

EPISODE 46



# From Heroin Overdose to World-Traveling Digital Nomad

with Francis Nayan



YOUR PERMISSION PRESCRIPTION

with Nancy Levin

**NANCY:** Welcome back to another episode of your permission prescription. I am delighted to be joined today by Francis Nayan. He is an email copywriter, probably best known for his freelance business, Stories and Copy, a DFY email marketing service for e-commerce businesses. After beating a heroin addiction in October, 2014, Francis set out to see the world first as an ESL teacher in Europe, then as a traveling freelance copywriter.

And now as the owner of the Nomad Newsletter, where he shares the latest news on digital nomadism, freelance work, destinations and features location independent entrepreneurs creating awesome businesses all around the world. His brand new book is just out called Nomadic and Happy: Six steps to Becoming a Well-Paid and Fulfilled Digital Freelancer.

Welcome Francis.

**FRANCIS:** Thank you so much, Nancy. Thanks for having me. That was a, a heck of a, an intro.

**NANCY:** I'm thrilled to have you here. So there's so many places I want, I want to go, but I figured the best place to begin is how did you get, how did you get here from where you were.

**FRANCIS:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, you know, we can dive into it a little parts of it, but originally I am from Memphis, Tennessee.

I was actually born in the, in the Philippines family immigrated in the early nineties. So I grew up in the south. I'm a bit of a red neck more or less. My accent comes out sometimes, especially when I'm nervous, but yeah, I grew up in. And I just always wanted to travel and I was wanting to see the world.

It was one of those things that you know, I, I remember being seven years old and looking outside my window and seeing an airplane and being like, oh man, I wish I want to be on that airplane. I want to know where it goes. I want to see the world. And that's always been kind of like [00:02:00] an interest of mine, but of course this was like the early two thousands, 2000 tens being like so young, I didn't know about I didn't really know about opportunities or ways to move abroad.

And I wasn't a very good student. I I was like, I don't really know if I can be a doctor and travel. I don't even know that we know what does, what's my path. You know, of course, I didn't know the path, so I kind of ended up parking little too hard in college. I fell into. A heroin addiction. When I was just very, very into opiates, I had about a 200, \$300 a day habit when I was using needles.

And just really wasn't overall, like just not a good person, you know? Fortunately. And unfortunately I had a, my overdose and October, 2014 and I was in the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi. I was found by a friend of my ex-girlfriend at the time, just seasoning and foaming at the mouth. And yeah, I was just in the hospital for two weeks Jackson and I got sent home back to Memphis and my mom was like, all right, [00:03:00] well, everybody knows you're clean now.

So what do you wanna do? And it took me a while, but I, you know, the whole travel bug hit me. So I'm signed up for a ESL course, teach English abroad. I ended up getting my first job offer in to teach in Spain in Barcelona. And yeah, that was about. 2022 now, so about seven years ago. And it was only about eight months after my eight or nine months after my overdose that I, that I moved to Spain.

And yeah, that was just like the start of the adventure. And eventually I realized I didn't really like teaching after I moved to Budapest after one year in Spain. And I did the typical thing where I just Google searched how to make money online, all of these kind of gigs in different ways.

Eventually I, I met like this 20 year old German guy who said he was a freelance copywriter and he just got done traveling. And I was like, I want to travel. You're 20 years old and you're not even a native English speaker. Like tell me more. And [00:04:00] he told me about copywriting gave me some resources and the rest is history.

**NANCY:** I love it. So, you know, It's an iconic story of, you know, here we are at the rock bottom and it becomes a gateway to opportunity for a different way of life. And also what I love about what you've shared is that you, you know, you followed your heart, you followed desire, and then you kept staying curious and.

You were looking for what would feel fulfilling and, you know, right before we started recording, you were telling me about how the title for your book came about and that the editor you were working with, you know, said, what is it that you feel right now? And you said, I'm happy.[00:05:00]

And that's, that's something that I think, you know, I still think not a lot of people would go right there and say, that's, that's the predominant feeling.

**FRANCIS:** Yeah, for sure. For sure. I mean, for me it was, it's one of those things that kind of stayed a whole lot attitude, you know you know, the things, maybe problem clients or tech issues or.

You know, certain situations or arguments with my girlfriend, you know, maybe those things bring me down, but then I kind of sit back and I realized Francis, this is you're literally living the life that you wanted. Like ever since you were seven years old, it's like, you get to write, like you've always wanted to be a writer and now you can pick up and move and live and, and travel anywhere.

And you know, I'd have that mindset where I can live in a. You know, legally, you know, barring all the tech stuff and residency and immigration paperwork for me. It's I know I can get past that because I've done it before. And so I'm just [00:06:00] a lot of the times it's just, you know, sit back and just be happy.

I mean, when he asked me, he's like, how are you, how are you feeling right now? Like deep down. I'm like, man, you know, Nate really I'm just super happy. It stills really, really good.

**NANCY:** So what are some of the misconceptions or the myths about digital nomad?

**FRANCIS:** Yeah. So I think one of my favorite missed session, sorry, misconception is that we're all just like, you know, wearing man buttons, maybe living on our parents' money, trust fund babies.

And we're all just doing yoga and drinking beer on the beach somewhere at the same time. And you know, that's not. You know that might've been the case 10 years ago, but because of the internet, because of, you know, online businesses and, you know, the influx of remote work, it's the people who are.

Digital nomads and our traveling, working around the world. They're they're CEOs, they're business founders, they're entrepreneurs, they're high level executives. So, [00:07:00] you know, you go to a place like, I guess the more typical places like a Tulum or like a Barcelona or a Budapest, you may think that, oh, these digital nomads, they're just, you know, 24 years old, you know, Working in a cafe or something on that, their laptop and not

taking it seriously, but in reality, there's a lot, a whole lot of a high level of people who are digital nomads and seeing the world.

