

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. David Phelps

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

Welcome to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint, a podcast about freedom—freedom from expectations of society and the traditional path to success that has been ingrained in us from our early years, I'm joined by mavericks, renegades, and non-conformers to discuss an anti-traditional path to financial freedom, freedom of time, relationships, health, and ultimately freedom of purpose. My name is Dr. David Phelps. Let's get started.

David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind Community and Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. Today it's really an honor for me to have the opportunity to do an interview, a conversation, if you will, with a good friend of mine, Mr. Chris Ryan. Chris will be with us in just a moment. I want to give you a little bit of his background before we jump into what will be I think a very deep conversation with somebody who has gone through a lot of iterations in his life. Today I will say, he won't say, but I will say he's living a great life, a very purposeful life, and he didn't get there by accident.

Today Chris Ryan is the managing partner of R360, which is a family and office of very ultra high net worth individuals. He also is the CEO of GoBundance, a community of like-minded, high caliber business owners and entrepreneurs who help each other in peer-to-peer meetings of establishing opportunities and challenges with phil ... phil ... excuse me, dealing with philanthropy in their own lives. And Chris also was the chair of TIGER 21, which is again, a high net worth group. He did that from 2013 until recently in 2020. Chris started out as a young man at the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

tennis player, but also did the very well in academics. His family background will ... so into that a little bit.

And which you also find is some of the questions I asked Chris, because I wanted to know for my own benefit is, what were some of the twists and turns in his life? What were some of the turning points? What were key people that sowed into his life? Because this is really the makings of what helps each one of us take our entrepreneurial spirits and move those to the next phase of our life. Not staying stuck in a rut, not playing the scarcity game, but always realizing there can be more and not just more money, not more things, not more materialism, but more purpose in life. And that's really where we all want to be. How do we get there? That's the question. And that's where I believe you will enjoy my conversation with Mr. Chris Ryan. Chris, I want to go back into your life, your beginnings, New York, your parents, your family, what were some of the seeds that you believed today set the stage for who you are today, what you believe in, what your purpose is, what drives you, where did that come from?

Chris Ryan: A few answers to that question, in terms of my childhood, there were really three things that defined a good part of my years up until about the age of 13. My parents were adamant on academic excellence and that was an incredibly big driving force in my life. Second to that, athletic performance specifically tennis and so both my brother and I were Northeastern champions nationally ranked by the time we were 10 and then religion was a cornerstone of our upbringing as well. Between school, tennis and religion, that pretty much drove the vast majority of my waking hours as a child.

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

David Phelps: That sounds like a fair amount of discipline and regimen, which I would agree. Kids need that, but you didn't stay in any kind of a regimented forward thinking, even through your academic pros, athletics, what we know about you today and what I discussed about your history and your resume if you will, it's nothing about following a path that most people follow. With the discipline and the regimen and the frameworks you had as a young man, what allowed you to go forward and be different? You're a great tennis player, you start teaching tennis while you were at University of Texas and Austin to parlay that into the next thing. A lot of people, including people in my industry, it was like, "Well, I got to keep going up the academic chain to become a professional with some specialized technical tools that I can go out and make a good living and there's nothing wrong with that." Give me some ... how did you able to navigate that, if you will?

Chris Ryan: There were a few things that came out of what I just shared with you. The first thing is there was unbelievable work ethic. Starting at about age seven or eight, I was up at 5:30 in the morning, I was on a tennis court at 6:00, and then I would come back at about 7:30 shower, change, 7:15 shower, change and go off the 3rd, 4th, 5th grade. That work ethic has carried me well throughout my entire life. The second thing that came out was probably an over perfectionistic drive and Type A personality and that has its good sides and its bad sides, but that was definitely one of the outcomes from that upbringing. The third thing that came out that was a dedication to whatever I put my mind to I could accomplish if I simply worked harder than everybody else around me, and that still to this day and all of those things are ... they sound great.

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

But as you well know, David, there's a light side and a dark side to all of those things. Being a perfectionistic has probably cost me some relationships, my work ethic, same thing. With all of those things, especially as I've gotten older, I've had to temper that against what is ultimately most important in life because it's not the tennis trophy, it's not the size of the checkbook, it's not the ability to work 18 hours a day. I need a family who loves me, who I love. I want friends around me that I respect and admire and can grow with. I want to learn across multiple dimensions, different forms of capital as you and I have talked about in the past. And I'm interested in creating a purposeful life of which I can be very proud and grateful for when I move on.

