

EPISODE 1702

FT: So Money episode 1702, reconciling your money trauma after a childhood between two trailers, a conversation with memoirist, Dana Trent.

“DT: I knew that if I wanted to get healthier, and to examine my patterns, especially my money and finance patterns, which we'll talk about, but I needed to do some work. I needed to do some healing. For me, home was so central, because I did grow up in this Western Indiana trailer park, where we had a drug trafficking business. Everything happened in the fiberglass walls of that trailer. For me, it was essential to return to the place where the war was and all the violence and all the trauma in order to help recover and heal those battle wounds.”

[INTRODUCTION]

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to Money with award-winning money guru, Farnoosh Torabi. Each day, you get a 30-minute dose of financial inspiration from the world's top business minds, authors, influencers, and from Farnoosh herself. Looking for ways to save on gas, or double your double coupons? Sorry, you're in the wrong place. Seeking profound ways to live a richer, happier life? Welcome to So Money.

[EPISODE]

[0:01:18]

FT: Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. We are in conversation with yet another memoirist today. Turns out, when you write a memoir and you write about your life, there are a lot of financial gems that come to the surface. Our guest today, Dana Trent, is the author of her memoir called *Between Two Trailers*.

I recently caught Dana on a podcast talking about her life and thought, I want to bring her to Money. The book is a powerful, unforgettable memoir about a girl who escapes her childhood as a preschool drug dealer in rural Indiana, only to find that no one can really make it out, until they

make peace where their story began, home. Dana is an accomplished professor and award-winning spirituality writer, but here she's putting her own story to page. She has a shocking childhood, and it's one you might read about in the novel. Not expecting it from someone with a master's degree from Duke.

Dana was only a preschooler the first time she used a razor blade to cut up weed and fill dime bags for her father, who was in the drug trafficking business. Dana talks to me about her tumultuous childhood, the financial lessons learned, and why it took her until she was 36-years-old to realize that her childhood was a little unusual. Can you imagine? Never thinking that the terror and trauma she experienced as a young person was worth unpacking. Here's Dana Trent.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:02:43]

FT: Dana Trent, welcome to So Money. I'm on a roll here with the memoirists on So Money. I think, I'm creating a niche here within our contenting. It's just so fascinating. You're fascinating. Your book is fascinating. It's called *Between Two Trailers*. As I said, it's a memoir, and we're here to talk about it. Welcome.

[0:03:04]

DT: Awesome. Thank you, Farnoosh, for having me. I'm excited for this conversation.

[0:03:07]

FT: I just discovered you. Although the book came out in April, I was like, "I need to get Dana on our show," because your life, which is the topic of your memoir, is, and you were saying even before we were recording, you never really thought about it as being this financial story, or this tale of money, trauma, money. The narrative of money just didn't really feel central to you as you were writing. Leave it up to the financial podcasters to siphon that out, because I think you were also on Carl Richards' Podcast, *50 Fires*. That's where I discovered you. I thought, "Oh, my God. This is riveting."

Dana, maybe you can just open by telling us a little bit about the memoir between *Two Trailers*. I'll give us a little bit of a tease based on the press release, which is that it is a powerful, unforgettable memoir about a girl, that's you, who escapes her childhood as a preschool drug dealer in rural Indiana, only to find that no one can really make it out, until they make peace with where their story began, and that is the home. At what point did you realize, "My life needs to be written about"?

[0:04:21]

DT: I did it for myself. It wasn't necessarily for public consumption. When my parents both died, I was age 36. It was a wake-up call. Really, we've never lived in a world without our parents, even if we were orphaned at a young age, right? It's still something new to us. I knew that if I wanted to get healthier, and to examine my patterns, especially my money and finance patterns, which we'll talk about, but I needed to do some work. I needed to do some healing. For me, home was so central, because I did grow up in this Western Indiana trailer park, where we had a drug trafficking business. Everything happened in the fiberglass walls of that trailer. For me, it was essential to return to the place where the war was and all the violence and all the trauma, in order to help recover and heal those battle wounds.

[0:05:21]

FT: You open the book with this powerful image. You're a preschooler, five-years-old, four-years-old?

[0:05:29]

DT: Yeah, four.

