

**EPISODE 687**

[INTRODUCTION]

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**FT:** I'm about to celebrate my 38<sup>th</sup> birthday this month and my guest is the same age. The big difference? She is retired. Tanja Hester has been retired now for just a couple of months so we're getting her fresh off the 9 to 5 boat. She and her husband both worked as political consultants making six figures each for many years. They loved their work, they found it fulfilling however, Tanja watched her father lose his mobility early in his life because of a degenerative neuromuscular disability and she realized she could have the same fate and so, she wanted to make efforts to retire early and be able to spend her able-bodied of years hiking, traveling, enjoying all the world had to offer away from the office.

After years of saving, which she says is half of her income, she and her husband finally reached financial independence. At the end of last year, 2017, they left their careers and are currently enjoying outdoor life where they live in Lake Tahoe. Along the way Tanja started a blog called, Our Next Life, to document the couple's journey and now gets over a 150,000 page views every month. It even earned her the 2017 Plutos Award for being one of the best blogs of the year. We'll talk about her journey, her blog, and how someone who is not a natural saver, as Tanja admits, how she was able to retire before the age of 40 and she hopes never to work again in her life.

Here's Tanja.

[INTERVIEW]

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**FT:** Tanja Hester welcome to So Money and also congratulations on early retirement, now just two months into it. Congratulations.

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**TH:** Yeah, thank you on both. I'm so excited to be here and I'm also excited to be retired.

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**FT:** Let's talk about that. I mean, what – how do you define your retirement? How are you living your retirement? And then, we'll talk how you got here. By the way, you're only 38 years old. What is it? Is it everything you thought it would be?

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**TH:** It's funny, I don't think that I would have expected to actually feel retired this early into it. I think that I fully accepted it to be a longer process. But we kind went through a weird mix of circumstances ended up doing a quick trip to Taiwan in mid-January in our first month of early retirement and in a strange sort of way that was actually the best thing we could have done because it really got us out of a work mode. We were on the other side of the planet, we weren't awake at the time when people we knew were online anyway.

So, reaching for our phones or trying to stay up on email was a pointless endeavor just by virtue of time zone but then we were also out on adventures, going through national parks in Taiwan, which by the way Taiwan is amazing and beautiful and also really cheap and I can't believe more westerners don't go there. But I remember this exact moment when we were in Taroko Gorge National Park next to this crazy, beautiful, marble gorge raising down the road on mountain bikes trying to dodge like big tour buses full of Chinese tourists and that was kind of this incredible moment where both Mark and I stopped at one point we were like, "Oh my gosh we feel retired, it's a Monday our colleagues are at work."

"We have no desire to check email or you know ask what's up with them" and it really felt like a big switch but as for the rest of it I think it – what's it going to look like that's also a little bit TBD, you know, I write a blog and I'm going to keep doing that, I'm going to keep doing the podcast that I do. Mark and I are hoping to spend a lot more time skiing. We just got some great snow so he's out doing that right now and then I think we are really just excited to keep things kind of

open ended and to see what life looks like, and to see what we feel drawn to now that we all of a sudden have so many fewer constraints on our time, so it will be an evolution I'm sure.

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**FT:** Financially how much did you two accumulate before you felt it was an okay time, a safe time, to quit your jobs?

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**TH:** I think we don't share our overall numbers and I think there I think of limited utility of folks anyway but what I can talk about is multipliers of our annual expenses, so if you know how much it cost you to live for a year than some of this will make more sense and if you don't then I really encourage you to start tracking because I think that's really the first key to being able to save to retire early. But we did it two phase approach, so we had gotten a pretty good head start on our 401(k) tax advantage to retirement savings and that's mostly due to Mark being a super saver from an early age which is not a virtue that I share. But we had a good amount in 401(k)s already so we decided to do two phases were we saved a set amount in our taxable investment accounts.

So, just some basic vanguard index funds and those would support us until we get to the age of 59 and a half when we come in to happen to the 401(k)s. So, we saved about 16 and a half times our annual expenses in phase one and our phase one period is about 19 years, a little bit less than that so 16 times our expenses, to get through 19 years. Then we'll also have some rental income kicking in when we get to about 12 years down the road from now so that will help supplement things and then we've got many more times. We got about a little over 25 times our annual expenses currently in our 401(k) but that we expect to grow.

