

# CHANGING LANES

**Danica Patrick talks about how her life has changed since retiring from race car driving**

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PHOTO CREDIT: SCOTT MCDERMOTT

**D**anica Patrick and I are seated in Manhattan's bustling Nomad Hotel. Dressed in a black leather moto jacket, black pants, and black boots juxtaposed with a delicate top and dainty gold necklaces and rings, her outfit is much like her personality: tough (you have to be to make history in the male-dominated sport of race car driving) and edgy, yet soft and inviting. In New York City from Green Bay, Wisconsin, the recently-retired barrier-breaking, record-setting race car driver has spent the past week promoting her new podcast, "Pretty Intense" and recording interviews for her show. Danica's drive has not slowed down at all since retiring from race car driving last year —she has simply changed lanes and kicked her brand into high gear. Her podcast shares its name with her book (a 90-day program to sculpt your body, calm your mind, and achieve your greatest goals) that she released in December of 2017, and is a fitting description of Danica.

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While doing podcasts to promote her book last year, the idea for her own podcast materialized. “I had never done podcasts before ... and podcasts are really big. So I did them and I thought it was a cool platform... Coming off my racing career, I felt like I wanted an opportunity and a platform to still be able to inspire people, so a podcast became my new platform,” says the 5’2” brunette powerhouse. Her first guest was fellow athlete Alex Rodriguez, aka A-Rod. “I just want them all to be great,” she says about her episodes. “I don’t want any average conversations and I don’t want to say or ask anything predictable.”

At the beginning of each podcast, Danica says, “I believe that each and every one of us has the power within ourselves to create the life that we really want...” Now that you’re in this new phase, what do you really want out of life? “I would think that on some level, we all kinda want the same thing and we can get it. There are more specific goals, but fundamentally, it’s really just about how can you be happier more of the time? How can you not let expectation levels affect your mood? How can you make sure that you don’t take things personally? How can you look and think the best of everyone, including yourself? Self-talk, how you talk about yourself to yourself. I mean, for me, it’s just a journey of how can I be happier more of the time, and there’s so many different little areas to go into to make that happen.”

Here is a woman who is constantly working on her mind and body and wants to inspire others along the way, so it’s fitting that Danica chose “growth” as her 2019 word of the year. With the year coming to an end, do you feel you achieved this? “The podcast has helped me grow a lot. The intention for the word is that, the things that I do, does it help me grow or does it not? And the thing is about growth, it never comes from your comfort zones, so, how far and how many times can I step outside my comfort zone to find growth?”

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Since launching the “Pretty Intense” podcast this summer, she has recorded about thirty episodes with a guest list that has included Bobby Flay, Howie Mandel, and Gloria Steinem. Thirty episodes sounds like a lot but Danica confesses that she is still getting used to being on the other side of the interview. “For me to be interviewed on a podcast in front of, I don’t care how many people, you could have the whole world watching, I wouldn’t be nervous ‘cause I’m just talking about myself. But when you’re the one that’s leading, directing, and guiding the ship of an interview, it’s a totally different story.” Danica shares that she was nervous while conducting a live podcast recently. “I’ve learned so much about being interviewed through interviewing. I learn about myself through it, too.” Being the interviewer and hearing other peoples’ stories has made her more empathetic, more understanding, and less judgemental.

This past year has really pushed Danica out of her comfort zone. Since she has changed careers, life is completely different. “I don’t have the same schedule. I don’t live in the same place. I have a different relationship. There’s tons of stuff that’s different with my day-to-day. I’m in the growth thing. It’s a regular practice. I recently took a

solo trip and I’d never done that before. I wanted to for like, twenty years. It’s interesting to go to dinner by yourself, without your phone, you just look around; there’s nothing else to do... If there’s ever a recommendation for how to know yourself better, I always say, being alone is the most beneficial —has been for me.”

