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Context to the nugget

Jennifer speaks about the tendency we all have to over-estimate the evolution we have had till date and underestimate the evolution that is possible from here on in our lives. She says that a 30-year-old will think that 20-30 was a period of tumultuous change and 30s is likely to be smoother. The same person 10 years later is likely to say that 30-40 was transformative but 40s would be a cake walk. She speaks about why this might be the case.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In the book you also talk about how we think about change. You say that every age we feel like we are done with our evolution and we are wired to believe that our big changes are behind us. I found that observation quite interesting just in terms of how we process the curve of change with time when we look at the past and when we think about the future. Why this does happen and how does that impact the way we function?

Jennifer Garvey Berger (JGB): I think it's a fascinating result, right? It's a fascinating result that says that most of us spend most of our lives believing that our major changes are behind us. And I wonder whether there is kind of a psychological health. I don't know the answer to this question so I am just musing here. I have never seen anything that actually explains the why of it but I have wondered whether there is a... it takes so long for us to develop into the time of our life this sort of self-transforming time of our life when we welcome change and move towards it as opposed to initially resisting at our finding it destabilizing. And so I wonder whether our brains have evolved to trick us into believing it is all going to be okay from here so you can relax as opposed to having us on constant alert our whole lives. So there is a kind of a you have arrived, take a breath, this kind of what are our body and our brains are telling us when really there is no such thing as arrival, the world is going to keep getting more complex, our lives are going to keep changing, the demands of our lives are going to keep changing and therefore we are going to need to grow better and better able to meet those demands. And in fact, I think that it is not even a helpful trick these days, because I think so many people are so overwhelmed that the idea of adult development itself has become like a very hopeful helpful useful notion that gives people the very optimistic sense that it can be different and it can be better than it is right now and that is a lifeline.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is where I like the work of Herminia Ibarra at London Business School where her ways that we all need to act our way into a new way of thinking than think our way into a new way of acting.

Let me pause for a couple of seconds here. It is a pretty profound way in which we think about transitions.

Something similar came up in my conversation with James Clear (JC), the author of Atomic Habits. He speaks about how small things we do can slowly start changing the way we think about our own identity.

JC: *“every action you take is like a vote for the type of person you want to become. So in a sense your habits are how you embody a particular identity like every time that you make your bed you embody the identity of someone who is clean and organized, every time that you make a healthy meal and cook that at home rather than eating out you embody the identity of someone who is focused on eating healthy. Every time that you write one sentence you embody the identity of a writer and know those little actions, those tiny habits do not radically transform your body overnight, they don’t lead to a written book in a single day but they do cast a vote for being that kind of person. So early on that’s really powerful because those habits provide evidence of this new identity that give you a reason to root that belief in something. So it can be a very powerful thing to adopt to a new identity, could be very powerful to look at yourself in this new light and habits and think of the best path to doing that but use down the line when it’s time for another change or another upgrade you also have to be willing to repeat the cycle again and continue to grow and evolve.”*

DJ: He makes a similar point that Herminia makes. Rather than thinking about the next mountain to climb, let’s start climbing a few hills and may be one of those could be the pathway to the next mountain as our identity evolves as well along the way.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from James Clear that is referenced: [Keeping the identity small](#).

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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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Podcast Transcript [57.09 Jennifer Garvey Berger - Trap 5 - Shackled by the past](#)

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