So, we're hoping that when we reach 59 and a half we'll be able to up our standard of living a bit and we don't feel like we are living a life of sacrifice now by any means but we should have the ability to do a few more things, travel a little more comfortably and also we hope give a lot more charitably by the time we get to our 60s and can have lived well in then what we call our traditional retirement.

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**FT:** Let's also explore the aspects of your lives where you live, what you do, how you save – as all those things contributed to your ability to save so much money and to retire early. I often when I was just having coffee with my friend Libby who is an editor at Business Insider and you know they cover a lot of stories about people who retire early and millionaires and low and behold the common ground is none of those people live in New York, none of those people you know probably even lived on the east coast for that matter. Many of these people like you got a head start and then investing because they had the good paying jobs to do so.

So, talk a little bit about the circumstances of your lives that allowed you to reach this massive goal?

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**TH:** Yeah, and I will say actually though it's true we weren't living in New York, we were definitely not living in cheap places for any stage of this. So, when Mark was saving, well it was in DC which certainly not as expensive as New York by any means but still an expensive place to live. A big chunk of our savings we did when we were living in Los Angeles and living in west LA, so not way out in suburbs or anything. We had a pretty expensive lifestyle there too and then the last six years and the bulk of our really focus retirement savings has been living in Tahoe which when it's included in rankings comes out as the fourth most expensive place in the country.

So, I do believe very strongly that you can do a lot of this stuff living in an expensive place it's just a matter of what choices do you make. So, for us moving from LA to Tahoe was not technically a change in terms of cost of living, in fact many things got much more expensive, gas here is amongst the most expensive gas in the country, groceries are a fortune we pay what we call the mountain tax on essentially everything. But a big difference is really cultural so in LA if we wanted to get together with friends we're basically looking at \$100 a person for dinner to go out somewhere.

And, that was just sort of like the standard that everybody we knew followed and nobody ever said that but that was just understood. Here in Tahoe even though things are equally as expensive people are much more likely to say something like, “Hey let’s go for a hike” or “Let’s go for a bike ride together,” or “Come over and we’ll have game night, and we’ll bring chips and salsa,” like the stuff that people want to do together is much, much cheaper and so, those are the types of things that I think have really made a big difference for us.

But, looking back if we had stayed in LA I think when we had this aha moment and realized the early retirement was possible I think we would just have to change some our choices and change really our money mindset and try to bring some of our friends along to say like, “Okay let’s not go out to that trendy restaurant let’s like come over and we’ll make pizza,” or you know do something that’s still equally fun but a lot less costly because that I think is the big significant factor more than living in a cheap place. We didn’t live in a cheap place at any stage of our savings and still made it happen.

I will say that like, we don’t have kids, we do have above average incomes. So we certainly were helped by factors there but I think people in the bigger more expensive cities are more likely to have higher income, so I think that tends to net out as a positive not a negative.

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**FT:** It can but to your point I think that there is a lot of money that gets blown away from the choices you make in socializing for sure but thank you for also mentioning that you don’t have children and that you were making above average salaries because I don’t think those were irrelevant factors. As a parent I know that majority of our money goes to child care and educating them, and clothing them, and feeding them and you know, fortunately though we live in an area that there are higher living wages here, so it does shake out but it still I think is more challenging for people living in high cost living areas. In say rural parts of America where they might be working from home and being able to make more than they would if they working and say at a company.

Tell us a little about what you were doing in your previous life? Your careers, you were both in engineering or –

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**TH:** I don't think –

[0:10:39.8]

**FT:** No, no, no, no, I don't why I thought that. I think I'm having a flashback from another couple.

[0:10:45.6]

**TH:** No, it's funny because so many people I think who are vocal in the early retirement community are related to engineering.

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**FT:** Yeah, I think it's often like a software engineer, like “Yeah, I work in tech”. I guess that's where I am, where my mind is going.

