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Context to the conversation

Tackling self-limiting beliefs - Ricardo speaks about how we can deal with our self-limiting beliefs that we are often blind to that can hold us back.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Moving to a different theme, Ricardo, in the book you speak about self-limiting beliefs, right? And I think you speak about, I think, your early years and you speak about being a people-pleaser and how that was a self-limiting belief. And personally, given my upbringing and given how I was brought up, I could relate to it. For a long time, I have been given the feedback you could be more assertive, you could sort of make your points more forcefully, you could make your presence felt a bit more, you are too soft. And, I think, it is a journey as you say it is still work in progress and in a way, I have tried to solve for it even if I go back to search, this would show up around the closing phases of a search where you need to, you need to be assertive with the client and the candidate to close the search. Talk to us a little bit about how your work helps people deal with self-limiting beliefs and going past them.

Ricardo Sunderland (RS): Yes. Self-limiting beliefs are one of the biggest holdbacks for leaders in the world mostly because our caretakers trained us to face our fears, conquer our fears, but they never told us that we should also question and update the beliefs that they have been given to us. So, they are very much ingrained into our unconscious. Discovering what those self-limiting beliefs are, it is tricky, but when you do, and working with the families helps a lot. So, asking the kids or the wife or the husband when that says, this is who I am, what does he say, or when he tells you what to do or not to do what he says and what does he say, because he is just reflecting a mirror of his belief or her belief system. Now, updating the belief system is the tricky part, not just discovering it. Why? Because when you do, a part of you unconsciously has an invisible loyalty, you would feel that you are betraying the people that you love that originally gave you this belief and that you are held as truth as part of your rule book back in very early stage in your life. Connecting to the original intention as to when they gave you those beliefs, I ask my clients, what do you think was the intention of your caretaker or mom and dad when they gave you those beliefs? They say, they want me to be happy, successful. So, then connect to that original intent so that when you are updating the system, you are not betraying mom or dad, you are actually updating it to honour their wish for you to be happy and successful.

DJ: That's wonderful.

RS: When this happens, it really liberates the ability to be able to update, because we are not talking about principles or values. Those are untouchable and I am not there to get into any of those. However, because of what we spoke, the world has changed. And unless you are able to update the belief system, then as a leader, you won't be able to shape context or become vulnerable or find strength in vulnerability or even be open to the idea that I could be my own self anytime anywhere and I don't need to compartmentalise work and home. When you are able to make these updates, you find in them immense amount of energy that you are able to unleash.

DJ: And what I also love is in a way you are updating your operating system while being grateful for the past, by honouring the intent, that's such a powerful thing. Very often, there is an op... we end up saying, okay, that was what, that was how I was brought up, that doesn't work for me. And there is maybe a little bit of a residual, if I may say, negative energy about the people that gave us the operating system. So, what I love is you move forward, but with closure and with harmony with the past, which is so powerful.

RS: Thank you. Yes, that's really the intent. I find that people change more with tough love than with just toughness, because then you find a warrior in them, and they have a very good warrior, which is why they are where they are, yeah.

DJ: Got it, got it. The other phrase I loved in the book, you say tackling your belief system is not like venturing into a cave to slay a dragon, it is more like having a very tough conversation with a difficult relative who is hiding behind a closed door. It is such a sort of a poetic and a very graphic visual. Talk to us about what you mean here.

RS: You know when you have sometimes inside of you all these blind spots that to your point are left inside of us with a lot of tender love and care, how to be able to open the door of that closet? Again, it comes as a result of finding the right key and sometimes, when you have this relative, and you can connect to some of these uncles that you love really dearly deeply, that you admire, or that they became a big influence in you, sometimes when you are able to bring them along the journey, it is easier to be able to open the door than when you bring in, let's say, mom or dad, who you hold in the highest of respects or whatever the emotion is that you may recall. So, all these resources allow for you to be able to find these blind spots, so you are able to bring the unknown to the known. And you can choose to make it a fight and see in that updating a dragon. Or you can choose that they were there with deep care and the intention for you to be successful and then just connect to that energy and the updating will allow for grey areas. Because we are not trying to get rid of the belief. It is how can you amplify your definition of success? How can you amplify your definition of pain or control or perfection? So, we are not trying to get rid of everything. It is just if you can update it in a way that works for you now, you can keep your edge and at the same time be caring. You can be candid and at the same time be loving. How you are able to balance this, it is a choice.

DJ: And very often with beliefs, what I have noticed it is a bit like fish in the water, right? The fish doesn't realise it is swimming in the water because sort of water feels like air for the fish. So, in your experience, how do leaders, how do you even recognise that you have a self-limiting belief that's holding you back? What's been your experience with just even bringing that to people's awareness?

RS: Yeah. I mean, when you are starting to discover what are your beliefs, right? As I share this example with a caretaker, with a family and then you are starting to see that there is this, this is... so you first are asking yourself this question, is who I am? Now, you can start to ask once you get that

list, how much is this belief serving me today or how much is this belief holding me back to where I need to be or where or who I want to be. And then you start, again, back... you connect to your truth and then you start to feel if this belief is actually serving you or not. This is not something logical. This is something that you need to feel. And then you start to see if my dad when I was being raised told me that Ricardo men don't cry, which I hold in a deep belief very dearly. And then my first boss tells me, Ricardo, don't let them see you cry because if they do, they are going to eat you alive. Then you start to realise that when you do that, in reality, you are shutting your emotional system down. Now, when I start to ask myself these questions, and I start to see, men do cry, we do cry, that doesn't mean that we are going to cry endlessly or women endlessly in front of our town hall, but I can show emotions when I am touched by something, which can make me feel human, and when I can connect to the audience with true emotions, then they see me and I see them. They can feel me and I feel them. Then you start to know that that belief, it is not serving you right. And then if you update it, and you create this grey space, you start to see that by updating it, you become more human, because now the world has changed and thanks to this change, you can actually allow yourself to be that way in the corporate setting, before you couldn't, now you do.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I really love Ricardo's point about going down to the intent with which some of these beliefs might have been given to you or the context in which they might have been formed. Recognizing that the context has changed and to know how your beliefs are holding you back can be powerful.

I also love the forgiving tone of how we reconcile with the past. That is such a healthy and a constructive way to recognize the past, see it for what it is and choose our beliefs for the future without having a dissonance or a grudge with the past.

End of transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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