[0:05:31]

FT: Your father has brought you into the business. He's teaching you how to cut up weed, which by the way, when you're a little person, your hands are "perfect for the task."

[0:05:41]

DT: Right.

[0:05:42]

FT: What do you feel in that moment? Do you realize that you're participating in a crime? Do you even know? How did that experience, that early adolescence experience shaped your understanding of who your family was, how you were surviving, and what it meant to be a part of the family?

[0:05:59]

DT: Yeah, that's a great question. I think, for me, it was the realization, even at age four, I'd been expelled from preschool. I came home and my dad dusted his hands and said, "Well, I might as well train you up hustling." Handed me the razor blade and taught me how to cut weed. It was this realization that families are units. Whether it's a crime family, or a nuclear family, I learned immediately the interdependence of things. Even if my father didn't say it explicitly, the tone, the ethos was that I was to be useful.

He told me without telling me, that our livelihood and our survival was dependent upon my ability and willingness to be useful. The lesson that I learned in that moment is that our survival, quite frankly, our survival in the drug trafficking business was about hustling. For me, that turned out to be all about money, because we ran a cash business. I began this affection for being useful, a willingness to be needed and feeling energized when somebody needed me to do a task, like my father needed me to do that when I was four.

Then also, this obsession with money, this idea of we have cash on our countertops and we've got cash taped to the water heater. My father has cash duct tape to his chest. It's this idea that we are responsible, and responsibility in our case and our business and in our trailer was hustling. I knew that I was an integral player in that game, in that money scheme at age four, just by using my own two hands.

[0:07:48]

FT: My gosh. What were the feelings that you had around money? What were the feelings expressed around money? I mean, just imagining the money all over the trailer. I think, first of all, that's unsafe. Is there a fear of being robbed? Is there a fear of being found out? Were those fears, they trickle down to you? I'm sure your parents experienced them to some extent.

[0:08:14]

DT: Yes, they did trickle down. Absolutely. My father taught me to walk through the world like this, when I was age four as well.

[0:08:23]

FT: Your hands, your fists, because we're podcasting, we will –

[0:08:26]

DT: Yes. Thank you, Farnoosh. Thank you. Exactly. He would say, “Everyone is your enemy, soldier. You are to be alert at all times.” He leveraged my ability to explode. He taught me, of course, how to use a razor blade to cut drugs, but he also gave me a two-inch folding pocket knife when I was four. He taught me the value of exploding and street fighting. The idea that, “Soldier, you're going to get stabbed. But it's no big deal. You'll survive.” He used to say that knife fights teach you to accept the inevitable, which is that you will get stabbed. He also said that he didn't like guns, because he said, a good knife fight hinges on proximity.

For him, the enemy was always out there. But he always wanted to be prepared for when the enemy was close. To your point about the cash, we had cash everywhere. I began this lifelong exception, acceptance of cash, but also an obsession to it, right? My parents took me to see *The Color of Money* when I was five-years-old. It's the only movie the three of us ever saw together. This obsession with cash and hustling, and everyone is your enemy, and you have to be able to street fight.

In an early age, I began asking for things, like a cash register drawer, so I can hoard any cash that I got. I liked money wrappers that I could put coins in, like what you get at the bank. I don't even know if young folks know what those are now. This obsession with being on guard for my enemies and also, this obsession that cash is king. That is the feeling that it left me with.

[0:10:17]

FT: I know you write, too, about just the volatility of living in your family. So many different types of volatility, but as far as financial volatility, too. At one point, you and your mom move away and experienced bouts of homelessness. I want to explore that in just a moment with you. You've talked about your parents quite a bit, not so much your mom yet. I want to just give readers a sense of who your parents, King and Lady were. Your dad worked as we've established in the drug ring. He worked for a big drug boss. He was a regional manager for trafficking front. It's called carnival captivations. This was the 80s, right? We know it's going on nationally in our country. A lot of a drug epidemic.

Everyone called him King. He was capable, but troubled. He struggled with unmedicated psychosis. Your mother also, who was known as Lady, also suffered from mental illness. She had personality disorders. You write, "I was holed up with her and King all the time. A witness to their moods and reclusiveness. Their isolation galvanized by depression and the drug business." How did you ultimately learn to make peace, or work through the trauma of being their daughter? When did you recognize like, "Oh, we are a problematic family. I am stuck with them"?