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**TH:** Yeah, I know Mark and I actually both worked in political consulting so, you know, consulting does tend to pay a little bit more but it also as one of those career fields where you're expected to be reachable at essentially all hours. Once we got to certain level in our career we will no longer even really able to be offline during vacation and every vacation we took over the last five, six years we worked, you know, maybe not half of it but like a good chunk of it.

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**FT:** Gee.

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**TH:** Yeah, so it's – you're paid well but you're also trading a lot for that and that was for us a big part of the motivation to retire early, was just recognizing like we were going at such frantic pace with work that – and I will say we've loved a lot of our work, we loved our clients, we thought really fortunate to get to do work that was meaningful to us but it was just a piece that we felt like that we couldn't sustain without taking a serious toll on our health and that was a trade-off we weren't willing to make long term. We really make it short term to save but over the long term we really wanted something different for our lives.

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**FT:** And, speaking of health, I know that what was the catalyst for wanting to retire early and wanting to achieve financial freedom earlier than later, was watching your father lose his mobility early in his life due to a degenerative neuromuscular disability. Can you talk a little more about that and how that impacted – affected you in your goals?

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**TH:** Yeah, it has been a huge motivator for me. So, my dad stopped working when I was in middle school and we're lucky in that his disability is not that one that's going to shorten his life but it has certainly impacted the types of things and how many activities he can do and it limited his ability to work. So, he was home most of the time from middle school and high school on and seeing that, you know, knowing that, that gene could also be in me as it turns out it is although it seems like at this point it's – I'm probably old enough that it's clear I'm not going to get his manifestation of it, which is really great. But we don't know that until recently and so, I've spent my whole life knowing like, okay, by the time I reach my mid 30's or about 40 my lifestyle I have to really change.

And, I might not be able to do a lot of the things that I love especially the outdoors kind of stuff. His balance is really affected so he can't do things like go hike on narrow mountain ridges like we like to do and things like that. So, seeing that, knowing that I had this timer, or this potential timer, has always been a big force in just recognizing like I can't spend my whole life at the office. The interesting thing is like I think we all in some way have a timer we just don't know what it is but I think that in my case it's really been a blessing of helping me hurry up and get to

a place where we could have control over our own time instead of assuming that all the things that we done and want to do are things we'll have time to do when we're at traditional retirement age. I never felt like I could put stuff off until then.

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**FT:** If we can go back even further in to your childhood now that we're talking about family and the influences that our parents place on us, I always ask guest about their biggest financial influences growing up as children. A moment, an experience, a job that they had or assume that they witness a conversation that was a moment, right, it was like a moment in their minds that now even now us adults they reflect on it impacts the way that they think about money, the relationship with money. What's the story like that, that you can share?

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**TH:** Oh my gosh, so many but I think the one that really stands out to me was this moment – my parents divorced when I was in middle school – but I definitely saw the way that they had very different money philosophies. I think my dad would prefer to save money my mom prefer to spend it and there was one moment where he said something along the lines of “Well you know, if she ever gets money she just spends it right away”. That it felt like really judgmental and harsh but also, you know, who knows it was probably true. I was too young to really process that stuff.

But, I do think it setup a narrative for me in some ways that, you know, women are spenders or women are bad with money that I do think that I carried for a long time and coupled with the fact that I am not a naturally disciplined person. I'm a person who needs systems of accountability to help me do things, you know, I would set money saving goals for myself in my early 20's early in my career and I would fail. I wouldn't be able to do it. I would say, “Okay, I'm going to save 50 bucks out of this pay check” and like by the time the next pay check came all of the money was spent I didn't save any of it.

And so, I really believed that I believe that I'm bad with money and I'm never going to be good at it and it was really making the connection for myself that it was not my failure it was a failure to have the right systems and that was what led me to figure out that I needed to pay myself

first, I need to automate everything so it wasn't always a choice. To be perfectly honest that has been the entire secret of the success that Mark and I have had saving for early retirement, had just been hiding money from ourselves and making money come out of our pay checks invisibly, so we never feel like we have it.

So, in some ways I'm really grateful for that narrative and having had it as a kid, although I do think it's unfortunately very widespread that women tend to think of themselves as bad with money and men don't have that same kind of baggage. So as a whole in society, I'd love for us to get rid of that idea. But in a weird round about sort of way it kind of helped me.

