



Guest

Dr. Tasha Eurich is an organizational psychologist, researcher, and New York Times best-selling author. With a PhD in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Tasha is the principal of The Eurich Group; a boutique executive development firm that helps companies—from start-ups to the Fortune 100—succeed by improving the effectiveness of their leaders and teams. Her primary areas of expertise are executive coaching, executive team development, and leadership and high potential development programs.

She contributes to Harvard Business Review and has been featured in outlets like The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Guardian, NPR, Forbes, and Fast Company, as well as peer-reviewed journals. Tasha's first book, Bankable Leadership, debuted on The New York Times bestseller list in 2013. Her latest book, Insight, delves into the connection between self-awareness and success, where she shares the surprising findings from her multi-year research program on the topic.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 49th conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast. This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. I am an Executive Coach and I engage with organizations and leaders during phase's high stakes transitions – whether it is related to an organization or the Leader's career. I feel just like companies need to be coherent about the 2 questions – where to play and how to win in the context of their strategy, we all need to be clear about our responses to the two questions – where to go and how to grow? I help leaders play to their unique potential by addressing those two questions especially during key points of transition as they go through their journeys.

In this podcast series, I talk to leaders from multiple domains (CEOs, Sportsmen, Artists, and Thought Leaders) on three broad themes – Leadership, Transitions and Careers.

I should also mention that I am excited about the line-up of podcast guests in the coming weeks. In the pipeline we have an interesting set of guests

- Alan Eagle – Co-Author of the Book - Trillion Dollar Coach (an insight into the methods of Bill Campbell who has coached the Who's Who of Silicon Valley)
- James Clear – Author of the New York Times Best Seller - Atomic Habits
- Prof Lynda Gratton – also a Professor at LBS and Author of the book 100-year-life and how leaders could think about staying relevant in a world where they possibly have to work till their 70s and 80s.

- Katia Vlachos – Expat Transition Coach who speaks at length about settling well when you are in an Expat assignment

Stay tuned for this coming your way in the next few weeks. Let's dive into the conversation at hand today. My guest today is Dr Tasha Eurich. Tasha is an organizational psychologist, researcher, and New York Times best-selling author. She helps companies—from start-ups to the Fortune 100—succeeds by improving the effectiveness of their leaders and teams. Tasha's first book, Bankable Leadership, debuted on The New York Times bestseller list in 2013. Her latest book, Insight, delves into the connection between self-awareness and success, where she shares the surprising findings from her multi-year research program on the topic.

Without further ado, let us dive into the conversation with Tasha Eurich.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Tasha thanks for making the time, really excited to have you at the Play to potential podcast.

Dr. Tasha Eurich (TE): The feeling is mutual. Happy to be here.

DJ: Before we dive in, I'm curious about how you got here? What got you curious about the notion of self-awareness?

TE: I have been an organizational physiologist for a little bit more than the last 15 years or so and I saw Over and over and over these wonderful executive coaching client I was so privileged to work with you know they would start at a different point of in their journey some of them would be successful and they wanted to be more successful some were on a bad day down right illusion in terms of seeing themselves clearly but what I saw time and time again was the clients that you have the courage and the commitment to look at themselves in a new way and say who am I really? How do other people see me? How do I fit into the world? They were able to make just transformational improvements and if you sort of put that along the back drop of what the world looks like today which is in our research shown people are getting more self-observed in general and less self-aware and it became clear to me at least and totally that this was a hugely important skill matters in business but to be a human that exist in world today and that was what led me down the path of researching and I was surprised to discover when I started to look at you know the really hard core scientific research that had been done there wasn't as much out there as I thought there would be and what our research program which is been going on oh gosh, for more than 5 years now has tried to identify is what is self-awareness? Where does it come from? Why do we need it? And probably most important how do we get more of it?

DJ: And you call it the Meta skill of the 21st century and I was curious about you know why the Meta skill is and why is it more relevant now than ever before?

TE: So, let me just give you snapshots of some of the improvement that people who increase their self-awareness typically see. So, what we know scientifically is that people who are self-aware are more promotable they perform better and their jobs they are more confident they are communicators, better influencer, significantly better leaders there is even some evidence that leaders' companies rather who are made up of a large number of self-aware employees and led by

self-aware leaders or actually more profitable than companies who aren't and so the benefits are pretty clear and a business that... and then they also follow us our own life. We know that people who are self-aware are more satisfied in their romantic relationships, they are more satisfied with their friendship they raise more mature less narcissistic children which I think for everybody in the 21st century is pretty helpful so if you just look at all of these things in sum total there aren't very many skills that if you dedicate yourself to improving you are going to see that wide range of benefits but the reason I call it the meta skill and this is really important is that particularly in the workplace our self-awareness is going to set that upper limit for our success. In other words, you know think about the best communicator you know or the best leader you know or the person who is just the most effective on a long term basis they are only as successful as they are self-aware because if we are not able to see our self clearly we can't come from a place values based behaviour we can't question our assumptions, we can't identify how we are impacting others and change our approach if we need to so I really see it is kind of the foundational skill not just to be successful at work but really to be someone lives meaningful, successful and draw able life.

DJ: Starting from the basic please describe self-awareness. What are some of the misconception you see around how people think about self-awareness?