So I think that's probably probably the biggest one.

**NANCY:** Yeah. It's interesting. I do. And I, I'm curious to actually talk with you about how you have seen the last couple of years. Change around digital nomadism, given the pandemic, because I have definitely seen, you know, I feel very grateful. I had an online business before the pandemic started and I know that there were certainly corporate situations where people thought, oh, people can't work from home.

They won't get anything done. And now I know I've heard [00:08:00] CEOs say. There's no difference. People are getting probably even more done working from home than coming into an office every day. And there's more flexibility and more freedom. And I've certainly known people who, when the pandemic hit said, you know, screw this, I'm outta here.

I'm going to go somewhere else where I really want to be. So what have you seen over the last couple of years?

**FRANCIS:** Yeah. Especially over the last two years, but the whole, the pandemic is that the. You know, before it was really just online business owners. So people who maybe had an e-commerce store coach, a consultant, maybe somebody who really killed it with some type of affiliate marketing or something.

But now what I've seen is real remote workers who work for companies. They're not freelancers. They have just been given permission or silently not told their companies that they're abroad. And it's really interesting because there are so many countries outright now. That would [00:09:00] just release that just released this digital nomad visa, which essentially states that you can live in this country legally.

As long as you provide the, the right information, you know, which is most of the time just showing that you're paying taxes in your home country and

a contract from your work saying that you can live there. And so, you know, I was just in Mexico all last year. And I met so many people who were like, oh yeah, I worked for FedEx.

Or I worked for this company based in Minneapolis. And they're letting me just live here. And it's, I think it's fascinating. And you know, and even in Europe, there's people who are, who have taken it to the extreme and Portugal's kind of leading the way with the digital nomad pieces where they're just, I don't want to exaggerate it.

Maybe it's true. But there, it seems like they're just handing out these, these Pieces to live there and you don't even need to have a business if your company says, yeah, go ahead and live in Portugal, just get the work done, then it it's readily available. But that's what I've seen is that there are so many people out here now who are just remote [00:10:00] employees and there's, they're just everywhere.

It's amazing.

**NANCY:** It's interesting. The, you know, in so many ways, the pandemic had us begin to see that. We are all connected and that this is, you know, we are global citizens of the world. And for those of us who are inclined to think that way, and it's, it's intriguing also that this idea that now there is so much more, I would say, even acceptability of being able to work from anywhere.

As opposed to having to be somewhere specific. And that it's, as you're saying, it's not just entrepreneurs. It's really about what quality of life do I want to have? Where, what is the landscape or geography that I want to live in and [00:11:00] look out at? I mean, I even feel that way. I live, I live in the U S and I live in Boulder, Colorado, and that is a very conscious choice to live in the mountains, you know, and I think that more and more people are consciously choosing to live somewhere that that really feeds them a nourishing.

**FRANCIS:** Oh, yeah, 100%, 100%. I think it's, I think it's really fascinating also the, the kind of cities that people kind of gravitate towards, you know, I love the beach and everything like this, but I'm, I mean, I'm from Memphis, I'm a city guy. So I love like kind of the hustle and bustle of Budapest. You know, moving, thinking Elizabeth doing and.

Just catching them by, but yeah, it's, it's really an incredible out. People are like, they, they realize they have this opportunity and they want to take it. And I think people have always had that now, but with, because of the pandemic and because of remote work, it's, it's, it's so much easier. And it's interesting to [00:12:00] see all of these amazing places pop up that people aren't going to, you know, you just mentioned Colorado.

One place over here is the band scope, Bulgaria, which is up in the mountains. And it is like becoming a remote workers paradise. They have a huge community there. They have numerous co-working spaces, they hosted workshops, meetups. And it's one of those places in which you think, oh, like, I didn't know, they had places like this, like communities like this, but yeah, now, now there definitely are.

**NANCY:** And so. Where you are now in Budapest. Are there a lot of ex-pats, you know, you S are you meeting people from all over the world? W you know, what, who are you meeting?

**FRANCIS:** Yeah. W in Budapest, Budapest has always been a big international hub, you know especially, you know, with the whole, like everything that happened in the late eighties and early nineties It's I think I've told people about this out Budapest, just kind of dealing with their own form of like gentrification in a way.

And [00:13:00] a lot of people from other countries are just coming in because it's, it's, it's a, you know, it's a affordable to live here. The, the, the younger generation wants like these new businesses in. And so, yeah, I, I meet a lot of a good mix. I wouldn't say that. I see, I meet more Americans than I meet, you know, a certain other.

Citizen of another country, but I think, I think with the whole, well hungry, it just released their digital nomad too. So I'm sure I'm going to see a whole lot of that, but yeah, I mean, over here, if you come here, you, you, you stand in the, in the downtown square, you're going to just hear every kind of accent and every kind of language.

So all over the

**NANCY:** place. I love that. And where are most of your clients that you're working with?

**FRANCIS:** Oh, yeah. My clients have you know, as an email copywriter, like a lot of my clients, they kind of differ. So thinking right now I have two clients based in England. I have one that's well, the headquarters is in Israel.

And then actually [00:14:00] today I go on a call with somebody from the states who was actually he fights and like this big fight promotion, not the UFC, but a another one. So, and it's pretty cool. So it's really nice that I have. It's an international base. That's pretty

**NANCY:** cool. And what I mean is time difference a challenge for you?

Or what, what are some of the challenges you might experience?

**FRANCIS:** Yeah, well, the, I think the time difference is probably the biggest challenge, you know, depending on the. And, you know, depending on who I'm working with, sometimes they're very busy and they prefer not to have calls in the morning. So for example, somebody who is in mountain time, you know, where you are or Pacific time, those are probably the most difficult because I prefer not to have.

