GLOSSARY

what do I have to show for it? – a rhetorical question (a question one asks oneself, not expecting to receive an answer) one asks when one is disappointed that one cannot observe the results of one's actions and feels one's efforts were wasted
* I spent all day in the kitchen, and what do I have to show for it? Burnt bread, an undercooked chicken, and mushy green beans.

to accomplish – to achieve; to do something, especially if it is difficult or admirable
* Nobody expected Grace to accomplish so much in her first three months on the job.

expectation – standard of performance; what one anticipates will happen in the future; what one believes should happen
* Mariah believes the secret to raising smart children is to have high expectations for them and never accept anything less than their best effort.

unattainable – desirable but impossible; not able to be reached because something is too difficult; impossible
* That kind of lifestyle is unattainable on our income unless we decide to have a lot of credit card debt.

planned out – with a clear, detailed idea of how and why something should happen
* The conference is this weekend! We should have had everything planned out months ago, but we're still trying to make arrangements for speakers and food.

to turn out – to become; to end in a particular way
* They were disappointed their offer on the home wasn't accepted, but as it turned out, they found an even better home the next week.

to peg (someone) – to identify or categorize someone in a particular way; to believe that a person has certain characteristics
* Most people peg Charles as a nerd because he wears glasses and talks about physics all the time, but he's also a member of a rock band and a world-class snowboarder.

regret – a feeling of sadness that something has happened; a wish or desire that one had done something differently in the past, because one is disappointed with the results of that action or decision
* One of Jan's biggest regrets is that he never earned a college degree.

to settle down – to get married and live a calm life, usually in a home, no longer traveling, changing jobs, or partying
* He'll probably settle down when he meets the right girl, but until then, he wants to have as many adventures as possible.

to pan out – to be successful; to happen as one expected something to happen; to meet one's expectations
* We thought we'd be able to make $100,000 by selling our home, but that didn't pan out once the housing market crashed.

content – happy, calm, and satisfied; not extremely joyful, but not sad or mad either
* Xavier is a very simple man. All he needs to feel content is a good meal and a soft bed.

upcoming – scheduled to happen soon
* Will I see you at the upcoming meeting?

to brood – to think about something too much, becoming worried, sad, and depressed
* My father always said that it doesn't do any good to brood over things you can't control.

premature aging – the physical changes that make one appear to be older than one actually is
* Spending too much time in the sun can dry out your skin and create wrinkles, leading to premature aging.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Nick disappointed?
a) Because he didn't marry a millionaire.
b) Because he had too many children.
c) Because his life isn't what he expected it to be.

2. According to Danielle, what's wrong with brooding?
a) It could make Nick die sooner.
b) It could make Nick seem older than he is.
c) It could make Nick's friends feel depressed.

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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to plan out
The phrase "to plan out," in this podcast, means to create a clear, detailed idea of how and why something should happen: "The committee has done a great job planning out the company's emergency response for natural disasters." The phrase "to plan ahead" means to make a plan for the future: "Even before their kids were born, they were planning ahead and saving money to pay for the children's college education." A "game plan" is used to talk about how one intends to win in sports or business: "The marketing director described his game plan for increasing sales before the end of the year." Finally, a "master plan" is a very detailed plan for how one will control something that is complex: "Do you think God has a master plan for our lives, or are all these events just random?"

content
In this podcast, the word "content" (pronounced "conTENT") means happy, calm, and satisfied: "At first we wanted to hire the best person in the field, but at this point, we'd be content with anyone who knows how to use a computer." As a noun, "contents" (pronounced "CONtent") refers to whatever is inside a box or container: "The writing on the box said, 'Do not drop – fragile contents.'" The word "content" can also be used to describe how much of something there is in a food or beverage: "What has a higher alcohol content: beer or wine?" The word "content" can also refer to the meaning and significance of written text: "They've created a beautiful website, but the content is terrible." Finally, a "table of contents" is a list at the beginning of a long document or book, indicating on which page each chapter or section begins."

