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Context to the nugget

Jennifer refers to the legendary “I have a dream” speech from Martin Luther King and speak about the criticality of engaging our various senses in the way we see a situation. She urges us to imagine a future that we can describe with our various senses.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I think picking on one of the things you said, Jen, and maybe linking it up with something that you talk about later in the book as well, you talk about using colors or drawing stars or finding other creative ways of expressing the conflict, later in the book, actually you talk about using the different senses, you use that in a different context, you talk about the Martin Luther King’s speech in the way he sort of appeals to the various senses, in the way we think about the future, let me ask a broader question, what do you see the role of the various senses, both in terms of building awareness of where we are in the conflict but also in the context of coming up to a better place?

Dr. Jennifer Goldman (JG): Great question. And the reason why this is an essential part of the optimal outcomes methodology is because of my experience working with real people in real organizations who I saw struggling to know what they even wanted. You know, it is impossible to collaborate with other people if you do not know what you are hoping for, right. Often times when we are stuck in conflict, we are so focused on what went wrong and on who is to blame, whether it is ourselves or other people or some combination of both, that we neglect to kind of pick our heads up out of the sand and ask ourselves, hey, wait a minute, what would I like to see happen here in the future. And so this practice of imagining the future is all about asking people to stop, pause and ask themselves this really important question. But when I started to ask people to do this what I quickly realized was, you can ask someone to imagine what they want in the future and they will give you all nice words about it but it will be meaningless if they do not put down the thinking hat and pick up the imagination hat instead. Basically if you are stuck in long-term conflict, you have probably tried many times to figure out, you know, a creative solution, right, especially because this win-win negotiation methodology has been around for four decades. So most people do know about it and have been trained in how to use it or many people particularly in the kinds of business context that I think many of your listeners are coming from, you know, they have been trained in this kind of way of thinking. And so if those kinds of thinking of creative problem-solving could have solved their dilemma, their conflict, it probably would have done so a long time ago, right and it has not worked. So I want to ask you to put down your rational thinking brain and engage your imagination instead. And the best way that I know how to engage our imagination is to make it really concrete actually by using our five senses plus our emotions to imagine what the future could be like. And if you watch Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s I Have a Dream speech, it is unbelievable. The way that he uses language

to help us imagine the future that he wants for us by using the senses of sight, sound, touch, he talks about, you know, the valleys and the mountaintops, he talks about quicksand and then, hearing the ringing bells of freedom, so you can feel that quicksand that you might be sinking into but then you can hear those bells of freedom ringing. And so that imagery, that is such a great concrete example that he provides for us of what we can do for ourselves. So I encourage us all to be our own Martin Luther King Jr. and imagine what would it look like then, what would it sound like then, what would it feel like then. So for example, I have had clients say to me, you know, I can imagine going out for dinner with this person who I work with, who I have been in serious conflict with and I can smell the wine that we would be drinking and I can taste the food and I can smell it coming out of the kitchen from the restaurant that we are going to be in and I can really imagine the good feelings that I will have from connecting with this person in a different way than we have been over the last many months.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: When I work with leaders, one of the things I get them to do is to speak about their early years and how they have been shaped by it. Recently, I was attending a programme where the facilitator got me to draw the river of my life. He asked me to sketch a flowing river and inside the river he asked me to write the various dominant emotions at various points in time and along the shores, he wanted me to write the contexts I had been through. I came away with a lot of insights about myself that I hadn't quite accessed using written word.

I do think there is something to be said about engaging various elements of the brain in painting a picture whether it is the past or the future. It just makes it more vivid and gives us greater granularity to work with. Thank you for listening. For more, please visit playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

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Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Nuggets

- 73.00 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - The Full Conversation
- 73.01 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Understanding the 4 default conflict habits
- 73.02 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Why some conflict patterns are common
- 73.03 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Listening to understand the nuances
- 73.04 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Engaging our senses
- 73.05 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Reactive and a Proactive pause
- 73.06 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Downsides of too much empathy and collaboration
- 73.07 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Role of ideal and shadow values in conflict
- 73.08 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Real meaning of "take a walk"
- 73.09 Dr. Jennifer Goldman - Pattern breaking behaviour and Camp David

About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the 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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