And they prefer not to have calls early. So then sometimes we have to compromise where it's like, okay, we can, we can all bond for 30 minutes at eight. O'clock my time. Or I'll say, okay, well I can, I can go at 8:00 PM my time this week. So there's, there's definitely those. Those challenges, but

I've had clients from [00:15:00] Australia and in Singapore and south America.

And it's usually not been a problem, especially as a freelancer, I gotta have my own boundaries and say, you know, I'm not going to have a call past eight, eight o'clock or I'm not going to be the morning is my time where I, I I'm in my deep work. So I prefer not to have calls there. I don't want to have calls on Mondays and Fridays.

So that's always really important to kind of allowing myself to, to, to have. The time

**NANCY:** know, well, you know, that I am all for the boundaries, so that's good. I have, I know I have a friend who actually is from the states and she lives in Paris and she she's an author and she also, you know, works with clients.

And she said, what she loves is she has the whole morning all to herself, you know, given the time difference with the states and that she tends to work with clients between three and 7:00 PM. You know, and that way she has really protected her time and [00:16:00] space and she makes herself available when she wants to be available.

And I of course love that.

**FRANCIS:** Yeah, me too. I mean, so I think that's, that's something that everybody should, should look into more. And I know in Portugal they actually think they enacted a rule lately. That's like employees can't contact Sorry, employers, can't contact employees after 5:30 PM or

**NANCY:** something.

I saw this, I saw this and it's, you know, it's funny. Cause I've been talking about this with some members of my team, you know? I work when I work and if I send a slack message on Saturday night, it certainly doesn't mean that I expect to be responded to. So I've, I've also had to, you know, I've

also had to, you know, sort of get my team in the mindset of them working when they're working, not in reaction to me.

**FRANCIS:** That's a good that's, that's a really great way to put it.

**NANCY:** Yeah. What is your most, most [00:17:00] favorite thing about doing what you're doing right now? I

**FRANCIS:** think, I think for me as a, well, one career wise, I just love writing. I think it's

**NANCY:** Nope. I froze.

You froze.

Let's see there you are. You've oh, I don't hear you. You're on mute. There you go. I [00:18:00] think we're back. We're back. Okay. I'll ask you the question again. Okay. Okay. What is your favorite thing about being a digital nomad and doing what you're doing now?

**FRANCIS:** I think for me, it's the, this is like the sense of adventure, you know, I I'm a, I'm a.

I think it's, yeah, I'm a digital nomad, but I'm more of a digital slow mad, which is like this idea of like slow traveling. I think that's also a misconception is that digital nomads just bounce from place to place every week. And for me it's nice, but the, the kind of adventure that you know, I settle in, in a, in a new Sydney or a new country and it's, I absolutely love just making myself at home and, you know, At finding my own favorite cafes, my own restaurants, my own, you know, my favorite walking spots.

I go with my girlfriend or even making friends. I mean, it's, for me, it's, it's exciting. And I think maybe there was, I don't know, because I went to four different [00:19:00] schools and four years at like when I was at a young age is kind of this kind of feeling of like newness and freshness and out of my comfort zone socially.

With me. So I think for me, it's, it's really, it's like a new point and I was just in the states, which is crazy. Cause my girlfriend has never been and she was, you know, she couldn't believe that we were in Nashville and country music and you know, before then, and we were in Greece for, for a month or two for a month or so.

And, you know, just being there, it was just, it was incredible. And then it also proved to me. You know, I can win the business from, from anywhere and I can be productive from anywhere as long as I have caught myself too. And, you know, I, I set those boundaries and I instill those habits. So yeah. Yeah.

I think the, just the diversity of life, the spice of life, as cheesy as that may sound, I think that's my favorite part.

**NANCY:** And I love that. Where's your girlfriend.

**FRANCIS:** My girlfriend is Hungarian she's she's my assistant and she's a really good writer. And yeah, she loves traveling as well. It's great that [00:20:00] she's, she's she really loves traveling and then she's, it's gonna stay the same for her as a, as a child.

She always wanted to travel. So we're a pretty good

**NANCY:** match. You're working together and you're traveling together. Life is

**FRANCIS:** good. Life is good. Yeah. Life is very nice. You know, we learn a lot from each other, you know, there's, there's kind of like those modes where it's like, you know, I'm her client, so to speak and she's my, she's my assistant.

So we have those weird moments where I'm like I love you, but you need to send that invoice like ASAP because that's kinda getting kind of a weird, so sometimes it can be, the lines can be blurred, but it's overall. It's pretty good.

**NANCY:** That's great. So. I'm curious if you personally experienced any sort of flack from your family, from your friends around, you know, really you're going to go do this.

How are you going to make a living? How are you gonna be able to do this? This is a fantasy, a pipe dream.

**FRANCIS:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. I think especially, so there's like kind of two ways that I I've [00:21:00] experienced that one is like, yeah, people saying, you know, why are you traveling the world? And how are you going to save money?

Like here? Do you have clients? How are you going to. Deliver for your clients while you're out here trying to serve in Western Mexico or something like that, or and just get a real job or, you know, just work at an agency. So, you know, it's you know, the income is steady or something. And then I also have like the flag that's kind of like, I'm a like I'm an annoying traveling.

Who posts photos all the time. And I'm not like a serious worker, which I think if you look at like my Instagram, I barely post anything for one. So it's, it's very, it's totally like my whole travel experience is so for me, not for my followers, but I think those are the two main things that I kind of deal with.

And of course that's like everyone, I think every business owner has something similar, so it might not be, oh, why are you. Why are you traveling while running a business? It could be, why are you trying to build a business while you are a mother or your, you know, your parents are ill, you know, you should focus on that.