TE: I found over the years that self-awareness is a very similar term and in some way is that the term communication we could have ten people talking about communication and all ten of them could mean something different so it's sort of inherently vague not just in the meaning but in the way people use it and even more confusing I have known people to talk about self-awareness in terms of the negative a lot more than the positive right if you hear people say what that person just isn't very self-aware but to paint the picture of a self-aware person obviously to your point it's really important to start to understand how we can develop it we got to know what it is and just a kind of to back track a little bit when I first started this research program I have this really naïve vision of what it would be and I thought myself get a research team together we might need to do work over you know 6 months or 8 months but I'm sure we will learn a lot in a really short time period and what we discovered really quickly was this was such a complex topic and it took us almost a year to just to define what self-awareness really was and actually we have reviewed almost a thousand empirical general articles we interviewed thousands of people around the world and we found people who dramatically increase their self-awareness and here is what we came up with just to save everybody the time so self-awareness it's pretty awful right. Several awareness is made up of two types of self-knowledge. The first is something we named internal self-awareness which essentially knows who we are on the inside. What do we value? What are we passionate about? What are our aspirations? What are the patterns of behaviour that we exhibit across situations but equally important is something called external self-awareness and in a nutshell what that means is knowing how other people see us and what was fascinating at least to me in our research was that we found that those two types of self-knowledge which are required for us to really be self-aware but they are not related to each other which I was kind of surprised by I was thought you know if somebody kind of knows you they are from the inside of course they would do the work and find out how they were seen on the outside and vice versa. But we discovered that they are you sort have to think about the... independent skill set within the self-awareness area.

DJ: And maybe now is the good time to talk about your research methodology and what really appeal to me was the notion of self-awareness unicorns you talk about having spoken to hundreds and thousands of people and really whittling it down to hand full of people who you thought were unicorn in self-awareness so I'm curious just linking it back to what you just said about the internal and external self-awareness id be curious to understand a little bit more about who these unicorn are and what about them sets them apart from the pack?

TE: Yeah this is a really a fun one this was probably my favourite part of our whole research program. So, we didn't set out to identify this people and I'll define what unicorn is in a second. But I originally thought was all we have to do you know we developed this we developed and validated this very lengthy comprehensive assessment of self-awareness. I thought all we have to do is go find a bunch of people who score high as rated by themselves and someone who knows them well and then I'll crack the code of self-awareness but what I discovered when we started to do that and we started to interview highly self-aware people is a lot of them and I wouldn't venture a guess but I'd say probably most at least in our experience had sort of always been like that you know think about those people that are just naturally self-aware just the way they are wired and when we tried to figure out what they do to stay self-aware they would literally say things like you know what never really thought about that before I don't know if I do anything consciously and we are so frustrated and we were thinking ohh my gosh who are we going to figure this out and then it downed on us that all we had to do was go replicate what I had seen with my coach and clients right find people who didn't start out a self-aware but who were able you know over the course of months and years of commitment and effort to learn to see them self clearly and so that's what we ended up doing we searched the world basically we used no ball sampling which is you ask everyone you know to fill up the survey and then they ask everyone they know and it actually we got all around the world and very very globally diverse sample but what we found eventually were 50 people who not only were highly self-aware as rated by them and someone who knew them well but they and the person who knew them well also basically established that they had improved their self-awareness so they were checks and balances built into the system just because you know you start to think about if I one up to hundred and I said hey are you self-aware would you like to be a part of our study. I'm sure we will talk about this later in this podcast but most people are not very good judges of their self-awareness so that was why you know had developed this checks and balances and that was very complicated but once we found this 50 people a couple of observation there were no demographic patterns by gender, age, nationality, job type, industry. We had students, we had Fortune 50 executives, we had stay at home parents, we had professionals really just to broad swathe of people and what was so interesting to me about that is showed us that almost anyone can improve their self-awareness if they learn some of the tips and chunks that the unicorns aren't covered for us. So it was just a really fun process and by the way the reason we call them unicorn is my research assistance were joking that like ohh you want us to find self-aware people who didn't start out that way or we might all be looking for a unicorn so everybody thought that was so funny and then you know when we find them we thought you know this is kind of the perfect term for this people. It's hard to imagine that they exist but when we found them there was just so much we learnt.

DJ: What is it they did both on the internal self-awareness and external self-awareness?

TE: We could be here for several days but let me give you a couple of examples. So the first thing that we saw in common across all of our unicorns was actually a mind-set and it wasn't always a mind-set that they had had you know up and told the point they decided to become more self-aware but it was something that I named being braver but wiser and so basically what that means is you know you think about life and it stresses and complexity and just that you know the weight sometimes that can put on all of us. It's very easy to go through your life with rose colored glasses and to say I am fabulous you know and thus anyone tells me I am doing anything especially egregious I am doing really well at everything and I am awesome and that not to say that we should not have self-confidence because that's actually a really important piece of the puzzle. But what all of our unicorns did at some point was you know whether it was... by some kind of event in their life you know maybe they were through into a new role at work or some them were fired for reasons they didn't understand or they had you something really unexpected happen in their personal life. They made the decision that it was worth the time and energy and sometimes the pains of self-

discovery for them to go on that journey and what I love about that for the rest of us is it shows us that anyone can make that decision and it's definitely hard to make that decision every day and I am a pragmatist I always say that if we can we can decide to be braver but wiser more than half the time or probably and really good shape and by the way our unicorns aren't perfect magical human being they are flawed and imperfect just like all of us are so that was the first thing the other thing I would say is and I am sure we can talk about this more but they had really well defined daily practices to improve their self-awareness so that doesn't mean that they spend ridiculous amount of time developing their self-awareness we actually found that in some ways they spend less time with more benefits if they use the right approach. But things like regularly soliciting feedback from people who want them to be successful and will tell them the truth things like reflecting at the end of every day asking we call them daily check in what went well today? What didn't go so well today and then how can I be smarter tomorrow. But I think you know just as sort of final point of broad brush of what made them different was; they didn't get into a cycle where they were navel-gazing just to navel gaze. It was very strategic and smart and purpose driven and I think that's important for us to remember because sometimes people see self-awareness as just this too daunting to even think about process right where it's like I got to go into deep psychological excavation mode for several years it really isn't like that and that was what was so... to me about what the unicorns thought us is it really about those daily practices that faster incremental inside over time.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. It is interesting to hear Tasha speak about how we can weave meditation into our daily life. I was speaking with Rich Fernandez (RF), CEO of Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute – an initiative that was incubated in Google to help their high performers cope with the pressures of being on a rocket ship.