[0:11:46]

DT: Yes. Yes. Absolutely. I did not realize it until I was 36. Yeah, yeah. I'm 43 now, so that's seven years ago. I was sitting with some editors and we were pitching some stories for some articles, op-eds. I was talking about how the drug business is often run like a religion. The editor said, "Ooh, say more about that. Tell me your evidence for this." I told him the backstory. He's like, "You know this isn't normal, right? People don't grow up in drug trafficking families and

know the ins and outs of this and survive and get to college and hold down jobs, especially when your parents are mentally ill.”

All these adverse childhood experiences, we call them ACEs. Your outcomes and adult life are not great, right? Your health outcomes, they lead to exponential stress. Exponentially, your poor outcomes come out when it comes to heart attacks and strokes.

[0:12:47]

FT: You didn't realize this. You thought you were the norm.

[0:12:50]

DT: No. Totally. I never had a willingness to examine my parents for their flaws and what they did wrong, and the trauma that they called. I was completely unwilling to figure, to see that. At some point, I did a bit more on my father's side, because my mother was so adamant that he was such a terrible person. I pushed him a bit away. I never understood the circumstances that they put me in. Here's the thing, Farnoosh, we know this, trauma always bubbles up, no matter what. We can't leave it to fester, because it infects our whole being.

For me, food scarcity turned into disordered eating, turns into food addiction, because it's all about control. Or my interdependence that we talked about in the drug business, this family unit turns into co-dependent, or enmeshment. It takes so much energy and time and effort and resources to untangle all of this. At age 36, when my parents died, I was left with a choice. I could be me. I didn't have to be King's drug dealing preschooler, daughter, or my mother's very polite servant daughter. I could be Dana.

To tell you the truth, Farnoosh, I didn't know who that was. I didn't know what my identity was. It took process and it took progress. It was really in those early years after their death that I could choose peace, right? I could choose me better. I could choose peace. It takes far more work to choose peace. That was really when it shifted for me. When they both had gone on, had died, and it afforded me a different kind of relationship with them that wasn't possible when they were living.

[0:14:46]

FT: Wow. So fascinating. I want to go back a little bit and understand. As you mentioned, you went to Duke University. You have a life that resembles a well-adjusted woman from the outside maybe. You're maintaining a relationship with your parents all this time. What was your adult relationship with them, versus your childhood relationship with them? Was there ever any acknowledgement on their part of like, "We were an eccentric family." You were forced to grow up really fast. Was there any ownership of their actions and how it may have impacted you, or any recognition of that?

[0:15:30]

DT: Not explicitly. The reason for that is my father was schizophrenic. My mother had borderline personality disorder and a couple of other diagnoses as well. They met in a locked psychiatric ward in Cincinnati, Ohio in the late 70s. They didn't have the capacity for self-awareness. It just was missing. We see that so many times with folks who were struggling with severe mental health. I mean, we're talking on a scale of one to 10, 12 on the mental health scale. Not functioning at all. No semblance of a normal life. They just weren't capable.

What looked like an adult life, even at Duke, even after – my first years of marriage was this ping-ponging and whack-a-mole, back and forth between the two of them, like a midfielder. I was always trying to please one of them at the cost of the other. That started at that age four, becoming my father's helper and an eagerness to please and help and be useful. My mother always used to say, "Dana, the world owes you nothing. You owe the world everything." By the world, she meant her. For both of them, it was this ping-ponging back and forth of trying to be the daughter that each of them wanted and needed.

[0:16:58]

FT: Wow. At one point in your childhood, your mom leaves your dad, takes you with her. This was unstable. More unstable in the sense that I read, you experienced homelessness from time to time. Can you take us back to that period of your life, and what's a standout memory from it?

Later, I also want to find out, did you think that you were a stabilizer for your parents? I feel like, who would have they been without you?

[0:17:27]

DT: Oh, wow. Oh, I've never been asked that question. That's a fascinating question. Yeah, I'll have to think on that.

[0:17:34]

FT: Okay. Let's put that to the side.

[0:17:36]

DT: Yeah, yeah. I love that. I love that.

[0:17:38]

FT: Take us to North Carolina.