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**FT:** So, it sounds like the aspects of your millionaire status, of your retirement status, I'm hearing things like "Discover your why". Like, why do I really want to do this? Because that's going to ultimately drive you and keep you motivated and then in your case it was not wanting to necessarily have the challenges that your father did in his life and be able to retire early and enjoy life sooner. Another one is automating the money, the savings, because if it gets in to your bank account and then you have to do something with it you probably won't do the right thing. Having a partner too, that's on the same page, let's talk about that. Your partnership with your husband – it's often it's rare actually that we hear couples talk about how financial synced they are.

So, before you got married did you were you hit the jackpot in that regard?

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**TH:** No, and I think it's funny because though Mark and I have been really in locks step on our big why, our goal of retiring early. We are not perfectly in sync on money and I think even to this day we still are constantly working through some of the stuff and it tends to be in a small degree of differences. We both agree generally what we want to do at things but sometimes I might hit a patch where I go like, "Okay, I want to be really frugal and buckle down and not spend" and he'll say like, "Yeah but I kind of need like this new thing right now".

Or then other times where I'll be spending a little bit more and he'll want to buckle down and we tend to have those moments at different times. But the thing that I think has been the great unifier for us in all this and has helped us get to these big goals has been the why, you know, to your point. I don't think you can just have money goals in isolation or in a vacuum and expect that to be something that both parties want to stick too. There has to be a bigger vision or bigger life connection behind them and once we realized the early retirement was possible and was something that we could achieve in relatively short time, we really only saved for about six years in a focused way.

That was not starting from nothing, but it was starting from a not a ton of liquid assets. So that was only possible because we both knew what the big vision was which was to be able to spend more time outdoors to not be constantly at the backend call of clients or work and reachable on every vacation and not ever feel like we're not getting enough sleep all of that stuff. We had that vision together and so then that always give us a frame to be able to talk about the kind of many details that go on underneath that.

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**FT:** Alright, let's now do our So Money Chastely question of the day, Chastely is our sponsor. Tanja what is your number one financial habit now that you have retired? You know, 40 some days in to it, 50 some days in to it. What's the practice that you are consciously still following?

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**TH:** Hiding money from our selves all the way, I think. It is the thing –

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**FT:** I love your honesty.

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**TH:** It is the thing that let us save, you know, I know that you had folks on before who are naturally frugal, naturally super savers, we are none of those things. We love spending money, we love travelling, we love going out to eat, there are plenty of things we would happily spend on. So hiding it worked for saving and now what we're doing is giving ourselves a regular pay check through just, kind of, some simple account transfers.

So, it feels like we still have regular money coming in but it's not a lot it's not a ton of our whole annual budget and it is keeping us more accountable. So, if that works for you if you can look at what's in your checking account and know "Okay this is all I have to spend", then I think our system can work really well and in our case, so far so good.

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**FT:** Any advice you have for people out there who want to achieve financial freedom, perhaps not as aggressively, not as aggressive as you two retiring before 40 but, you know, just want to get ahead. They want to be able to pay their bills, save, invest, enjoy life, and they're stuck because they either are living beyond their means. They have some lingering debt from student loans or credit cards, you know, that's most people, most people live pay-check to pay-check, most people can't even come up with \$400 in an emergency cash.

What's your advice? And now, that you've stepped in to the financial literacy world – your blog has been awarded, it's high traffic, people come to you to for inspiration and also hopefully some guidance. So, what is your guidance for those of us who want to just get better with our money?

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**TH:** I think two things, I think if you're starting from scratch the very first thing that you should be doing and this is eye opening for everyone, is just to start tracking all of your spending. So you know where your money is going to your point of most people live pay-check to pay-check and that was totally asset as one point in our lives. Most people just don't know where all the money goes like it might be. You know, people to have the latte factor. I am not one who's going to tell people to cut out the latte if that is the very best part of your day. But it might be that you're

spending a whole lot more money in Starbucks than you realize or it might be, you know, whatever else.