RF: *"What I would say is ritualize it and routinize it so make it a ritual or routine so personally for me it's the first thing I do when I wake up, I latterly get up from beds, splash water on my face and I go down stair to my office and then I sit in the morning. This is early morning before the sun is up, I mean early riser and before my family is awake, before I check my email or open up the laptop or look at my phone or anything it's the first thing I do and then second thing I do is I brush my teeth. So, to that level of routinization, it's to that level of ritualization for me. It's just the hygiene factor I call it. So, to the extent you can make the formal practice of meditation hygiene factor it will help make it a habit in your life. The other suggestion I have is something we offer in a curriculum which is make it a set of integrated practices. When people think about meditation, they think about having to do exactly what I have just said which is sati side you know x block of time and you know sit in a certain way and close your eyes and protect the space for formal practice. But there is also a way to practice mindfulness and meditation in an integrated way. For example, as you move through the course of your day, integrate it into your day between meetings if you need to walk to the rest room make that a walking meditation. I am actually serious about that. Become aware of your bodies is it moves for space between your office and the rest room. Become aware of your foot fall, become aware of the felt sense if your body. How are you feeling actually in that moment? Or take the opportunity to focus on breath or this being in India this Podcast you know if you have a "Mantra" that you are familiar with or particularly like us that. And I say "Mantra" and there is an often a religious component to that but here what I am referring to is really finding an object of your attention to train your attention upon it whether be "Mantra" or breath or walking or sensation you can really do this throughout the course of your day. I was driving to work today and I was focusing on my breath not so much that I wasn't able to drive but there but when there is a red light when I*

was stopped in traffic in and out for three breaths, I noticed my breath. Next stop like same thing integrated practice is also helpful one."

DJ: Back to what Tasha says, I think there are several opportunities for us to be mindful during the day without necessarily getting into deep psychological excavation mode! If this topic is of interest, do tune into my conversation with Rich Fernandez. This specific segment would be nugget 41.04.

I have a small request for your consideration. I guess you notice that there are no ads in this podcast. Neither is there any paywall. You would appreciate, it does take quite a bit of effort to research for a conversation, have the interview, edit it, cross-reference it, break into nuggets and share it with you. I pour a significant amount of time, thought, heart and resources into this podcast.

If you are deriving value from the podcast and are looking to demonstrate your gratitude, could I request you to consider paying it forward and contributing towards a Non-Profit that I have been working with for 3+ years? This is Antarang Foundation, co-founded by Priya Agrawal. They work with 1000s of young adults from challenging backgrounds and help them play to their unique potential by keeping them in education, giving them employability skills, guiding reflection and connecting them to the world of opportunity. As part of a group of Philanthropists – Social Venture Partners, I work closely with Priya and her team and have seen her work from up-close. Here is Priya speaking about Antarang Foundation.

Priya: "In India almost all of the children close to 100 percent children are enrolled in school but the problem really begins once these children get to the high school stage so if you look at the dropout rate and the patten that's there in our country it's a little alarming to see that close to one and half of our children actually drop out even before they complete high school and then what happens after that almost like a going down slippery slope because just 25 percent of them get into higher education and that are really tiny and almost insignificant percentage actually get into organization sector employment that any hope of career progression. So this was the large gap that I could see after working with children and young adults through the two organization that I headed prior to starting Antarang in 2013. So Antarang really works to bridge this gap. Antarang launches careers for disadvantaged young adults we do this through two structure we begin with intensive career guidance program that runs in all the government schools in Mumbai, Pune and Udaipur and also in a few schools in Varanasi and once the children are older they are adults they are 17 and half or 18 years of age then we train them in employability skills and place them in careers of their choice"

DJ: I would really appreciate if you could help some of these young adults play to their potential. You could do this either by contributing financially to Antarang Foundation. If you are in India, specifically around Mumbai, you could consider employing some of their alumni. Do email me at deepakj.p2p@transitioninsight.com if you wish to know more (I repeat it is deepakj.p2p@transitioninsight.com) and I will connect you with the right person to give you further details. Thank you in advance.

Now let's get back to the conversation with Tasha Eurich

DJ: I am really curious about your research here around why so many people are self-delusional rather than self-aware?

TE: That's a big question. So there are really two main contributor at least according to our research some of them come from inside of us with just the way humans are built and then the other cause comes from our environment so just to take the first one there is so much to this but essentially

humans are built to see ourselves with rose colour glasses. It sort of like if you think about it like eating sugar you know it feels great but in the long term it's not good for us and not eating sugar takes a lot of discipline and it takes that daily commitment that we were talking about and so the inclination of most people on a day to day basis is focus on the problems, focus on the emergency of the day and then in addition to that the way we are wired we are not just aware of so many of our unconscious thoughts and feelings and even a lot of our behaviours. So we are sort of born with a blindfold on and if you think about it if that our default state it's no wonder that so many people have so much room to improve their self-awareness. The other piece of that that I think is important to mention is 95% of people believe that they are self-aware and only about 10 to 15% of people actually are and of course that the over simplifies it but just to give you kind of a the high level until they start off well I am self-aware I don't really need to work on my self-awareness is kind of the default state. But then if you look externally and we look at this is been found an almost in every culture around the world. We are living in a world where we are more and more focused on ourselves, while at the same time seeing ourselves less and less clearly and you look at things like social media and reality TV and the self-esteem movement which is turns out self-esteem actually doesn't help us be more successful. All of these things are creating an environment where we are being tempted to become more self-absorbed and less self-aware so you know if you take a step back from all of that it's so easy to you know think about that terrible oneself-aware boss that we work for example say what that person is just a bad person they obviously don't want to be better. It's really is not that simple in most cases in my experience is that lack of awareness isn't an indictment of who we are as a people. It really is just something we have to consciously decide to push past and again that's why our unicorn was so inspiring.

