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Context to the nugget

Ashley speaks about how we should think about bringing time affluence in our lives. She speaks about the notion of time being a collective resource and therefore the need for us to engage our friends, our family members and our colleagues at our workplaces to move from cognition to behavioural change.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): As a coach Ashley, one of the pieces I am curious about is moving from cognition to behaviour change, right? In the book clearly there is a lot about bringing this notion of time and money and the trade-off to people's awareness. In your research, what have you observed about people that are able to effectively convert the awareness to making behavioural changes? What are some of the roadblocks and what are some of the watch outs as people who read your book and who want to implement changes in their life and drive behavioural change to experience more time affluence, what would be your advice to some of these people and what are some of the watch outs they should be aware of?

Ashley Whillans (AW): Yeah. So, I am a behavioural scientist, a social psychologist by training. So, I care a lot about helping people take their values and live them in practice on an everyday basis. And a lot of metaphor throughout the book likening putting time first as becoming healthier exercising more. Although we think about needing to do something drastic like training for a marathon or quitting our job when it comes to time, actually, the biggest gains in the long run come from small simple changes around the margins that involve disrupting our daily habits. People often ask me well, as a time researcher, what's one thing that you have done to put time first? And one thing that I have done quite successfully is to disrupt my morning habit of rolling out of bed and going straight to the computer. For me, personally, when I do that that colours my entire day, I become immediately heads down and work focused and really do not look up at all until the day is done. However, when I disrupt the initial habit of rolling out of bed and going to my computer with something more active or pleasant instead, I am much more likely to be aware, present in the moment and capitalize on opportunities through social connection like chatting with my colleague or spending time with my spouse in between work meetings; given that we are all working from home we can do that now. And so, that for me was one unlock that I have made recently that I think is really important and these small simple changes are going to look very different for everyone, but I really push people to not get into this dichotomous thinking that similar to what happens in the sphere of eating healthy, I need to eat every healthy meal, completely clean, fruits and vegetables for every meal otherwise what's the point? Similarly, we shouldn't think well, I need to change my career or move or work 20 hours less if I am ever going to become time affluent. My research suggests that simply spending 30 minutes engage in active leisure pursuit is likely to pay really

important dividends for stress reduction and happiness. So, it's about finding and committing to small changes on an everyday basis consistently in a similar way to physical activity. I would say that one of the opportunities is again like fitness to get everyone in your household on-board. I have heard a lot of optimistic stories in the work from home environment where families together are making dinners technology free or communicating about boundaries between work and home that have gone missing that we can talk about in a moment, but I think trying to engage in norms both at an individual household level and also at team level are really important for helping us follow through. I think, another trap that we get into is thinking that time management is a completely individual problem and although I am a social psychologist, a micro-organizational scholar, I focus on individual level decision making, it's very important to recognize that time is a collective resource, our workplaces shape how we spend our time, our government shape how we spend our time, our partner shape how we spend our time. And so, we also need to be engaging our partners, our friends, our workplaces if we really are serious about cultivating greater time affluence in our life.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Something similar came up in my conversation with Raj Raghunathan (RR), an individual who has researched the topic of happiness for a while. When I asked him about the notion of how we can all build time affluence, this is what he said.

RR: *"So, I interviewed Melanie Rudd who is one of the co-authors on that paper that talks about time affluence after encountering images that induce a sense of awe. If you think about awe, awe is an emotion that we feel when we are confronted with something that is far grander than ourselves. And usually you would imagine that encountering something like that makes us feel little and belittled and we end up being humiliated or insulted or feeling like we are not powerful, not very positive. But in fact, being in front of I don't know El Capitan at Yosemite, by the way, I mean, I just saw this movie called Free Solo couple of days back, I highly recommend it for those who haven't watched it. So... or in front of the Grand Canyon or in front of the Himalayas, the mountains, rivers or things like that or the galaxy, we are just watching the Milky Way on a nice night inspires you with this feeling of smallness and somewhat kind of paradoxically that smallness is actually a good feeling and it makes you feel that, you know what, I think what it does is it makes you feel that life has existed, there are so many things beyond my control, there's so many big beautiful things, why am I worrying about things that are going on in my life and getting really stressed out and worked up about it. I am going to be gone in 80 100 years and let me just have a good time in the meanwhile. So, it kind of induces this sense of time abundance or time affluence in the short run. It's not a permanent change obviously, okay, but I think that it is a very useful hack. So, whenever you are feeling really stressed out, I think it might be a good idea to take a look at... nowadays we have things on YouTube so just look at size of the Earth compared to the universe, just Google something like that and it definitely works for me, it induces a sense of time affluence."*

DJ: Just to share a personal anecdote, I am reminded of a trip I made with my family to Ajanta and Ellora caves in Aurangabad about 3 years back. Just looking at the majesty of the caves just blew me away. 1000s of people had chipped away on the rock for 100s of years to build this magnificent piece of work. I still undertake time travel to that moment to get some perspective on time and to understand what that long game means. Sometimes, in the buzz of the day to day, I feel there is a lot of emphasis on the here and now but going back to what Raj says, there is something about these large grand things (whether it is natural or manmade). They do change one's perception of time and significance.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Raj Raghunathan that is referenced: [Time scarcity and generosity burnout](#).

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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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