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Context to the nugget

Jen shares her perspectives around how we can try different conflict breaking paths for us to get out of the loop. She specifically refers to what President Carter did to reframe the conversations in Camp David where his talks with the then President of Egypt (Anwar Sadat) and the then Prime Minister of Israel (Menachem Begin).

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other thing that I found interesting was you talk about small experiments and you suggest a prototyping approach to getting out of conflict. Rather than shooting for the ideal outcome, you sort of say that let us take baby steps towards it. Could you talk a little bit about what you mean by that and how that plays out in a conflict context?

Dr. Jennifer Goldman (JG): Yes. I talk about mini experiments. So if you have been doing your conflict habit and that is not working for you, you know what you do not want to do but you do not really know what you do want to do. So my best advice is to start small, start in a safe environment actually, so if you are in a really tough situation with somebody from work, try testing out a new behavior with someone from home where the stakes are going to be lower. So, you know, if your conflict habit is relentlessly collaborate and you have decided that doing something different might look like being direct and instead of asking someone else what it is that they want and then trying to figure out options that could meet their interests and yours, you are just going to tell the other person, you know, you want to test out telling someone what it is that you need and just being more direct. So you could try that out with your partner at home or with a kid at home. And just be more direct in a situation and see what happens, what is the feedback. I ask people to take notes in a very simple way. So you do a behavior. So in this case, you know, say something directly, here is what I need in this situation. And then see what happens and write down for yourself what worked well about what I did and what would I do differently next time. And I always encourage people to put at least three bullets under each side, each question. You know, on the left hand side of the page, what worked well, three bullets, right hand side, what would I do differently, three bullets. And it is all framed in the positive, right. I did not say what do I criticize about myself. I said what would I do differently next time so that you are constantly feeding back some really helpful information to yourself about what you would do differently next time and then you take it into the more tricky environment at work and do your experiments there, right. See how it goes. And you know keep testing in small ways until you find what works.

DJ: And you talk about this notion of a pattern breaking paths and I really really loved the example that you gave of President Carter at Camp David. You talk about the incident of President Carter offering free photographs addressed to Begin's children and you talk about how that provides a

breakthrough to a sort of deadlock till then. Can you sort of share this example and talk about the broader insight here?

JG: Yes, there are two different things that you just mentioned, one is the pattern breaking path and then, one is the example of Carter which I think makes us related and slightly different points. I am going to take them separately. The pattern breaking path, there are three focus points to it. One is when you think about what is a pattern breaking path. First of all, it is made up of a set of actions. So when you are finding your way out of the conflict loop, it is not just going to be one action that is going to set you free because you have been going around on that loop presumably for a while. It is more likely going to be a set of actions that is going to help you out of that loop towards an optimal outcomes loop that will then become its own self-reinforcing pattern. So you are looking at a set of actions that one builds on the next, builds on the next, builds on the next. Number two, you want to keep your actions simple because typically when you are stuck in a conflict loop, the situation is already pretty complex like we were talking about before, so you do not want to add more complexity on top of it. So you want to keep your actions simple so that you can track your impact over time and so that it is more likely that your action will have the intention, it will have the intended effect. And three, you want to make your actions surprisingly different than you have had before. This surprising nature, right, so if you have been relentlessly collaborating with people and it is not working, you being direct and saying here is what I need from you, that will surprise people and it will jolt them potentially out of the conflict loop as well or at least there is a higher likelihood of jolting them out of the conflict loop as well in a good way. It will help them respond differently than they have been responding in the past. So then you are both freed from that conflict loop. So that is what it means to create a pattern breaking path. Now this example of Jimmy Carter absolutely has some aspects of what I just described on it, particularly the surprising nature of it. So the story is that Jimmy Carter in 1978 brought to Camp David the prime minister of Israel at the time who was Menachem Begin and the president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. He brought them because he wanted to help them make peace between Israel and Egypt. And after many days, the negotiations had broken down, neither side was willing to budge and each leader, Begin and Sadat was packing up his bags to go home. And so Carter went and asked his assistant to find three pictures of the three of them, of Carter, Begin and Sadat that had been taken earlier in the week, and Carter signed each picture and addressed each picture to the grandchildren of Begin who Begin had told Carter about earlier in the week. And so Carter goes and knocks on Begin's door as he is packing to go home and hands these pictures to Begin. And as Begin looks at one postcard and then the next and the next, he begins to cry. And within the next day, Begin had stopped packing and went back to the negotiation table and made a historic peace agreement that is in effect to this day. And what I love about this story is first of all the surprising nature of what Jimmy Carter did but the real point to me of this story is about the power of helping people see the unintended consequences of their actions on people who may not be immediately obviously involved in the situation. So what Jimmy Carter did there was that, like we were talking about about mapping, he widened the situation for Begin. So Begin was so focused on not having gotten what he wanted from Sadat in the prior negotiations that week. But when Carter helped Begin imagine his grandchildren and the lives of war that they would continue to have to experience, future generations would continue to experience because of Begin's failure to come to an agreement with Egypt with Sadat, that is what really got to Begin emotionally and enabled him to go back to the negotiating table and make an agreement. So the power of asking ourselves what might be the unintended consequences of my actions here, either my actions or of my inactions and then allowing that to help us see do I want to do something different here, to me that that is very powerful.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I really love Jen's big takeaway of the Camp David episode. Let me play that piece again.

Rewind sound and play

JG: "And what I love about this story is first of all the surprising nature of what Jimmy Carter did but the real point to me of this story is about the power of helping people see the unintended consequences of their actions on people who may not be immediately obviously involved in the situation."

DJ: This is a profound insight I feel from Jen. Our ability to read a situation with all its complexity and the nuances and not be swept away by a you versus me conversation that it often descends to can lead to a much better solution. It's also a great story to reflect on how sometimes thinking out of the box and reframing the issue can lead to such a powerful outcome.

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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