DJ: What are the challenges in us introspecting our way for self-awareness and secondly how do we be productive in the way we conduct the inquiry?

TE: We had so many surprises in our research situations where we would collect data and it would literally say the opposite of what I predicted we would see and one of the earliest surprises in our whole program was what I thought was a really simple investigation. So we surveyed about 300 people and we asked them how much time you spend introspecting. In other words, kind of pondering the deeper meaning behind our thoughts and our feelings and our motives and then we surveyed them on things like are you stressed are you depressed, are you anxious, are you happy, do you like your job, are you happy with your relationship, do you feel in control of your life and naturally because self-awareness is good I knew that we would find that the more people introspected the better off they be and that was the opposite of what our data showed so we found that people who self-reflected often were more anxious, more stressed, more depressed, less satisfied with their jobs and their relationship there were even less in control of their lives and we are just thinking maybe self-awareness is bad may be delusion is actually what we wanted to be fostering because it doesn't seem like it make sense and as we started to dig into some of the data we started to discover that thankfully it's not that the introspection in into a self is bad it's just that the way most of us introspect is completely wrong and the best way to illustrate this you know it gone without having two hours to delve into it is to think about probably what the common introspective question is for most people which is the question "Why". So we might be trying to understand why we are in a bad mood you know you could say why am I so upset after that conversation with my co-worker or we might be trying to understand a bad outcome you know like why didn't I get that promotion or we might be even trying to understand why be believe what we believe you know why do I want that promotion but as it turns out those questions not only the do lead us away from true insight about ourselves they give us a false sense of confidence about our knowledge so for example Sigmund Freud was wrong he believed in his work that people could access their unconscious right so like really why am I upset if I just excavate if I just think long and

hard and ask that why question I can find the answer. But what has research has shown for decades actually is that no matter how hard we try we can't access so many of those things it's what I mentioned earlier about the behaviour and emotion and knowledge blindness. So, what happens is we find an answer that feels true even its wrong so that an example of where I can lead us away from the truth rather than towards it. Another reason why a really dangerous question is introspectively is it has been shown over and over and over to depress us you know you think about like why I didn't get that promotion. If you are not careful you can start asking question where the answers are well because I'm just a fundamentally bad person and who would want to promote me and you can kind of get stuck in I call it the *rabbit hole of rumination* and so what we wanted to do in our study was understand if why is the wrong question what is the write question you know what are these unicorns doing differently than the rest of us and it took us a little while to find this pattern but we discovered that when unicorns introspected they almost never asked why question they asked what questions and at first sight I thought ohh that just a weird sort of fluke or weird nuance but as we started to look into it started to make a huge amount of sense. So, one example would be you are going back to the question why I didn't get that promotion unicorns if they were in that situation wouldn't ask themselves that question. Here is some question they might have asked instead. What did I learnt that can help me be better positioned in the future? Or what can I do to close the gap between you know where I thought I was and where I need to be? Or what support can I enlist from the people around me to help me you know to achieve this goal the next time I set it? Or they are going back to why am I so upset about that conversation with my co-worker they might instead ask what part of that situation did I own or what can I do differently in the future to avoid that kind of conversation with that person and so what we found was asking "What" instead of "Why" really helps us avoid so many of the pit falls of introspection where we you know what excavating for the truth that we are never gone find and we are focusing on our problem and feeling victimized and disempowered. So I think what I have loved about that is a really tangible tool that I think we can take away it seems subtle but the difference is huge and I am speaking from personal experience. I have started to use that as well.

DJ: In terms of internal self-awareness, you also talk about the distinction between mindfulness and meditation and you say that meditation does not necessarily lead to mindfulness what's the insight here and how does one get to non-meditative mindfulness if there is term like that?

TE: You bring up a really important issue I would slightly tweak that to say that meditation isn't the only way we can be mindful because you know there are so many of us who are type A people or we are so busy we can't imagine finding 20 minutes to sit in silence and meditation is associated obviously with mindfulness and that link has been really clearly established it's also linked to self-awareness so people who meditate tended to be more self-aware as a whole. But the question I wanted to answer is you know what about the people who don't meditate is there still some way that we can be mindful you know in spite of maybe not practicing that and I go back in forth with meditation sometimes I get on a really good streak then sometimes I fall off the wagon. But what we discovered were several non-meditative mindfulness tools and the way to think about this that made it click for me is what is a really mean to be mindful and there is a lot of nuance to this but at a high level it means noticing what's happening in ourselves in our environment without judgement and what's really important is you are noticing new things you know you are not getting trapped in rumination, you are not going down the spiral of introspection you are seeing what is. So here is one example of non-meditative mindfulness tool that we saw in our unicorns it's called comparing and contrasting. So basically what you do is if you are experiencing a positive or a negative state instead of getting down that introspective rabbit hole here is an example what you can do so let's say you get home from work one day and you are just in a terrible mood instead of saying you know why am I in such a terrible mood you could say when are the other time that I have felt this way in my recent

memory right so you might think ohh gosh I remember feeling this way last week and I remember feeling this way couple of months ago and then you ask you self what are those things have in common so you know I tell story in my book about how I felt terrible after coming home from work for enough days in a row that I realize that was my pattern is that two years after I started any job I would just get sort of I would felt disempowered and I wouldn't feel like I was doing good work or I was satisfied with it and that lead me to the discovery as I looked at all the similarities that maybe I am not built to work in a corporation or for someone else. But by not getting to sucked into that feeling and just noticing that state as if it was related to think I can remember in the past it led to a really big insight so that's just one example of the tools but I think it's the powerful one.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. The other habit that I have seen several leaders use to become more mindful is some form of journaling. This is not just business CEOs but leaders from other disciplines. In this podcast, I spoke to Dr Ramachandra Guha, a historian who has spent decades studying Gandhiji, he spoke at length about how Gandhiji would keep a dairy where he would reflect and process all the complexity around him and stay mindful of what was going on. Another guest on the podcast – Vinay Sitapati (VS Ep1), another historian who has written the book Half Lion. In the book he profiles the journey of Narasimha Rao, arguably one of the most influential Prime Ministers India has seen. More specifically, he speaks about how Narasimha Rao managed to get so much done despite several constraints around him. He specifically referred to his practice of keeping a diary....