Like, just getting to know your own spending habits I think is often very eliminating on its own and when you look at that stuff then it's much easier to say, "Okay, is this really bringing me happiness, is this really making my life better" and it becomes incredibly easy actually to cut some of that stuff out. Not everything that's not the whole deal but that is a great place to start. I think then beyond that, I totally lost my train of thought I'm going to get back to it.

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**FT:** That's okay. Another question I have was now that you're reached, you know, "Financial freedom", do you still feel the need to budget and do you still revisit your spending to make sure that you're not just spending the way that you thought you should be. I mean because what I do is every year at least we evaluate the spending because what I may have signed up for in the previous year whether it was a subscription or program I mean my life changes, my needs change, I might still be paying for this thing and I shouldn't be.

So, those are also ways to cut back but how often do you look at your numbers?

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**TH:** Yeah, we look at our numbers pretty much every month and know where our money is going. We also, I'll be honest like we don't do a strict lined item budget at all and really just focus on containing our spending within a certain amount and as long as we stay within that amount we don't sweat it too much. But we do take a look at the recurring charges on our credit cards to make sure that there isn't something that we're not using. I think the other thing I was going to say before is if you get to a point where you know where your money is going and you feel like you could probably spend less, a really good strategy to do is – this is how I started with all this.

Which is just to start with a very low level of hiding money from yourself. So all of my saving journey started years ago when I had my HR department at work split my pay check, so that I

had \$50 on every pay check goes straight in to savings and the rest one in to checking. So, I felt that I had most of my pay check but then \$50 went away and I probably felt that the first pay check but then after that I didn't notice and I just get adjusted to it and then a few months later I said like, "I can probably do better" and I updated it to a \$100 a pay check and then I kept upping it and that could be through HR, if HR doesn't want to change your paper work that often you can do it through other ways. A lot of banks will let you do automatic savings withdrawals or you can set it up as automatic investing.

Most investment banks may have a pretty big minimum limit to open a mutual fund, but they'll make it lower if you do it as a recurring thing. So it could be \$50 a pay check and I think doing that until you really notice it or feel the pain if you up it gradually it can be incredibly powerful and I think that's honestly my biggest tip to folks is like, don't try to cut everything all at once, cut a little bit at a time and then keep finding little ways to refine so that it doesn't feel like a sacrifice. You don't feel like you're having a life – you know, going from a life that's comfortable to a life that's miserable.

If you are saving or you've been paying off debt but you feel miserable in the meantime you're not going to stick with it it's the same as dieting. If you feel deprived all the time you're not going to be able to stick with that diet. So finding a way to do it gradually in little ways where it never feels painful I think it's just really a good way to start and a good way to get ahead.

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**FT:** Right, I agree rather than cutting things out sometimes it's just a matter of finding really more affordable substitutes asking your existing billers to adjust the bill to give you a discount to reduce the interest rate, you know, there's a lot of ways to renegotiate what you're paying without losing that service, without losing access to that product so your life doesn't change but your bank account sure does.

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**TH:** For sure and some of that stuff you may decide you don't need and so, you can in fact to get rid of it. I think knowing your why and knowing what you're working toward is really

motivating to be able to cut some of that stuff out. Like, we loved cable TV before and I know now cutting the cord is not news to anybody but it's just a really easy example to talk about, once we realized what cable is costing and how much that added up to and that if we cut that out we could get to retirement, you know, like a couple months faster that was an easy no brainer to cut.

And so, I think when you know why you are doing it and you're not just cutting it to save money it becomes a lot easier to make some of those choices.

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**FT:** What's your approach to investing? Are you pretty much middle of the road investor not taking on too much risks, indexers?

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**TH:** We, I think if you ask Mark you would probably get a slightly different answer he is definitely much more comfortable with risk than I am and so, his 401(k) is pretty much a 100% stock. My 401(k) is based, a lot heavier in bonds, because I just tend to be more risk adverse. But, yeah, as a couple we're about 70, 30, stocks to bond funds and we just buy index funds mostly if you're vanguard and, you know, like we are not trying to pick stocks. We also are not interested in having our gains eroded by high fees so we're very driven by low fees and just buying out tiny slice of the whole market.

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**FT:** No Bitcoin?

