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MBS ([00:02](#)):

I'm Michael Bungay Stanier. This is two pages with MBS, where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. But this is part of the twist series when my favorite person is myself and my favorite book is my own book. And in fact, the really cool thing is I invite favorite people onto the show to have a conversation with me about that.

MBS ([00:23](#)):

I'm excited to... I think you may already have met Octavia because I've had her on previous podcast. I'm a big fan of her work. She has a new book coming out, which is going to tell us about. Octavia Goredema is a British woman, thriving in LA, a career coach, a champion for women. And we met randomly. I think, Octavia wrote me a nice email saying she liked one of my books. And we've



somehow struck up a friendship and a comradeship on that, which is precious to me. So Octavia welcome.

Octavia ([00:57](#)):

Oh, thank you, Michael.

MBS ([00:58](#)):

It is very nice to have you here. How would you describe who you are? I threw around some words, but who are you? What's your story?

Octavia ([01:07](#)):

I'm really passionate about helping people do their best work. And along the way, I've been figuring out how to do that myself. And I didn't just like your book. I love *Do More Great Work*. And I love your new book. So thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this. But yes, I am a career coach. I run a company called Twenty Ten Agency and we specialize in helping underrepresented professionals accelerate their careers. And I'm the author of a new book called *Prep, Push, Pivot*, essential career strategies for underrepresented women. And that's coming out in early 2022 in January.

MBS ([01:49](#)):

So exciting.

Octavia ([01:51](#)):

Thank you.

MBS ([01:52](#)):

We'll be able to celebrate the birth of our new books together, which is pretty cool. You're British, how did you end up in LA?



Octavia ([02:00](#)):

By accident. [inaudible 00:02:03] best stories. I moved to Los Angeles for the first time, I've lived here twice, but I moved here for the first time 16 years ago. 17 years ago, if you told me, "Octavia you're going to be living in Los Angeles." I just said, "Michael, no way. There's no way that's happening." So it was a complete accident. The professional reason was that I transferred with my company at the time. But the real reason was only for love.

MBS ([02:29](#)):

Nice. That's why I've been moving around the world as well for love as well. So that's a good reason. So Octavia, I asked you to pick the chapter that you'd like me to read from the book, and what's cool about the chapter you picked is actually the one that has a nod back to my, one of my first books, *Do More Great Work*. And those of you who aren't watching the video, there she is holding it up. It's beautiful. Thank you so much. Honestly, it never gets old, the thrill of people holding up one of your books saying this is your book, and I'm reading it.

MBS ([03:03](#)):

So section eight, the title for it is, *Remember Your Best Self*. And I'm actually going to read a bit. It's a page after the chapter starts. Because it tells a funny story, which I want to tell. So thank you for inviting me to do that. I'm just going to launch into it. And then you and I can have a chat about what you liked about it.

Octavia ([03:24](#)):

Sounds great.



MBS ([03:25](#)):

The subtitle is called, Lock Don't. "I mentioned earlier that my first job out of university was in product development. We didn't just work on sugary desserts. One of the agency's clients was one of the world's biggest alcohol companies. They are a [inaudible 00:03:47], the vast number of beers, ciders, and spirits they market to the world.

MBS ([03:53](#)):

Nearly 1990s, Scotch Whiskey hadn't yet got the status and now's enjoys. It was seen as an unhip, old man's drink, everyone from distillers to distributors sensed there was potential to grow the market, but no one had cracked it yet. My agency was tasked with solving the problem and inventing a new whiskey. If the old fashioned distilleries weren't grabbing people's attention, maybe something that spoke to the young and the cool would do the trick.

MBS ([04:25](#)):

We did invent a new whiskey Loch Dhu, the Black Lake and Scotch Gaelic. It was dark. It was sweet. It was horrible. I mean, it failed utterly. Scotch new pr.com describes it as quote "intriguingly bad" like the nasal equivalent of a horrible traffic accident. The review goes on. Today it has a coltan collector following and borrows can fetch several \$100 apiece. Part of this fascination is due to its rarity. And part of its reputation is one of the worst single malt whiskeys in existence." Thank you very much. I'm responsible for that.