CULTURE NOTE

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was one of the "Founding Fathers" (one of the men who made an important contribution to the country's creation) of the United States. He made many important contributions to history, politics, science, and more. He made important "discoveries" (something learned for the first time) about electricity, invented "bifocals" (glasses where the top part helps people see far away and the bottom part helps people read), created the country's first public library, and more.

Many historians have written biographies of Benjamin Franklin, but he wrote his own four-part "autobiography" (a book written about one's own life) between 1771 and 1790. The first part is "addressed to" (written for; intended for) his son and is about his childhood and early life. The second part talks about his plans to create a library and lists the "virtues" (desirable behaviors, like honesty and cleanliness) that he wants to "perfect" (to make as good as possible) in his own life. The third part talks about his views on religion, his study of languages, some of his inventions, "theories" (ideas about how something works), and his "thoughts" (opinions) on current events. The fourth part describes his "role" (what he did) in U.S./British relations, but it ends "abruptly" (quickly), "presumably" (one assumes) because he "passed away" (died) before he could finish it.

Many different versions of The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin have been published over time. Most people admire it for its importance in "recording" (documenting) events in early American history and for being an important piece of American "literature" (written books, novels, and poems). Readers admire Benjamin Franklin for being so "humble" (modest) and "down-to-earth," willing to admit his own mistakes and "shortcomings" (things one does not do well), "despite" (even though he had) his fame.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – b

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 707: Looking Back on One's Life.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 707. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is about looking back or thinking about one's life. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Nick: I'm turning 40 this year and what do I have to show for it?

Danielle: Actually, you've accomplished a lot. Do you know what your problem is? Your expectations are too high and your goals are unattainable for most people.

Nick: Not for me. They shouldn't have been. I had my life all planned out and nothing is turning out the way it should.

Danielle: I would never have pegged you for someone with regrets about how his life has turned out.

Nick: But I was supposed to make my first million dollars by the time I was 30. By 35, I should have met someone and settled down, maybe had a child or two. None of that has panned out.

Danielle: You have lots of friends and a full life. Maybe things didn't turn out the way you had imagined, but wouldn't you say you were generally content?

Nick: I was before I started thinking about my upcoming birthday.

Danielle: Then stop thinking about it. Too much brooding could definitely lead to regrets – not to mention premature aging!

[end of dialogue]

Nick begins by saying to Danielle, "I'm turning 40 this year." "To turn 40" means to reach the age of 40. He says, "what do I have to show for it?" The expression "What do I have to show for it?" is not an actual question, he is not expecting Danielle to answer; it's really a question that says that you are disappointed or unhappy with the results of your actions, that you have done a lot of work but not much has happened.

Danielle says, "Actually, you've accomplished a lot." "To accomplish" (accomplish) means to achieve something, to do something, often something that is difficult. Danielle says, "Do you know what your problem is? Your expectations are too high." "Expectations" comes from the verb "to expect." "To expect" is what you hope for, what you think will happen. Your "expectations" are what you think will happen in the future, what you believe should happen. So if you have high expectations you are expecting a lot of success, for example. We talk about "high expectations" and "low expectations." Danielle says that Nick's expectations are too high, higher than they should be, and that his goals are unattainable for most people. "To attain" (attain) means to reach or to accomplish something. "Attainable" would be something that is able to be accomplished, something you can attain. "Unattainable" is something you cannot attain; it doesn't matter how hard you try, it's impossible or it's too difficult.

Nick says, "Not for me," meaning his expectations, I guess, are not too high. He says, "They shouldn't have been." I think he's referring to his goals as being unattainable. He said, "I had my life all planned out and nothing is turning out the way it should." "To plan (something) out" is a phrasal verb meaning to have a clear, detailed idea about what you are going to do. So, Nick said that he had his life all planned out; he knew exactly what he was going to do and the order in which he was going to do it, but nothing is turning out the way it should. "To turn out" is another phrasal verb meaning to become, to have a certain result, or to end in a particular way. You may say, "How did the game turn out?" That is, who won the game? What was the final result? In Nick's case, he's talking about all of the things that he planned, but they didn't turn out the way they should, the way he wanted them; they did not have the result that he wanted them to have.