VS Ep1: *"Narsimha Rao's ability to be introspected to be invert helped him sift the day into what or to put in statistical terms to be able to sift the signal from the noise so I think that is the first thing that introspection taught him that one is it taught him don't trust anyone except your diary which is a pretty good skill in politics second is that you should be able to shift the signal from the noise who are the people you met every day how many people are being honest? How many people are lying? To give you one example one of the diary entries which I have in the book is from 22nd May 1991 this is the day after Rajeev Gandhi has been killed near Chennai and Narsimha Rao until then basically eased out of the congress and was about to become a Monk in monastery called Kuttrallam in Tamil Nadu and was closing his bank accounts he suddenly realising that by virtue of being the least ambitious man in the party he's prime to be Prime minister of India and the diary shows 22nd May he's back in Delhi, he's in Ten Janpath where Soniya Gandhi and Rajeev used to live and the pieces of Rajeev Gandhi's body there were just pieces, not the full body are kept there and all the congress men around the body pretending to cry some of them were actually crying actually trying to manuharji to see who would succeed him? And he has this wonderful passage about how Pranab Mukherji who was in the boon docs them but would later recovered to become president of India beadies up to him and said we think you should become congress president which is the proxy for Prime minister of India and Narsimha Rao immediately says "I immediately told him that I am not the right person knowing full well the kind of person he is, I also gave him the name of N.D. Tiwari for Prime minister of India knowing even he was that he was even less likely a candidate than I am" and I think the introspection in the diary allows him to do that it allows him to reflect over the day, otherwise somebody else, Pranab Mukherji came up to me and says maybe you should be prime minister of India I wouldn't stop to ask what's his anger? So I think the introspection gave him that ability and I think the third thing introspection gave him was to take the long view, often we are so caught up in the movement that we are unable to see short term benefits from the long term cost than unable to separate that for example Narsimha Rao was frequently side-lined from the party, frequently. He never complained, he never protested against Indira Gandhi, he never protested*

against Rajeev Gandhi and very soon he would be back whereas people like Sharad Pawar or Arjun Singh or N.D. Tiwari at the first sign that they were out of favour in the Nehru Gandhi court was either form a separate party or sulk or protest, and their careers would end instead of just kind of taking it and hoping that your luck changes which has happened to Narsimha Rao, not everybody is luck changes but I think Narsimha Rao's ability to take the long view and not make silly short term beneficial decisions also contributed to the kind of career he had."

DJ: I guess the key point is that there is many more paths to being mindful than meditation. It is worth keeping an open mind and not giving up if meditation is not up your alley. Some people speak about reflecting about some of the deeper issues when they are running or swimming. I guess we all need to find our own mechanism that works for us. If this topic is of interest, do refer to Nugget 30.03 with Vinay Sitapati or at playtopotential.com or Nugget 41.05 with Rich Fernandez. You could also listen to the nuggets at the Playlist titled Mindfulness in the Curated Playlists section at playtopotential.com.

Building from the earlier segment, here is the founder of Antarang Foundation, Priya Agrawal (PA) speaking about the Why behind Antarang Foundation and provides some granularity around the work she does with Antarang Foundation.

PA: *"Antarang envisions a world where every young adult is passionately, productively and positively engaged in a career of their choice and this career and choice right we believe has to be the prerogative of every young adult irrespective of their socioeconomic status. What happens today is that, you know, the concept of careers and career progression becomes really the, you know, sole prerogative of the privilege and that is what we are trying to break. If you look at our student population, up until now we have been in existence for about six-and-a-half years and we have worked with over 55,000 young adults. If you look at our students, they are podcast editors, they are filmmakers, they are fitness instructors, they are bankers, they are educators, they are beauticians, and they are therapists. So, it's really across the board and it's actually quite simple, right? If more and more people get to know about the potential of these young adults, it's so easy to link them to careers of their choice. Today getting good quality talent, talent that has the right attitude is really the biggest, you know, is really the biggest issue today. In fact, most employers have been telling us don't worry about the technical training, that's something that we can do. If you are able to give us young adults with the right attitude, we will go ahead and train them."*

DJ: I am a firm believer that intrinsic potential is uniformly distributed but unfortunately, the world of opportunity is not. Do email me at deepakj.p2p@transitioninsight.com if you wish to contribute to them in helping some of these young adults play to their full potential.

Now let us get back to the conversation with Tasha Eurich.

DJ: And shifting the attention to external self-awareness right while gathering external feedback you refer to the metaphor of a prison verses a mirror to describe the richness of feedback that one can often get what's the key insight here and given that for example 360 is a phrase that gets thrown around and in corporate circles right what are the common pit falls you see in the way people gather external feedback?