[0:17:40]

DT: Oh, yes. Okay. North Carolina. We had some experiences with the hotel, motel life. Before North Carolina, when I was age four, my parents took me to the Renatto Inn, which we all call Nati Renati, because it was one of those motels where you paid by the hour and you paid cash. It opened up to the highway. It was a mess. What I learned from that experience plays into the homelessness experience. In that hotel with my parents, I was four, same age as the drug trafficking age. I learned to wash my own hair in the shower of that very dirty motel room that had blood stains, towels.

What I learned from that motel experience was this sense of independence. Of teaching myself to do new things in this new environment, which as a child, I thought was really fun and imaginative. I used to take the glass ashtrays. We don't have those anymore. But play waitress

with them and find all kinds of ways to entertain myself in a motel room. Fast forward when we are homeless, again, and living in a motel, a holiday inn, so a bit of an upgrade, but I would entertain myself by walking myself to the pool and I was six. I would play waitress.

It's this idea of like, this is children's superpower, right? Because of course, the adults are worried about being homeless. They absolutely should. It's a terrible feeling to be homeless, or to not have affordable housing, let's just say even. But children have this amazing superpower to create a situation and use their imagination to almost take a lesson from it. For me, the lesson on homelessness was that I can survive in the – I can adapt. In any setting, in any home you place me in, I can make it a home. That still rings true today. No matter where I am, I can always – my husband calls it nesting. He's like, "You like to nest and make this your home." I was like, "Yes, yes, no matter." Whether it's camping, or I love to stay in hotels now. I feel very comfortable in these little cozy compartments, where I can make a nest. For me, that was the takeaway of homelessness. Now, as you're an adult, it's a terrible feeling, and so we don't want to diminish that at all. This is the superpower of children. They're resilient.

[0:20:06]

FT: Yes. As I'm hearing you, I think what it's really showing is that kids are, they're survivors. They have this instinct. I mean, we're humans. We're built to survive. That instinct is in us at a very – from birth. For you, though, it was on hyperdrive, probably.

[0:20:29]

DT: Yes. Yes. Which leads to hustling nonstop. Survival mode is hustling.

[0:20:38]

FT: What did you hustle? How did you hustle?

[0:20:40]

DT: Yes. Hustling started for me at age 14. I got a work permit in the state of North Carolina, which you cannot work, unless you have one of these. I started bagging groceries at Winn-Dixie my freshman year of high school. I worked every Saturday. It was for me, it was like, I was obsessed with having my own money and my own cash. Then, that turned into babysitting and life guarding. In college, I cleaned houses for a living. Cleaned filthy houses. While my peers were going out and spending money and having fun and buying clothes, I was getting hand-me-downs from friends at college to wear as my clothes. I was cleaning houses. I was an Avon sales rep. I was a beer girl at a country club, a realtor. Anything I could do to make me have control and feel I was surviving and that I could be resilient. When no one back home, I never got an allowance, right? That wasn't a thing. Having my own money gave me that sense of survival and independence.

[0:21:46]

FT: It was your oxygen. It was your oxygen. You could not sit still.

[0:21:51]

DT: Yes. Oh, that's so well said, Farnoosh. Yes, it was my oxygen. Yeah, totally.

[0:21:57]

FT: I mean, on a smaller scale, I didn't have – I had Iranian immigrant parents, and they were very unstable in the beginning of their marriage. I was an only child growing up amidst that. A lot of turbulence, a lot of financial turbulence, a lot of marital turbulence. We moved a lot. I grew up really fast in that environment. As you're speaking, I just think your story is going to hit home for so many people, because this idea just having to survive emotionally on your own, because maybe your parents aren't emotionally mature. Maybe they're still figuring their stuff out and they are raising you, but not really.

The way that kids need attention, kids need emotional support. In some ways, it becomes this gift that you wish you got in a different way, but here it is. How has this been a gift to you in

some way in your adult life? Then I'll talk about the gift you gave your parents for being their daughter, for crying out loud. You know what I mean? You didn't rat them out, first of all.

