



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' in a red box below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Jennifer speaks about how we grow up listening to linear stories that have a beginning, middle and an end and there is often a very clear chain of causality. She mentions that this leads us to “making sense” of the world through simplistic stories and often that can be really far from the truth. She speaks about how we can recognize this trap and avoid it.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And if we maybe dive into the first one, you talk about the fact that deep desire for causal thinking and automatic stories are too simple for the complex world and do you make the statement in the context of the world in the last 10-20 years, or is that something that you would say as a topic that's relevant for the last 100-200 years? So is it a recent phenomenon or is it a wider issue that humans have had an issue with? And also maybe reflecting on what you suggest you talk about the need to carry three different types of stories for each story you hear. Talk to us about how you see this phenomenon and also a little bit around how we can deal with this.

Jennifer Garvey Berger (JGB): Yes this question about causal thinking. So humans love to figure out causality, right? It's one of the ways our mind works and I think it's why we have been such really good problem solvers. We do that by pulling things apart, taking them apart and trying to examine them and humans have been doing this for as long as we know... as long as we can track them. My son is using this space, my son is in university, he is using this space to be re-reading a lot of ancient philosophy and you just see people trying to make sense of the causality, the way to create particular outcomes happenings. And so I think this is a thing humans have been trying to do for a long time and it's had extraordinary benefits. And the more interconnected the world is, the more issues of simple cause and effect are very unhelpful. So the question about whether this is new or not humans have always loved this thing, but I think... and it's always had like its downside in an unpredictable space but a lot of the world has been what's been quite unpredictable hasn't been so interconnected as it is right now. And so I think the downside of our causal thinking is growing as things get more complex. We see that in the Covid situation just as we look at different governments trying to figure out what will cause the slowing of the virus without causing the ruining of the economy, right? This is the thing that so many people or governments are trying to figure out. And as long as you are in a kind of linear way of thinking about the world, you are not going to be able to actually respond to the interconnecting forces and you are not going to be able to take action quickly enough really so... or action that's suitable for complexity quickly enough. So you get this strange blend of people talking about Covid-19 as though we really understood the cause and effect of things when really in this complex world, we couldn't possibly understand what makes Italy the way Italy is and what makes Singapore the way Singapore is, like we can just look at the little tiniest features that we think we can control but then you and I thinking about like what's the impact of

pollution in large urban places and is the impact of pollution does that actually help the immune system or does it degrade the immune system, do that help the lungs recover, does it degrade ... like we don't know, we don't know and we may never know.

DJ: True and maybe responding to the point about the three different stories for each story. Could you talk for a minute there?

JGB: Well, so we become, we kind of fall in love with our own conclusions and we fall in love with our own stories without even noticing their stories. You could hear it in our language like your people said, well, it's obvious that or it's totally clear that, I hear it in my language all the time and almost never is it actually obvious the thing that I am talking about and so forcing ourselves to listen to when we have a simple story. Like it's obvious what the government should do here, completely not obvious what any government should do right now, completely not obvious. And so when we hear ourselves interacting with a complex set of ideas as though it were simple, then we know that we are in this trap. And so I think the solution there is to be able to construct a series of alternate stories not to confuse us but in a kind of almost a scenario planning way, not to try and get the right one but to try to help us understand that there are these multiple possibilities, none of them are likely to be a 100 percent right and to help us create a kind of a flexibility of our thinking that will hold us in good stead.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: One of the things Jennifer says in the book is that we find it really easy to get to describe people that are the farthest from us but we struggle to describe the people that are closest to us because we see them with a higher resolution. She says that it is easier to draw a curve through fewer dots than more dots. Even as we think about navigating COVID-19, there are very simple solutions that are often offered by people around opening up or locking down and the implication on lives and livelihoods. It is important that we are wary of very simplistic linear narratives as people discuss these options. No easy answer, but being aware of this trap is half the battle won!

In the book, Jennifer quotes the complexity theorist Peter Coleman who says that pieces of the puzzle seldom fit together well. If they do, beware!

Thank you for listening. For more content across 50+ speakers, 500+ nuggets painstakingly curated across 65 odd themes, please visit playtopotential.com. You will also find the podcast on apple podcast, Spotify, Google podcast player and most other podcast platforms.

End of nugget transcription

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Judgment: Judgment is a key trait that differentiates the great leaders from the average ones. How do you make decisions and exercise choices in a world full of options and grey areas with multiple stakeholders around you. In addition, the playlist has nuggets that discuss how one creates a climate for the people around you to exercise good judgment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Storytelling: Perspectives from practitioners and thought leaders on how we could use the power of stories at the work place in order to build a stronger culture. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating "INTERESTED". Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Jennifer Garvey Berger - Nuggets

- 57.00 Jennifer Garvey Berger - The Full Conversation
- 57.01 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Stages of human development
- 57.02 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Transitions in mid-life
- 57.03 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Humans - an outdated OS
- 57.04 Jennifer Garvey Berger - 5 traps that leaders fall into
- 57.05 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap1 - Looking for simple stories
- 57.06 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap 2 - Feeling right doesn't mean it is right
- 57.07 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap 3 - Desire to agree
- 57.08 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap 4 - Controlling instead of influencing
- 57.09 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap 5 - Shackled by the past
- 57.10 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Actively listening to your body
- 57.11 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Leadership in a post COVID world

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this

transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.