MBS ([05:09](#)):

"As bad as Loch Dhu obviously was, the project was nonetheless the genesis of one of the most powerful tools I know for self-management and self-mastery. It's why I continue to use whenever I'm about to step out in front of an audience, or get down and start wrestling with work that's on the edge of my



confidence and competence. I first talked about it in my book, *Do More Great Work, and I'm bringing it out of the volts, Disney Style For You.*"

MBS ([05:36](#)):

Then a new sub heading This Not That. "Think of a favorite brand of yours, a brand you feel affection and some loyalty towards. Now, tell me what it is about the essence of the brand itself that makes it so different and special in comparison with his competitors. It's a difficult thought experiment for anyone. But if you're a marketer, this is at the heart of the job. Brand essence guides, what is on or off brand.

MBS ([06:03](#)):

Peleton shouldn't launch a range of donuts clearly, but should they open a dance club? When we were trying to invent the new whiskey, we ran into the challenge. What's this brand about? We found that words alone were too blunt at all. They were too generic, too abstract, too hand waving you know what I mean? We solved it in two ways. First, by using metaphors where possible. [inaudible 00:06:27] a picture is worth 1000 words and a metaphor is just a grammatical name for a picture.

MBS ([06:33](#)):

And second, by clarifying through comparison, I've come to call this tool, This Not That. So for Loch Dhu instead of saying vague things about how we wanted to position it as a cool whiskey for hip young people, we would create a, This Not That table, like so. Mysterious, not obvious, Guinness not Murphy's, Dusk not Dawn, Ice Hotel not Log FirePlace, Burberry not Tartan."

MBS ([07:01](#)):

And then as I go on and talk more about it, because that's about the two pages, we go, here's how we move that table. I'm talking about bad whiskey, you're talking about the best of you, versus the not quite best of you." So look, I love



reading that. So thank you, Octavia for picking it. What is it about that, or this chapter in particular that struck a chord for you?

Octavia ([07:27](#)):

It strikes a chord for me in so many ways, because there are not many opportunities where we actually pause and do this for ourselves. And well, it's a strikingly simple but poignant concept. It's such a powerful one. What does it take to be your best self? And the fact that there's no right or wrong to that, but there's lots of nuance to that, but that nuance really matters.

Octavia ([07:56](#)):

And I very much, it took me a long time to learn this. I'm now in my 40s. But I had to learn to trust how it feels. Not how it looks, how it sounds, what it might look like, but how does it feel? And with this exercise that you're sharing with us, it just gets to the heart of that.

MBS ([08:17](#)):

Yeah. I appreciate you saying that Octavia, because how it looks can be quite seductive, because it plays into aspiration and a bit performative and a bit kind of, this would be a good thing for me to be saying about myself. Whereas that sense of how it feels and the way I think about it as kind of does it hit my body somewhere? So I go, "Oh, yeah, I can feel that." Not just a feeling, but can I actually get a visceral hit around? It gives me a clue that I'm onto something that's real, not just vaguely aspirational.

Octavia ([08:51](#)):

Yes.

MBS ([08:51](#)):

Octavia, how do you come back to the best of who you are?



Octavia ([08:56](#)):

Do you know, I've been rethinking that. I constantly am rethinking that. And when I read that chapter, I actually stopped and reflected again, because I'm in a really exciting phase where I'm doing some things for the first time ever, that's also terrifying, but I'm also evaluating in real time, how those things feel. And there's this phrase you use in the chapter about being on the edge of your competence and confidence. Oh, boy, my back.

MBS ([09:38](#)):

[inaudible 00:09:38]. This is so exciting/terrifying.

Octavia ([09:38](#)):

Exactly. And so I am in the middle of really reflecting on this, Michael, right now, I really am. And I made a commitment, partly from reading this chapter, because it was coinciding with so much happening for me that the next steps I'm about to embark on in the coming months, I want to enjoy them.

MBS ([10:00](#)):

Oh, nice.

Octavia ([10:02](#)):

I want to enjoy them. And I also, of course need to get out of my comfort zone a little bit. But how it feels, is really resonating with me. And you share this story about your leg jiggling before you're having to get like, I think two really important presentations at different points in your career. And that really touched me because there's no perfect answers to this stuff. We're not robots. We feel, we get nervous. It can be a bit panicky. It might feel awful. We might feel great. But sometimes we were like in between all of those things, and it's a little bit of a jumbled up mess. But within that, there were some core themes that your questions have made me really stop and think about, "Oh, I didn't



think about it that way.” That’s why that works for me. And that’s why maybe this didn’t work so well for me.