[0:23:00]

DT: That's true. I'm ratting them out now, but yes, you're right. My father would be like, "No, actually, you'd be very happy to be the center of attention for sure." Yes. But I think you have said it so many different ways on this podcast and in interviews that you have done. It's like, fear is a motivator towards success. It is, for better or worse. If you have scarcity, it can swing the other side, right? You have too much scarcity, such that you're holding on too tightly and you're not generous and you're obsessed with money, but it is this motivator. It is oxygen. You said that so well. For me, that was absolutely true. It still shows up for me today. I have four jobs, which is ridiculous. I don't need four jobs, but I've got one full-time and three part-time. Because I have a fear.

I have a fear of things not working out, or my mother went bankrupt later on, because my father said cash is king, cash is blunt, it barks your worth. But my mother said, cash is trash. She put everything on a credit card. It's all these embedded financial patterns from childhood that show up in adulthood. I really have to catch myself when I go to that scarcity mentality, especially when it comes to buying food and sharing resources and slowing down and relishing the moment and being present, instead of always trying to hustle.

[0:24:30]

FT: Yes. Wow. All right. Well, I said I was going to ask it, so let's maybe think about the gifts that you gave your parents. I mean, if I had to venture to guess, I mean, like a lot of parents, I think their children are anchors, they ground them, they give them a different sense of purpose. I feel like, maybe you were also moral support for them, especially your mom, since it was just the two of you for a while there and as you were traveling.

[0:25:00]

DT: Yeah. No, I think you're right. Because even at a young age, my mother started calling me Revy, R-E-V-Y, which was short for a reverend. She really wanted a pastor, someone who would be her listener, who might give some advice, who could hold space for her heartache, and also, someone who would meet her needs. She taught me to anticipate needs, to use her words. That was my mom's side of it.

My dad's side, I do think I was an anchor. I was his only child. He never remarried. My mother never remarried either. I do. I think, I was more important to him than I realized. But when you're a kid and your parents get divorced, there's rejection tangled up in those spaghetti strands. It's so complicated, because you know your parents. You know it's not your fault, but you still think it is. It's that rejection. It's that fear of abandonment.

Again, for me, it turned into this, how can I help you? How can I be useful? How can I meet your needs, so that you don't drop me off at the fire department and leave me and abandon me for good? Yeah, I think you're right. I mean, I do think I met an unmet need for each of them. I never thought about being their stabilizer. That's a really interesting idea of, if I weren't here, what would have happened to them long-term? Yeah.

[0:26:32]

FT: I had a session with an astrologer once.

[0:26:35]

DT: Ooh.

[0:26:36]

FT: I think I was just in a desperate place. I'm not religious. There's a point to the story. I'm not woo-woo. But I think in everyone's life, you got to hold on. You have to have faith, right? It helps to believe in something that gives you faith, in whatever you're tackling with. In my personal life, I was struggling. I am struggling a little bit with my son's ADHD and just being able to show up for him. I was like, I'm at – I've read all the books. I don't know. My friend said, "You should talk

to an astrologer and have him chart, do his birth chart and your birth chart. Maybe he can find out a little bit more about your son and how you can show up better for him, blah, blah, blah.”

It was interesting. I don't know if I bought all of the feedback from this astrologer. One thing he said, I just thought was pretty controversial, but I would love your thoughts on this, is that he said, when children are born, it's not a coincidence who their parents are. It is meant to be. You get the parents you're supposed to get. I find that really troubling, because I mean, there are some children who I would not want them to have the parents they have for a host a reasons, right? There are people who are not equipped to be parents.

[0:27:56]

DT: Exactly.

[0:27:57]

FT: Who should never have children. But your story is an example to me of just like, it can still work out, even if you don't get the beavers, your parents or not, that's perfect either. You don't have the quintessential nuclear family, financial stability, economic security, emotional security. Things were rocky a lot, to say the least in your upbringing. Yet, you've managed to reconcile and not only that, but become someone who can now teach and share others what you've learned. You're giving this gift to others. What do you think? Do you think that you were supposed to have the parents that you did?

[0:28:37]

DT: Oh, gosh. I agree with you, Farnoosh. That's a complicated thing to say, right?

[0:28:42]

FT: Yeah.