David Phelps: You're absolutely right, Chris, that I think the Type A, the driven to perfection which is the arena that I came from too, it can be a hindrance and I think to a point, with wisdom and maturity comes sometimes a temperance in some of these early drives that are built into us or part of our DNA, whatever the case may be, you sound like a person who has the wisdom of someone who is much older than you are. I know you're a young guy because you're younger than I am. Anybody who's younger than I am is a young guy, but you speak with the presence of somebody who is maybe 80, 85, 90 years old.

Looking back on life and relishing what we know people at the end of life look back on, and it's not the amount of money in the checkbook, it's not the trophies, it's not how big the business was, it's really comes down to people, memories, impact, purpose. And the circles that you run in and I run in more or about that purpose and significance, not so much the drive that most of us have early on in life to build, build, build, and go hard and go

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

fast and create success by the definition or the doctrines of society or whatever industry we're in, which is full of fallacy.

I know this to be a fact about you ... can you speak about some of the soft skills, soft skills being people skills, communication skills, connection skills. I know that to be a huge driver of what's made you have that purpose in life, not everybody has those same skills and charisma, let's face it, but how can you sow what you know to be working in your life and what's impactful to you? How can you sow it into other people who would like to be a little bit more like a Chris Ryan, some of those attributes, but you know what, personalities are unique to all of us. How do you help people that are more self reflecting, but still want to be purposeful in life?

Chris Ryan: Let me give a little bit of a circuitous answer to that question because you hit on something that's important. As a child of the drivers that I've explained to you, I felt almost like a thoroughbred that was simply being put into different arenas. There was an academic arena, had to excel. There was an athletic arena, had to excel. There was a religious arena, had to excel, had to excel, had to excel. It drove a tremendous amount of resentment, anger, frustration, at times feelings of unworthiness and I received as a child, a lot of conditional love when things went well and the absence of that when things didn't go well. To be perfectly candid, it jacked my reality. By the time I went ... going to college, I realized that if I didn't change some of the core beliefs that I had built over the 18 years, 17, 18 years before then, I was on a destructive path.

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

The other thing I didn't share with you, but it's germane to this question is I come from a family of alcoholism, not uncommon, with high productivity families as you well know and I also didn't want to go down that path. In college at the University of Texas at Austin, I absolutely got an academic education, graduated with break grades, but more important than that, in my freshman year of college, shortly after my parents declared me financially dependent, I was looking through the student services fees and saw that counseling was offered as part of the student package. I walked ... a true story, I walked into the Student Services Counseling building and was with a grad student, shared with her some of the stuff that was going on in my world. She's like, "Chris, I'll be right back." Left and in about five minutes, there were about six people that came back in with her.

And they ... and she asked me to repeat the stuff that I had shared with her to these other guys. And there were a few older professor esque gentleman there and that started me on a journey of going to length at the height of it. It was three times a week average, probably one or two times a week. And I did that from the time I turned 18 to the time that I was 20, maybe almost 21, so almost four years. And I truly believe that was a turning point in my life.

It put me on a path to discover my purpose, which I did not too far thereafter. It gave me the grace to accept myself for exactly who I am, good, bad and otherwise. It taught me self confidence. It taught me self patience. It taught me how to ground myself and what it gave me is it gave me a completely different language in terms of interacting with folks. And in ... with me, a big push from one of my mentors, Bob Buford is helping people move

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

from success to significance. It gave me a lot of the core skills that I have used literally from that point forward in terms of interacting, engaging with people and helping them realize their purpose and ultimately in uplifting them and helping them realize their purpose, I helped fulfill my own.

David Phelps: I was going to ask you if there were any significant turning points and I was thinking, as you said it, this was a big one. To have that kind of self awareness still at age 17, 18, and be willing to be vulnerable enough, to walk into counseling and say, "I need some help." That's a huge step for a young man who's ... got it all together academically, in terms of athletics, tennis, big man on campus and here I am walking in to say, "Hey. I don't have it all together." That takes a lot right there, at any age to strip off the badges of success that we try to wear and actually acknowledge that, "You know what, there're some areas in my life that could use some work."

And then what I believe, and I know you would say the same thing is that, we all go through a journey in life and it's with twists and turns and ups and downs and two steps back before you take a step forward, but the lessons that we learn and then are able to sow back into people who are ... want to take a path of success in their own life. Whatever that means for them, their vision, their ... is to be able to see that back. You speak of counselors in this case, the six people, some professor esque types that were there, you found out very early in life and really through coaching and academics, but I think the world today, you and I would both say is mentors, peer group, or people with wisdom beyond which we have in our life that we want to espouse in our own lives has been a huge

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

key for you, but also in the group that you facilitate. That's a big part of it, peer group and mentorship, right?

