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## Context to the nugget

Think you need to know all about a career before you dive right in? Not necessarily! Papa CJ talks about how the world of stand-up was a blank slate for him and all he had was his excitement and eagerness to pursue it. Sometimes all it needs is the drive and the resilience. Hint: Look out for what makes stand-up comedy the one profession where 'failure is the only way to succeed' according to Papa CJ.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** What were the few things that were unexpected once you started living the life of a stand-up comedian that you hadn't expected when you set out on that path?

Papa CJ (CJ): I am not going to be able to give you a good answer to that because I find that I am not the kind of guy who goes into situations with expectations. I find, if you don't have expectations, you're never disappointed. Because the field was so new to me, it was a completely blank slate. I had no clue what I was getting into, but I just knew I was excited and eager to discover whatever it might be. I have always believed it, and you have seen that in the show 'Naked' as well, you have to play the cards that you've been dealt. It's almost an addiction for me; I have the ability to find the positive in every situation. I will always look at the plus side and what can be made of the situation, than look at what didn't work. So, I think, that's an important part of who I am. I'm perfectly comfortable with uncertainty and I will somehow try and find the positive.

**DJ:** Maybe to reframe the question, if I'm an individual who's at the cusp of getting into stand-up comedy. I come up to you for advice and say, I am thinking of this. What should I be aware of? What am I walking into?

CJ: Well, the first thing I will say is, don't do it, because I don't need the competition. The second thing I will say is, you have to have a really thick skin. As men, if you've ever tried to ask a girl out on a date, for example, we are very bad with rejection. In comedy, you get rejected all the time. Keep in mind, that in our profession, we get feedback every 15 seconds. If they're not laughing, you have to adapt instantly. If you don't have the ability to adapt instantly, there is nothing worse than trying to people make laugh and getting five minutes of silence. So, on the way home, you have to ask yourself, if I'm in the same country, with a similar audience of a similar background, what can I do differently so I don't look like a fool? So, for us, failure is the only way to succeed. You have to put yourself in different situations, you have to keep failing, and that is what makes you grow. So, if you're getting to do stand-up comedy, you have to know that it is a marathon, it is not a sprint. You

have to be prepared to constantly fail. I have been doing stand-up comedy for 12 years. I have done 2,000 shows in over 20 countries. Today, I feel I know far less about stand-up comedy than I felt three months after I started doing it, because now I know how little I know. I mean, the more you do it, the more you realize how much more there is to learn.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of the work of Cal Newport, who says that "Follow your passion" might well be terrible advice and is over-rated. By the way his book "So good they can't ignore you" is worth a read if you want a perspective on how you shouldn't totally ignore your competitive advantage or your career capital as you think about re-inventing yourself. There is another point about resilience here. Once having taken a plunge, one needs to stop judging whether it was the right thing or not and dive head long. I find too many people reacting negatively to initial negative feedback and pulling out while if they had stuck it out, they would have made it eventually.

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## End of nugget transcription

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## **Papa CJ - Nuggets**

- 04.00 Papa CJ - The Full Conversation
- 04.01 Papa CJ - Why 'Naked'?
- 04.02 Papa CJ - Oxford MBA, consulting, stand-up
- 04.03 Papa CJ - Plunging into stand-up
- 04.04 Papa CJ - Stand-up: Unknown unknowns
- 04.05 Papa CJ - Stand-Up: What it takes
- 04.06 Papa CJ - Lessons from a journey in stand-up
- 04.07 Papa CJ - Role of vulnerability in building trust
- 04.08 Papa CJ - What corporates could learn from stand-up
- 04.09 Papa CJ - Three things they don't teach you in B-school

## **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](#).

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