[0:28:43]

DT: It's fate. It's destiny. I teach critical thinking, but I love astrology, because it's fun and it's mystic. It is an interesting puzzle. It's an interesting riddle. The idea, and I hope you take comfort for this as a parent, I hope. I'm holding that with you, because that would be hard to hear, is that nothing is all good, or all bad, right? Nothing is binary. Nothing is evil, or all good all the time. It's all these nuances. We are all the amalgamation, or the alchemy of our parents, our experiences, our community, our circumstances, our surround. All of it, right? It's a beautiful, beautiful alchemy.

I think I take comfort in that is that if we are, as this astrologist said, if we are given the accident of birth and it's the parents that we are supposed to have, accident or no accident, then how do we make that amalgamation, right? How do we take the best traits of our parents, or our grandparents, or our community and internalize them, so that we can then in turn, be our best selves, or our healthiest selves? For me, that's what I would reflect on, if I had heard that as a parent, and that's what I reflect on as I'm hearing it as an adult child, is that what are the best traits of my parents? What advice did they give that was actually useful? What things did they say or do that were funny, or joyful, that I really miss? That for me is also healing and recovery from trauma. That helps my healing.

[0:30:31]

FT: Yes, yes. Also, I think, when you get older to recognize in the ways that your parents did show up for you, or what you learned, and also, how to complete that amalgamation externally. I got X, Y, and Z from my parents, but we were lacking in these areas, so I'm going to now go look consciously and proactively for these experiences, these relationships that will feed these areas in my life that are lacking. Which maybe brings us to Duke University, where so many of our lives, if we did go to college, I think college is very formative. How did you end up at Duke? I'm curious, did you benefit from any resources, support? How did you work through college? What was your relationship to your parents to at this time, and how was that impacting your experience in school?

[0:31:22]

DT: Going to Duke was the happiest I've ever seen my parents. They were so proud.

[0:31:29]

FT: So proud.

[0:31:30]

DT: They were over the moon. Oh, my gosh. They were over the moon. I was over the moon. I had wanted to – When I was little and we were in this Indiana trailer, my mother would cross-stitch the shield, the crest of Duke and the motto, “Eruditio et religio.” They were obsessed with Duke. My older brother went to Duke. He's from my mother's first marriage. This was the legacy, right, to carry on my older brother's work and to also do my parents proud. I don't think I've ever seen them happier than when I got into Duke and when I was at Duke.

Now, I was not happy. Duke is so hard. It was ridiculously hard. I always felt behind, going back to the hustle, right? You got to move, you got to chase, you got to do it again. Use the fear to succeed. Stay busy. Stay alive. Get it done. Duke was, I always felt inferior. I always felt like I was never smart enough. I did not know what I was doing. I didn't know what I was studying. It was wild.

Here's the lesson that you learn from Duke, is that it's a community in which everyone, honestly, is struggling. Completely struggling. Because everyone at Duke has got their growth edges and things that they are working on. Duke in and of itself is this melting pot of amazing students who are brilliant and smart, but that pot boils over very frequently with tons of stress and unrealistic expectations.

I think for me, Duke was just about survival. I always repeated the mantra to myself that I tell my students now, C's get degrees, C's get degrees. The time is going to pass, so you might as well have something to show from it. Whether that is a job training certificate, or a associate's degree from your local community college, or it's Duke University, get it done, get in, get out, and grace yourself. Be gentle. Because when you leave, no one can take that piece of paper from you. It is yours to keep, and you will have it forever.

[0:33:48]

FT: No one will ask you for your GPA.

[0:33:50]

DT: You got it. C's get degrees.

[0:33:52]

FT: Just pass. I wish I had been – well, there was a little bit of a higher stakes for me. I had a scholarship. If I didn't get a certain – It wasn't full, but it would have been embarrassing to lose that scholarship and not great financially.

[0:34:06]

DT: Right.

[0:34:08]

FT: I got close to losing that scholarship. Because I got to college and I was all very busy being high school. I think that college was, I just wanted to – I had a hard time balancing the fun with the focus on the academics. I think, I took for granted. I thought I could just breeze through some of these classes and not have to study. I did, and I did not do well on these multiple-choice tests. I got a letter the first semester. But it's okay. You're right. You say, everyone is struggling in college, everybody, whether you're at Harvard, or community college, everybody is going through their own thing.

[0:34:46]

DT: Yes.

