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## Context to the nugget

Herminia speaks about the role of the spouse in transitions and the criticality of aligning the transition strategy with them. Very often, implicitly they assume that you would plan your way and dive into an opportunity shortly after. They are often not mentally prepared to deal with the phase of exploration and experimentation that is often required before you make a choice of direction. She speaks about the importance of staying close to them and keeping them updated on the thinking process during a transition.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And picking on that piece about identity... let's say the liminality phase where your identity is between the two states. What are some of the suggestions you have for people to sleep well at night during that phase what do some of the people do to cope with that in that phase?

Herminia Ibarra (HI): I think the biggest thing is kindred spirit where going through that too so that you don't think it's just you who are going crazy so that one and then the other thing is I have found this consistently so it's been now I don't know it's 20 years since working identity it's been the books been out a bit but it holds it really does hold up because I guess everybody I mean tell me that career transition stories. You need that kindred spirit because that period is very hard on your life partner. Your life partner freaks out. Sometimes it's the money like the livelihood of the family if you have been the bread winner sometimes it's just the sanity sometimes they are going through it too but it's just for them they are not in it they are thinking plan and implement just pick something and execute what is all of this wishy washy and they don't understand that it's going through a process that is more intuitive and more discovery base and if you try to force it you will make a dumb mistake so I think kindred spirit having tolerance for your spouse just try to keep from doing something stupid but just doesn't you don't really understand this is like until you go through that process yourself.

DJ: And I was talking Stewart Friedman of Wharton who talks about work life and he talks about managing expectation for the stake holders including your life partner is a key element so in your experience is it a one on one conversation between the person and the spouse or do you think there are creative things that people do to bring them?

HI: I think you communicate a lot but I also think that couples are delicate things and I think that this transition process make some couples stronger and it brings out the worst in others and that's because you know the kind of the roles we play in personal life and in career they kind of come together a lot and you start undoing something and it's hard for the other bit's to hold up because

you in a certain way by changing you might not be holding up your end of a bargain that was negotiated either explicitly or not and I have had people say my spouse feels like this was not the deal that he signed up for what she signed up for and the thing is there is no permanent deal that's gone take you through any relationship it's a constant conversation.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The point Herminia makes about being in close touch with the spouse is quite a profound one. What people don't realize is that by default, most people around you expect you to quickly get to an answer in a short period. The notion of liminality and exploring possibilities and multiple selves is quite fuzzy and unsettling for the rest even if they get it. So, the onus is on the person going through the transition to be in close touch with the close family members and give them comfort around what they are doing and align them on the thinking process.

One of the earlier guests on the podcast was Prof Stewart Friedman of Wharton who has spent decades researching work life integration. He says that if you have to move things around in your work and in your life, you need to have authentic conversation with the people around you on what really matters and carry them along.

SF: *"The base criteria there is what you want to find out from people as you trying to discover new ways of doing things that are good for both of you or agreements that are and going to work for both of you win wins you have got to get passed the positioning to the underlying interest so what you really care about? Well, I want to be ... more, ok! But what's really important for you? Well, I needed you to be around more, ok! Why is it important to you? So that I know you care about me, that I know you love me. Then you have my interest in mind and then you are going to do everything you can to protect me and to nurture me. Oh OK! Well, let's talk about the different ways then I can make that happen even when I am not here. So, he starts to talk about all kinds of creative possibilities, instead of arguing over when you are home"*

DJ: Something similar holds with transitions as well. It is natural for the spouse to get uncomfortable and edgy when you are going through this test and experiment phase of career transition. It is a great opportunity to have authentic conversations with the people around you on what matters, what trade-offs you are willing to make and what the stop-loss point should be for the experimentation phase. It is a great trigger to have the conversations with your family so that you get their support on your side when you are going through the phase of identity vacuum during the liminal phase.

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The Playlist reinventing yourself is about leaders who were at inflection points who were courageous to try different things and move into a new context. This includes Amish Tripathi speaking about how he moved from a career in Financial Services to writing, Roopa Kudva moving from CRISIL to Omidyar Network, Papa CJ speaking about moving from Management Consulting to Stand up, Nandan Nilekani moving from Infosys to the UID project and to politics, Atul Kasbekar moving from being a Photographer to a Producer, Devdutt Pattanaik moving from Healthcare to Mythology and so on. Hopefully the diversity of perspectives will provoke your thinking around how to navigate the transition.

The Playlist Navigational Principles gives you a flavour of the frameworks that various people used to deal with the various inflection points. In a world with more divergent pathways than before, the quality of the steering wheel is possibly as important if not more important than the quality of the engine we have in our car. This playlist gives you some thought starters which will help you build a more robust steering wheel for yourself.

You can access these playlists in the Curated Playlists section at [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com). And to know more about the Leadership and Transition Advisory work I do, please visit the About section at [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com). Bye now.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Stewart Friedman that is referenced: [Managing stakeholder expectations](#).

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### Herminia Ibarra - Nuggets

- 47.00 Herminia Ibarra - The Full Conversation
- 47.01 Herminia Ibarra - Acting your way to new thinking
- 47.02 Herminia Ibarra - Experimenting with different pathways
- 47.03 Herminia Ibarra - Portfolio approach versus Full-time role
- 47.04 Herminia Ibarra - Pausing to reinvent
- 47.05 Herminia Ibarra - Operational, Personal and Strategic networks
- 47.06 Herminia Ibarra - Identity play versus Identity work
- 47.07 Herminia Ibarra - The perils of foreclosure
- 47.08 Herminia Ibarra - Role of the spouse
- 47.09 Herminia Ibarra - Transitioning from well-paying time-greedy careers

### 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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