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Context to the nugget

Jennifer speaks at length about Stage 3 (Socialized mind) and Stage 4 (Self-authored mind) as these two accounts for 90% of the adults in the world. She also speaks about the notion of liminality and the connection with transitioning across these two stages. Suffice it to say that this is not easy but this transition requires years of commitment to firmly move from one space to the other.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And I was also curious about the numbers Jennifer. I understand research says that about 58 percent of the adults are on stage 3, the socialized mind kind of space and about 35 odd percent are in the self-authoring phase and about 7 percent in the rest of the three categories. Maybe we spend a little more time on stage 3 and stage 4 given that sort of the big chunk of the universe, of the human universe if you will. Talk to us a little bit about maybe the transition from stage 3 to stage 4. What triggers it and how do people... talk to us about what happens in the middle as people move from stage 3 to stage 4.

Jennifer Garvey Berger (JGB): Yeah. So, the socialized mind has probably been the most helpful mind for human flourishing for almost all of human history. It allows us to live in connected tribes that allow us to subordinate our own interests to the interests of the collective. It allows us to take our cues from like common leadership. And so when we were living in smaller and less diverse groups, that was a fantastic way to see the world and I think probably a few people grew out of it. In a modern world where that's just so hard for you to take all of your cues from a particular discipline, domain or human, more and more people are finding themselves particularly leaders in my work, in my research, I find particularly leaders tend to be in pain because there are so many voices, so many pressures that leaders become overwhelmed, torn apart by trying to figure out how do I fit into all of these different things simultaneously. And then that begins for many of these leaders this move where they start to question the larger surround in which they are and then begins to question whether they can find a better surround or whether they have to kind of make it themselves. And this takes place over sometimes a decade or more as people keep one foot firmly in the socialized space and over time begins to put one other foot in the self-authored space. But even there they can be at war with themselves with one part of them battling the more socialized part of them looks at the self-authored part and says, you are disloyal, you are arrogant, why do you think you can be in charge of these things and writing these things, who are you? And the self-authored part looks at the more socialized part and says, you are small, you are weak, you don't have your own perspective, and you are blown about by the wind. And so we can live in kind of the state of tension or conflict inside us as these different forms of mind live in us and that can be often very confusing for the people around the person who's in this transition. And finally over time, slowly we begin to rely less and less on the earlier form of mind and rely more and more on the next form of mind as

we begin to much more frequently see the world through that space and not the earlier one and the battle dies down and then we would say that we are more fully self-authored.

DJ: And is this something that you would call just linking it to a term that is often used in common language midlife? Is this what that makes midlife complex or are these two different issues?

JGB: Midlife often brings about some kind of change. Unlike child development though adult development is very idiosyncratic about the ages at which people move. So the general idea of midlife that here we are at this halfway or sometimes farther point of our life where we are looking back and asking ourselves a new set of questions and we enter this new phase, for some people that does kick them from a more socialized perspective into a more self-authored one, but for somebody who is already self-authored when they arrive at that place, it might kick them into the next transition in fact, because it's the sense of not enough-ness that characterizes midlife and that sense of not enough-ness is a catalyst for growth across the life span.

DJ: Got it. And the other term I wanted to understand from your perspective Jennifer was a term called liminality. I was talking to Herminia Ibarra another lady in London at London Business School who was on the podcast a few months back and when she describes transitions she talks about this phase of liminality where you are neither here nor there and you need to deal with your identity through that period of flux. And you briefly described that sort of conflict between the socialized mind and the self-authoring mind. How do you see liminality and what is your advice to leaders to grapple with that phase of transition between the two stages?

JGB: Oh my goodness. I am... I love this idea of liminality so much that I thought to name our consulting firm liminality. This is years back when we were first forming. So I think a lot about this incredibly fertile and yet incredibly painful bewildering time when we are neither here nor there. And yes, there is some developmental spaces that feel that way but really when we focus on it, this question of what is solid and what is not solid and how do we make our way from a solid place into the next space whatever that next space is either requires a push into the liminal zone as when we have some significant change in our circumstances that we have not directed like being fired or a massive pandemic or whatever that might be, or it requires a kind of dissatisfaction with where we have been to step off from these familiar shores into the next place but no matter what causes it, I think research is clear that once you are in that liminal space it is a time where our bearings don't work well and we can... I think one of the things about helping leaders in that space is that people very often wish to rush back to the shore they have just left and they don't know how to grieve the part that they have lost as they make space for what new thing might be emerging for them.