TE: I would even say talking about external feedback it's important to paint the context of where external feedbacks fits in what are self-perception because this is something I have noticed you know when I am speaking and I see this all over the world whenever I ask a group of leaders for example who's opinion of you matter more your or your employees and they all smile proudly and

shout out my employees because they have read all those articles about 360s but what the research on this right... and it's sort of easy to over simplify that but what the research on this has shown really conclusively my opinion is that both types of data are hugely important and what even more critical is they represent different types of information about ourselves so for example even if they conflict they are both valid and that's part of what we saw what our unicorns is there is a quote by... that something like the definition of true intelligence is to be able to hold two opposing viewpoints in our mind and still retain the ability to function . Our unicorns were able to get feedback and say this is really different then the way I see myself and that's ok that doesn't mean I am wrong and they are right and vice versa it just means that there are different ways of seeing and those different ways are valid and that's what it comes to the prism metaphor so most people thing about self-awareness is something you know the simple would be I look in the mirror I see my reflection and that is who I am but it's a lot more complicated and everyone probably remembers from science class when they were young that when you shine a white light through the prism on one end on the other end it comes out as a beautiful rainbow and the way I like to think about self-awareness is you know it's every single reflection or every single light that goes through you get a richer, fuller picture of who you are so every day to point that you get whether it's your own whether it's your spouse, whether it's your co-worker, your employees, your boss each of those are valid and helpful it doesn't mean that we have to listen to every single piece of feedback we get we can go into that in a sec or two but what it does mean is that I think is just that open curiosity that is so hugely important so I think that's probably the biggest pit fall to go back to your question is over simplifying the different roles that feedback plays relative to our own self-perception.

DJ: What's the benefit you see a third party or another individual brings in bringing richness of data in improving self-awareness?

TE: So I learned from my good friend Michael Goldsmith and the bottom line is that other people have this amazing and annoying way of seeing us far more clearly sometimes then we can see ourselves and you know you sort of think about the leader who goes in every day and really feels like they are doing a great job for their employee and then you know I go and I interview their employees and they say working for this person is the worst thing that I have ever done. I have had coaching clients where I have you know and basically, I go in when I am working with the CEO or someone else's their coach. I interview as many people as I can that work with them so sometimes it's up to 25 people I talk to their employees their Board members, their colleagues, their family even their spouse and what I find fascinating is time and time again you get this very consistent patterns so whether or not see the seen themselves. If you talk to enough people around them. So I say this time and time again you are getting very similar themes across people and there is a lot of power in that and the reason is it doesn't necessarily mean they are right or they are wrong but it's the prevailing perception and knowledge is power when it come in that type of feedback it's doesn't necessarily mean that you have to change it doesn't mean that you will want to change but having that data is what allows you to make an informed and empowered decision and that what I see my coaching clients really making the most dramatic transformation is when they decide to listen to that feedback and to respond to it and to circle back with the people that gave that feedback and make sure they are making improvements.

DJ: And maybe persisting with this Tasha could you share a little bit an insight around how one gathers this data as a coach you said you speak to up to 25 people across different realms of life is there any nuance around you know how you do it and what some of the common pit fall are in the way people go about collecting this data?

TE: I customizing it depending on my client but typically I ask around four questions, so the four questions I ask are 1. What is this person doing on a daily basis that's contributing to their success as

a leader? 2. What is this person do that is it attracting from their success? 3. What situation brings out the best in this person? 4. What situations bring out the worst in this person? And I actually learned those last those two questions from Marshal Goldsmith who I'm sure most of your listeners are familiar his work he is considered the number one leadership thinker and coach in the world and there are a lot of nuances that come out of those second two questions and you know you sort of think about where if you are trying to get a snapshot from someone in 30 minutes if you can ask similar questions slightly different ways you are going to pick up on nuances to their behaviour and usually it's those nuances right those very small daily actions that person is you know demonstrating that are what are so helpful and that's where when it comes to traditional quantitative 360 right where you say all this person is this 3 out of 5 on team work the challenge with those they can be helpful and I am not discounting their value but sometimes you say what 3 out of 5 on team work what am I doing exactly that's making people rate me that way and you can sort of try to read between the lines of your open ended comments. But for me what I can do is a coach you know I ask these four questions or some kind of variations of them and then I can start testing hypothesis I can see if multiple people are bringing up the same behaviour or even the same situation and that gives me the ability not just to say you are 3 out of 5 on team work but here are some nuances you know here is why are you doing really well. Here is what is maybe coming across in the way you wanted to hear several specific examples again protecting confidentiality which is probably then the number one most important thing in my opinion and bit if five people bring something up its obviously something that everybody is seeing and so you got to balance that and obviously whenever I'm writing up my reports I don't do very very specific excerpts from that interviews for that reason but again got back to what I said earlier people tend to start saying almost the exact same thing after a point you know sometimes there is a variation depending on the stakeholder group. But I would say those are just a couple of initial thought.

DJ: And is there a way or is there's nuance to the way people think about developing awareness when they are in career transition verses when they are in a role because in a transition you are often grappling with more open ended problems in terms of what next and which pathway do I take verses in a row lets so the question is often how do I get better what I do so have you observed a sort of a thematic difference across the two?

TE: I think that when you in a career transition to your excellent point it allows you to evaluate even deeper aspect of who you are and you know I think it's pretty normal on a day to day basis for people to look at their patterns of behaviour or the impact they are having on the people around them. But there is some kind of deeper more fundamental questions that we should all answer and then I think if we are in a career transition it gives us an excellent excuse to investigate things like values you know what are the principles that I want to live my life by. The reason that's important is if you are looking for a work and you interview with a company that doesn't share those values or job that doesn't allows you bring those values with you every day that's good information to have and by that same token we want to know what our passions are. What are those things that really make us when a leap out of bed in the morning and how can we design our life to do them another is aspirations? What do we want to not just to accomplish in our life in our work but what do we want this experience called life to be for ourselves and so I think that it's certainly over whelming and it requires more work and more effort and more focused thought? But it's such a great way to reset and going back to our unicorns so many of them gave examples of transitions. There are different types of I call them alarm clock events. Things that kind of wake us up to who we really are and new roles or rules you know we are in a new job or we are in a new environment or where we come to... the road and our work and our life. They are just such right opportunities for us to see our self-more clearly.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It was interesting to hear Tasha use the term Alarm Clock events to describe points in time that shape people's life. For me, it was my father in India being diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer when I was working with McKinsey in New Jersey in the US. This was sometime in 2008 more than a decade back. That really changed a lot of things for me.

