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## Context to the nugget

Rich talks about how he thinks about ritualizing meditation and baking it as hygiene in the way he goes about leading his life. He also talks about the importance of not treating meditation just as a separate activity that we do once a day but suggests that we weave in meditation in the small things we do through the day. He also speaks about the importance of rituals to manage our attention in the digital economy.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Back to meditation Rich the people I interact with in general conceptually everybody knows it's helpful and quite a few even get started with it but I the biggest slippage of the leakage I see is over the medium-term right people struggle to make it a habit. What's been your experience in installing this is a habit for the long term in people?

Rich Fernandez (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 my bed, 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: Look for pockets of opportunity as your day's plays out. Just a quick comment on dealing with meditation or even building the muscle of attention in the digitally let's say stimulated world we live in. What are some of the again what do see people do in effectively sort of leveraging the upside of digital while protecting themselves from the downside of digital if I may use the term?

RF: There are specific ways that people manage or mismanage their attention. So, the digital world sucks our attention it absorbs us and I don't mean to say that in a bad way there are tremendous benefits from our information economy. But if we let it be unbridled it's sort of like eating a delicious feast but never stopping to eat. You kind of become an over fed and you can grow little sick and so it's really about managing attention. I'd like to say it's actually an attention economy where we have to parse out our investment of attention prudently think about it like a financial portfolio you want to balance your investment prudently and so you want to allocate time that is off line, you want to compartmentalized time so I never take out my phone for example almost never take out my phone when I am interacting with my son who is 12 years old but that has been true for me for a very long time. Now once in a while I'll get a ping you know if I have senses of working something urgent is happening at work I will check it but there are kind of set times in which I check and that's not said that I'm offline for the huge amount of time but when I'm offline I'm really offline at dinner with the family the phone is not on the table or anywhere near where notification can distract me. I think it's really about managing your attention and compartmentalizing effectively. And believe me I'm online sporadically when I'm home from work through the evening because I have a job where I do have to monitor but then I definitely cut off at a certain time as well. I'm usually asleep by in bed by 10.00 and I'm not on my device any more. Until after my meditation in the morning

DJ: Now clearly the sense I get is unless we draw hard lines if we just let osmoses then it's just gone suck rest of the attention so that point is well taken.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of things struck me in this nugget. One is the point he makes about setting rituals about most things rather than letting our will-power fight it each time. With Billions of dollars going into how companies can consume our attention where they have experts from various fields ranging from Casinos in Las Vegas to mathematicians, I guess if we leave it to our will-power and our intuition to deal with it, then it is a battle where there is no hope for us to win. So, I guess, we need to bake in rituals for things that matter – whether it is around exercise or digital devices or meditation.

The second piece that struck me was the point around the fact that meditation need not only be a separate activity that we do once a day. It could be weaved into several other things we do through the day. This insight reminds me of a recent conversation I had with Dr Ramachandra Guha who has studied Gandhiji for several years. When I asked him about how Gandhiji preserved his mind-space when the world was clamouring for his attention, this is what he had to say.

RG: *"So, I think, for example, spinning. Now, spinning is an activity in which you are, of course, doing labour. You are breaking down the caste barriers via you, Baniya, spinning. In fact, in one of his court appearances, he's asked about his caste and he says farmer and weaver. You are spending time with yourself. And, of course, silence. Walking is another activity in which you are whatever you call it, slow food and slow this, right? And the day of silence that he adopted was also a way of withdrawing into himself."*

DJ: If you want to listen to this piece, you could go to Nugget 39.09 titled Inner journey in my conversation with Ramachandra Guha.

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## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Ramachandra Guha that is referenced: [Inner journey](#).

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## Rich Fernandez- Nuggets

- 41.00 Rich Fernandez - The Full Conversation
- 41.01 Rich Fernandez - Leadership Development in the Digital economy
- 41.02 Rich Fernandez - Origins of SIY
- 41.03 Rich Fernandez - Attention and Meta-Attention
- 41.04 Rich Fernandez - Developing the meditation habit
- 41.05 Rich Fernandez - Benefits of Journaling
- 41.06 Rich Fernandez - Meta-distress and Response-flexibility

- 41.07 Rich Fernandez - 3 levels of resilience
- 41.08 Rich Fernandez - Positivity and Psychological Safety

### **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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