DJ: And maybe sticking with this for a couple of minutes Jennifer, in your work as you think about let's say levels of happiness or levels of fulfillment across these stages and just to maybe pick stage 3 and stage 4 again, is it fair to say that people in the stage 4 are likely to see a greater sense of fulfillment and happiness than stage 3 or would that be an incorrect assertion?

JGB: It's funny when I first got into adult development, the research didn't point that way. The research pointed to an unclear correlation between happiness and development in fact. But now research that has been done over the last 15 years or so increasingly points to exactly your point here is that as the world is calling on us to be more able to author our own experience, those people who cannot yet do that are less happy. And so there is really interesting research that points at the connection particularly in this transition that you are talking about, this transition from the more socialized way of making sense of the world into the more self-authored way of making sense of the world. It does seem to increase happiness, success, satisfaction and marriage, parenting, jobs. So this question then arises how we support people who are interested in this growth journey to be

able to grow in a faster more intentional way as opposed to the way adult development usually happens, which is kind of happenstance and patchy.

DJ: True and maybe to take a more philosophical approach, if 58 percent of the adults are still in stage 3, if we are solving for global happiness, then we would be doing the world a service by moving people further along the chain, moving them into stage 4. So I was just wondering what has been your experience in helping people move from a socialized mind to a self-authoring mind, do you think a coach can trigger that process or do you think it has to come from within? What's been your experience in grappling with the transition as a coach?

JGB: I mean, I have done quite a lot of work with leaders in that space as you might imagine. So I think that coaching and change in general tends to be triggered by the client because of something that's going on for them, either something in their personal lives or something in their professional lives that has given them a sense that who they have been is not going to work for what their life needs to look like in the future. So that sense which many people don't think of as a developmental sense because many people don't have any idea that there is adult development, that sense is still I think the most important ingredient, the sort of change willingness is the most important ingredient. Once you get through that gate I think coaching can be extraordinarily supportive because we actually know quite a lot about what this transition looks like. It's the most well-charted of all the adult development stages because it's as you say it is a major focus of adult growth for most people. And so we know a lot about how to help people begin to hear and make sense of their own voice, help them notice the ways they rely, they over-rely on the voices of others, help them find their own authority and there is a way that you can use developmental theory and even the position of a coach as the kind of external authority on behalf of helping a person develop her own internal authority. And so that work is extraordinary and very transformational.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If this topic is of interest, you might want to tune into an earlier conversation I had with Herminia Ibarra, one of the leading thinkers in transitions. While Jennifer and Herminia speak about this transition at an individual level, what happens as a matter of fact is that this plays out in a messy way with Couples as both individuals grapple with this transition, often concurrently. One of my earlier guests, Jennifer Petriglieri (JP) (Professor at INSEAD and Author of *Couples that Work* – a book about how dual career couples can navigate transitions) speaks about this.

JP: *"I am very often actually when we talk about relationships we talk about them through the idea of a zero sum game so you know there is a pie and the more I get the less you get so you know if I push ahead in my career that mean you can't push ahead in yours and this is where we get. When we have a zero some view of our relationship this is where we get to the language of trade off and sacrifice you know I gave this for you now it's your turn to give something up for me. But what I found is that it doesn't necessarily have to be that way in couples. One person's growth and development can bleed over and spark the persons growth and development such that becomes the essential the couple the more you succeed and grow the more that enable me to succeed and grow which is a very different mindset from thinking about it as that the more you succeed and grow the more that diminishes me the less opportunity I have to do this and what I found that is really interesting is this was a mindset it wasn't based on any objective facts that we can think our way into this growth mindset this positive sum mindset as a post you know the zero sum mindset where as if you gain and I lose."*

DJ: She speaks about Couples going through 3 big transitions as they go through their journey. If this is a topic of interest, do look up my conversation with Jennifer Petriglieri.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Jennifer Petriglieri that is referenced: [The second transition - What do we want to become?](#)

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Jennifer Garvey Berger - 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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