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## Context to the conversation

Neeraj speaks about how he prioritized trust as a default and cultivated an optimistic mindset.

## Transcription

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Deepak

Actually, as I was preparing for this conversation, I did ask her about a couple of questions that... Given she knows the Neeraj behind the curtains, what are the couple of things about Neeraj that we could learn from? I she mentioned a couple of things which struck me. One is sort of... I'm quoting her here. Optimism to the point of being delusional. And the other thing was just sort of trust as default. You know, as a default setting, unless proven otherwise. Talk to us about just where these come from, how they've helped you, and just how you've worked with these two as you've gone about your life and the choices you've made.

Neeraj

I think both of them she's nailed it. I'm always a glass half full rather than the glass half empty. I've always felt that if enough smart people put their mind to it they can solve any problem or most problems, I shouldn't say any problems. And I've believed in the collective power of humans to solve toughest issues. And I think that generally gives me the reason for being optimistic in most places. And I actually feel if you had a choice to make, feel good about that, you know, rather than bad. That's just some of it. I don't know where it comes from, but that's just been my being.

Deepak

And is that a training like you spoke about reacting versus responding? Would you say that is a cultivated skill?

Neeraj

I think some of it was just wired in me from the very early years. Maybe I, in my growing years, I saw people who were either kind and I connected more with people. You know, their choices you make as a kid, I don't want to be like that, I want to be like this. I think people who are glass half empty, made early choices of I don't want to be like that. That's not what I enjoy. And I think, you know, it was a subconscious process. I don't think it was a conscious process.

On the other one, yes, on the trust. I feel... There's a simple theory I have. Nobody wakes up to be a bad person. Everybody in their mind does the right things. I also believe every saint had a past and every criminal has a future. I believe that people repay trust with trust. That has been a good mantra. I've been very rarely disappointed.

Deepak

It's like the Sin curve or the cos curve.

Neeraj

You know, if you genuinely say to a person, look, I trust you and I'll back you. So my rule has always been, I'll back you the first time, I'll back you the second time. But if the third time you don't repose the trust, then I will not back you. I've really had to use the third.

Deepak

I go back to one of my professors in LBS, economics professors and this was a conversation about game theory and one of things he said was when they ran simulations the strategy that worked was what they called generous tit for tat.

Neeraj

So you have a framework for that, which I...

Deepak

I'm just trying to relate it. First time, you always have a choice of cooperate versus be selfish. So first time the opponent is selfish, you still cooperate. One more time you cooperate, then you go for that tit for tat. I mean, not the same situation.

Neeraj

It's an elegant framework. have not thought of it like this. I think it captured.

Deepak

It's not you're not taken for granted but at the same time benefit of doubt.

Neeraj

Exactly. And I'll tell them that you didn't deliver on this but I believe in you and I'll back you one more time. But don't try it the third time.

Deepak

It actually worked as a student back to IIMA. I remember one of our profs, Kannan Sethuraman, he used to teach Ops. And one of the courses I remember, I was reasonably good student in Ops, but in that exam, I took a shortcut or copied or whatever. And he called me to talk. I did some shortcut or did something silly because there were multiple deadlines and, something out of desperation. And he called me to his room and said, I know you're capable of better things. I can give you a D here but I'm going to give you whatever, one more day. can you show me what you can do? That stayed with me.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If this is a topic of interest, you might like the Curated Playlist – Building Trust which has insights from many speakers across domains. You can find at the Members section at [www.playtopotential.com](http://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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