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Context to the nugget

A lot of who we are often gets baked in our early years. A lot of it is often a function of the context we grow up in and the family culture. Vedika talks about how her home environment played a key role in shaping some of the behaviours which have helped her in the journey till date.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): One of the pieces I am curious about is how we get formed as people through our growing-up years. If you think about your childhood leading up to IIM-A, three or four things which come up, which played a key role in shaping Vedika of today? And maybe, if I had to underscore the point, given the commentary that we have around women leadership, I am curious about any themes, specifically, that you reflect upon which made a significant difference.

Vedika Bhandarkar (VB): I was thinking about this, and I don't think I have a clear-cut answer. I grew up in a small town, called Udaipur. My parents were both academics, they used to work in the university and we were a very normal household. Since you asked me to think about it, I have been thinking about it, and I think there are two or three things which I could come up with. We were a very relaxed household. There wasn't any pressure put on you. At the same time, you were really expected to do whatever you were doing really well. So, you were expected to put all your effort into what you are doing. So, there was certainly no pressure to be first in your class or to win every medal or anything, but there was an expectation that you try your best and that was important. I think, that has stayed with me and it's important for me, and hopefully, we've been able to pass it to our kids, that everything that you do, you have to give it your all. You have to try your utmost.

The second thing was, there was no pressure in terms of this is what you should do. As I said, my parents were both academics. They were both physicists, but there were certainly no expectation that I needed to do physics. Most of my classmates are doctors. So, they studied biology in school and they became doctors. I did not like biology at all and there was no pressure from my parents that you have to do biology, you have to become a doctor. I did math, appeared for IIT, and did not get in. Again, there was no pressure that you need to try it again next year or you need to go to any of the other engineering colleges. So, I did my science and then through research, through a couple of talks which I attended with my dad, I decided to do my MBA. This was the first time anybody in the family was doing an MBA. My parents had no idea what this was all about, but they were incredibly supportive. So, I think, this no pressure to go on the expected paths has also stayed with me.

I think, the third thing which has stayed with me is just open conversations. So, as a family, we could talk about anything and you could have very strong disagreements with your parents and I had many

of them. No subject was taboo and we believed in open conversations. It was a little messy, sometimes a little loud, but that's the way we grew up. That also stayed with me through my working career. Whenever things have been uncomfortable or I have disagreed with them, I've had open conversations and at that time, it feels like, oh my god, what're you doing, but on hindsight, I think that's really worked well for me. So, those were the three things, if I had to say, which have stood with me.

DJ: Fair enough. And I think it's an interesting point you make about a) facilitating the child to figure out what makes sense for him or her, and b) in McKinsey, we used to use the term obligation to dissent, where, let's say, in a problem-solving discussion, somebody 20 years in the firm and somebody two months in the firm would be expected to treat each other as peers. That sort of sets a certain culture, whether it's a house or it's an organization.

VB: Correct! It's very hard in an organization. It's hard to do it when you are just two months in and it's very hard to take it when you have spent 20 years in the organization, but if you can do it, I think, it's incredibly powerful.

DJ: I think, maybe since I have two young kids, the parallel in the home context is, when you are time strapped, the tendency is often to kill the discussion. Take this and run with this. And the harder part, is often to say, OK, let's listen, let's talk, let's debate it out. So, I guess at some level, it gets hard on the home front as well.

VB: Absolutely!

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I was recently listening to a chat with Pullella Gopichand the highly accomplished badminton player and coach. When he spoke about his journey, he mentioned that as he was growing up the ranks in Andhra Pradesh and subsequently at a national level, he would always have 3-4 people who would compete with him and he would often benchmark himself to them. He mentioned that his best years which was winning the All England and the successes after that happened when he set an absolute yardstick for himself and started focusing on the best he can be. However, clichéd it sounds, there is something to be said about the power of having a growth mindset and an orientation to excellence. And that can be a big shift for a lot of us to make who have grown up in the "What is your Relative grade" school of upbringing.

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End of nugget transcription

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Vedika Bhandarkar - Nuggets

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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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