Danielle is trying to be encouraging to Nick, who's clearly a little depressed. Maybe he needs a vacation. I think I need a vacation! Anyway, Danielle says, "I would never have pegged you for someone with regrets about how his life has turned out." "To peg (peg) (someone)" is to categorize someone or identify someone, to believe that someone has a certain characteristic or certain characteristics. So you might say, "I pegged you for a football player," meaning you look big; I looked at you and I thought, "Hmm, that person is a football

player," that's one of his characteristics. In this case, Danielle is saying that she did not peg Nick – she did not think about Nick as someone with regrets. "Regrets" (regrets) are feelings of sadness that something has happened, or a wish that you could do something over again differently. Something that is in the past – that has already happened, you wish you could go back in time and change it; that's what "regrets" are. Danielle says that she didn't think Nick was someone who would have regrets about how his life has turned out – what has happened, what has resulted.

Nick says, "But I was supposed to make my first million by the time I was 30 (my first million dollars)." He's saying that he thought he would make his first million dollars before he was 30 years old. "By 35," he says, "I should have met someone and settled down." "To settle down" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning usually to get married, to buy a house, or to live a calmer life, perhaps to have children. We talk about young men and young women "settling down," eventually getting married, no longer going out as much because they have met their husband or wife. Nick thought he would have met someone and have settled down by the time he was 35. He says, "None of that has panned out." "To pan (pan) out" is similar to the verb "to turn out." It's a phrasal verb meaning to be successful. "To pan out" is, however, always something that is successful; "turn out?" could be successful, could be not successful. But if you say, "Did it pan out?" you mean was it successful, was it what you were expecting to happen. Unfortunately for Nick, his life did not pan out as he thought it would.

Danielle says, "You have lots of friends and a full (or complete) life. Maybe things didn't turn out the way you had imagined, but wouldn't you say you were generally content?" "To be content" (content) means to be happy, to be calm, to be satisfied. You're not sad, you're not disappointed; you are relatively happy, basically happy. There are other meanings of that word; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Nick says, "I was (meaning I was content) before I started thinking about my upcoming birthday." "Upcoming" (one word) means scheduled to happen soon, something that is going to happen very soon. Nick says that he was content until he started thinking about his 40th birthday, his upcoming birthday, which means he's not yet 40; it hasn't happened yet.

Danielle says, "Then stop thinking about it (stop thinking about your birthday). Too much brooding could definitely lead to regrets." "To brood" (brood) means to think about something too much; you're thinking about it so much that you become worried or sad or depressed, so it's always a negative thing. It's a nice word: "to brood," to have too much thought about something, especially

something that is negative. Danielle says, "Too much brooding could definitely lead to (or cause) regrets," so if you brood you'll start thinking, "Oh, I wish I had done this," or "I wish it were different," that sort of thing.

Danielle says, "not to mention premature aging!" The phrase "not to mention" is used when you want to add an additional thing to your sentence – an additional item. Let me give you a few examples: "If you go out into the sun your skin might become red, not to mention you will be very thirsty." "Not to mention" introduces the additional idea. Or you could say, "If you study hard at school you will get a good job when you are finished, not to mention the satisfaction of knowing that you studied and succeeded." "Not to mention" introduces the additional element of the satisfaction. In this sentence, Danielle says, "Too much brooding could definitely lead to regrets" – that's one thing, "not to mention" – another thing, which is "premature aging." "Aging" is the physical changes that take place when you get older. "Premature" means before the time that you would expect. If a baby is born before the expected date we may say that baby was "premature." Even before he was ready, he came out of his mother's womb. The "womb" is where the baby is before it's born. Well, "premature aging" would be getting older before you should be getting older, or you look older than you should. I think that's happening to me, personally. I think I am aging prematurely. People think I'm in my late 40s because of the way I look. Wait a minute…no, actually I am in my late 40s, so maybe I'm not premature aging. Maybe I'm just getting old!

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Danielle: Then stop thinking about it. Too much brooding could definitely lead to regrets – not to mention premature aging!

[end of dialogue]

We have no regrets about this episode; that's because we think it turned out pretty well, thanks to the wonderful script by our own Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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