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**TH:** No Bitcoin.

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**FT:** Although, someone told me whose, someone I know whose very, very in to Bitcoin. I think her husband like actually works for some sort of technology that supports BlockChains and cryptocurrencies, so she's in it. So, they're highly I guess invested in it but she said "You can still get in the game by buying a cryptocurrency mutual fund" or, you know, some, sort of, a basket of cryptocurrencies that are just like giving you some exposure, you know, not paying 14, \$11,000 for Bitcoin but you're getting some, a bit of Bitcoin, in the fund and I though, hmm, that's something to look in to, you know, maybe not, maybe I'll look in to that because there again it's still risky, it's still riskier than most other kinds of investments but I think every portfolio should have a little bit of alternative investing 10% and maybe the cryptocurrencies like 1 to 2 % of that.

[0:28:18.1]

**TH:** Yeah, I think that is certainly not something that we've explored at length I think make sure that whatever you're doing in your alternative investing is money you can afford to lose. So I think I wouldn't recommend that people go down that road or I know some folks like doing the peer-to-peer lending or some of the things that can give higher returns but a little riskier. I would say that stuff is good to explore once you have a cushion built up, you know, once you have a good emergency fund, once you have enough in investments, that if you lost that whole alternative investment you'd still be okay. Then you can just enjoy it if it gives you some gains and if it doesn't it's not going to sink your whole financial plan.

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**TH:** Yeah, you're gambling essentially so –

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**TH:** Yeah, it should be, kind of, the fun money on the side.

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**FT:** The fun money, yeah, you have no debt, you have savings, you have retirement plans, you have maybe even, if you have children maybe some savings for their college funds, and that all takes precedents before cryptocurrency and the like. Alright, Tanja, let's do some So Money fill in the blanks and then I'll let you back to your fun life of doing nothing by the way. What is your typical day like now? I mean you just got back from Taiwan so that's not typical but what is your average day like at home?

[0:29:30.6]

**TH:** The really surprising thing has been how much earlier we get up than we ever have before. We are both night owls and have always enjoyed sleeping in when we could. So, it's funny that we find ourselves waking up actually pretty early like pre-dawn most of the time. But, you know, I'm still spending amount of time writing the blog. I do a lot of writing which probably looks like work to others but its work that I really want to do and writing is one of the things that I love most of all so I'm happy to do it.

It feels like a privilege doing some work with my podcast co-host Kara on our podcast many days of the week but then otherwise so far it's been, you know, big chunks of time to read. Time to get outside and either hike or ski and, you know, like this morning I got up and worked on a puzzle for an hour while I have my coffee, it felt really luxurious to get to do that.

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**FT:** I love that and you're socializing. I just read, I saw a Ted Talk that said "The number one attribute to a long life, number one is, your social life," like to connect to other people.

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**TH:** I completely believe that and I have written about that several times because I think that that is a big factor the people often leave out of their early retirement planning or traditional retirement planning for that matter. But a lot of folks will say like, "Oh yeah, great I'll see my friends a lot more when we retire early," except wait a minute, like your friends are probably still

at work and you might need to make some new friends. So I think making some new friends who have a similar schedule to yours is super important.

I also think for us moving to Tahoe here people are much likely to have traditional careers and so, there are more people free during the day we are always the working stiffs who had to say no to going skiing on week days before, which now we can change. But that for us like being in a community where traditional hours are abnormal has been a positive for social stuff. But, yeah, I do think whatever your own circumstances are it's important to think that through and not just get to early retirement and then all of a sudden feel socially isolated, that's going to take a whole a toll on your mental health and your physical health.

[0:31:42.1]

**FT:** Great point, alright Tanja, now some So Money fill in the blanks. You're already reach by many definitions but if you did win the Lottery tomorrow, you know, Powerball Lottery, the first thing I would do is?

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**TH:** I would make it rain to the Donor Advice Fund. We would love to be able to give more charitably and it was really important to us before we quit to put a big chunk of money there since especially with the new tax bill. Charitable donations really for us won't be a write off for us in the future, so we put as much as we possibly could into the DAF. But I would love to be stepping up and being able to give really generously every year for the rest of our lives, that would be amazing.

