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Context to the nugget

Tasha speaks about the notion of Self-awareness Unicorns, the 50 people they shortlisted from 1000s of people to study them. She speaks about how she arrived at this shortlist and who is in it. She goes on to speak about some of their practices around how they cultivated internal and external self-awareness.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And maybe now is the good time to talk about your research methodology and what really appeal to me was the notion of self-awareness unicorns you talk about having spoken to hundreds and thousands of people and really witting it down to hand full of people who you thought were unicorn in self-awareness so I'm curious just linking it back to what you just said about the internal and external self-awareness id be curious to understand a little bit more about who these unicorns are and what about them sets them apart from the pack?

Dr. Tasha Eurich (TE): Yeah this is a really a fun one this was probably my favourite part of our whole research program. So, we didn't set out to identify this people and Ill define what unicorn is in a second. But I originally thought was all we have to do you known we developed this we developed and validated this very lengthy comprehensive assessment of self-awareness. I thought all we have to do is go find a bunch of people who score high as rated by themselves and someone who knows them well and then I'll crack the code of self-awareness but what I discovered when we started to do that and we started to interview highly self-aware people is a lot of them and I wouldn't venture a guess but I'd say probably most at least in our experience had sort of always been like that you know think about those people that are just naturally self-aware just the way they are wired and when we tried to figure out what they do to stay self-aware they would literally say things like you know what never really thought about that before I don't know if I do anything consciously and we are so frustrated and we were thinking ohh my gosh who are we going to figure this out and then it downed on us that all we had to do was go replicate what I had seen with my coach and clients right find people who didn't start out a self-aware but who were able you know over the course of months and years of commitment and effort to learn to see them self clearly and so that's what we ended up doing we searched the world basically we used no ball sampling which is you ask everyone you know to fill up the survey and then they ask everyone they know and it actually we got all around the world and very very globally diverse sample but what we found eventually were 50 people who not only were highly self-aware as rated by them and someone who knew them well but they and the person who knew them well also basically established that they had improved their self-awareness so they were checks and balances built into the system just because you know you start to think about if I one up to hundred and I said hey are you self-aware would you like to be a part of our study. I'm sure we will talk about this later in this podcast but most people are not very

good judges of their self-awareness so that was why you know had developed this checks and balances and that was very complicated but once we found this 50 people a couple of observation there were no demographic patterns by gender, age, nationality, job type, industry. We had students, we had Fortune 50 executives, we had stay at home parents, we had professionals really just to broad swathe of people and what was so interesting to me about that is showed us that almost anyone can improve their self-awareness if they learn some of the tips and chucks that the unicorns aren't covered for us. So it was just a really fun process and by the way the reason we call them unicorn is my research assistance were joking that like ohh you want us to find self-aware people who didn't start out that way or we might all be looking for a unicorn so everybody thought that was so funny and then you know when we find them we thought you know this is kind of the perfect term for this people. It's hard to imagine that they exist but when we found them there was just so much we learnt.

DJ: What is it they did both on the internal self-awareness and external self-awareness?

TE: We could be here for several days but let me give you a couple of examples. So the first thing that we saw in common across all of our unicorns was actually a mind-set and it wasn't always a mind-set that they had had you know up and told the point they decided to become more self-aware but it was something that I named being braver but wiser and so basically what that means is you know you think about life and it stresses and complexity and just that you know the weight sometimes that can put on all of us. It's very easy to go through your life with rose colour glasses and to say I am fabulous you know and thus anyone tells me I am doing anything especially egregious I am doing really well at everything and I am awesome and that not to say that we should not have self-confidence because that's actually a really important piece of the puzzle. But what all of our unicorns did at some point was you know whether it was... by some kind of event in their life you know maybe they were through into a new role at work or some them were fired for reasons they didn't understand or they had you something really unexpected happen in their personal life. They made the decision that it was worth the time and energy and sometimes the pains of self-discovery for them to go on that journey and what I love about that for the rest of us is it shows us that anyone can make that decision and it's definitely hard to make that decision every day and I am a pragmatist I always say that if we can we can decide to be braver but wiser more than half the time or probably and really good shape and by the way our unicorns aren't perfect magical human being they are flawed and imperfect just like all of us are so that was the first thing the other thing I would say is and I am sure we can talk about this more but they had really well defined daily practices to improve their self-awareness so that doesn't mean that they spend ridiculous amount of time developing their self-awareness we actually found that in some ways they spend less time with more benefits if they use the right approach. But things like regularly soliciting feedback from people who want them to be successful and will tell them the truth things like reflecting at the end of every day asking we call them daily check in what went well today? What didn't go so well today and then how can I be smarter tomorrow. But I think you know just as sort of final point of broad brush of what made them different was; they didn't get into a cycle where they were navel-gazing just to navel gaze. It was very strategic and smart and purpose driven and I think that's important for us to remember because sometimes people see self-awareness as just this too daunting to even think about process right where it's like I got to go into deep psychological excavation mode for several years it really isn't like that and that was what was so... to me about what the unicorns thought us is it really about those daily practices that faster incremental inside over time.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is interesting to hear Tasha speak about how we can weave meditation into our daily life. I was speaking with Rich Fernandez (RF), CEO of Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute – an initiative that was incubated in Google to help their high performers cope with the pressures of being on a rocket ship.

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 beds, 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: Back to what Tasha says, I think there are several opportunities for us to be mindful during the day without necessarily getting into deep psychological excavation mode! If this topic is of interest, do tune into my conversation with Rich Fernandez. That specific segment would be nugget 41.04.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [Developing the meditation habit](#).

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Dr. Tasha Eurich - Nuggets

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- 49.01 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-Awareness - Meta-skill of 21st century
- 49.02 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-awareness Unicorns
- 49.03 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-delusion versus Self-awareness
- 49.04 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Limitations of introspection
- 49.05 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Mindfulness beyond meditation
- 49.06 Dr. Tasha Eurich - A Prism versus a mirror
- 49.07 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Role of a coach in enhancing self-awareness
- 49.08 Dr. Tasha Eurich - Self-awareness during career transitions
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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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