



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 far right 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 conversation

Dan speaks about engaging different parts of our brain in expressing ourself. He speaks about how he uses LEGO Serious Play to have participants in his course express themselves in the context of their journeys and the future they are trying to create for themselves.

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And the other thing you suggest, which once again intrigued me was you say that you try and use your art to represent the story that resonates with us the most. Talk to us a little bit about, you know, what is the benefit of doing that.

Dan Cable (DC): Yeah. I am going to say that there is a couple of different things. First one is, it is not art itself so much as using different parts of our brain to work on a concept helps our brain remember that concept. So for example, speaking about it is different from reading about it and reading about it is different from drawing it. And they all can reveal something different that helps our brain process it deeper and deeper. So I think that is one really important thing. The second thing is, I am not an expert what I am going to say now, but art seems to use a part of our brain that does not need words. So it is going to be hard for me to talk about this but it appears in the science that when we draw, and I do not even mean, like a way that is literal, I do not mean like you draw an event, like here is the person holding the ball as a child through it, I mean more like, it might be a splash of color on the page that this is how the story made me feel, or it might be a bunch of shapes that you made out of clay that here is how that day made me feel. But what using art seems to allow us to do is express our emotions and almost unconscious ideas that are words just do not do justice to. Let me give you a specific thing that I do, and by the way I am not saying that this is for everybody, I am saying that different people also learn in different ways. But in my own class here, I have a class on sort of creating change in our own lives and in our organizations, what I do is I have them read their best self report the night before, I help them debrief in the morning and then the afternoon, I bring in an artist who works with them. For instance, he will have them illustrate with pastels, the way that one of the stories made them feel and then he will have them use let us say clay to have another story. And then they will introduce those stories, they will pair off and then we introduce, this is what this story meant, here is what this splash of color meant, or here is what their shape meant. And that not only allows them to articulate something in a different way, it gives them a way to talk about it with people.

DJ: My son is a big fan of LEGO Serious Play.

DC: Exactly. So LEGO is something we usually associate with kids and play, which it is, but it also is something that we are now using in leadership courses and in training to allow people to build their

thoughts because when you build a three-dimensional thought, you then can hold it up and show people and describe it. It becomes a prop that pools ideas and concepts out of ourselves. So there is a whole literature on that by the way.

DJ: LEGO Serious Play is it?

DC: That is right. I have a book called *Alive at Work* and I have a whole chapter dedicated to that because it is becoming science. It is one of these really fun ideas that there is now really good research on and it is showing that it makes our brain work differently and better to be playful and tactile with our ideas.

DJ: Since you mentioned, do you want to just maybe spend a minute or two on it, how do we use LEGO in the context of leadership development, if you could just maybe expand on that.

DC: Okay. I will even go one step farther in the context of career transitions, which I work with. We have a program here called the Sloan's and it is a one year MBA kind of program for very senior folks that are like going into a new direction in their careers. We have them work on who they were in their last job and we literally have a session with LEGOs where there will be little people, there will be hoses and there will be building blocks and windows and doors and trees and we will just say, okay pick 25 pieces and then assemble them in a way that shows us who you are in your job today and then we give them 25 minutes to do that. And then we will say, okay, now grab 25 more pieces and draw what you are going to move toward in 15 years from now. If everything worked out perfectly, who would you be, what would you be doing, what would be your role. And so then we have them do that, 25 minutes. And then what we do is we put those two together and we will say now describe to somebody what it meant and what it will be. And boy, the room just lights up because like the hose that they used to represent feeling strangled or the prison they put a block and they put a little person in it and say, this is me, I feel like I am in a prison and it just becomes animated and emotional. And by pointing at it, by turning it, it reveals things that they meant to say but like they would not have said it unless it was there. They will put a skeleton there and say, this is how I usually feel today. And then on the other one, they will sort of build a person out of vibrant colors and say, this is what I want to feel like and boy, it just becomes really fun instead of static, it becomes enjoyable and dynamic instead of kind of, oh, I do not know, overly cognitive. So, anyway, I will stop going on about it but it does appear there is some really interesting science that when we allow our hands to build our ideas, we end up in a different and sometimes better place than when we just rely on a verbal medium.

