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Context to the nugget conversation

Dan speaks about the role of regret especially around transitions. He refers to the Japanese art form of Kintsugi which is about embracing the negatives and bringing beauty because of them and not in spite of them. He also refers to the work of Herminia Ibarra who speaks about acting your way into a new way of thinking.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Dan in the book, you refer to the Japanese art form kintsugi, and you speak about how regrets can help us discover a uniqueness and find our own pathway, and you go on to say that the cracks are how the light gets in. A lot of leaders I work with are at a point of transition and they are trying to figure out what next in their journeys, given the career they have had, given their passions and given the market and so on, and this particular phrase stood out for me. So, can you expand on this notion of kintsugi and sort of using the cracks to let the light in?

Dan Pink (PC): Yeah, so we are spanning the cultural references here across the Pacific Ocean because the cracks are like it is a lyric from a song by Leonard Cohen, the Canadian singer, and kintsugi is an ancient form of Japanese pottery where what happened is that in the old days, the pottery would break, they sent it out to be repaired, the repair was terrible. Then they sent it instead to some artisans to repair it, and the reparations, the repaired pottery is more beautiful because they did this really elegant job of stitching up the seams and whatnot. And so, kintsugi is this gorgeous form of pottery that is broken, but despite its crack, it is beautiful because of the cracks in the way they have been joined together. And so as a writer, I cannot resist the metaphor, and I think that that is a metaphor in some ways for what regret does for us, that if we acknowledge the cracks, if the cracks are how the light gets in, if we recognize that we have all the product of mistakes and regrets and setbacks and things like that, and instead of papering over them, instead of a smoothing over them, we actually kind of acknowledge them, there is a beauty in that. And also, there is a performance advantage in that because you are spending time moving forward rather than trying to portray this perfect image of yourself. So I love that as a metaphor. So if you have career, sort of, seasoned professionals in transition thinking of themselves as like, okay, where are the cracks, I think that can be a very healthy way to approach things. The other thing about, I think that comes out, sort of, if I can make a regret related point here in terms of these career transitions is that, one of the things you see more broadly is that people have many more regrets by inaction than action. They regret what they didn't do more than what they did do. And so, I think there is an argument in general in life to have at least a slight bias for action. And I think the reason for that is that in some ways, you have gotten it wrong, and here, I am going to steer this ship around to the point about career transitions, is that if you look at career transitions, I think a lot of times what we want to do is transitions of any kind. We want to think it through, plan it out, come up with a

strategy and then execute on the strategy, and does not always work that way. In fact, Herminia Ibarra now at the London Business School has some great work on this which is basically like acting is a form of discovering. That is one of the things that I have learned in my life. It is that, you cannot just figure out everything, sometimes you just have to act. And I think that the regrets that people express since it is so overwhelmingly about inactions rather than actions, to me, it says, in the grand scheme of life, you want to have a slight bias for action because actions, it is not only how you get stuff done, but it is also how you figure stuff out.

DJ: Fascinating. She has been on the podcast as well and she uses a phrase, act your way into a new way of thinking, is a phrase she uses.

DP: Right, exactly. That is a better way, I mean it is her work. She started working on this, like, maybe, 20 years ago in her book, Working Identity, and it has been real, I think it is totally smart, I think it is totally on point, and again, in some ways, we have the sequence wrong. We think that yeah, exactly as she says, you have to act yourself into a new way of thinking. And so, again, it is another reason why I think in general we should have a bias for action because acting is how you figure stuff out, and also, we are more likely to regret inactions.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I learnt something similar from my conversation with Bruce Feiler (BF). He speaks about a classic scene from Indiana Jones where he needs to take a leap of faith into the unknown first and then the bridge appears. I think that is a profound metaphor to the way transitions often play out especially when people become more experienced. Bruce Feiler expands on that notion here.

BF: *“There is something about the fact that the great stories of every faith involve going into the wilderness in some aspect. It is in the Hebrew Bible. It is in the Hindi tradition where you go into the forest. It is in the Buddhist tradition. It is in the Muslim tradition, okay. It is in the story of all of the great mythologies have somebody going on a journey of some kind and that journey in a fundamental way is leaving what is secure and safe and going into this period of lack of confidence and wilderness and transformation and fear. So, at the first phase is the long goodbye where you accept it and you use rituals in some way. The next step involves taking a step and going through that process and that brings you to the Indiana Jones scene where let’s remember here, he’s in one place and there’s a cliff and there appears to be no bridge. He actually has to take a step and then the bridge appears after he takes the step. That’s what it is like to go into this messy middle and it involves two processes fundamentally. The first is to shed some habit some way of life. Maybe it is shedding your... maybe you like having a job and it is shedding that comfort of stability. Maybe it is shedding a habit that maybe you have been a people pleaser and you have stayed around something for too long, and it is taking you too long to say goodbye and you realize you have to stop trying to please your boss. Maybe you have to stop trying to live up to the expectation of your parents that dare I say it, okay. Maybe your parents have fed you these expectations that you must have a certain status and you must bring in a certain kind of money and you must do something that you don’t want to do and you are I would rather do something that I want to do or maybe you have to say I want to stop making money and I want to start giving back to society you want to shape shift. So, you have to shed some expectation. This is the first half of what the messy middle involves and then the second half is absolutely astonishing acts of creativity. Once you shed things from your life you suddenly have room to try new things, okay. Maybe it is a new habit, maybe it is a new skill, maybe you start to paint, maybe you start to dance, maybe you start to sing. Like people literally do actual things. Like think when the pandemic happened everyone was posting pictures about learning to bake, right? That was the... I may have been the only person who was not surprised by this because even*

the act of baking something small is an act of re-imagining. If you can imagine that you can bake something and that you can eat that and that little act of imagining that creation allows you to imagine that you can make and bake and create your new life. And that's what happened, it begins with small steps just like Indiana Jones sometimes on a bridge that you don't even know is there."

DJ: If you are at a point of transition, I would strongly strongly recommend the conversation with Herminia Ibarra and Bruce Feiler to give you some perspectives around how to frame your thoughts for the transition.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Bruce Feiler that is referenced: [Taking a leap of faith](#).

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Identity: Identity refers to the reputation, characteristics etc. of a person that makes the individual or the people around him/her think about them in a certain way. To put simply, how do we think of ourselves and what to the others think of us. Identity is a key element that we need to wrestle with during pivotal transitions. Herminia Ibarra shares her insights on how we should treat Identity as a Work in Progress that gets influenced by the journey we go through and the choices we make. Ram Guha speaks about the multiple identities of Gandhiji. Atul Kasbekar speaks about how he saw his identity evolve from being a photographer to a producer. All this and more in this playlist. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Regret: Regret is a word that we often use but do not quite understand that well. Jeff Bezos speaks about his regret-minimisation framework for making high stakes decisions. Several people speak about "No regrets" as a way of life. Dan Pink recently wrote a book - The Power of Regret - How Looking Backward Moves us Forward. This playlist has nuggets from our conversation with Dan and some of the other speakers who touch upon this topic. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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Dan Pink - Nuggets

- 89.01 Dan Pink - Lawyer to Leadership Thinker
- 89.02 Dan Pink - Regret - The photographic negative
- 89.03 Dan Pink - Four Core Regrets
- 89.04 Dan Pink - Regrets and Choice
- 89.05 Dan Pink - Counterfactual thinking
- 89.06 Dan Pink - Goldilocks balance in handling regret
- 89.07 Dan Pink - Inward Outward Forward
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- 89.09 Dan Pink - Rifts and Drifts

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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