So [00:22:00] I think it's you know, this is. I've I've heard a whole lot. And being a serious business owner, serious freelancer, wanting to look to deliver for my clients. Of course, I've had people say, you know, all you do is work and travel. You don't even really hang out with us or your and things like that.

So, yeah, those are for sure. Some of the challenges that I faced.

**NANCY:** Yeah. I mean, I think what you're speaking of is. Far more universal than just being someone who is working abroad. You know, I mean, I know for, for me, in terms of the boundaries, I set around my time and space. I know that because I live in Boulder and in the mountains and because I love to hike, I even arranged my days around when I can hike and.

No different of me being here, doing that than you being wherever you are arranging your day, perhaps around surfing, like you said, or whatever, it might be, this, you know, the work, this, this work [00:23:00] ethic that we all have, those of us are, let me say it a different way. Those of us who have the strong work ethic and the sense of responsibility will always get the shit done.

And that doesn't mean that it needs to come. At the cost of us actually having enjoyment and fulfillment.

**FRANCIS:** Yes. Yes, exactly. Exactly. And I think kind of doing those things, there's a, like there's non-negotiables and those things that you do to really honor yourself, I think those contribute to you being productive and to your happiness.

I mean, you know, the. And maybe, you know, making money is fantastic and making your clients happy is great, but like at the end of the day, if you're not taking care of yourself and you're not doing those things that really make you happy and, you know, make your heart sing. But you know, for me, I, I won't be as creative, you know, I won't be as.

As joyous as I am on those calls or, you know, being supportive with the people that I, you know, that I work with. So it's, for me, that's, that's one of those things that like, I, I need, and [00:24:00] I'm, I'm lucky enough to work with people that understand that. And they, they have something similar in their lives as well.

**NANCY:** Let's take a moment and I'd love you to tell us a little bit about your. Yes.

**FRANCIS:** Yes. So my my upcoming book, and without now, I think by the time they listen to this, it's called nomadic and happy six steps to becoming a fulfilled and well-paid digital freelancer. And basically it's, it's really my, my story and the story and lesson boring, or my lessons in story form about how, how I went from becoming one, an addict in Jackson, Mississippi, and.

Essentially changed my life and shifted it and kind of up-leveled it. I would say like maybe every year from being in the states and kind of trying to figure out what I'm doing, trying to find my people turn off. From stop hanging out with, you know, other drug addicts to really finding my circle of people who support me and who inspire me.

And you know, all the way [00:25:00] from my first year in Barcelona, where it was just, just an absolute, crazy time, not so much party-wise, but it was my first time being like like a normal person. You know, that wasn't like, I think did to drugs or anything like that. Yeah, it was great. But you know, from my time at Barcelona, from and into Budapest where I still am now and how I found copywriting, how I found freelancing, and then I go into.

More practical lessons about how to, how to get your first client, how to get paid, how to set, you know, how to set up your freelance business. And there's not a lot of fluff. There are some anecdotes in there and things like that, but I really want it to be very straight forward. I wanted to, for whoever who read this would you know, whoever read this book would, would really wouldn't want finish it.

And then to just be like, okay, well I know what to do next next. And if it's a. Yeah, this simplified then, you know, I can do too. And if you know, if they want to learn more, of course they can follow up, follow up and follow me and ask me how they can, maybe we can work together. [00:26:00] But yeah, they I poured my heart and soul into that book and I'm, I'm pretty, I'm really excited, you know, said, this is like it's a big step for

**NANCY:** me.

I love this. And what I love most is what I'm hearing you say is you're really putting it out there as if to offer. You know, if I can do it. So can you, and here is, you know, here's the path.

**FRANCIS:** Yes, yes, exactly. Exactly. And it's also, I wrote the book also in a way that, you know, if what, what, what did Francis want to read in 2016, 2017?

Yeah. So there was a lot of like some talk with like fellow writers. It's like, oh, maybe the book is too short or maybe it's too long. And I was thinking, I think. You know, I'm going to pack it in with the stuff that I wish that I knew and nothing more, nothing less I want, I want it to be actionable. But I want it to inspire the people who read it.

And so, yeah, I'm really, I'm really happy. I got him super pumped up for it, for people to finally open it [00:27:00] up and read it. And yeah, whoever's listening to this. I hope you enjoy it.

**NANCY:** I love that. So as you know, the. Name of this podcast is your permission prescription. And I'd love to know what you would like to invite our listeners to give themselves permission for

**FRANCIS:** yes, yes.

I would say no. I would describe you to find those. Non-negotiables find those things that you. The honor, you every single day. And the things that honor your year, you know, what's going to make you hear what's gonna make you successful and happy. For me, it was being nomadic. And maybe for you, it's being you know, spending more time with your kids and happy or getting a better shape and happy and whatever that is.

I, you know, prescribed that you, you explore it and that you allow yourself to have it, no matter what it is.

**NANCY:** Thank you. And for people who want to follow you and check you out, what's the best place that they should go. [00:28:00]

**FRANCIS:** Yeah, you can just follow me at well, when you can join my newsletter, the nomad newsletter, and you can find that@thenomadnewsletter.com.

And then you can also just find me on social media. I am a pretty active on Twitter and on Facebook. And of course you can follow like, If you want to like follow me on my travels so you can go on my Instagram. There's only one Francis Nyan in the world. Well, other than my dad. So don't, if you see my dad, you know, just don't friend request, the older guy, that's my bad.