[0:34:47]

FT: When I gave myself permission to slow down in college, I was like you. All these different jobs, all these credits. I just was on a 120 miles per hour treadmill. Once I said, I'm just going to take the minimum credits. I'm going to drop the jobs. Let's see what happens. Well, my skin cleared up, my friendships grew stronger, my grades got better. I no longer thought about transferring out. I thought the problem was the school. It was me.

[0:35:16]

DT: Wow.

[0:35:16] FT: It was me. Yeah. I think that's a lesson for everybody. When you're burned out, sometimes it's not your environment. It's you. It's you. It's how you're showing up.

[0:35:27]

DT: Mm-hmm. Yes. That's right. If you can find those little – I love that story, because you can find those bits of agency, right? Something that is within your control to change, like maybe dropping a job, or dropping a class. That is so empowering, right? You can find it. I think the big stumbling block for people is that they can't find the spaces in their lives where they have some agency.

[0:35:52]

FT: I do that all day. I love it. These are my breakthroughs all day. Yesterday, I was stressing, because I had to – I was like, okay, I have to do this workshop. I always do it the same way. I got all these slides and the slides take forever to make. I try to make them really cute and special and different. I said, why do I have to do it that way this time? Maybe I'll bring on a guest and we'll just do a 60-minute Q&A, open it up to the audience. That way, we don't have to do as many slides. I don't have to be so super prepared.

I was like, I forgot I can give myself permission to do that. No one is keeping tabs. No one is scoring Farnoosh on how she's doing these workshops. Agency is so, so important. We get so stuck on a formula, and a rigidity to our own detriment.

To close out here, you write in your preface, "Herein is a true story. One that is at its best when uncovering healing in the very places where violence thrives." You dedicate your book to anyone who thinks they can't go home, so many of us. Home is a metaphor, right? It's just your history, your background, your people from when you grow up, your people places. What has been the greatest gift and reward for you unpacking your past at 36-years-old?

[0:37:17]

DT: I think it really is speaking to exactly what you just said, is that agency. It's the idea that we can shape who we are, right? If we are willing to do the hard stuff, which is, for me, it was going home, and home is a metaphor, or it's a literal place for a lot of people. If we were willing to face the trauma, if we're willing to examine the patterns, if we're willing to look at the ways in which we are working against ourselves, which you just were talking about.

Then the reward is in being healthier. When we are healthier, we're more at peace. We can be better community members. We can be more generous. We can make better decisions from a position of critical thinking, rather than a position of trauma, which isn't our clearest best thinking. It's certainly not our clearest and best selves. My advice is always for people that if you are willing to go home, if you're willing to do this work, surround yourself with some kind of support system. Whether it's a teacher who's encouraging a neighbor. If you can afford to do therapy, engaging in therapy, finding some resources at your library. Whatever it is, surrounding yourself with scaffolding. I call it self-help scaffolding, right? That will empower you to do this hard work and will shore you up on days where it just feels impossible.

You do that day in, day out. You make the decision every morning that you're going to face the hard work. The reward is in the rediscovery. It's rediscovering who you are at your best. Because you are not your past. You can make a decision today to be different and to be whole and to be healed.

[0:39:13]

FT: Dana Trent, thank you. Your book is *Between Two Trailers: A Memoir*, my new favorite genre of books. My newest favorite is financial expert. Did you know that you're a financial expert at this point?

[0:39:27]

DT: Oh, my gosh. This is amazing. Oh, my gosh.

[0:39:31]

FT: My theory is you have life experiences, if you've lived, you've learned, you've taught, you know what? You're just as good as a lot of the experts out there. Dana Trent, thank you and congrats in everything.

[0:39:42]

DT: Oh, thank you, Farnoosh. Thank you so much for having me. Thank you for making my week. I'm going to be walking on air, thinking that I'm a financial expert out here in the world.

[0:39:53]

FT: Adding to your LinkedIn profile to tweet. Yes.

[0:39:56]

DT: I love it. Thank you, Farnoosh, for having me. This was wonderful.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:40:02]

FT: Thank you to Dana Trent for joining us. You will definitely want to pick up her book. It's called *Between Two Trailers*, available everywhere. I'll see you back here on Wednesday, and I hope your day is so money.

[END]