A) It gave me a sense of the end-game of life as I got to spend the last 6 months of my father's life very close to him; I got a sense of what really mattered in the end.

B) Till then, I was possibly leading a skills based life asking myself, where can I deploy my problem solving skills and my numeric capabilities and consulting felt like the logical canvas. This period was the first time I started reflecting on what gave me energy and I felt I had to do something on the people side of things, however clichéd that sounds. So, that took me to EgonZehnder where I worked for about 6 years helping clients recruit CEOs, CXOs and Board Members. Further reflection during the journey in Search led me to believe that I got my energy from helping people and not from judging them. I wanted to have fewer deeper conversations with people around me. That has taken me to what I do now which is a combination of Leadership and Transition Advisory and this podcast that you see. Both pursuits are about having deep, reflective, purposeful conversations with people.

Without the alarm clock event, I am not sure if I would have embarked on this path of reflection. But having been through all this, I realize that we don't have to wait for alarm clock events to do this. I realize that in the work place we get a lot of feedback on how we can do better in the job we are in. But in transition, we are actually asking a different question – what is the canvas where I can flourish? Or how can I design my life that makes sense for me? Just like Tasha says that internal and external self-awareness are not highly correlated, I feel that there not much overlap between the data you need to advance in a job and the data you need to transition thoughtfully. The two sets of data are a bit orthogonal if you know what I mean. Of course, this is more of an anecdotal view and not a research backed view. At least not yet.

Now let's get back to the conversation with Tasha Eurich.

DJ: And coming to receiving feedback Tasha you talk about three types of people lost cause, aware don't care and... and I loved the way and I used to work in a McKinsey so whenever anyone breaks it to three things so its instantly appealing how do you look out for these types and in what ways do we approach our feedback differently towards each of these segments?

TE: So this might not be the answer that you are looking for but it's something that I feel very passionate about. At some point and almost every key note I give someone will raise their hand and ask that question and I think at that heart of that question is usually something to the effective. How do I make other people more self-aware? And you brought up the different types of un self-aware people and I'll briefly define what those are and then come back to my original point. So one are lost causes these were the people who despite the amount of feedback they get they could hear the same thing from 100 % of the people they work with and live with and they are still convince that they are close to perfection. These are not people that anyone is ever going to change. There is also the aware don't care these are people who know exactly what a jerk there are being and we'll continue to do it anyway because they believe mistakenly that that's helping them achieve something that they want right success or some twisted version of success in their mind the third which is most people is something that named "Nudgable" people who are able to be nudged and if

you are the right type of person if you have the right kind of relationship if you use the right kind of approach you can very often help these people see themselves more clearly. This goes back to what we were discussing earlier where you know most un-self-aware people are not bad people, they just don't know what they don't know. But in spite of all of that it's so common for us to focus our attention our self-awareness attention on all the people around us right. I wish my spouse could be more self-aware, my co-worker, my client but it's usually is a risky endeavour. If we take it on ourselves to make someone more self-aware. We may or may not be successful and there is often an inherent risk so the first thing I tell people is think really carefully about whether you are willing to accept the worst case scenario of trying to help that person and you know there is a lot of nuances to that depending on the relationship we have with them the power dynamic we have. I would even make up a percentage; say a large amount of the time channelling that energy into our own journey is a better use of our energy and attention. That doesn't mean that we don't have to live with these self-aware people so one of the things that our unicorns taught us was focusing on our own reactions and perceptions of their behaviour is something we have a lot more control over than the behaviour itself so there is one tool I can talk about it in my book I call it the laugh track and this is actually a mindfulness reframing technique, I developed when I was working for this very un-self-aware, very un-intentionally nasty boss and every time he would say something nasty instead of getting wrapped up in feeling hurt or offended or sad I would imagine that we were on a television show with a canned laugh track and the laugh track would come on every time we said something horrible and what I noticed was it allowed me to snap out of the moment and out of the instinctive reaction I had and see him a little bit differently you know sometimes I would think about it later and I would say actually with the laugh track behind it that was kind of funny and so what I would encourage people to do is if diving head on to that I am gone give this unaware person feedback is to again be very careful about making that strategic decision is you want to talk to them or not and the no matter what you can always focus on your own perception of their behaviour and try to limit the amount of time you spend with the if that is all possible.

DJ Respond: - "That's fascinating I am reminded of the Wimbledon finals recently between Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer and you know Novak had the whole crowd and in Wimbledon routing for Federer and then somebody asked him how did you really manage to keep you calm and keep you motivation levels when everybody was routing for Roger Federer he said something interesting he said each time somebody said go Roger I sort of transmuted it in my head and made it sound as go Novak for myself so it sounds bit like the laugh track point you just made but that's fascinating".

DJ: How does one watch out for not falling in this trap what are the watch out so that we don't get caught in that catch 22?

TE: I want to make this really simple for all of us and this is a hard one and far less in for me personally. It's to make the decision to gently stop assuming that we are self-aware and there is an inherent paradox both to unawareness and to awareness right the unaware people usually don't know that they are unaware but the other side of that paradox is the most self-aware people never get overly confident about their level of self-awareness and they don't do it in a way that is self-deprecating or in a way that erodes their confidence they do it in a way that is open and curious. There is one unicorn that we spoke to his name was Kelcy, and he is a middle school science teacher. So inspiring amazing young man and he enlightens the quest of self-awareness to exploring space and what he said was you know what I loved about it is no matter how much we know there is always so much that we have yet to learn and you know just speaking personally this research program has knocked me off of my own self-awareness pedestal you know I thought when I started I am pretty self-aware I am probably gone discover that and I discovered that I am not nearly a self-aware as I thought I was. But what I have been able to do learning from our unicorn in a research subject is to reframe that it's to say you know I am going to take the default mind-set that I don't

know myself as well as I think I do and I am going to take every piece of data that come in my way as data as exactly that right ohh this is really interesting I wonder what this is about and I think if we can do that, in some ways that's half the battle. If we can make that decision that no matter how much I think I know about myself there is always more to know that puts us far and away beyond most people.