Indulging in more alone time has enabled Danica to learn more about herself and become more aware of her tendencies, habits, and hobbies. Recently, Danica realized she had a persona she upheld around others. “You are going off subconsciously programmed expectations of who you are as a person. One thing I learned that was really interesting, I don’t walk nearly as fast when I’m alone as I do when I’m with people. And obviously there’s something that comes out of me when I’m with people that makes me think: *I need to be the leader. I need to be aggressive. I need to be strong. I need to be intense.* Even just walking —that’s not really me.” Danica is embracing this newfound time with herself, and likes being able to plan her day around the things *she* enjoys doing. “I guess that’s why they also say that being single is probably helpful. You kinda figure out who you are a little bit more... I haven’t been single much,” she muses.



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Danica has been in a relationship with Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers for nearly two years. Talk about Aaron is peppered into her podcast (this is where I found out that he thinks of her as the Stephen Curry of food because of her matcha pancakes). What attracted you to Aaron? “I met him a really long time ago, and I just remember thinking he was really funny and we just have a lot of similar interests. We remember meeting for the first time, but it wasn’t for five years —I mean, we both had whole other relationships during that time. We just kinda kept in touch a little bit, but mostly, just saw each other at the ESPYs or maybe one other random place along the way. So it was more just like we knew each other, but we didn’t really *know* each other. Once we really got to know each other, we were like, Wow, we have a lot more in common than I thought. And we’ve only gotten to know that better and better, on deeper levels and so it just keeps getting better, especially when you’re open and vulnerable, open-minded, willing to communicate. It’s almost like an interview, right? In an interview, you get to know that person better through these stories. You have empathy. You have understanding. You have less judgment. Same thing in a relationship.”

This season, you’re likely to find Danica in the kitchen. She loves to cook, especially during the holidays. “Thanksgiving is usually at the house with a bunch of players. Football season is during the holidays, so it’s a lot of time at home. It will be football and cooking,” she tells me about their upcoming plans. Some might be surprised to find that Danica considers herself quite the caretaker. “I love to take care of people. I love to cook, open up wine, make ‘em comfortable, have the music on, whatever. Help them have a good time. In a relationship, that goes into little thoughtful things —leaving things for him in the fridge when I leave. Like, I made

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a dozen waffles for him and left them in the fridge, so he had dinners —breakfast for dinner [their favorite]— when I was gone. Just little things like that,” she says with a smile.

You learn a lot about Danica from her podcast, this is where I heard that the cute couple love breakfast for dinner and that Danica dropped out of high school and moved to England to advance her racing career. “I learned how to cook when I was there. My third year there, I was fully alone, so you learn how to cook when you have to live alone, y’know?” If you follow Danica on Instagram, you’ll see that she’s really into health and fitness, and is the first to advocate for healthy eating. “Anybody that thinks healthy food tastes bad just doesn’t try hard enough or they really don’t want to eat healthy and they’re just coming up with an excuse. I mean, look, that’s very, very aggressive and blunt, but the truth is, you do have to put a little effort into it. You have to find what you like. Pizza, cakes... that all tastes great. You can learn,” she says. “My diet goes through many phases and the window of creativity gets a little more narrow when you keep eliminating more and more ingredients, *but* you just come up with more new ways to prepare them,” says Danica.

She has eliminated gluten, dairy, beans, and grains from her diet. “We eat a lot of fish. We don’t really eat so much meat as in birds or cows. Salads are actually harder to make than people think. I’m mostly eating paleo without the meat parts.” When it comes to dinner, cooking vegetables, like squashes and potatoes, are on her go-to list.

And there’s always room for life’s indulgences, especially great wine. Cooking, eating, and wine —these are Danica’s simple pleasures. In 2009, Danica bought property in Napa Valley to develop her own vineyard and named it, Somnium, which means dream in Latin. “I can’t tell you how many times I have signed an autograph for a child and added the note —dream big! It is a life motto— it’s how I think, how I live, and what I preach!” Danica states on her website. Passionate, driven, and always ready to do the work needed, we can’t wait to see where Danica’s dream-chasing takes her next. **ML**

Keep up with Danica on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook: [@DanicaPatrick](#) and [www.DanicaPatrick.com](#) and check out her podcast “*Pretty Intense*.”

