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Context to the conversation

Neeraj speaks about how he has manage the intense work life along with the demanding career that his wife Priyanka also pursues (also at BCG).

Transcription

Neeraj

I take a lot of flights and I enjoy just the silence of a, you you're sitting on your seat, there's nobody to talk to. I normally am very incommunicative in the flight and I just take a blank piece of paper and I'm... lost in own thoughts and that's my best time to, I don't know if that's system two or processing what all, because you're normally on the treadmill all the time. And that's my reflection function and some of my best ideas, best reflections happen in those moments.

Deepak

Is there a structure to it or just be with yourself?

Neeraj

Be with yourself like no other stimuli I want. I never watch TV. I don't, I normally don't eat in the flight and I just be quietly just a piece of paper and a pen.

Deepak

And just maybe staying with flights, was going to come to it, fitness, right? You spoke about gym and badminton and other stuff. Very tactically, especially I'm sure you do your share of straddling multiple time zones, India to Singapore, Singapore to Japan, etc. So, what's your, I mean, you know, for people that are sort of moving across time zones, are there one or two maybe... Hacks is too simple a word, but are there a couple of rituals that you've developed over time that have served you well to manage your energy?

Neeraj

It's a tough thing firstly and it's got tougher, a little tougher with age. Till about a couple of years ago I never had a problem. But my simple rule is I sleep, so if it's a long flight I only do two things. I never drink alcohol, I almost don't eat and I only reflect and I only sleep. So, if it's a 12-hour flight I will have two three hours of reflection and nine hours of sleep.

So when I land, I land having slept enough. And I would have a good eye mask, which like literally blocks out any kind of light. Sound doesn't bother me. Light is the only thing which bothers me. So I always invest in good eye masks. And I try not to use the airline one. I have carry my own. So that's a simple hack. And then I always feel the other simple hack is I will try to adapt immediately to the new time zone.

Because I would normally sleep enough and I would adapt having light dinners so that you can sleep well is super helpful. What else? I mean at times you have to have a lot of coffee. I have never ever had melatonin in my life.

Deepak

Changing tracks Neeraj, Priyanka Agarwal is a senior leader at BCG as well what have you and Priyanka learnt about managing two intense careers and raising two kids right not easy so what talk to us about sort of if I may your reflections of you know having pursued two intense careers what does it take to make it work?

Neeraj

So firstly, I'm genuinely eternally grateful to her for doing more than fair share and also for dealing with my idiosyncrasies. So, I think I don't say that often enough. But equally it is also been knowing when each other needs are going through those highs and lows and giving each other that extra space or that... you know, to talk it out, to reflect. So being a bit of a sounding board for each other, covering up for travel. Although I think in the early days, till our kids were about six and nine, I think we tried to manage travel so that one of us was always at home. And there she certainly did far more, but I also tried to find a lot of local clients. I think that helped. I think the one thing we are proud of is if they were like every kid had the moment of truth beyond the birthday, the school functions and others. In the last, in growing up years, we probably missed less than 1 % of the moments of truth. So the big play in the school, the big sports day, the big birthday party, whatever. I mean like, know, I think... A milestone event, right? Yeah, maybe that's the moment. Or a doctor's appointment or whatever the case may be. So I think we've always made... And I think that has been the inviolable block on the calendar. And both have been there. It's not like one has been there. So the general rule is that you know both will always be there I think that has I think been a general rule and I I as I said we've always had some rituals of like as a kids in the early days if you would play with them, but as they got an older There's a certain board games we played and the skill level of the board games kept improving as they got from you know early days of Monopoly and Ludo to Catan and Ticket to Ride and whatever the else they have been and I think those rituals have made us kind of connected as well.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If managing dual careers is a topic of interest, you might like my conversation with Jennifer Petriglieri. She is a Professor at INSEAD and the author of the book – How Couples work. You can look this up at Apple, Spotify or at www.playtopotential.com

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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