MBS ([11:05](#)):

Nice. You know, I love you going, “How do I kind of connect to the joy of it?” And I’m really sitting with at the moment myself, because I am wrapped around the launch of this book, more than I want to be. I keep talking to people in the light, “Come on, Michael, you’ve launched books before. You had one book that was super successful. You know how to do this.”

MBS ([11:25](#)):

And I’m like, “First of all, it’s different. Secondly, if I didn’t know anything I’ve forgotten it all. And thirdly, even though I’m trying to hold it lightly, I’ve over holding on too tightly. Just got to firmer grip on this. And even intellectually, I’m like, “Michael, come down. It’s just a book launch.” It’s the life of the book that matters, not the launch. In the moment, I’m actually more entangled than I want to be. When you’re in a place of edginess, exciting, thrilling, daunting, scary, how do you connect to the joy of it? Because I’d love some guidance on that.

Octavia ([12:07](#)):

It’s hard for me to do it in the moment. It’s often me reflecting back once the thing is done, because the adrenaline is running for something that matters. Even if it’s something that’s a sweet spot for you that you’re looking forward to the adrenaline is still running. And I do a lot of reflection. I’m a very introverted person. So I like to, even if I’ve done something that is visible, or things I do are not visible to other people, especially with writing, and coaching and things I do. But for the things that are visible to people I love to have reflection afterwards on what it means to me, and the things that aren’t visible to others too I do the same reflection because I’m not a big fan of to-do lists and accomplishments dispatch. I really do like to, at the end of each month, that’s normally when I do



it, just really pause and go over how it felt, what I learned from that, the perspective I have on that, but the analytical piece wasn't always there, and this chapter reminds me of that.

Octavia ([13:12](#)):

And as you said, he echoes this chapter here, which and I then remembered, yes, and do more great work. That was one of the things I loved the most in that book too, because you are helping your reader to really gain insights into who they are in a really powerful and supportive way.

MBS ([13:36](#)):

Beautiful. Octavia Goredema, where can people find out more about you, your work, your new book coming out?

Octavia ([13:44](#)):

Oh, thank you for asking. Well, you can find me @octaviagoredema.com. And my book is called Prep, Push, Pivot. And yes, I'm so excited about this journey. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of your journey.

MBS ([14:04](#)):

My pleasure. When your actual publication date?

Octavia ([14:09](#)):

January 12.

MBS ([14:10](#)):

January 12, fantastic. Mine's January the 11th. We've almost got a shared birthday. Fantastic. Congratulations on your new book. And thanks for being part of this conversation with me, Octavia.



Octavia ([14:19](#)):

Oh, thank you for having me, Michael.

MBS ([14:20](#)):

Hey, it's Michael here. Thank you for listening to one of the, How To Begin episodes. Part of the two pages with MBS podcast series. So you're either listening to it before or after January the 11th, which is the launch of the, How to Begin Book, How To Begin, Start Doing Something That Matters.

MBS ([14:44](#)):

If it's before January 11th, if you're happy and willing to make a pre-order of the book, I would certainly be grateful. The pre-ordering really matters to authors. It's our chance to kind of get some notice of the book to get a bit of buzz going around it. It's one of those great gifts that our reader can do is to pre-order a book for an author.

MBS ([15:05](#)):

I wrote the book because the [inaudible 00:15:08] came to me, which is we unlock our greatness by working on the hard things. And when I think of my own personal growth and the difference I've made in the world and impact I've had, it's been I've taken on something that feels thrilling and important and daunting. And I wanted to share and write about a process to help others do that.

MBS ([15:25](#)):

So if you're looking to be more ambitious for yourself, and for the world to connect to that ambition. And if you're really wanting to rethink goals, as a liberating force, and if you just want to be the best version of yourself and do work that makes a difference. Whether that's work at work or work just in life outside your kind of a career, then I think this book might be for you.



MBS ([15:51](#)):

You can find out more about the book [@howtobegin.com](#) that will give you bonuses, that will give you a pre-launch extras, if you're listening before January the 11th. And it'll just give you additional resources if you're coming to it after January 11th. Thanks for your support. You're awesome. You're doing great.