So you can follow me there, but 30.03.22\_YPP\_E46\_mixdown

**Francis:** And basically it's, it's really my, my story and the story and lesson form or my lessons in story form about how, how I went from becoming one, an addict in Jackson, Mississippi, and. Essentially changed my life and shifted it and kind of up-leveled it, I would say like maybe every year from being in the states and kind of trying to figure out what I'm doing from stop hanging out with, you know, other drug addicts to really finding my circle of people who support me and do inspire me.

**Nancy:** Hi, and welcome to your permission prescription, the podcast that teaches you how to confidently say yes to you and consciously create the life you desire. I'm Nancy Levin, best-selling author, master life coach, and founder of Levin Life Coach Academy. But it wasn't too long ago that I was a burnt out people- pleaser living my life for everyone around me and ignoring my own needs fast forward to today.

And I've successfully coached thousands of recovering people, pleasers to set boundaries with themselves and the people around them. So they can live a more fulfilling life on their own terms. I created your permission prescription to help you do the same. Be sure to tune in for actionable coaching methods.

From me, interviews with other incredible coaches, speakers and authors, plus one-on-one live coaching calls and so much more. If you're ready to start saying yes to you, then you're in the right place.

Welcome back to another episode of your permission prescription. I am delighted to be joined today by Francis Nayan. He is an email copywriter, probably best known for his freelance business stories and copy a D F Y email marketing service for e-commerce businesses. After beating a heroin addiction in October, 2014, Francis set out to see the world first as an ESL teacher in Europe, then as a traveling freelance copywriter.

And now as the owner of the Nomad Newsletter, where he shares the latest news on digital nomadism, freelance work destinations, and features, location, independent entrepreneurs, creating awesome businesses all around the world. His brand new book is just out called Nomadic and Happy: Six Steps to Becoming a Well-paid and Fulfilled Digital Freelancer.

Welcome Francis.

**Francis:** Thank you so much, Nancy. Thanks for having me. That was a, a heck of a, an intro. Just happy to be

**Nancy:** here. I'm thrilled to have you here. So there's so many places I want, I want to go, but I figured that the best place to begin is how did you get, how did you get here from where you were.

**Francis:** Yeah, well, you know, we can dive into it a little parts of it, but originally I am from Memphis, Tennessee.

I was actually born in the, in the Philippines, family immigrated in the early nineties. So I grew up in the south. I'm a bit of a red neck, of. My accent comes out sometimes, especially when I'm nervous, but, yeah, I grew up in Memphis and, I just always wanted to travel and I always wanted to see the world.

It was one of those things that I remember being seven years old and looking outside my window. And seeing an airplane and being like, oh man, I wish I want to be on that airplane. I want to know where it goes. I want to see the world. And that's always been kind of like an interest of mine, but of course this was like the early 2000s, 2010s being like so young, I didn't know about opportunities or ways to move around.

And I wasn't a very good student. I was like, I don't really know if I can be a doctor and travel. I don't, I don't, you know, we know what is, what's my path, you know, of course I didn't know the path. So I kind of ended up partying a little too hard in college. I fell into a heroin addiction where I was just very, very into opiates at about a \$200, \$300 a day habit when I was using needles.

And, I just really wasn't overall. Just not a good person. Fortunately, and unfortunately I had a, my overdose and October, 2014 and I was in the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi. I was found by a friend of my ex-girlfriend at the time, seasoning and foaming at the mouth. Yeah. I was just in the hospital for two weeks Jackson and, I got sent home back to Memphis and, my mom was like, all right, well, everybody knows you're clean now.

So what do you wanna do? And, it took me a while, but I, you know, the whole travel bug hit me. So I'm signed up for a, ESL course, teach English. And I ended up getting my first job offer to teach in Spain in Barcelona. And that was about seven years ago. And it was only about eight months after my eight or nine months after my overdose that I, that I moved to Spain.

And yeah, that was just like the start of the adventure. And eventually I realized I didn't really like teaching after I moved to Budapest after one year in Spain. And I did the typical thing where I, Google search, how to make money online, found all of these kind of gigs in different ways. And eventually I, I met like this 20-year-old German guy who said he was a freelance copywriter and he just got done traveling.

And I was like, I want to travel. You're 20 years old and you're not even a native English speaker. Like tell him. And he told me about copywriting gave me some resources and the rest is history.

**Nancy:** I love it. So a, an iconic story of, you know, here we are at the rock bottom and it becomes a gateway to opportunity for a different way of life.

And also what I love about what you've shared is that you, you know, you followed your heart, you followed desire, and then you kept. Staying curious. And you were looking for what would feel fulfilling and, you know,

right before we started recording, you were telling me about how the title for your book came about and that the editor you were working with, you know, said, what is it that you feel right now?

And you said I'm happy. And that's, that's something that I think, you know, I still think not a lot of people would go right there and say, that's, that's the predominant

**Francis:** feeling. Yeah, for sure. For sure. I mean, for me it was, it's one of those things that kind of stayed a whole lot attitude, you know, you know, the things maybe problems from clients or tech issues or.

You know, certain situations or arguments with my girlfriend, you know, maybe those things bring me down, but then I kind of sit back and I realized Francis, this is you're literally living the life that you want it, like ever since you were seven years old, it's like, you get to write, like you've always wanted to be a writer and now.

Pick up and move and live and, and travel anywhere. And, you know, I have that mindset where I can live in a country, you know, legally, you know, barring all the tax stuff and residency and immigration paperwork for me. And it's, I know I can get past. 'cause, you know, I've done it before. And so I'm just a lot of the times it's just, you know, sit back and just be happy.

I mean, when he asked me, he's like, how are you, how are you feeling right now? Like deep down. I'm like, man, you know, Nate really, I'm just super happy. It stills really, really

**Nancy:** good. So what are some of the misconceptions or the myths about digital

**Francis:** nomadism? Yeah, so I think probably my favorite misconception is that we're all just like, you know, wearing man buttons, maybe living in.