DJ: Fascinating.

DC: We have so much to learn, Deepak. It is one of the things that thrills me. I think I want to say that out loud, I love remembering that we do not really know that much about our brains and our emotions. You know, even in physics in the physical world, we have only known about gravity for 400 years. So we have only started learning about our brains in the 1980s. You know, we did not know about behavioral plasticity really until the 1990s. I love to remember that what we do not know is much bigger than what we know.

DJ: Absolutely. You know the reason why I do this podcast is, a) it gives me an opportunity to talk to people like you and learn from what you have learnt, but the other thing I find fascinating is, I come in thinking I will learn ABCD but I end up learning ABCD and then some EFGH, which is totally different.

DC: Love it, I love it.

DJ: So I came in to learn about Exceptional and I walked away learning, not just about Exceptional but LEGO Serious Play, which is completely in my blind spot, right, which is the beauty of having these conversations.

DC: That is great.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This insight from Dan reminds me of my conversation with Jennifer Goldman Wetzler (JGW), a Conflict Management expert, who speaks about the notion of engaging our emotions while speaking to others. In our conversation, she alludes to the great “I have a dream” speech by Martin Luther King and she actually goes onto say that one of the reasons it is such a great speech is because it engages all our senses.

*JGW: “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.”*

DJ: At a very personal level, I took the plunge to move from a Corporate Career to what I do now in Feb 2016. A few months later, the movie MS Dhoni released which featured Sushant Singh Rajput who is now no longer with us. It has this lovely song Besabriyaan. I was learning the chords of the song when I listened to the words –

*“Kya Ye Ujaale*

*Kya Ye Andhere*

*Donon ke Aage hai Manzar tere*

*Kyon Roshni tu Bahar Talaashe*

*Teri Mashaalen hain andar tere*

*Kyun Dhoondna Pairon ke nishaan*

*Jaaye vahin le jaaye jahaan*

*Besabriyaan...”*

Not just that line Kyun Roshni tu Bahar Talashe, Teri Mashaalen andar tere just touched part of my heart that words hadn’t. It translates that why do you look for light outside when you have a fire burning inside you. May be it was the stage of my life but there is something so powerful about art and how it touches you. I guess this song is even more poignant today given Sushant Singh Rajput

passed away a few months back at a young age If I link it back to what Dan is saying, Teri Mashaalen andar tere is a bit like activating your best self based on insights from your past.

## End of nugget transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Nugget from Jennifer Goldman Wetzler that is referenced: [Engaging our senses](#).

## RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Reinventing self:** “How do I stay relevant” is a question that all of us have to grapple with as we go through our respective journeys. Careers aren’t linear any more. Some of the leaders talk about how they managed to pivot during their journeys and significantly change trajectories. You can access the playlist [here](#).

**Self awareness:** Insights around what it takes to build a better understanding of self. This includes perspectives around how we can deepen our picture of ourselves through a combination of inner work, mindfulness practices and by gathering meaningful feedback from the world around us. You can access the playlist [here](#).

## SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

**Podcast Newsletter:** Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

**Nuggets on Whatsapp:** We also have a [Podcast Whatsapp distribution group \(+91 85914 52129\)](#) where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Dan Cable - Nuggets

- 75.01 Dan Cable - Cancer and life-choices
- 75.02 Dan Cable - Crowd-sourcing your highlights reel
- 75.03 Dan Cable - Eulogy delay
- 75.04 Dan Cable - Visualization and peak-performance
- 75.05 Dan Cable - Developing directional clarity
- 75.06 Dan Cable - Emotional Labour
- 75.07 Dan Cable - Providing thoughtful feedback
- 75.08 Dan Cable - Highlights - Big bang vs Drip feed

- 75.09 Dan Cable - Engaging different parts of our brain
- 75.10 Dan Cable - When strengths become derailers
- 75.11 Dan Cable - In Summary - Playing to Potential

### **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](#).

### **Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts**

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.