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Context to the nugget conversation

Ayse speaks about her four step deconstruction and reconstruction process that she uses in Life Design. She uses the metaphor of a Chicken Soup to make the point about deriving inspiration to create a recipe that is unique to our life context. We connect the dots with an insight from Rama Bijapurkar in an earlier conversation where she speaks about how she drew inspiration from her role models.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): So let us talk about your process Ayse. You talk about a bowl of soup, interestingly enough, and you talk about how we can, you have a four-step process that you suggest, can you walk us through what these are and maybe elaborate a little bit, just for the listeners to get a sense of the crux of the thinking?

Ayse Birsal (AB): Sure. My process is deconstruction reconstruction and it has four steps. And I thought I need an easy way to explain it to people that does not come from design. So chicken soup or soup was a good example. So let us imagine, if you want to make soup, you think of the ingredients that go into a soup and those things could be onions and chicken stock, let us say, some rice, some tomatoes. And as you are thinking of the ingredients, what you are doing and what I am doing with you right now is I am deconstructing the soup. And I could say also, well, is this a soup that is like the kind of soup that my Turkish grandma would make, or is this the kind of soup that your grandma would make. It is like two different cultures, the same soup, but maybe in Turkey, we put rice and in India, you put something else. So anyways, it is really like looking at what is something made up of is the first step. And then the second step is how can we think about this from a different perspective, how could we see the same things from a different light. And so if you teach me how to make chicken soup like your grandmother made, that is going to shift my thinking about chicken soup and I could, based on that, say, you know what, maybe this should be a vegetarian soup, and so I will take chicken stock out and instead, replace that with vegetable stock. And now, I have started playing with the ingredients, the parts. And then maybe, you know, some other people will tell us, hey, now that you have taken chicken stock out and you are making this with vegetable stock, well, how are we going to eat this, what if instead of a hot soup we thought about this as cold soup. And so now, we could reconstruct it, put it back together and we leave some things out, we could leave the hot temperature out of it and then, introduce the idea of cold temperature. Now we are thinking about how we put the ingredients back together in a whole new way. And then in doing that, how do we express it which is the fourth step, and the expression could be, hey, if you are going to make this cold soup, have you thought about what if we freeze it, you know, it is a whole other way of, you know, it is taking the cold idea and expressing it in a whole different way, if we can freeze it, then maybe we could make a new kind of soup that is frozen and

yet edible, you know, maybe it is a popsicle soup. And now, we have come up with a whole different way. We have deconstructed soup, we thought about the same elements differently. As we thought about them differently, we did some research and brought new culture into it. And then, that led us to reconstructing it in a way that is new and different, and that new reconstruction then allowed us to express it as a new idea. And then if we were commercializing this, we could say, hey, this is a popsicle soup that you can eat on the way to school or on the way to work, you do not need a bowl for it. And so, that is how I think. And that is how I think with our clients, with Target or Herman Miller, with Toyota, and I teach them this so that we can now deconstruct and reconstruct together, and they can think differently about the same things that they know, that they are experts on. And then, I teach the same thing to people about their life.

DJ: And just to bring it to life Ayse, do you want to illustrate these four maybe in the context of a life design situation, just for the listeners to appreciate how this transfers to a life context?

AB: Absolutely. I mean, our life is our biggest project and when we say life, it is a big topic. So what I want people to do is to break that into its parts and say, hey, what are the parts and pieces of my life. You know, there is, maybe family in there, there is work in there, there is friends, there is health, there are hobbies, and then there is how I use time. And then, all of those things could be broken into their separate parts. And as we do that, as we deconstruct our life, we start to realize that their parts that have different weights and some of those parts, now that they are deconstructed, we can change them, we can replace them, or we can make new combinations. And then as we do that, we start to see the same things differently about our life. And as we start to see them differently, I introduce the idea of inspiration because when you are creating something, you need inspiration. And in our life, inspiration is other people. So I call them our heroes and in getting people to think about their heroes, I help them reconnect with their own values. And then once you are reconnected with your values and you realize what is important to you, then you can make choices based on your values which is a big part of designing something. And then based on those values, you reconstruct. And in reconstructing, you can think about your life and try and play with different ideas and say, hey, if I, like, reconstruction is also, Deepak, understanding that you cannot have everything and that is the beauty of design. And so you have to think about different permutations of ideas and say, what if I have these three things versus those three things and combine different ideas. And then from that once you have a reconstruction that excites you, you can go to how to express your life. Does that answer your question? It is really, I guess, my goal is to help people think about their life as something that they can, instead of letting life come at you, it is really designing your life is saying, well, I can envision my life using design tools and practice. And based on those ideas, I can now bring that idea to life, just like a designer would bring a chair or a car to life. I want people to have an idea, a creative idea about what is important to them, and think about that ahead of time, visualize it, imagine it. And then once they do that, they get excited and then, that excitement propels them towards making that idea happen. And then, I also tell them, well, how do you make that idea happen, you do it by creating a list of to-dos, getting collaborators involved and listing people in your idea, all those things come from design, everything that I know, my expertise is in design, I just show how design and life overlap and get people to think.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the point Ayse makes about how we sometimes struggle to figure out what really matters to us. Thinking about who our heroes are sometimes can sharpen our self-awareness around what really matters to us and what we care about.

Something similar came up in my conversation with Rama Bijapurkar (RB), a Board Member and an expert in the area of consumer Insight.

RB: *“so I have friend who said to me that why don’t you figure out three role models of people who you really respect and my list of three was C.K. Pralhad, P. Chidambaram and Bhimsen Joshi, I knew two of them C.K. and Chidambaram pretty well, I didn’t know Bhimsen at all but I then realize that all three of them was absolutely solo performers, I mean C.K. who is my teacher and my guru in every way actually sat in wherever his office in Michigan and gave the whole world not just the theory of core competence, the idea of competing for the future, the idea of fortune at the bottom of the pyramid I mean the man just did it repeatedly again and again and again, the idea of co-opting your consumers, the whole set of things. And then when you look to Chidambaram, when he wasn’t being the minister and he was out of power he was just a damn good lawyer and he was stop being a lawyer he was a minister but he was pretty much because of his individual stuff and I went to Bhimsen’s 70th birthday at that time and he said that and he sang for himself and he basically said that day from the podium that I have said to the lord, I stopped singing please take me away, once I had those three M, and its again serendipity how did that three come? Then I said there are guys who don’t have any umbrellas, platforms, nothing but they have basically given the world what they have given the world.”*

DJ: If we feel stuck around the question – what do I want out of life, shining the light on the people that we instinctively look upto might have cues that could help us move forward and architect a life that is fit for purpose for our context.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Rama Bijapurkar that is referenced: [Becoming a solo-advisor](#).

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- 86.02 Ayse Birsal - Nelson Mandela - a Master Life Designer
- 86.03 Ayse Birsal - Deconstruction and Reconstruction - The 4 step process
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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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