



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 a man in a suit and glasses, identified as 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman'. At the bottom left of the banner, there is a small text note: '*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 criticality of not jumping too early into the process of meaning-making when we go through lifequakes. He says that only when we have completed the process of transition and when the wounds have dried up are we in a position to weave a narrative through what we have been through.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And one of the related points you make Bruce is the ability to share a life story in high definition. And you also say that a lot of us face a writer's block in the way we narrate our stories. Any guidance to people who are trying to make sense of their journey and one of the related points if I may bring that up as well you talk about focusing on scars rather than wounds in terms of making sense of what we are going through. So, can you talk a little bit about how we can sort of process what we go through?

Bruce Feiler (RS): So, I think that the foundational way to think about this is that everybody listening to us could just stop for a second and listen kind of summon up that story that goes on in the back of your mind kind of on low level, the story of where you came from and who you are and what's important to you and what you have done in your life and where you are right now, where you want to be going. Like, if you got a call right now that a loved one was in the hospital and you went rushing to the hospital to take care of that person you would imagine the time that you spent with that person, what do they mean to you and what you would say to them. That story that is kind of running in low volume in our minds all the time. That is the story of who we are, okay? And that we now know is not just part of who we are, it is who we are in a fundamental way, right? Life is the story that you tell yourself. And what we are talking about fundamentally with lifequakes or life transitions or crises or upheavals or whatever names have been given to this over the centuries, it is fundamentally a breach in that story. And so, one way to think about this is that is that a kind of a lifequake is a disruptive event and that the life story is the healing event. Like that's the way that you make sense and make peace with the disruptive event. It is in effect an autobiographical occasion. And so, the point about stories are told from scars not wounds is when that life upheaval is at its rawest in effect when it is still an open wound you can't fully tell the story yet because you haven't gotten through it. That's somehow that the act of getting through it and piecing it together and determining what it means and sort of deciding a new direction of where you are going, that's the process that turns the wound into a scar that finally allows you to tell the story. It is why in the seven tools that I have in the book *Life is in the Transitions*, the last one is to unveil the new story because it is at the end of the process that you can finally piece together the various experiences and actually in effect add a new chapter to the story of your life that accommodates the loss of the loved one, the loss of income, the loss of a job, the loss of legs, the lack of beliefs that you used to have, the

new political position that you have taken, the new relationships that you have formed. That's the way to think about this is that a lifequake is an autobiographical occasion when we have to kind of re-tell re-think re-tell and then re-share the story of who we are.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Bruce makes an interesting point about not going through existential questions when you are deep in the event. He asks us to go through it and then try and make sense as we come out of it.

My last guest at the podcast was Ramesh Srinivasan (RS), a Senior Partner in McKinsey and the Global Dean of the Bower Forum, McKinsey's programme for CEO learning. He and his wife Charuta unfortunately lost two of their children to cancer. He speaks about how they have found a sense of meaning and purpose coming out of the event.

RS: "and I don't talk about it that often but I have decided to do it to be helpful to all your listeners, Deepak. Unfortunately, my wife Charuta and I, we have lost two kids to cancer in the last 10 years. Shruti was nine-years-old when she passed away in 2009 and Aditya was almost 12 when he passed away in 2015 and both Shruti and Aditya were amazing kids. They were smart, extremely positive, very wise for their age and that really has pushed both Charuta and me to think about who we are, why we exist, what is our own purpose. And I think, the more I think about it, I have come to a realization that my own purpose is to bring a source of positive energy, possibilities to the world. The smile I bring is the asset and I represent this positivity for everybody going through a tough time in this world of so much demoralization. I represent optimism and hope."

DJ: When I asked him about how he dealt with the day to day trauma when he was going through it, he spoke about taking it a day at a time.

RS: "and some of the doctors we worked with at Memorial Sloan-Kettering they were incredible advisors to us to say take life one day at a time. You know, what you need to do today, that's great. You need to plan for a week, that's useful. Whenever we would ask them about the prognosis of our kids they would say if we give you too optimistic a view you are going to then if something bad happens come back and blame us and lose credibility. If we give you too pessimistic a view, you will not live your life and like what's the point. So, really being, you know, taking life one day at a time is what we found helpful and that's my advice."

DJ: If this topic is of interest, you might also like my conversation with Tasha Eurich, where she speaks about how we should ask the What question when we go through these experiences and not ask the WHY question. The WHY emerges over a period of time.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Ramesh Srinivasan that is referenced: [Dealing with lifequakes](#).

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Podcast Transcript [70.06 Bruce Feiler - Make sense from scars \(not wounds\)](#)

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Bruce Feiler - Nuggets

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- 70.03 Bruce Feiler - What is the shape of your story
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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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