DJ: And just wrapping up Tasha which element of self-awareness are you curious about given your work and given your continued interest in this space what elements of self-awareness let's say going deeper in your researching in your journey?

TE: The thing that is fascinating me right now are culture difference in self-awareness and funny story I was doing a talk I was somewhere in Canada I'd actually don't remember the city and someone came up to me who worked for a large consulting company and she said hey if you ever want a sample of you know leaders in 20 countries give me a call and I was so excited and this was like the holy grail and then I lost her business card and so I have been trying to find another sample for a little while but to me I think that is the next frontier. If you look at just sort of culture differences and how self-awareness over-lays onto that and anecdotally, I think there is a lot to it and I am hopefully excited to...

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Two things struck me in this conversation.

First is the point that Tasha makes about the Rabbit hole of rumination. There is a downside to over-introspection. A lot of the people that come to work with me actually do so because they have hit a point of analyses paralysis with their reflection. I like the point Tasha makes about the kind of questions we need to ask ourselves as we introspect. She talks about the usefulness of the what versus the Why questions.

I was recently listening to an interview of Jim Collins on the Tim Ferris show; Jim is considered one of the leading thinkers in the field of management of our times. He is the author of Good to Great, Built to Last, Great by Choice. His books have sold more than 10 million copies worldwide. The interviewer asked him about how he spent his day and one of the things he said really struck me. He said that every day as he wraps up a day, he would just write down the 3 or 4 things he got done that day. He says that he would give himself a score between -2 and +2 on how he felt about the day. Just a gut feel. +2 are when you have a great day, -2 are when you have a lousy day and the rest is in between. Jim goes on to say that he does this for a while and then every 3 months or so, he takes a step back and looks at what's going on. He looks at all the +2 days and says what is common to all these days. He looks at all the -2s and sees what the pattern is. I guess the key insight for me here is that when we are too close to a situation, it is difficult to analyse what is going on. It is helpful to collect adequate data (the what questions as Tasha says) for a period of time before we get to the Why question for us to have a meaningful outcome.

The second piece was the point she makes about going on a self-awareness journey as exploring space. The metaphor of space is a great one. I guess building self-awareness is a never-ending journey and not something where you get complete mastery. As somebody who learns the guitar, I would possibly liken it to music. The more you learn, the more you realize there is to learn and as you build your capability, you start appreciating nuances that you didn't even know existed earlier when you started out on the journey.

I learnt a lot from this conversation. I hope you found it purposeful too. Finally - Just a few requests as we wrap up the show.

If you find the content of value, please rate the show and write a review on iTunes, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Stitcher or wherever you consume the content.

And as we wrap up, if you want to share your gratitude for the value you are deriving from the podcast, do consider contributing to Antarang Foundation. There are millions of young adults who are playing the game of life with a big handicap. Your contribution will make a difference in helping some of them play to their full potential. You could email me at deepakj.p2p@transitioninsight.com and I could connect you to the right resource at Antarang Foundation.

The next podcast conversation is with Alan Eagle – the co-author of the book – Trillion Dollar Coach, a book that describes the ways of Bill Campbell, who coached the Who's Who of Silicon Valley, including Steve Jobs, the leadership team at Google and several other CEOs.

To know more about the Leadership and Transition Advisory work I do, please visit the about section at playtopotential.com. I look forward to having you at one of the subsequent conversations at the Play to Potential Podcast. Bye now.

End of transcription

Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [Developing the meditation habit](#).

Nugget from Vinay Sitapati that is referenced: [The reflection habit - decoding signal from the noise](#).

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Self-Awareness: Insights around what it takes to build a better understanding of self. This includes perspectives around how we can deepen our picture of ourselves through a combination of inner work, mindfulness practices and by gathering meaningful feedback from the world around us. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Excellence: Learn how individuals from across disciplines have pushed themselves to move to the very top of their field and profession. As we move towards a flattening world with a leveling of the playing field, there is a high risk of being commoditized if we do not strive towards excellence. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Deliberate Practice: Deliberate practice refers to a special type of practice that is purposeful and systematic. While regular practice might include mindless repetitions, deliberate practice requires focused attention and is conducted with the specific goal of improving performance. Leaders across fields talk about how they think about this topic in their respective fields. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Mindfulness: Given we live in a world with exponential increase in content creation and with firms like Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple vying for our attention, it is quite hard to reclaim our own space and attention. In this context, being mindful could be a key differentiator and a competitive

advantage. Some leaders talk about how they created that space for themselves amidst the noise. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Coaching: The business world is slowly waking up to the fact that just like in elite sports; there is a tremendous value to be unlocked by having an effective coach for a leader. It is not just about fixing issues but also about enabling the journey from Good to Great. Leaders across disciplines share their insights around how one should pick a coach and get the most out of such a relationship. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Reinventing self: “How do I stay relevant” is a question that all of us have to grapple with as we go through our respective journeys. Careers aren’t linear any more. Some of the leaders talk about how they managed to pivot during their journeys and significantly change trajectories. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Dr. Tasha Eurich - Nuggets

- 49.00 Dr. Tasha Eurich - The Full Conversation
- 49.01 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-Awareness - Meta-skill of 21st century
- 49.02 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-awareness Unicorns
- 49.03 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-delusion versus Self-awareness
- 49.04 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Limitations of introspection
- 49.05 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Mindfulness beyond meditation
- 49.06 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Feedback as a prism vs. a mirror
- 49.07 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Role of a coach in enhancing self-awareness
- 49.08 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-awareness during career transitions
- 49.09 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Catch 22 of Self-awareness

About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.