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Context to the nugget

Raj speaks about the link between time affluence and an abundance mind-set, two seemingly uncorrelated concepts. He also goes onto talk about the link between how much we load our plates and the link between that and happiness. He also shares some insights around how we can bring in some time affluence in our lives.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Talking about a different adjacent topic of abundance and scarcity, you talk about the notion of time scarcity or time abundance and you talk about the paradox here that more successful we are the more time strapped we feel. Why is that so? I mean you also speak about a few ideas for reducing the perception of time, right? One of them is sort of looking at awe-inspiring images and so on. So, I found this whole concept quite interesting. Could you talk about this a little?

Raj Raghunathan (RR): Yeah, sure. So, I am sure that everybody can relate to this. Certainly, people who are listening to you have access to internet and so they belong to a certain socio-economic class I would imagine. All of us end up feeling strapped for time. And I do this as a kind of a quick survey of my class in my MBA class and undergraduate class as in how many of you guys feel that you have more than enough time to handle everything that is thrown your way. Not a single hand goes up, okay, and then I ask the opposite question, which is how many of you feel that you have less than enough time to do all the things that you want to do and 24 hours is too little in a day and every hand goes up. And this has been happening for all the years that I have taught the class, maybe two or three people in all these years have not raised their hand for the second question but everybody is feeling more and more frazzled that life has become more fast-paced, they've bitten off more than they can chew, there is too many balls up in the air, some are going to drop and those are important ones and so on. So, we all face this sense of time scarcity and much of the time it's kind of like our own mistake, it's self-inflicted. We just... we have a FOMO as it's called "fear of missing out" and so we grab any opportunity that we get, we say yes to all the parties, we take on this, we take on that and often to our own detriment, and I have to say I myself am very guilty of this and in a way I don't mean to at all minimize the seriousness of the pandemic that we're facing right now Covid-19, but touchwood so far I have been healthy, my family has been healthy and of course my perspective is going to change on this if that were not to be the case. But I have to tell you that this has really been a kind of eye opener for me in terms of how much it has simplified my life. I can't go out; I can't take on all the assignments that I had lined up. I was going to go to Spain for something called the Happiness Walk, I was going to go give talks at different corporations and I just can't do it because of this lockdown. And it's been so good Deepak in terms of just this time affluence, having a sense of more time on my hands and also sense of connecting with my family, just sitting down playing board games for example in the evening, everyone's home, it's much, much simpler life and that's what it

is, this time scarcity versus abundance or affluence as they call it time affluence actually makes you kind of rewind back to what we imagine to be simpler times that people had lots of times to go for a walk and reflect on their day's happenings and talk to each other about things that were meaningful to each other and so on and so forth. And that sense of time affluence is critical if you want to be happy. It's slightly separate from this mind-set of abundance, which has to do with me feeling that I have more than enough of resources that I don't need to be greedy and self-centred and grab things but I do think that the connection is that time affluence leads to or promotes a sense of the mind-set of abundance. And if you are time scarce, then I think it's less likely that you will find yourself adopting that mind-set of abundance.

DJ: And may be just persisting with this for a couple of minutes Raj, and even linking it back to Adam Grant's work around giving during these times, there is... we have finite time in a day and there is an opportunity for us to say, there's so much more we can do and give and give and give and load the plate and that at some level could be personally draining. I think Adam Grant also uses the term generosity burnout at some level right, we talked about this. How do you think about that solving for personal happiness versus solving for impact? Again, do you see attention there? How do you think about that?