Chris Ryan: Absolutely it is and what I've found is ... and I've been blessed with a number of mentors over the course of my life that have all poured themselves into me in terms of helping me develop into the person that I am now, I shared with you previously, that I was mentored by a gentleman named Bob Buford. Bob wrote the book 'Halftime' subtitle is 'From Success to Significance' and I read that at the ripe old age of about 27. I spent almost a year tracking Bob down. I live in Dallas, Texas. Bob was in Dallas, Texas and I wound up spending from 1996 through ... I had a stroke in March of 2000. So maybe January, February of 2000, he and I would get together usually at least once or twice a month and he selflessly poured into me and the unspoken promise that I made to myself and to him is that, if I can understand and fully embrace Bob's teachings around 'Halftime' ... and he also wrote another book called 'Finishing Well' ... that I would dedicate my life to doing what he did to me into the lives of others.

With a group of CEO Netweavers, that started around 2000, then fast forward to a group called TIGER 21, that I was responsible for running in Texas starting in 2013, to GoBundance which I now run, to R360 which I have two partners. I'm actually the founding partner, they're both managing partners. The work that I do now is absolutely a continuation of the work that Bob and I started back in the 90s.

David Phelps: State for us for our benefit, how would you consolidate that down to what your purpose is today? What is the purpose for Chris Ryan's life?

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

Chris Ryan: My purpose is pretty straightforward. I have been put on this earth to help other people realize the full level of their significance in their lives, in the context of them as husbands, wives, parents, brothers, sisters, professionals, philanthropists, and what I hope to do in the work that I do day in and day out is create opportunities for folks to discover their significance, that drives fulfillment, satiation, joy, happiness, and their purposes in life.

David Phelps: Beautiful. Beautiful. We're both tennis fans and one of my favorite players ... I don't know who yours are specifically, but Arthur Ashe, watching Arthur, of course, I know you'd be a fan.

Chris Ryan: I've played Arthur Ashe Stadium back in the day.

David Phelps: Fantastic.

Chris Ryan: Long, long time ago.

David Phelps: Fantastic. What of ... one of the mantras of Arthur Ashe of many, but one is start where you are, use what you have, do what you can. To that, let's talk a little bit about what Arthur was probably talking about. I think ... my point here is that you have evolved over your lifetime and to your purpose, you have facilitated, organized, founded a number of substantial groups, peer groups that have the same purpose, abundance and finding new opportunities, going through the challenges of life, all the things that you're about.

There's a lot of people that will be listening to what we're talking about today and say, "I'd love to be in that group, but you know, I'm not there." In fact in my life, I've wanted to be ... I've always wanted to reach, to higher groups and there's been times when people would tell me, "Hey. Not

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

yet. Not quite your time. Keep doing what you're doing authorizes this point." What would you say to people that are on that pathway? They're listening today and go, "Well, TIGER 21, you got to have a certain net worth and R360 ..." But there's a place for everybody. Is there not Chris? What would you say to people that are like, "well, I'm not sure where my place is." How do you go about finding mentors or groups that would be most appropriate wherever you are in your life?

Chris Ryan: You said something that is absolutely spot on, we're all looking for communities. You and I both follow tribes and all of us belong to a tribe, whether we realize or not. Maybe it's a social tribe, maybe it's folks that we hang out with in the apartment that we live in, maybe it's a philanthropy, maybe it's a religious organization. We're part of communities and what's interesting is, and you know that cliché 'it's when the student is ready, the teacher will appear'. I believe that for anyone who's listening to this right now, who doesn't have a sense of where their tribe is, you have to make yourself open to it and you have to be willing to ask the questions. I learned a long time ago, there's no such thing as an uncomfortable question. There's no such thing as a bad question.

We learn primarily through community. That's how most of us learn in school, that's how most of us learn professionally. Why wouldn't you want to spend time developing yourself personally, professionally as an investor, as a philanthropist, as a religious leader, whatever the community is. There are so many great communities, we both work in the mastermind group and there are an infinite amounts of masterminds all

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

throughout the United States and the world and there are a lot of great groups.