On our parents' money trust fund babies. And we're all just doing yoga and drinking beer on the beach somewhere at the same time. and you know,

that's not true, you know, that might've been the case 10 years ago, but because of the internet, because of online businesses and you know, the influx of remote work, it's the people who are digital nomads and are traveling, working around the world.

They're CEOs. Their business owners, you know, founders that are entrepreneurs they're high-level executives. So, you know, you go to a place like, I guess the more typical places like a Tulum or like a Barcelona or a Budapest, you may think that, oh, these digital nomads, they're just, you know, 24 years old working in a cafe or something on that.

And not taking it seriously, but in reality, there's a lot, a whole lot of, high level people who are digital nomads and seeing the world. So I think that's probably probably the biggest one.

**Nancy:** Yeah. It's interesting. I do. And I, I'm curious to actually talk with you about how you have seen the last couple of years.

Change around digital nomadism, given the pandemic, because I have definitely seen, you know, I feel very grateful. I had an online business before the pandemic started and I know that there were. Certainly, corporate situations where people thought, oh, people can't work from home. They won't get anything done.

And now I know I've heard CEOs say, there's no difference. People are getting probably even more done working from home than coming into an office every day. And there's more flexibility and more freedom. And I've certainly known people who. When the pandemic hit said, you know, screw this, I'm outta here.

I'm going to go somewhere else where I really want to be. So what have you seen over the last couple of years?

**Francis:** Yeah. Especially over the last two years, but the whole, the pandemic is that the, you know, before it was really just online business owners. So people who maybe had an e-commerce store coach, a consultant, maybe somebody who really killed it.

Some type of affiliate marketing or something. But now what I've seen is real remote workers who work for companies. They're not freelancers. They have just been given permission or silently not told their companies that they're abroad. And, it's really interesting because there are so many countries out right now.

That just released that just released this digital nomad visa, which essentially say that you can live in this country legally, as long as you provide the, the right information, you know, which is most of the time just showing that you're paying taxes, in your home country and a contract from your work saying that you can live there.

And so, you know, I was just in Mexico all last year. And I met so many people who were like, oh yeah, I worked for FedEx. Or I worked for this company based in Minneapolis. And, they're letting me just live here. And it's, I think it's fascinating, you know, and even in Europe, there's people who are, who've taken it to the extreme and Portugal's kind of leading the way with the digital nomad pieces where, they're just, I don't want to exaggerate it.

Maybe it's true. But there, it seems like they're just hanging out these, these remote visas to live there and you don't even need to have a business if your company says, yeah, go ahead and live in Portugal. Just know, get the work done, then it, it's readily available. But that's what I'm seeing is that there are so many people out here now who are just remote employees and there's, they're just everywhere.

It's amazing.

**Nancy:** It's interesting. The, you know, in so many ways, the pandemic had us begin to see that. We are all connected and that this is, you know, we are global citizens of the world. And for those of us who are inclined to think that way, and it's intriguing also that this idea that now there is so much more, I would say, even acceptability of being able to work from anywhere.

As opposed to having to be somewhere specific. And that it's, as you're saying, it's not just entrepreneurs. It's really about what quality of life do I

want to have? What is the landscape or geography? That I want to live in and look out at. I mean, I even feel that way. I live in the US and I live in Boulder, Colorado, and that is a very conscious choice to live in the mountains, you know?

And I think that more and more people. Consciously choosing to live somewhere that that really feeds them and nourishes them.

**Francis:** Oh yeah. 100%. 100%. I think it's, I think it's really fascinating also the kind of cities that people kind of gravitate towards, you know, I love to be. And everything like this, but I'm, I mean, I'm from Memphis, I'm a city guy.

So I love like kind of the hustle and bustle of Budapest. It's really an incredible out people are like, they, they realize they have this opportunity and they want to take it. And I think people have always had that now. Because of the pandemic and because of her work, it's, it's, it's so much easier. And it's interesting to see all of these amazing places pop up that people aren't going to, you know, you just mentioned, Colorado.

I mean, one place over here is a band scope bulk area, which is up in the mountains and it is like becoming. A remote workers paradise. They have a huge community there. They have numerous co-working spaces, they hosting workshops, meetups. And, it's one of those places in which you think, oh, like, I didn't know, they had places like this, like communities like this, but yeah.

Now, now there definitely are.

**Nancy:** And so where you are now in Budapest, are there a lot of ex-pats. You know, US are you meeting people from all over the world? Well you know, what, who are you meeting?

**Francis:** Yeah. Well in Budapest, Budapest has always been a big international hub, you know, especially, you know, with the whole, like everything that happened in late eighties and early nineties.

I think I've told people about this out Budapest, just kind of dealing with their own form of like, gentrification in a way. And a lot of people from other countries are just coming in because it's, it's, it's a, you know, it's affordable to live here. The, the, the younger generation wants like these new businesses in.

And so, yeah, I meet a lot of, a good mix. I wouldn't say that. I see, I meet more Americans than I meet, you know, a certain. Citizen of another country, but I think with the whole, well hungry, it just released their digital nomad too. So I'm sure I'm going to see a whole lot of that, but, yeah, I mean, over here, if you come here, you, you stand in the downtown square, you're going to just hear every kind of accent and every kind of language.

So it's all over the

**Nancy:** place. I love that. And where are most of your clients that you're working with?

**Francis:** Oh yeah, my clients have, you know, as an email copywriter, like a lot of my clients. I kind of differ. So thinking right now I have two clients based in England. I have one that's, the headquarters is in Israel.

And then actually today I go on a call with somebody from the States who was actually, he fights in like this big fight promotion, not the UFC, but a another one. So, and it's pretty cool. So it's really nice that I have. It's an international base.