RR: Yeah, that's a great question. So in Adam Grant's book there is also this... he talks about this give and take that if you look at somebody who is a selfless giver, at some level you are talking about a person who is a selfless giver, who just takes on every opportunity that they get to give and they are giving indiscriminately to anyone who asks them for any help any time and so on. It's kind of sad, I mean because they are the kind of epitome of giving at some level but sad that they actually end up burning out faster. And so if you have a graph if you can imagine a graph in your mind's eye with time on the x-axis and the positive impact that you have had on the y-axis, the selfless givers even though they are probably the poster children of somebody who is truly an altruist, they end up burning out faster. So, you can imagine in your mind's eye kind of a volcanic eruption of giving but that's it, it's over. Maybe two years, five years down the road it's over because they burnt out. Now if you think of somebody like who is an other-ish giver, who also takes care of themselves in the process of giving and if you look at their graph, they might actually end up having a career of giving so to speak of 30, 40, 50 years, and although it might look insignificant compared to the work in the initial three, four five years, if you fast forward 40 years and zoom back on that graph, you'll see that what they have achieved is far, far, far more significant. So, it's very, very important to take care of yourself. Here I think that there is also another concept that is very useful and that concept is the concept of self-compassion. So, taking care of yourself, treating yourself like you would other people who need help is super important as well, which kind of at some level perhaps to some people they are asking themselves, well, this is getting confusing now because I thought that being a giver is good and now you are saying that, take care of yourself then how do I know that I am not becoming a taker or at least a matcher, and there's no real hard and fast non-porous boundary between these things. Ultimately it comes down to intention at some level, am I doing this for the sake of societal benefit or am I doing it in order for my own progression and it's going to come at a cost to other people. And I think that if you're doing more of the latter then you are not a giver, you are not a true giver. So, it really comes down to you, at the end you have to introspect and ask yourself and be honest in answering this question, am I taking care of myself so that I can be better prepared for more giving in the future and the answer is yes, then you are being an other-ish giver and that's a very, very important thing to do.

DJ: Got it. And back to maybe just quickly wrap up the point around time affluence. You talk about two ideas for reducing the perception of time. Could you talk about the couple of nuances there?

RR: Yeah, so things that... I find that very interesting. So, I interviewed Melanie Rudd who is one of the co-authors on that paper that talks about time affluence after encountering images that induce a sense of awe. If you think about awe, awe is an emotion that we feel when we are confronted with something that is far grander than ourselves. And usually you would imagine that encountering something like that makes us feel little and belittled and we end up being humiliated or insulted or feeling like we are not powerful, not very positive. But in fact, being in front of I don't know El Capitan at Yosemite, by the way, I mean, I just saw this movie called Free Solo couple of days back, I highly recommend it for those who haven't watched it. So... or in front of the Grand Canyon or in front of the Himalayas, the mountains, rivers or things like that or the galaxy, we are just watching the Milky Way on a nice night inspires you with this feeling of smallness and somewhat kind of paradoxically that smallness is actually a good feeling and it makes you feel that, you know what, I think what it does is it makes you feel that life has existed, there are so many things beyond my control, there's so many big beautiful things, why am I worrying about things that are going on in my life and getting really stressed out and worked up about it. I am going to be gone in 80-100 years and let me just have a good time in the meanwhile. So, it kind of induces this sense of time abundance or time affluence in the short run. It's not a permanent change obviously, okay, but I think that it is a very useful hack. So, whenever you are feeling really stressed out, I think it might be a good idea to take a look at... nowadays we have things on YouTube so just look at size of the Earth compared to the universe, just Google something like that and it definitely works for me, it induces a sense of time affluence.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for reading. For more please visit playtopotential.com

End of nugget transcription

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Raj Raghunathan - Nuggets

- 56.00 Raj Raghunathan - The Full Conversation
- 56.01 Raj Raghunathan - The journey till date
- 56.02 Raj Raghunathan - Defining happiness
- 56.03 Raj Raghunathan - Achievement and happiness
- 56.04 Raj Raghunathan - Abundance mind-set and happiness
- 56.05 Raj Raghunathan - Time scarcity and generosity burnout
- 56.06 Raj Raghunathan - Why we lose the plot with happiness
- 56.07 Raj Raghunathan - Navigating mid-life
- 56.08 Raj Raghunathan - Dealing with negative outcomes
- 56.09 Raj Raghunathan - Pursuing flow than chasing superiority
- 56.10 Raj Raghunathan - Raising happy kids - love versus discipline
- 56.11 Raj Raghunathan - Coping with COVID-19

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 [56.05 Raj Raghunathan - Time scarcity and generosity burnout](#)

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