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## Context to the nugget

Matt Dixon speaks at length about the criticality of rest and rejuvenation. He specifically speaks about some of the qualitative and quantitative considerations around having a restful night's sleep to be effective in our functioning on a sustained basis in our various domains of life.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** How do you think about rest? What are some of the pitfalls that leaders fall into as they think about rest or rejuvenation?

**Matt Dixon (MD):** I think you just fell into it in many ways which was adding something in and so that and what was sort of inferred there was you are taking something like training or sport or whatever it might be and you are dumping it on the top of life and that will always yield failure, it would always underperformance the accumulation of stress and fatigue and so the biggest mistake that we see people make is to think I know I need to exercise because I know that's something to do that's makes me healthy so, how am I going to add this on the top of life and many people what they do and the great example is Oh it's wonderful go to bunch of friends I am going to do Ironman Turkey and it sounds wonderful and what does it take to train for that and it takes 20 hours a week goodness me I don't have twenty hours a week but there's the training program and to dump it on top of life and I am just going to have to find a way to cram it in. To be successful and to actually integrate the key components of rejuvenation and recovery as well as training what we have to realise is that we have to integrate it into a person's life so that not only does, they can then improve in that discipline because hopefully they are looking for improvement but so that they can lift their health they can lift their performances as a CEO or an executive and it can help them to thrive across areas of life and so it's all about integration, we go through a very particular process where we look up the habits the start and we look up their genuine landscape of their life what have been non-negotiable? And when we think about non-negotiable there's obviously the commitments in the work place quite often there's the commitment with their family and we want them to be available and present for their family, their children, their wives, their husbands or whatever it might be and then the other component that we have is non-negotiable is sleep and saying ok how much do you sleep and is that necessary and is it high enough quality which is the other component of effective sleep not just quantity are you getting enough? And with those building blocks in life we have a certain amount of time left over and that ebbs and flows with the different demands of life but then we can go about same equation, with that time is left over how do we optimize it? how do we create an optimization mind-set with that time is left over and that's a very different way of going about it, so rather than just dumping a training program on top of life or throwing a bunch of habits and saying this after navigate it becomes an all-encompassing recipe for them and that's really where took element of resilience, and ultimately success comes from.

DJ: How do you think about sleep both from a quantity and quality perspective if you could give us a sense of what are some of the guidelines here?

MD: I think first we have to acknowledge, I will give you a very practical guide or takeaways for people and the first thing is there is an individual and genetic component to it, is that everyone is not the same some people are a morning lark and some people are night owl and I think for listeners, understanding yourself and understanding are you someone that tends to perform better when they go to bed early and get up early? Stay up later and get to sleep in little bit later and trying to mesh the life with that natural quality, there's also a genetic component of how much sleep you actually need? Some people can thrive or do better on less hours of sleep but no one I have ever met and the research will actually supports this as well, no one I have met consistently thrives less than 7 hours sleep every night and most people begin with four, five or six hours when they go very busy life is consistently under-done and some people need 8 or 9 hours and of course that's a challenge for us as an athlete ... with everything that we have in our life but it's not as simple as just saying how many hours? The key component to it is how do you set yourself up for perhaps more important, how do you set yourself up for the best quality of sleep possible and the part of that is environment and a part of it is approach in habits, there goes that word habits again so with environment the body tends to perform best when its sleeping and get the best quality sleep when it's in a dark environment, it's cold so the body tends to rejuvenate better in a cold environment and in the quite environment, now you can stimulate that by wearing an eye pillow, wearing ear plugs and all of that is absolutely fine but the cold dark environment is really important that's number one but then secondly there's some habits that people can do to help set themselves up for sleep so, ensuring that you are not using screens or if you are using screens you are using a blue blocker over the top of the screen in the last hour or two before, so I shifted to the habit where I like to read to trying to turn my brain off just before I fall to sleep but rather than reading it on the Ipad I read paper pack, I have gone back to old school because I want to avoid screen, any type of screen, the second component is ensuring that if you have a very busy mind and you have a bunch of things you have to do or things that you tend to woke in up in the middle in night with considerations of, Oh my goodness I am going to do ABC and D tomorrow it's really effective, you could just keep a notepad by the bed or just before you go to bed you do what we call on a weekly basis the Sunday special, going through what you are going to do tomorrow to enable you just start in execution mode and you do this on a weekly basis, you can also do if you tend to have broken sleep on a nightly basis or daily basis and by doing that before you go to bed it tends to settle the mind because it tends to enable saying I can actually put this aside, I am going to do this tomorrow I will be in execution mode and there's a much lower propensity of you could get woken up in night and so those are some of the quick habits that we talk about, we think about it equally in terms of quantity but in many ways more importantly quality of sleep is really critical.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of my earlier conversation with Stuart Friedman of Wharton earlier in the podcast, where he speaks about taking stock of 4 domains – Self, Work, Home and Community and says that we need to seek to harmonize our choices across these dimensions in the context of what matters to us. The related point is that people often prioritize Work, Home and Community but tend to ignore self in the jig-saw. A big chunk of taking care of self is leaving room for rest, sleep and rejuvenation. It is worth ensuring that we do not under-index on this crucial element which might come back to bite us in the long term.

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## End of nugget transcription

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### Matt Dixon - 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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