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## Context to the nugget conversation

Alisa speaks about some of the mental health challenges of Entrepreneurship. She says that stress is the child of a startup and depression is the child of stress. She says that Founders are depressed 30% more than their counterparts. She shares some suggestions on how Founders can combat this.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): A related theme you talk about Alisa is, and I like the phrase you use, you say that stress is the child of a startup and depression is the child of stress. Once again, it is probably one of those topics where the need exists or the phenomenon exists, but it is sort of the elephant in the room that often nobody talks about. Can you talk a little bit about this and what founders should watch out for and when they should seek help if they are in that zone?

Alisa Cohn (AC): Yes, there is so much to say about this. I would just say that startups are extreme work environments and you have to be aware of that when you are getting yourself into it as a founder. The second thing is that founders are 30% more likely than their counterparts to experience depression and anxiety in general, you know, than any other companies in general, and so that is also just very difficult to be aware of. So when you are going through the experience of the extreme work environment that the startup is, and you are going through all the ups and downs, many founders say to me, I knew there would be ups and downs but I did not realize that they would be in the span of five minutes or even on top of each other, which is so true, then you have to kind of have the wherewithal to handle it. So first of all you absolutely should have routines that help you. So it might be a mindfulness routine in the morning, might be like funny movies in the morning, it might be meditation, it might be fitness, wherever it is, you definitely have to have also some stress-reducing mechanisms, like fitness, like hobbies, like friends to just make yourself feel good and step away from the work, and then you actually should have a team around you, maybe a coach like me, maybe a therapist, maybe just a CEO group to help you deal with the inevitable ups and downs so they do not turn into serious cases of depression and anxiety.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I asked a similar question to Hari (Hari) and Sanjeev – the authors of the book from Pony to Unicorn. Here is a related perspective from Hari.

Hari: *“So, I think some founders, you know, self-aware founders have resorted to stuff like yoga, taking social media breaks and stuff like that or even sometimes actually consulting psychiatrists. I have seen some founders actually reaching out for help specifically to psychiatrists and dealing with*

*some of the troubles that they are facing. But I think it is just important for a founder to be able to talk very freely to a set of close friends. I think the best stressbuster that you can have is a loving family or a bunch of trusting friends, trustworthy friends who you can speak to without them judging you because I think founders are going through some really difficult issues. They might be struggling with valuations, they might be struggling with investors not trusting them, struggling with raising money for the next round what to do, they might be running out of cash. So, I think these problems are extremely, extremely difficult to deal with both from a physical and mental perspective. So, I think having a loving family and having a set of friends who they can talk to can be a good stressbuster. I have seen some people I told you visit, you know, do yoga camps, Art of Living stuff and even talking to psychiatrists in extreme cases. And many of them of course also are very, very focused on doing physical exercises, very, very, cycling some of them might do, some of them would be doing swimming. I don't know how effective all of these physical exercises are, but I am assuming that to some extent they can keep you fit, you know, a sound mind in a sound body as they say. So, I have seen some of them doing this as well."*

DJ: When it comes to managing their health, I see that Founders often fall into the trap of being too busy driving the car and not having enough time to fill petrol. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out how this story would finish!

Thank you for listening.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Sanjeev and Hari that is referenced: [The Full conversation](#).

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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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