



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' 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

Bruce speaks about the notion that transitions happen to us all the time and not at a particular stage of life. He specifically talks about the limitations of the transition model espoused by Gail Sheehy who suggests that mid-life transitions often occur around late 30s and early 40s. He goes on to say that voluntary or involuntary transitions could happen at any time in our lives.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Just picking up on that Bruce you talk about we having moved from the notion of a midlife transition to a whenever life transition. What are some of the big shifts we need to make to thrive in this paradigm?

Bruce Feiler (RS): So, the first thing I think would be helpful to have this conversation would be to realize that the idea of a of a midlife transition was a kind of brief accident of history that we now know to be not an accurate description of how we live. So, the idea was really originated in the 1950s from a Canadian psychologist named Elliot Jaques, who when he first introduced the idea was laughed out of the room literally in London, and then he published paper in the early 1960s and he did not talk to anybody, did not research this in any way; he read 300 biographies of famous men. And in fact, he said I did not even read biographies of famous women because women have menopause and it would throw off the whole idea. Well, if menopause which is half the population experiences would throw off your idea like maybe there's a problem with your idea and not the problem with women and then this idea was picked up by two researchers, one at UCLA and one at Yale and then the idea was popularized by a woman named Gail Sheehy, an American journalist who wrote an article and later a book called Passages about this idea and she popularized the idea of a midlife crisis. And the idea was that everybody does the same thing in their 20s, everyone does the same thing in their 30s and then everyone has a "midlife crisis" that begins at 39-and-a-half and must end by 44. That's how prescriptive it was and the problem is, is that this is a bunk. Like we have these life disruptors, we have these lifequakes and they happen whenever they happen. Some people are born into a lifequake; may be one of their parents dies or maybe their parents are getting divorced. Other people have a lifequake when they are teenagers that a parent dies or they get an illness or there's a natural disaster. Other people have them in their 20s or 30s, 60s, 70s, they happen across the life. I mean just take the idea of a pandemic, okay. The entire planet has been going through a lifequake and a life transition since the pandemic first kind of became something that we all had to deal with. So, if you are between 39 and 44 you are having a midlife crisis, but if you are between 24 and 29, you are also having a life crisis and if you are between 67 and 72 you are also having a lifequake. So, the point is these happen across our life often when we don't want them or when we least expect them. So, that's the first thing to realize. The second thing to realize is that the lifequakes that we experience in our lives they may be voluntary or involuntary. 53% of

lifequakes in my study are involuntary. So, what's an involuntary lifequake? An involuntary lifequake is you lose your job or you get a diagnosis or there's a natural disaster or there's a pandemic or your spouse cheats on you, okay? That's an involuntary lifequake. But 47% of lifequakes are voluntary. So, what's a voluntary lifequake? You choose to change your profession, you choose as you in fact did to move back home to take care of an aging relative, you cheat on your spouse. So, what's interesting is that there's a kind of a generational impact on this. So, like if you take the kind of a construct of baby boomers and gen X'ers and millennials like X'ers get this idea that life is nonlinear more intuitively than do baby boomers and millennials even more. So, millennials have kind of intuited or learned the idea that life involves more moves and job changes and we know by all data across multiple countries that people are spending less time in their jobs, and they are moving to jobs more frequently. So, it's much more instinctual for younger people than it is for older people those of us kind of 50+ we are kind of haunted by the ghost of linearity. But so, back to this framework. So, like the lifequake can be voluntary or involuntary, but the life transition that comes out of it must be voluntary. You must choose to lean in and make the changes. So, anybody listening to us that feels like they are in a lifequake or one of these moments where they are unsure life is coming at you from all directions that may be beyond your control or maybe something that you are trying to control but one thing you can do to control it back to your initial question is say I am going to pick one aspect of this and that's the transition I am going to go through. I am going to work on my personal life, or I am going to work on my beliefs or I am going to work on my professional life or I am going to spend more time with my children or give more back to my community or whatever it might be. So, pick one of the things that you are dealing with and let's say that's the transition that you are going to go through.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If this topic of an anytime transition is of interest to you, do tune into my conversation with Lynda Gratton of London Business School. She is the co-author of the book 100 year life where she speaks about how we should think about our life choices very differently given the advances in healthcare and the fact that we all are likely to work till our 60s and 70s and beyond.

She says that earlier we had a 3 phase approach to life – Study, Work and Retire. If you knew somebody's age, you knew their stage. Now that whole model has been thrown out of the window. This requires us to make choices very differently. You can go to playtopotential.com and find Lynda Gratton in the Speakers section.

End of nugget transcription

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Inflection Points: Inflection points are when the notion of “what got you here won't get you there” hold. Whether it is a company moving from a start-up to a scale-up or a leader moving from a CXO to a CEO role, these passages of play have to be navigated carefully as there is a high risk of derailment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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Bruce Feiler - 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 [70.05 Bruce Feiler - Midlife to Whenever life transition](#)

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