**Nancy:** And what I mean is time difference a challenge for you? Or what, what are some of the challenges you might experience?

**Francis:** I think, yeah, well, I think the time difference is probably the biggest challenge, you know, depending on the client. And, you know, depending on who I'm working with, sometimes they're very busy and they prefer not to have calls in the morning. So for example, somebody who is in mountain time, you know, where you are or the Pacific time, those are probably the most difficult, because I prefer not to have calls late and they prefer not to have calls early.

So then sometimes we have to compromise where it's like, okay, We can all bond for 30 minutes at eight o'clock my time, or I'll say, okay, well, I can, I can go at 8:00 PM my time this week. So there's, there's definitely those, those challenges, but I've had clients from Australia and in Singapore and South America, and it's usually not been a problem.

especially as a freelancer, I got to have like my own boundaries. And say, you know, I'm not going to have a ball past eight, eight o'clock or I'm not going to be the morning is my time where I I'm in my deep work. So I prefer not to have balls there. I don't want to have goals on Mondays and Fridays, so that's always really important to kind of allowing myself to have that time, you

**Nancy:** know?

Well, you know, that I am all for the boundaries, so that's good. I have, I know I have a friend who actually is from the States and she lives in Paris and she. She's an author and she also, you know, works with clients and she said, what she loves is she has the whole morning all to herself, you know, given the time difference with the States and that she tends to work with clients between three and 7:00 PM.

And that way. Has really protected her time and space and she makes herself available when she wants to be available. And I of course love that.

**Francis:** Yeah, me too. Me too. I think that's something that everybody should, should look into more. And I know in Portugal they actually think they enacted a rule lately.

Employers, can't contact employees after 5:30 PM

**Nancy:** or something. I saw this, I saw this and it's, you know, it's funny cause I've been talking about this with some members of my team. You know, I work when I work and if I send a Slack message on Saturday night, it certainly doesn't mean that I expect to be responded to.

So I've, you know, I, I've also had to sort of get my team in the mindset of. What them working when they're working, not in reaction to me.

**Francis:** That's good. Yeah. That's a really great way to put it.

**Nancy:** Yeah. What is your favorite thing about being a digital nomad and doing what you're doing?

**Francis:** I think for me, it's the, this is like this sense of adventure.

You know, I, I'm a digital nomad, but I'm more of a digital slow-mad, which is like this idea of like slow traveling. I think that's also the misconception is that digital nomads just bounced from place to place every week. And for me, it's nice, but the, the kind of adventure that, you know, I settle in, in a, in a new city or a new country.

And it's, I absolutely love that. Making myself at home and finding my own favorite cafes. My restaurants. You know, my favorite walking spots, I go with my girlfriend or even making friends. I mean, it's, for me, it's, it's exciting. And I think maybe there was, I don't know, because I went to four different schools and four years at like, when I was at a young age, it's kind of, I had this kind of feeling of like newness and freshness and out of my comfort zone socially.

It's always been with me and I was just in the states, which is crazy. Cause my girlfriend has never been and she was, you know, she couldn't believe that we were in Nashville and country music and you know, before then, and we were in Greece for, for a month or two, for a month or so. And, you know, just being there, it was just, it was incredible.

And then it also proved to me that. You know, I can run a business from, from anywhere and I can be productive from anywhere as long as I have caught myself to. And, you know, I, I set those boundaries and I, I instill those habits. So, , yeah. Yeah. I think the diversity of black spice of life, as cheesy as that may sound, I think that's my favorite

**Nancy:** part.

I love that. Where's your girlfriend from my girlfriend's

**Francis:** Hungarian. She's my assistant. And she's a really good writer. And, yeah, she loves traveling as well. It's great that she's, she really loves traveling and, and she's, it's going to be the same for her as a, as a child, she always wanted to travel, so we're a pretty good match.

**Nancy:** So you're, you're working together and you're traveling together. Life is good.

**Francis:** Life is good. Yeah. Life is very nice. You know, we learn a lot from each other, you know, there's, there's kind of like those modes where it's like, you know, I'm, her client, so to speak and she's my, she's my assistant. So we have those weird moments where I'm like, yeah, I love you, but you need to send that invoice like ASAP because that's kind of getting kind of a weird, so, sometimes it can be, the lines can be blurred, but it's overall.

**Nancy:** It's pretty good. That's great. So I'm curious if you personally experienced. Any sort of flack from your family, from your friends around, you know, really you're going to go do this. How are you going to make a living? How are you gonna be able to do this? This is a fantasy, a pipe dream. Oh

**Francis:** yeah. Yeah. I think, especially, so there's kind of two ways that I've experienced that one is like, yeah, people saying, you know, why are you traveling the world?

How are you going to save money? Like here you have clients, how are you going to. Deliver for your clients while you're out here trying to serve in Western Mexico or something like that, or, and just get a real job or, you know, just work at an agency. So, you know, it's, you know, the income is steady or something.

And then I also have like the black that's kinda like, I'm a, , like a, I'm an annoying traveling. Who posts photos all the time. And I'm not like a serious worker, which I think if you look at like my Instagram, I barely post anything for one. So it's, it's very, it's totally like my whole travel experience.

So for me, not for my followers, but, I think those are the two main things that I kind of deal with. And of course, that's like every business owner has something similar, so it might not be, are you traveling while running a business? It could be, you know, why are you trying to build a business? Are a mother or your, you know, your parents are ill, you know, you should focus on that.

So I think it's, you know, those are. I've heard a whole lot and, being a serious business owner, a serious freelance or wanting to look to deliver for my clients. Of course, I've had people say, you know, all you do is work and in travel, you don't even really hang out with us or you're, and things like that.

