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Context to the nugget

Raj speaks about the notion of pursuing flow rather than chasing superiority as we think about making key choices in our journey. He also speaks different kinds of flow and goes onto speak about the importance of mastery in us experiencing high flow (harder to achieve at the foothills of a pursuit).

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Maybe just going back to one of those things and we might have discussed this already, but maybe just to sharpen the understanding Raj, you speak about pursuing flow rather than chasing superiority as one of the ways of enhancing our happiness levels and maybe just to make it real, one hears about tennis players and painters and so on pursuing flow, but let's say people in the corporate world, business leaders who are in transition, how do they... what's your suggestion around how they could discover what gives them flow?

Raj Raghunathan (RR): Yeah. So this is again a very big topic and one of the ways in which I feel that our education systems fail us around the world may be especially in places like India, although there is lots of positive things that can be said about the education system in India too, is that they don't really help us understand where our passions lie, rather we go after things that are going to pay the bills and will make us a lot of money and so on. So, we sacrifice our intrinsic interests for the sake of extrinsic rewards and you brought this up earlier too that chasing superiority seems like a good thing to do until you reach a certain point. So, I think that one of the very important things for people to experience more flow in their lives is to start at the beginning, which is to understand what is it that is intrinsically motivating for me? You might be familiar with the work of Sir Ken Robinson? He has written a book called The Element and he was on your podcast too; I am not sure?

DJ: Not yet, not yet.

RR: So, he talks about this intersection between what you are good at and what you enjoy doing and he calls it the element and I think it's very, very important to identify that because once you identify it then there's a higher chance that you are actually going to put in what... and as Erickson says is the critical amount of time that you need in order to get to a level of mastery in a field, which is ballpark around 10,000 hours. Of course, he says, use that ballpark very loosely but a lot of times basically. You are not going to put in those 10,000 hours if you pursue extrinsic rewards because it's not deeply intrinsically motivating for you. And even if you do end up putting those 10,000 hours if you are pursuing extrinsic rewards, it's going to come at a cost to some other things that are important in your life, your relationships, your health etc. And in this context, I should refer to the work of Robert Vallerand on pursuing passion with a sense of harmony versus obsession. So that's the idea

that if you want to have more flow in your life not as an athlete but working let's say as a professor or as an investment banker it doesn't matter what field it is. You can have flow in any field, then it's very, very important to pursue your passion and that's... the reason is that you are more likely to experience the kind of flow that's really immersive, what might be called high flow when you have a high level of ability. At low level ability you get to experience low flow or medium flow, that's not very engrossing, it's not going to answer one of life's big questions, which is what is my purpose in life. It's when you experience high flow on a consistent basis, maybe not every day basis, but certainly every week basis that's when you feel that yeah, I know what I was put on Earth for. That's a very satisfying place to be and for that to happen you need to experience high flow on a relatively regular basis and that in turn means that you need to have put in a critical amount of time, around 10,000 hours pursuing that field and that in turn means that you need to be intrinsically motivated otherwise you can't stomach putting so many hours into that field. And so it can like... in a chain of events it goes back to starting with discovering where your element is, what am I good at, what do I enjoy doing and then you have a high level of I think high chance I should say of ending up in a place of high level of mastery so that you can experience high flow. Did that make sense?

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

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

End of nugget transcription

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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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