



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of a man in a suit and glasses, identified as 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman'. At the bottom left of the banner, there is a small text note: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Deepa shares her thoughts on the trade-off between seen as a “different person” versus being seen as just another individual who can do most of the things that a regular person can. She talks about how it is about her taking the onus and putting the other person at ease rather than expecting the other person to react to her situation. She says “if I am OK with it, they are OK with it”.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Given your situation, how do you strike the balance between being seen as a regular person leading a regular life and an individual who is different from the rest the reason I ask is diversity and inclusion sometimes are two sides of the same coin so how do you think about those two, In terms of being just like anyone else versus being someone who is distinct from the rest, how do you process that?

Deepa Malik (DM): I think I have come to learn a lesson in life that people will look at you the way you look at yourself, as long as I was treating myself as a patient or as somebody who was disabled, or have a sad persona around me or still despair losing legs and not moved on I was looked upon like that but today I took charge of my situation, I said no I am going to be as normal, well I never said that I am abnormal, and actually there is nothing that I don't do which people with all functions intact in their body do, I drive, I swim, I play, I watch movies, I listen to music, I cook, I am a mother, I am a wife, I am a home maker and I write some poetry, I have hobbies, I travel so there is nothing really different and that's what I cruised for I call myself a person on a mission called and ability beyond disability, who actually advocates that the differences are I think just a matter of thought and not matter of action, if you really take charge and do it as casually people also take it that way because initially I have always realised that when somebody meets up. Initially when I recently got paralysed and people saw the change from a walking Deepa to a severely disabled Deepa, with so many medical challenges and body challenges and at the same time I think generally the Indian society is used to and understands that we are culturally not a very sensitised society we do not have the kind of infrastructure and inclusion that is there outside India or, so we as a society in general do not accept disability so easily or we are not knowledgeable enough to understand that yes we have a way to cope up and live normally, inclusively with the challenges in the body also, even if you see it mythological or anything, they its “Bure Karma kaa fal hai” there is always a negative connotation attached to it, it is never taken as part of life.

DJ: So you deserve it kind of an approach right?

DM: Yes, so there's a lot of guilt which has been imposed on you that there is something wrong that you have done to deserve this, so to deal with a society which used to these thoughts it's definitely

changing now with the current generation but I am two decades old on the chair so if I take you twenty years back, because with the internet coming in, with the phones, with WhatsApp with these positive stories floating around and a lot of media activity around changes and positive thinking and like the recording that we are doing now the thought process is changing and corporates have come in with their MNC policies of inclusivity and diversity, so overall the work culture and the thought culture is changing but when I had got paralysed, I faced all this and *I think the onus laid upon me to make the other person comfortable rather than the other person trying to make me feel comfortable so once they saw that I was alright with the chair and I was happy within my space then they would let their guards down and speak to me normally and include me*, they would not talk about fashion, Sari shopping because I could no longer wear a Sari so they would delete the Sari talks not realising that I would still like to talk about it I would probably cherish some really good memories about wearing Sari or at least updating my information as to what is the latest fashion being a fashionable women myself but slowly and steadily a time came and I was a shows topper on the ramp shows, so this change of attitude like first I said the people will look at you the way you look at yourself so you have to create an aura around you, you have to help people around you, so it comes to the communications skills, the way you learn soft skills in any business environment, I think this is also a learning like that and a person who suffers with any kind of physical challenge can help the other person who does not understand, it's not their fault, because it is not as common, this is a unique situation, which is not universally Omni-present so obviously you don't expect everybody to understand it the way you do, you can help them understand so that's what I do, I make people understand my situation and I also make them understand that I am alright with it, and the moment they realised that, if I am OK with it, they are OK with it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key phrase that hit me was Deepa saying "If I am OK with it, they are OK with it". All of us go through shocks where our life often turns upside down. The key takeaway for me is that we have to first come to terms and be at peace with the new normal. And that will show in how we come across in the interactions with the others. It is very tempting to go down the path of seeking sympathy but it is fascinating to hear Deepa talk about choosing happiness over melodrama, by coming to terms with it and taking charge of a situation and putting the other person at ease.

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End of nugget transcription

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Deepa Malik - 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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