I believe as I know you do, David, that we come from a world of abundance. There is plenty of opportunity, there is plenty of access and the ability to connect. For your listeners that are looking for that, I would say, reach out to you, reach out to me, look for peer-to-peer learning groups that are maybe local or national in their communities that align with not just the financial goals, but as you and I both know, we're looking for character, value, moral and ethical sets that align, cause I'm not interested and I have never been one to create transactional peer-to-peer groups and there are a lot of those two. I believe that we serve each other best when we move from transactional to relational and we focus not just on what is obvious in front of us, be it investments, be it philanthropy, whatever the case may be, but to your point, it's those soft skills that help us become better husbands, fathers, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, whatever the case may be.

David Phelps: Chris, I know that we talk in terms of currencies and you said it well, but the ultimate currency for you in your life, and I think probably for most people outside of all materialism, all the money we can make, whatever that may be. What is that ... what's that ultimate currency for you?

Chris Ryan: It's the same for both of us. It's relationships, actually the two currencies that I think drive everything that we both do, especially as we get older, it's relationships and help.

David Phelps: Yeah.

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

Chris Ryan: I'm a huge fan of ... you've met him, Michael Cole. Michael Cole is the author of the book 'More Than Money', and he talks about the six forms of capital. Those are financial, intellectual, social, human, emotional, and spiritual. To enjoy a life fully lived, you have to be firing in all six of those pistons. You have to be focusing on human capital alongside emotional spiritual that you have to be physically in ... if ... as you well know, if the relationship suffer your quality of life suffers, if your health suffers your quality of life suffers. Financially, all of us in the United States, we're all doing fine.

We all live like the Kings and the Queens of Old, everyone's in great shape. It's not typically putting food on the table that's the challenge, as you and I both know and as most of the members that I had with TIGER 21, with GoBundance, with R360, we struggle with our relationships, we struggle with our health, we struggle with feelings of inadequacy that ... if you're 25, if you're 75 can still plague you. It's those things that I find can create ... if we can address those issues, the most long term impact and value to these tribes and these audiences that we serve.

David Phelps: It's difficult, I think probably more for men than women although it works on ... for both genders, is the ability for us to be real, to be vulnerable. And to do that with people, you've got to have trust ... relationship. The caliber of people, whether you set the stage or the group with environment yourself, or you decide to become a part. It's that trust that allows us to strip off the outside armor that we all try to dress up and to protect ourselves because we all feel inadequate many times in relationships, in so many areas of life. We bear ... one set of big wins, it's the

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

trophies, whatever the trophies are. It's like, that's what we look back, but how very void of meaning those can be.

Having people that you can actually be real with, it's hard, but when you're in a group and I know the way you facilitate so well, you do that very well is you take all that down ... and guys and gals, let's wait online. Here's what we're here for. It's not to ... certainly we want to celebrate wins, got to do that, but still, what is it that's missing in our lives? And sometimes you got to peel a lot of bandages off, a lot of pain, lot of scar tissues there to get down to it and really discover what's been holding me back? What am I still fearful of in life? Because it's there.

Chris Ryan: I'm sure many of your audience has read the book from Brene Brown called 'The power of vulnerability'. And it is ... it's an outstanding read in so much, as you would think that to be vulnerable is a sign of weakness, where actually as you and I have both experienced, it's a sign of strength. And so in the work that I do, in a lot of the facilitation that I do, I have no problem being open, vulnerable. One of the exercises that I've done in TIGER 21, I've done in GoBundance, that I will do in R360, is how interesting, not only to write our own eulogy, but how interesting to share that with others. I've done that exercise multiple times and what I find is that there is a tremendous connection that comes from reflecting on our own lives, sharing that with others, and then especially if you can be truly authentic in sharing the good, the bad and the ugly, people tend to rally around that authenticity, that genuineness that vulnerability because in seeing the vulnerability in somebody else, maybe we humanize that a little bit better in terms of the vulnerability within ourselves.

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

David Phelps: Yeah. That's very well said. You're the proud father of a beautiful young lady, Bishop, who I had the privilege of meeting not too many months ago.

Chris Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

David Phelps: What general framers, not specific advice that's father daughter, but what general frameworks, how are you helping her at age 20 going back cause you talked about, where you were at age 17, 18 in that same ... what have you tried to empower her with that again, if you were speaking to any 18, 19, 20 year old at that point in their life, what would be some key frameworks that you would want to give to them or, what you've given to Bishop?

