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Context to the nugget

Marshall speaks about the challenges in getting behaviours to stick and the need for a Coach to keep you accountable and ensure that you be at it. He speaks about how he gets somebody to call him every day to get him to ask him a few questions around areas he wants to improve and how that has helped him with behaviour change.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Marshall, one of the themes I want to talk about, you know, as you speak about your mission statement, you speak about wanting to help successful people achieve positive lasting change in behaviour for themselves, the themes. I am curious about how we get behaviours to stick, changed behaviours to stick. What can we learn from your wisdom on ensuring that it's not a one-off but...?

Marshal Goldsmith (MG): Follow up; you have to follow up over and over and over again. You have to get measured and basically do it the rest of your life. Yeah, by the way, Twyla Tharp, let me ask you this question. I am going to give you a technique now that takes three minutes a day, it costs you nothing, it will help you get better on almost anything and will stick if you do it. Now, some people would think, three minutes a day, cost nothing, help me get better at almost anything, it sounds ridiculous too good to be true. Half the people start doing this quit in two weeks. We'll see how you do. Two weeks people quit. It's called a daily question process. Okay, get together a spread sheet, on one column write down a series of questions that represent anything in your life you want to get better at friends, family, health, and work, whatever. Now every question's answer yes, no or a number. You fill it out every day, at the end of the week you get a report card. Now, let me warn your listeners in advance that report card thing the week may not be as beautiful as corporate values like you see up on a wall. See in my glowing introduction you mentioned a lot of good things about me. One thing you left out, I have an incredible skill, you left out, that's the ability to screw something up almost every day, you can't screw something up almost every day. When you do this process every day you get to look at it. Now, I have someone call me on the phone every day to make sure I do this, every day. Somebody asked me why you have someone calling on the phone, don't you know the theory about how to change behaviour. I wrote that theory about how to change behaviour. That's why I have someone call me on the phone. My name is Marshall Goldsmith; I got ranked number one coach and leadership thinker in the world for years. I have someone call me on the phone every day just to listen to me read questions I wrote, provide answers I wrote every day, why? My name is Marshall Goldsmith, I am too cowardly and too undisciplined to do any of those stuff by myself, and I need help. And you know what, its okay, its okay. We all need help. You do what I just told you, you can get better at almost most anything, any case, I mean; you don't have the guts to do this. You probably are too cowardly and undisciplined as

me. You know why we don't do this it's hard to do; it's incredibly hard to do. It takes a lot of courage; it takes a lot of humility and takes discipline. It's humbling to look in the mirror every day. Yeah, it's humbling. It's not humbling to talk about values and change and transition and blah, blah, blah, talk, talk, talk. That's not humbling. What's humbling is when some guy ask you what you are the world's expert at but you can't even give him an answer. That's humbly. That's not talk. You see there's a big gap between talk and live. Talk is easy, live is hard. Almost all leadership development is talk, buzzwords, as if somehow better buzzwords are going to help people change. Nobody gets better because of buzzwords; you actually have to work. And it's hard, if that were easy, I would not have someone call me on the phone every day. Now, there's a great book called The Checklist Manifesto published by Dr. Atul Gawande from Harvard Medical School. If the nurse asks the doctor a series of questions before the surgery the odds on unneeded infection plummet and the death rate is cut by two-thirds. A majority of hospitals in the world do not allow the nurse to ask the doctor the questions, and what's the first question, did you wash your hands. Why - ego? Why won't the doctor have the nurse ask the question? Ego, they're ashamed, they are ashamed to admit they need help; they are embarrassed to admit they need help. Yet, how to get people stick with it? It's hard, it's not easy. They have to work. They have to work over and over and by the way, it's like getting in shape. You'll say well, why don't they stay in shape after they get in shape? It's like once I get in shape I can quit now and I will be in shape for eternity. That's not the way it happens, no. You have to keep doing it for life.

DJ: And is there a point where it moves from getting help from a coach to then sort of doing it themselves. Is there a...

MG: Well, Twyla Tharp's world's greatest choreographer has had the same personal trainer for 27 years. The trainer doesn't teach you anything new. Now, I have had somebody call me on the phone every day for probably 30 years. Now, you know Deepak maybe there is a time when I can get this all by myself and do it on my own but you know what? I am 71; I haven't quite made it yet. Maybe in the future, that I will and I won't need help in the future, but I am 71 and you know what I wouldn't bet on it, yeah, right. Well, isn't there time when Deepak won't need any help and he can do everything on his own? If so, you are a way better man than I am.

DJ: Thank you, Marshall, I hear you. Marshall, a related question...

MG: By the way Deepak, I have had a question. How many in the top 10 tennis players have a coach?

DJ: All of them, I am guessing.

MG: Why? Why can't they do it on their own? They are number one in the world, you know, why can't you do it on your own? Why do you need a coach? Pau Gasol is one of the people I have adopted, he is a basketball player. He has a personal trainer live in his house. So, he works out every day while he's trying to get back in shape for the Olympics, why? He knows the theory. If he thinks he doesn't know the theory after all these years, he's 40 years old, he knows the theory. He is not going to do it by himself. I am not going to do it by myself. But you may be able to do it by yourself. I am not and I cannot, I need help, I need help, by the way, all those people I coach they need help. Before I even coached them, people were ashamed to have a coach. Today, I am proud of my book Triggers, 27 major CEOs. I am CEO here in the United States; I need help. I am No. 2 CEO here in the United States, I need help; I am the President, World Bank, I need help; I am the CEO of Pfizer, I need help. Yeah, I won the Presidential Medal of Freedom, I need help. Who are we kidding? We all need help. Isn't there going to be a time where you don't need help anymore, maybe? I say I am 71, maybe when I am 81, I will figure it all out.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. If you are interested in the topic of building habits and are looking for more resources, please visit the conversation with BJ Fogg – Professor at Stanford and the Author of Tiny Habits and a researcher of human behaviour for several years. Also visit the conversation with James Clear earlier this year. You can find them at playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

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Marshal Goldsmith - 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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