So, yeah, those are for sure. Some of the challenges that I faced. Yeah. I

**Nancy:** mean, I think what you're speaking of is. Far more universal than just being someone who is working abroad. You know, I mean, I know for, for me, in terms of the boundaries, I set around my time and space. I know that because I live in Boulder and in the mountains and because I love to hike, I even arranged my days around when I can hike and.

No different of me being here, doing that than you being wherever you are arranging your day, perhaps around surfing, like you said, or whatever, it might be. Those of us who have the strong work ethic and the sense of responsibility will always get the shit. Yeah. And that doesn't mean that it needs to come at the cost of us actually having enjoyment

**Francis:** and fulfillment.

Yes. Yes, exactly. Exactly. And I think kind of doing those things, those are like those non-negotiables and those things that you do to really honor yourself, those contribute to you being productive and to your happiness. I mean, you know, the. And maybe, you know, making money is fantastic and, making your clients happy is great, but like at the end of the day, if you're not taking care of yourself and you're not, doing those things that really make you happy and, you know, make your heart sing.

But, you know, for me, I, I won't be as creative, you know, I won't be as. As joyous as I am on those falls or, you know, being supportive with the people that I know that I work with. So it's, for me, that's, that's one of those things that like, I, I need, and I'm, I'm lucky enough to work with people that understand that and they have something similar in their lives.

**Nancy:** Let's take a moment. And I'd love you to tell us a little bit about your book. Yes.

**Francis:** So it's called Nomadic and Happy Six Steps to Becoming a Fulfilled and Well-paid Digital Freelancer. And basically it's, it's really my story and the story and lesson born, or my lessons and stories about how, how I went from becoming, you know, one, an addict in Jackson, Mississippi, and how.

Essentially changed my life and shifted it and kind of up-leveled it, I would say like maybe every year from being in the states and kind of trying to figure out what I'm doing from stop hanging out with, you know, other drug addicts to really finding my circle of people who support me and who inspire me and you know, all the way from my first year in Barcelona.

Where there was just, just an absolute, crazy time, not so much party-wise, but it was my first time being like a, like a normal person that wasn't like addicted to drugs or anything like that. It was just, yeah, it was great. But, you know, from my time at Barcelona, up from and into Budapest where I still am now and how I found copywriting, how I found freelancing, and then I go into.

More practical lessons about how to, how to get your first client, how to get paid, you know, how to set up your freelance business. And there's not a lot of fluff. There are some anecdotes in there and things like that, but I really want it to be very straightforward. I want it to, for whoever who read this would, you know, whoever read this book would, would really would want finish it and then to just be like, okay, well I know what to do next.

And if it's a. Yeah, this simplified then, you know, I can do too. And if they want to learn more, of course they can follow up, follow up and follow me

and ask me how they can, maybe we can work together. But, yeah, they, I poured my heart and soul into that book and I'm, I'm pretty, I'm really excited.

You know, I said, this is like, it's a big step for me.

**Nancy:** I love this. And what I love most is what I'm hearing you say is you're really putting it out there as if to offer. You know, if I can do it. So can you, and here is, you know, here's the path.

**Francis:** Yes, yes, exactly. Exactly. And it's also, I wrote the book also in a way that, you know, if, what, wait, when did Francis want to read in 2016, 2017?

Yeah. So there was a lot of like some talk with like fellow writers. It's like, oh, maybe the book is too short or maybe it's too long. And I was thinking, I. You know, I'm going to pack it in with the stuff that I wish I knew nothing more, nothing less. I want, I want it to be actionable, but I want it to inspire the people who read it.

And so, yeah, I'm really, I'm really happy. I got him super pumped up for it, for people to finally open it up and read it and yeah, whoever's listening to this. I hope you enjoy it. So

**Nancy:** as you know, the. Name of this podcast is your permission prescription. And I'd love to know what you would like to invite our listeners to give themselves permission for.

Yes.

**Francis:** Yes. I would say find those non-negotiables find those things that you. The honor, you every single day and the things that honor your year, you know, what's going to make you hear what's gonna make you successful and happy for me. It was being nomadic an happy, maybe for you. It's being, you know, spending more time with your kids and happy or getting in better shape and happy and whatever that is.

I prescribed that you explore it and that you allow yourself to have no matter what.

**Nancy:** thank you. And for people who want to follow you and check you out, what's the best place that they should go.

**Francis:** Yeah, you can just follow me at, well, when you can join my newsletter and the Nomads Newsletter, and you can find [thethenomadnewsletter.com](http://thethenomadnewsletter.com).

And then you can also just find me on social media. I am a pretty active on Twitter and on Facebook, and of course you can follow like, If you want to like, follow me on my travels, you can go on my Instagram. There's only one Francis Nayan in the world. well, other than my dad. So don't, if you see my dad, you know, just don't friend request, the older guy, that's my dad.

So you can follow me there, but join my newsletter, you know, get the book and yeah, I can't wait to

**Nancy:** hear. Francis. Thanks so much for sharing yourself with us today. Thank you, Nancy.

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode. If you loved what you heard, I'd be so grateful. If you'd leave a review and share your experience even better follow this podcast. So you never miss a new episode. And if you'd like some extra support or guidance, head over to my transform together, Facebook group for an engaged community.

Where you can speak your truth, receive inspiration and ask for help as you navigate life's journey or visit my website, [NancyLevin.com](http://NancyLevin.com), where you can find resources to help guide your path to reclaiming. What's truly important to you. Thanks again for joining me.

you want my newsletter, you know, get the book and yeah, I can't wait to hear from you all

**NANCY:** Francis. Thanks so much for sharing yourself with us today.

**FRANCIS:** Thank you, Nancy.