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Context to the nugget

Raj speaks about his thoughts around raising happy children and how parents need to walk the tight rope across discipline and love. He makes the case for leaning into love given a choice and speaks about the framework developed by Baum Rind who has studied this in detail.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Couple of questions as we wrap up Raj. One is maybe changing the topic to children? I am a parent of two young kids 10 and 6. What's been your research around raising happy kids, what are some of the things we should think about as parents and where do you think people... what are common places where you see people trip in the way they think about raising children? Any insights there?

Raj Raghunathan (RR): Yeah, sure. So, I actually just recently got a paper accepted that's coming out soon on the impact of parental love that children get experienced when they are young and the impact that that has on their future financial success and we were very lucky to get hold of this data set from Canada which followed the same set of respondents for about 25 years. And these respondents are about 35-40 years old now, and we got them from right around when they were about five-years-old to about 15-years-old and they responded to four waves of surveys. And it collected lots of things including the level of love that these children got as kids and the dependent variable is their financial success now, which we define as not just how much money they have and how much money they perceive that they have, so subjective kind of success as well as more objective income level success and also stress, how much debt they have and how much credit card loans they have and so on. And what we find is that there is a really significant positive effect of parental love, parental nurturance that these children get as kids and these respondents got as kids and where they are now financially in their life. So, in answering this question, I think it's useful to think about two dimensions. One is the amount of love that children get which can be taken as whether the parents really truly deeply care for the children's well-being and are willing to go out of their way to help them out. For example, wake up at four in the morning if the children have to study and make them Horlicks or Bournvita or whatever, and make sure that they are getting good quality sleep at night, make good food for them, all kinds of normal things that you would think of in a loving house. So you can envision this graph in your head, one dimension the vertical dimension being amount of love that the kids get, Low to High and the other dimension is the amount of discipline that they get, that are there rules in the house and do they have to follow the rules and if they are not followed then they are disciplined maybe through punishment and may be through other means. And so again, you can imagine Low versus High. And these four cells that come out have actually been named and the researcher that does a lot of work on this is or used to do a lot of work, maybe she is not doing any more is a person named Baum Rind and so the High-

High cell, high levels of love, high levels of discipline that is called authoritative parenting. High levels of discipline, Low levels of love and that's called authoritarian parenting and you can think of one trap, is it Colonel von Trapp whatever from the...

DJ: The Sound of Music

RR: Yeah, so he was authoritarian, I mean lot of discipline and very little love until Maria comes into the household. And the low levels of love, low levels of discipline that's called negligent parenting where the kid is just abandoned basically, no love no discipline. If you have read this short story called Junius Maltby I think that was probably negligent. Actually, maybe that was permissive actually, that's the fourth category, which is lot of love and no discipline and what we found is that as far as we could tell the discipline dimension wasn't that significant at all in our study. So one of the things that we worry about is that if we don't discipline our kids when they are growing up then they are going to end up being messed up, they are not going to be able to be diligent in pursuing their passions, they are not going to put in those 10,000 hours and they are not going to be successful, they are going to fritter it all away and that's a big deep worry that a lot of parents have. And I am not saying that discipline is not important, but I think it's a little bit less important than we think it is. And if it comes to a compromise or a trade-off between love and discipline, I think that love should always trump, love should always trump. And sometimes what we do and we are very good at this as human beings is that in the garb of love we end up passing what is actually our pet desire and so for a very stark example of this that we want our kids to really succeed in let's say playing the piano, and we give them like very harsh meet or harsh punishment if they end up not practicing enough, and we tell them that it's all for you. It's for you because I love you that I do this. So, in the garb of love we kind of end up being strict martinets that are even willing to psychologically punish our kids so that they achieve our goals. So, I would say that as a parent I think one thing you need to do is you need to step back a little bit and ask yourself why do I want them to achieve this goal and really be deep like truly honest to yourself about why. And I think that many parents will discover that one of the reasons why they want their kids to achieve these goals is because they themselves did not achieve these goals. So, it's kind of a vicarious way of fulfilling what happens to be your pet dream and you want to... now that you have failed in achieving it and often it's the case that these parents themselves were probably subject to a lot of discipline without love from their parents. And at that point they reacted violently against it or passive aggressively against it and they didn't learn to play the piano as a kid or Mridangam or what have you and now they are kind of regretting it and they wished that they get they had actually learnt. And they absorb that blame to some extent and now they are kind of ragging right? I mean you just pass it on to the next generation. There is a much, much better approach and the approach has got to do with love. So, if you truly want your kids to achieve this thing, you want them to achieve great heights in piano then why don't you learn it yourself right now. Sit down with them and practice it rather than telling them you know what, you go and practice, next two hours you are going to practice, I shouldn't hear a peep from you, I should only hear you play the piano and meanwhile you are sitting there watching a sitcom or one of the shows, soap operas on TV. What's that message you are giving out to your kid. The message is that what they care about is my achievements and I am only loved to the extent that I achieve things. That's not a good message to send to your kid, it's going to mess them up. So you learn it yourself, you make it creative, maybe tell them that look, okay, let's figure out the song, the piano for the song and we're going to sit down and I'll learn how to play the guitar or I'll sing and I want you to learn the piano and play the piano parts. And sit down with them, help them out, make it a game, gamify it, have a lot of laughter, lot of creativity, lot of love and that's a much better approach, much better parenting approach. So, it's a very big area I mean how to raise happy kids. One of the other things that I would say very quickly is transmit messages to them that nurture a sense of abundance in them rather than a scarcity mindset. So, if they come back from a game of

cricket, rather than ask them did you win, how much runs did you score, how many wickets did you take, let the first question be did you have a good time? Did you enjoy yourself? Did you help other people out? If you are playing a game in which that is relevant like Assists in basketball. So those are much better questions. In fact Adam Grant, we talked about him quite a bit earlier, one of the practices that he has on a daily basis, I think maybe weekly but certainly weekly if not daily basis is to ask his children who did you help out, who are the three people you helped out today because he knows that helping other people out is a much more reliable determinant of success than striving for superiority over other people. And so, in a similar vein we know that abundance minded people are not just happier, they are more successful as well. So, encourage this sense of abundance. Ask them if they are pursuing their passion, if they're having fun, if they are enjoying themselves, if they're helping other people out rather than encouraging social comparisons, don't ask the child okay, how come you are not reading big books like Amy does? She has already finished the Harry Potter series and here you are still reading Tin Tin or something. So those kinds of things, in the short run it might make the kid insecure and make them pursue goals but in the long run you are really messing them up. That's not a very good strategy at all.

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

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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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