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## Context to the nugget

Rich speaks about the benefits of journaling and refers to research in neuroscience that suggests that journaling is superior to typing on a digital device given the speed at which we do each of the activities. He also has some pointers around how people can start the practice of journaling in their lives.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I want to move to a journaling Rich and in the book, I found an interesting statistics right Meng talks about a study where a group of people who were laid off, they wrote to themselves about their feeling for about 20 minutes a day. I don't have the statistics in front of me but they did much better than the non-writing control group in terms of getting the new job. I'm curious about the notion of journaling what's being your experience about journaling and more importantly what should people write about? How important is it and also comment a little bit about how does one make the habit as we like we discussed earlier on a couple of other things?

Rich Fernandez (RF): Your presiding some studies by James Pennebaker and others who found that journaling has helped all sort of outcomes physiological but also very tangible in terms of like finding new job after losing them. I think the part of the factors that lead to that are that when you journal you are basically capturing and encoding your thoughts about a specific situation rather than letting them basically fester to use a very untechnical term and so when you do this very concurred exercise of staying how you feel stating what you hope for stating your goals you are really making them very clear in your own mind. I think it really help to navigate towards those positive outcomes. One thing we know also thing we know also another bit of neuroscience is that what they found is that people have a better memory for things they have written down than that which they have typed in class room setting that's bit of finding in neuroscience and what's neuroscientist have found is the reason for that is that because we can type faster than we can write long hand and we can type almost at the speed of what's being spoken and so basically what we are doing is we are just essentially quickly processing but not encoding what's being said. When you write something long hand like when you journal you actually have to articulate the entire thoughts in your heads and they become encoded in your memory in a much stronger fashion. Basically, you are programming yourself in another sense of the word when you journal you are programming your brain to perceive a situation through a certain lens or perspective and it becomes much more real and concrete and, in some ways, you start to live your way into that if that make any sense. For Journaling to get started or to have bit sure of it make it more of a habit think about a prompt today I feel "dot dot dot" And then just write for 2 minutes without stopping stream of consciousness. I think the SIY have some prompts for a good journaling prompts that you can use. It simply think like think that annoy me are? I am at my best when? I hope that? Just these open-

ended questions can really be wonderful to start your journaling practice and just like meditation you have to do it to experience benefits.

DJ: And what do you see people do in terms of reviews what's been written is that important at all or even the act of writing itself is good enough or do you see people coming back every week or every month to really make sense of what they have written?

RF: It seems like the act of writing itself is the most important piece but then in reviewing furthering encodes as well so I think the research had much more to do with the actual act of writing but what we know is that people can reinforce that through reading that. So we always ask people to read what they have wrote after they have done it in our curriculum and it really helps bring a lot of clarity. For the listeners I would just invite you to try that you don't have to do this extensively but for three or four days of a week, seven minutes, five minutes even each. Give yourself a prompt and that might my best when? I hope for and just let yourself write and experiment with this and see what emerges it might surprise you

DJ: Do you see people picking one prompt and sticking with it across time or do you pick different prompts at different points in times do you have a view on that?

RF: NO, I don't see consistently what people do? What we like to encourage people to do is to find the prompt that is most relevant for you if that point in time. If you are feeling particularly frustrated during a certain period write about things that annoy you so that you get clarity on those. If you are hoping for a new situation think about your work or life would be like if you exceeded your expectations in a year. That's one exercise I actually do it at the beginning every year I do that exercise myself. If my life exceeded my expectation in the next three years my life would "dot dot dot" and I just write that. I write that every year at the end of the year. As I setup for the New Year. So just think about situationally what would be useful prompt for you and then just get going writing on it.

DJ: That's so profound I think in the busy lives we lead just stopping to reflect I think is one of the thing that everybody realizes the important of but it just the work crowds out most of the things so points well taken.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In my coaching work, when we are trying to drive behavioural change, I often urge the leaders to develop some sort of a journaling habit. I like the distinction Rich makes between writing with a pen or paper versus typing. I also like the phrase Rich uses when he says that by journaling, you begin to reprogrammed yourself and you act your way into the new version of you! I thought that was really powerful.

Of the leaders that I have studied, either through my Leadership Advisory work or at the podcast, if I had to distil what are the 3-4 habits that stand out for these leaders, I would like to believe that Journaling would be one of them. I asked one of my earlier guests Vinay Sitapati (VS), the author of the book – Half Lion, a biography of Narasimha Rao. When I asked him about what gave Narasimha Rao the ability to process the complexity around him, this is what he said.

VS: *"Narsimha Rao's ability to be introspective, to be inward, helped him sift the day into what, or to put it in statistical terms, to be able to sift the signal from the noise. That is the first thing that introspection taught him. 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 sift the signal from the noise. Who are the people you meet every day? How many people are being honest? How many people are lying?*

*To give you just one example. One of the diary entries which I have in the book is from 22nd May 1991. This is the day after Rajiv Gandhi has been killed near Chennai. Narsimha Rao — who until then had been basically eased out of the Congress and was about to become a monk in a monastery called Kutralam, in Tamil Nadu, and was closing his bank accounts — suddenly realized that by virtue of being the least ambitious man in the party, he's prime to be Prime Minister of India. The diary shows 22nd May, he's back in Delhi, he's in 10, Janpath, where Sonia Gandhi and Rajiv used to live, and pieces of Rajeev Gandhi's body — they were just pieces, they were not the full body — are kept there and all the Congressmen are around the body pretending to cry. Some of them were actually crying, while actually trying to manoeuvre to see who would succeed him. And he has this wonderful passage about how Pranab Mukherjee, who was in the boondocks then but would later recover to become President of India, wheedles up to him and says, 'We think you should become Congress president,' which is the proxy for Prime Minister of India, and Narsimha Rao 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 ND Tiwari for Prime Minister of India, knowing that he was even less likely a candidate than I am.' I think, the introspection in the diary allows him to do that. It allows him to reflect over the day. If Pranab Mukherjee came up to me and said, maybe you should be Prime Minister of India; I wouldn't stop to ask what his angle is. So, the introspection gave him that ability."*

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## End of nugget transcription

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

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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
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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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Podcast Transcript [41.05 Rich Fernandez - Benefits of Journaling](#)

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