So sometimes we just get caught up either in living our day to day life and meeting all the demands, OR we just end up living for the future, when we finally ... I don't know, fill in the dots there, so when we finally make more money. Or when we finally have that bigger house. Or when we finally get a promotion. So when we live like that, we forget to live in the here and now. And not just our daily obligations like work and cooking and taking the kids to schools and their after-school activities. But also to focus on ongoing current goals. Like I have with my dog. I need to keep investing time in him and not blame being busy for not being able to help him with his behaviour and guide him to better alternatives.

Now on to my 3rd and last current goal and I might need to refine this one a little with time as I feel it's quite a big or general one. But I want to establish a happy, productive and healthy daily, weekly and monthly routine. Hmm yeah now I've said this, it definitely does sound a little much. The thing is, I love routines and I always want to get the most out of my days. Like I want to do exercise every day, I want to cook, I also want to get my work done, I also want take my dogs on at least two of their daily walks, I want to do a daily cleaning task in the house. There are really so many things I want to do. But I have this sort of long-term desire to figure it all out and establish this daily routine, along with weekly and monthly tasks that I want to complete. So I'm going to continue my quest for finding out what routine works for me, not just from a productivity sense but also from a happiness sense as I sometimes forget about that, and then I don't make time for the things that make me happy.

So there you have my big dream as well as my three more current objectives for 2021. And that takes me to the last part of this episode, which is how I am going to make these things happen.

So starting with my BIG goal, that is the one of living in a house with a BIG garden, my principal way of getting there is by leveraging my first current goal or priority, which is to turn my personal finance business into a full time business. I want to make more money by doing so and in that way I will start building up savings to get a downpayment for a house together.

Then, I am going to achieve this goal, so the business goal, by continuing this podcast in order to reach new listeners every day, I am also going to venture into offering online courses and just getting my name out there. So I am talking about doing real scary stuff like facebook lives, getting onto other people's podcasts in the next few months. Stuff that really sounds intimidating, but I know I need to get into these things if I really want to achieve my goals!

My doggie is my second day to day goal, to keep working with him to help him make better choices when we run into people and other dogs. One thing that has helped me greatly to keep this up is by reminding myself of everything we've already achieved together. So sometimes I get really demotivated when he has a bad reaction again and that can really upset me. And then I just focus on the bad. But when I remind myself of all the times he has already been able to interact much



better, that keeps me inspired to keep going and not get angry or annoyed with him, but more see it as a challenge that he and I still need to overcome together. Maybe this sounds a bit airy fairy but by looking at it this way, it really is much easier to do something with it, instead of just blaming my dog and taking all responsibility away from myself. As by blaming just him, I also tell myself that I can't do anything about it. But I know I can. So yes, for this one I am going to continue to focus on the progress made as well as make sure to always give him a few minutes in the mornings to work on things together, that's how we start our day on our walk, we train on something new, so that he learns to make better decisions.

And now for the last one, which is the routine. This is a hard one to find the right balance, and this might sound a bit bizarre as this goal might in some ways sound like the easiest of my goals, but I think this is the most challenging one for me. I've been trying to find the right balance for years, but I really struggle with this. So in 2017 and 2018 when I was working on my first book, I had a super productive routine, like I got up really early, I walked the dogs, then did exercise for about 45 minutes, then I meditated, followed by a healthy breakfast and writing time, and that was all before going to work. So that's how I managed to write my first book, but it made me really miserable at times. So even though it was a very productive routine it wasn't a very happy one. I also spent about 10 hours a day at work, and I just wasn't able to enjoy stuff or find time to disconnect. I was always doing something to work towards a bigger goal. And I never had time to read or for a cup of tea or i don't know, paint my nails or something haha. So finding the right balance between a productive, healthy and happy routine is really a hard one for me. I want to do and achieve so many things every day, but I also need to focus on me-time too.. So yeah, I see this as a challenging one, more so than making my business successful, which is a bit strange maybe as that might be much harder... haha. Anyway, I am going to try and implement a new habit every two weeks, starting next week and see what works and what is achievable. I guess one thing I struggle with is also admitting that I can't do it all.

Anyway, these were my one big dream, and my 3 current priorities that I am going to focus on in this year, as well as my strategies on how I think I can achieve them.

Wow, this really was a very personal episode, I think I am going to not talk about myself for quite a while now. Next week I am back to a less personal episode again as usual.

So that was it, the end of this episode of the Financial Harmony Podcast, a look behind the scenes of my financial harmony dreams. I hope you enjoyed it and found it useful, make sure to subscribe and I'll see you next time.

