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Context to the nugget conversation

Ayse speaks about how we can equip our children to design their life as they set sail on their respective journeys in a world filled with twists and turns. We connect the dots with an insight from Pramath Sinha on how we can help equip children to navigate the world of uncertainty.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): One of the things that is top of mind for me Ayse, I have two young kids, a 12-year-old and an eight-year-old, you know, I am curious about how to imbibe some of these things in kids. In a way, at least we grew up in a time where things were relatively linear, but I realize kids are growing into a future which is going to require them to be a lot more deliberate about how they design and redesign as they go through life, what is some of your thinking around how we can start helping our kids appreciate some of these things and sort of to give them the foundation as they grow up?

Ayse Birsal (AB): Absolutely, I mean what you just said is something that I think about often. I think you and I, even though we grew up in different places, you know, we grew up with a similar, like you said, a linear roadmap, you do this, you go to school, you study hard, you know, you go to work, you work hard, you meet someone, you get married, you have kids, it was very, like, tutum tutum tutum, you do this and then you do that, and I find my kids are also teenagers, they are 17 and 18, and I feel like I cannot give them the same roadmap. You know, there are no roadmaps today because everything is fluid and changeable and uncertain which is an incredible challenge, but at the same time, that is the opportunity. There are no roadmaps, so create your own roadmap, and in a way, Design The Life You Love is my answer to that. Teaching kids to think like a designer with optimism and empathy and collaboration and an open mind, asking what if questions, and seeing the big picture, and connecting the dots in new and different ways early on, and making that a lifelong practice. So that is the only way I know how to do it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This reminds me of a conversation with Pramath Sinha (PS), one of the early leaders in institutions like ISB and Ashoka. He used to be a Director at McKinsey earlier. He has a good sense of what good leadership looks like and how we equip the children for the future. He spoke about how sometimes, we as parents end up making decisions for the children. He urges us to hold back and get them to make choices and live with the repercussions.

PS: *“First thing I do is I ask them to listen to what their children are saying rather than deciding for them. That I see as a huge problem. I think our parents were much less concerned about what we were doing, even though, at that time, I think, it was very important. But today, what has happened is, ironically, even with the large number of choices in careers, the choices in education are very limited still, so that forces people to become very, very focused on saying, oh, I have to decide. So, the first thing I really ask them is, are you deciding for your kid or do they really want to study law, for example. And often, you will find kids who are very clear that they are very excited about being a lawyer and that’s really what they want to do. Honestly, between you and me, objectively, they may not know, but the important part is they are excited about it and they want to pursue it. So, first and foremost, just clarifying that.*

Then, if you end up on the other side, where the person doesn’t know, I then start by saying, listen, it’s OK that you don’t know. There’s nothing wrong with that. Because otherwise, people are under pressure that they are confused or that they don’t know and they ought to know and how come they don’t know and so on. So, taking that pressure off and then helping them understand, honestly, what you specialize in will not matter. In fact, this whole thing about specializing in a subject and then being in a career and aligned to that, as you know, is tenuous. It happens sometimes, but, increasingly, happens less and less. So, while it’s important to major in something, it’s not really that important to major in the right thing. That kind of releases the tension of a lot of parents and children, when they realize. Sometimes they don’t, but most of the times, you can actually show the parents themselves that what they majored in and what they are doing now has no connection.”

DJ: The children are growing into a world with abundant possibilities and that can be extremely unnerving. Giving them the tools to keep redesigning their life as they move forward might be the biggest gift, we could give them.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Pramath Sinha that is referenced: [Educating ourselves \(and link with leadership of the future\)](#).

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Ayse Birsal - Nuggets

- 86.01 Ayse Birsal - Journey to becoming a Life Designer
- 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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- 86.09 Ayse Birsal - Bringing ideas to life

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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Podcast Transcript [86.08 Ayse Birsal - Helping Children Design their life](#)

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