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## Context to the nugget conversation

Darleen speaks about how we need to take care of physical, mental and spiritual energy in these times. Atul Bhandari and Sahiba Singh also share their perspectives around how some leaders can think about staying healthy and productive in these times.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And just coming to how we manage our energy in these times Darlene, you know, initially when we started remote work around the pandemic, there was a sense of the fact that we weren't commuting, there was a lot of time released and we were able to spend time with family. So, there was a little bit of a, if I may, mini celebration at the early part but very quickly I realized that myself included it has actually gotten more intense and more stressful and people are working harder and the sense of fatigue in the system seems to be much higher than what it was maybe 15-20 months back. What have you seen about leaders managing their energy in these times?

Darleen DeRosa (Darleen): Yeah, that's a great question. So, I think, we have seen a range of things and we would agree by the way, we saw that exact trend and the data suggests that and Microsoft study also suggests that these huge productivity numbers at many companies are masking that extreme burnout and fatigue. And so, I think, leaders and one thing we talk about a lot is in a virtual world you have to really be your own CEO. You have got to manage your calendar, you have got to create balance and if you are leading a team as we have talked about earlier, you have got to role model that behavior. So, if you are telling people don't work on a weekend, you shouldn't be firing off a ton of emails on the weekend. And we have also, you have probably read in the news, a bunch of organizations have actually been so focused on mental health and work-life balance that they have given people a week off, everybody in the company the same week so that they don't feel pressure to work. I mean, there's not been like a ton of those examples, but those examples are actually quite profound of really encouraging people to have balance because people have worked so hard for so long. One leader that I am coaching actually encourages his team every Friday to take a half-day and just do something with their family or do something on their own. He also encourages them to block time in their calendar to get work done and has meeting free days. So, I think, that there's a number of interesting things that I have seen, but again, not all leaders follow this. And I think the critical thing in my mind is that the best leaders really role model this behavior.

DJ: Sahiba Singh (SS) from SpencerStuart has an interesting insight around how we think about calendaring various activities.

Sahiba: *"I think most leaders have been used to calendaring work. Now we see most people calendaring work and life to make sure that they can maintain, whether some people will call it work-life separation, some people will call it work-life assimilation because the days have just continued to stretch on both sides and everybody has to be a lot more deliberate about how they are spending their time. So one aspect is just me time and fitness, people are constantly interacting on Zoom calls through the day and then without a commute at the middle, they are going back to their families, kids and sort of taking care of those aspects. So there is one leader that I know who is completely particular about calendaring his runs because for him, that is the only me time that he gets, it is the time he gets to think about his workday. So that is something that we see quite often. There is another client of us and she is absolutely clear that she has set aside her children's bedtime as non-negotiable, no meetings can get scheduled, no calls, etc. So I think we are all finding out different ways in which we work best. And it is also interesting that this also allows us to play to our preferences of how we like to work. So I am not a morning person at all and I love the fact that I can actually work my calendar in the day that I can start slightly later and work till later as well, so that is one thing that I see quite often."*

DJ: In a way, remote work completely changes the role of an EA. It moves from keeping you productive at work to really taking complete ownership of your life which includes work. This includes solving for exercise, family time, reflection time, breathing time between meetings and much more.

Atul: *"Your EA is your best friend while you are doing this because she is the one who, for example, I have probably the most amazing EA in this world who will factor in one hour breaks on my calendar just so that I can go get some fresh air, get a coffee. If the calendar starts looking really bad, she will herself start kind of pushing things out a little bit."*

DJ: Sahiba Singh (SS) also makes an interesting point about the need for proactively solving for a Support System in these times.

Sahiba: *"We have always spoken about leaders needing to have a support system and somewhere when you are going to the office, you are meeting with your colleagues, your leadership teams, etc., that support system of opportunity to connect with people, talk to people, discuss things, was almost organically built into the day. Now given the situation where most people are actually more under stress than before and in some ways disconnected from people in terms of just banging into them in the elevator or whatever, people have to be more, particularly leaders have to be more deliberate about making sure that they have a support system that they can rely on for advice to use as sounding boards. And that can take the form of their colleagues across the globe, that can take the form of coaches, mentors, that can take the form of sometimes family members that you discuss issues with, but you have to be a lot more deliberate about it than before."*

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In addition to what Darleen, Atul and Sahiba say, I find insights from Prof Stew Friedman from Wharton extremely relevant in these times. He speaks about us focusing on 4 domains – Self | Work | Home and Community. We need to focus on the 4 piece jig saw and solve it holistically. I personally feel this whole debate around Work and Home whether we call it balance or harmony or something else misses a broader point. It treats this problem as a 2 piece jigsaw while I feel that unless we address all the 4 pieces that Stew speaks about, we end up in a funny place.

- Ignoring Self leads to burnout or often some health event

- Not allocating time and attention to the Community piece ends up leading to a hollow feeling especially in these times where there is so much pain and suffering all around us.

I would strongly urge you to look up Stew Friedman in the Guests section and tune into the conversation around how we can lead a full life across these four domains. Thank you for listening.

## End of nugget transcription

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### **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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