Chris Ryan: Yeah. The first thing I would say is I am anything but a perfect parent. I've made my fair share of mistakes as we all have. One of the things I did and it was from some learnings that occurred while I was at TIGER 21 is I read two books, the first one is called 'The Price of Privilege', and it talks about how not to retard your children with wealth and the accouchements that come from that and then the second book is called 'The Blessing of a Skinned Knee', and that book is all about teaching you to give your children the love of the grace to let them fight their own dragons. I'm divorced. I have not had nearly the influence that I had hoped to have on my daughter, but what I have instilled in her is hopefully a sense of a work ethic that I ... she's incredibly hardworking. She's academically incredibly successful, but she's also kind, and loving, and giving, and relational.

I'm actually more proud of those character skillsets for her because like all kids, one of the biggest drivers that all teenagers, young adults should have is they want to be liked enough that people will want to help them. I want my

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

daughter to be prepared to receive mentors, not her mom, not her dad. I want her to find her Bob Buford. She's big into music, I want her to find her musical mentors, I want her to find her professional mentors, I want her to find her spiritual mentors outside of me, but I want her to be not only prepared and ready, but likable and engagable enough to have those folks surround her.

David Phelps: I love that Chris. Let's finish up with gratitude and philanthropy. You're a huge giver and you've hosted over 100 charity, probably well over 100s of charity fundraisers for different organizations, different groups. I've got a list of many here that you supported over the years, but let's talk about that. Many times people feel like, "Well, when I get to a certain point in life where I've got these things fixed, or this is all just right, I'll start living my life and I'll start giving back and I'll start creating memories." Can we flip ... put the switch? I know what you'll say, but I'd like to hear it in your words. What's wrong with that thinking and how should people look at their life in terms of gratitude and giving back no matter where they are in their walk.

Chris Ryan: I'm convinced that somewhere the switch was flipped and people got the wrong idea around philanthropy. Philanthropy is not about you just giving to benefit others. Actually I'd go the other way and I would say that by being philanthropic, the real gift is to you. Your last question to me was in raising my daughter. Bishop started accompanying me to charity events, probably at age three or four. She's performed in a bunch. I used to host events in my backyard, she's been at probably 40 to 50 of those and her sense of giving and my sense of giving are very much aligned, both from a nurture and a nature standpoint. What I find is being philanthropic is a gift to me in terms of it grounds me emotionally, it fulfills me, it

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

satiates, it satisfies and no matter what life throws at you, good or bad, by giving the situation becomes better.

If life's going great, had a phenomenal year and I give, fantastic. If life is tough and it's challenging, yet I find a reason to give or to spend time, not just money, but time, talents, treasures, all of that tends to put things into perspective because a lot of times it's easy to major in the minors in terms of what stresses us out, what frustrates us, what annoys us, the stuff that's real and serious is, family relationships. It is health. Yet a lot of times we find ourselves caught up in an investment or a financial, those are all nuisances, those are minor challenges. The stuff that really matters, do you love somebody else? Does somebody else love you? Are you trying to make this world a better place? And I believe that it is incumbent on all of us who have received gifts, not only in terms of our own accomplishment, but through the mentorship and the giving of others to return that favor.

I met Bob Buford, as I said, when I was about 27, 28 years old, I stayed with him till I was 32. I will spend a lifetime repaying the gift of his time, but more importantly, I'm going to spend lifetime reaping the gifts of his teachings, both in terms of benefiting others, but then also benefiting myself. That to me, seems like a life worth lived.

David Phelps: I think that's a great place to cap this off. Chris Ryan, I really want to thank you for your time, your insights and your wisdom. You mentioned that people who wanted to connect with you ... what's the best way that you like to stay connected or allow people to enter your world, what's the best way?

Ep #370: Chris Ryan - From Success to Significance

Chris Ryan: Thank you, David. The website is www.gobundance.com, G-O-B-U-N-D-A-N-C-E.com. My email is chris.ryan@gobundance.com. My other business is R360, that website is www.R360.com, R-3-6-0.com. My email from that is chris.ryan@R360global.com. That's my global family office that I run. I'd welcome any of your listeners reaching out to me. I'll do whatever I can to help answer any questions that they may have and do whatever I can not only to honor the friendship that you and I have, but because that's truly where I get my greatest fulfillment in life.

David Phelps: That speaks exactly of the person of I know you to be Chris. Thank you so much.

You've been listening to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. If you're tired of trading time for dollars and you want to create more freedom in your life, I encourage you to visit my week blog, freedomfounders.com/blog. I post weekly hard-hitting videos about creating more freedom in your life. Check out my latest book on Amazon, *What's Your Next?: The Blueprint for Creating Your Freedom Lifestyle*, or visit freedomfounders.com to learn more about how we help high income earners create the freedom to buy back their time and create more impact.