[0:32:25.9]

**FT:** And, I'll fast forward to this fill in the blank since it's related – when I donate I like to give to blank because?

[0:32:32.6]

**TH:** Oh my gosh, I think that my – it's deductible has like 50 different charities listed that we like to get to a week to give to a ton of causes that are related to climate change, a lot are related to land conservation in our area and around the world I'm just, kind of, general and environmental protection is a big one. We donate to causes that are focused on hunger. I think it's shocking that were the richest country in the world and we still can't feed our people and that food and security rates are so high but, yeah, we can otherwise give all over the map, you know, we sometimes give to disease research, causes for things that members of our family have and, you know, if somebody's doing fundraising for a good cause we always like to be able to help out.

[0:33:11.9]

**FT:** When I splurge, since you're not an innate saver, I want to ask you when I splurge I like to spend my money on?

[0:33:21.7]

**TH:** Airline tickets.

[0:33:24.4]

**FT:** First class?

[0:33:26.4]

**TH:** We have had the good fortune to have a lot of upgrades because I had flown so much for work so we've gotten some nice fringe perks from that. But I certainly had never paid for first class tickets. I think if our portfolios do exceptionally well maybe in our 60s we will buy a first class ticket every once in a while but it's nice if you can do it for free.

[0:33:45.6]

**FT:** Oh yeah, free is always, free always feels, tastes, is better than everything that you pay for. When I do spend on something that makes my life easier or better I spend on?

[0:34:00.9]

**TH:** Right now, we are still paying for a snow cloud contract. We live in this year.

[0:34:06.9]

**FT:** How much snow do you have out there?

[0:34:09.4]

**TH:** Right now have not the best winter but we just this morning got about a foot where we live we tend not to get snow in inches we get it in feet, so it is definitely worth it to us to pay \$500 a year to have somebody else come clear our driveway and not put ourselves through that but, you know, there are different DIY tasks around the house that we could do. We tend to call a plumber instead of doing plumbing ourselves. You know we know how to use some of it but I do think as for now and early retirement we will probably be trying to take on more of that stuff ourselves just to see what we can do and then, if any of it isn't especially fine or we aren't good at it will keep hiring that stuff out.

[0:34:47.7]

**FT:** Alright, one thing I wished I had learned about money growing up is?

[0:34:50.9]

**TH:** That I wasn't bad at it, that I just hadn't found the right systems yet.

[0:35:00.0]

**FT:** And, again why do women particularly assume that they're bad with money? I hear this more from women, it's a story that we somehow have in our heads I don't get it. I mean I get it because I guess that's what we've been taught but how did you come in to that conclusion?

[0:35:15.6]

**TH:** I mean we talked about it earlier like the story with my mom and dad and that money dynamic in the way that they both spoke about it. But I do think that the narrative out there of ladies be shopping is super powerful and this idea that actually becoming wealthy means you get to go shop more that, that's the thing we're supposed to aspire too. I think really plays to that idea that a lot of us carry around and so, recognizing that is just a story that's not the truth. And also, that there are many, many different ways you can be good at money and it could be that you get really good at earning it. It could be that you're better at saving it and you're naturally frugal. It could be that you're like me and you're neither of those things, but you find a way to put systems in to place to help you succeed and you, sort of, optimize it that way. But, yeah, we got to kill that narrative because it's no good it's not helping us.

[0:36:08.3]

**FT:** And last but not the least I'm Tanja Hester I'm So Money because?

[0:36:12.4]

**TH:** I'm going to go back to the systems because I found the systems that helped me succeed and in my case it's hiding money from myself but for anybody else it could be a different system but, yeah, finding that for me has definitely made me So Money.

[0:36:27.4]

**FT:** Hide the money and be So Money, Tanja Hester thank you so much. Everybody to go to [somonypodcast.com](http://somonypodcast.com) where you can learn more about how to find Tanja and follow her but want to wish you and your husband a fruitful, fun, prosperous retirement. Keep us posted I know you will on the blog but wishing you all the best with this new stage in life.

[0:36:52.9]

**TH:** Thank you so much this was a blast.

[END]