

The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small note at the bottom left of the banner reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget conversation

Ayelet speaks about how having clear goals can show us the path but our ability to stick to the path is determined by our intrinsic motivation in walking that journey and the joy we experience in it.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And talking about motivation Ayelet, you talk about the role of incentives as achieving our goals. And as a student of careers, I am curious about the question, if you had all the money, what would you do with your time. And some of the leaders I work with in midlife are at that point where they have made adequate money but they are still figuring out what to do with their time. Can you talk a little bit about your observations of people in journeys where they hit a point where the financial metrics are taken care of, now they need to find other motivators to move forward, how do you observe some of these people and what have you observed working, as they find a new compass to guide them?

Ayelet Fishbach (AF): So here is what we know, what makes people feel good, what makes them satisfied with their lives, with whatever they do, is not usually reaching the goal, it is pursuing that, is making progress, is being on the path to get somewhere. And to the extent that we feel that we are making fast progress, that things are moving faster than we expected and we are happy with our life, then we feel these things are good. So it is not really the static condition of I have reached my goal, it is the way there and the extent to which I feel that the way there is working. Why is this relevant, well, for many people, feeling like you have reached your goals is not a satisfying experience. If you were hoping to achieve something and you worked really hard, then you achieved it by, I do not know, like age 30, then what is else, what will happen in the rest of your career, what is the next challenge. It could be that you have made more money that you planned to, it also could be that you had an idea and you are done exploring it, you had a product that you wanted to develop and everything worked great and you were able to create the right team to develop this product and you developed this product and you sold it to someone and now what, now you have the crisis, now you have the emptiness that we often feel when we are done with our goals. You talk about career, many parents feel that when their kids leave home, just like I was very invested in that goal for a long time, and it is kind of done and maybe I did an amazing job and maybe my kids are really happy in their adult lives, but what is now for me, what motivates me in the morning.

DJ: Hmm. And actually, a related point you make is about harnessing the gratification in the moment rather than thinking too long term in terms of goals. I like the point you make, focus on the crunchiness of the carrot rather than the long term health benefits. Can you talk a little bit about that, just enjoying the activity and enjoying the moment and not getting carried away by the significance of what we are doing?

AF: So the best predictor of engagement in basically everything is intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation is the feeling that when you are doing something that feels the right moment, when you want to do it for the sake of doing it, not really for any long term purpose. Now for most of the goals that we set, we try to motivate ourselves, we do start from the point of wanting to be in a different place than where we are now, so we are not 100% intrinsically motivated. It is not like reading the most interesting book, watching an amazing movie, or having a terrific meal, it is wanting to get yourself somewhere. But what predicts extent to which you can stick to the way there, you can stick to the means that you set, is often the extent which you feel right to you at the moment, that you feel that there is purpose, that it is fun, that it is something that you do with people that you like. I just gave you different examples for ways in which people say, I like doing what I am doing.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If there is one thing that I have learnt from all the conversations at the podcast, it is the fact that you can play to your potential but you can't really work to your potential. That leads us to the question of what is Play and how do we discover it? The other thing to mention here is that whenever we hit a point of discontinuity like achieving Financial Independence, it can be like a positive Lifequake and it might require us to re-evaluate our priorities ground up. I love the framework of Stew Friedman of Wharton who talks about 4 domains of life – Self | Work | Home Community and how we need to harmonize across these 4 domains at various points. Do tune into my conversation with Stew if that is of interest. I also like the perspectives from Bruce Feiler – Author of the book – Life is in the transitions. He says something very interesting about ABCs of meaning and how we might want to reorganize our priorities when we hit such an inflection point.

BF: *“There are kind of three pillars we have to how we make meaning in our lives. I call them the ABCs of meaning. And the A is agency, what we do or make or create. The B is belonging, our relationships, our colleagues, our friends, our loved ones, our co-religionists, people we volunteer with. And then the C is a cause, a calling, a purpose or something higher than ourselves. So, we all have a way that we kind of balance these. I am an ABC, I am a writer so, I am very agentic, I am very involved with family and a very active dad and cause is kind of less important to me. My wife Linda Rottenberg who started and runs an organization called Endeavor that supports high impact entrepreneurs in 50 countries around the world, she's very cause oriented. She gets back to entrepreneurs all over the planet. Then she's very agentic because she's you know a founder and a builder and a social entrepreneur. Relationships yeah, she tolerates the rest of us. So, she's like the CAB. So, what tends to happen when we go through a lifequake is that we rebalance like maybe we have been working very hard and we want to spend more time with our family or maybe we have been a caretaker or caring for an aging relative or a child and maybe we are now moving on from that and we want to give back or maybe we have been giving back in our career, we want to do something more for ourselves. So, what tends to happen in these lifequakes is because they are sort of breaks in the normal, they are opportunities and, in some ways, I would even say obligations to rethink what's most important to us and allows us to kind of breath, take stock and maybe then shift our priorities somewhat.”*

DJ: Back to what Ayelet says, I guess this pursuit of the Where to go needs to be a healthy combination of discovering Direction and some exploration around what feels like Play so that you can keep the motivation for the long journey.

People often ask me why I do this podcast. The honest answer that emerges for me is that this feels like Play. My hope is to build this to perpetuity and see how this library evolves over the next several years and decades. May be this will change as time goes by but for now, I plan to march on. Thank you for your attention and your support.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Bruce Feiler that is referenced: [Shape-shifting instead of resilience](#).

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Ayelet Fishbach - Nuggets

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- 91.03 Ayelet Fishbach - Parenting and Psychological reactance

- 91.04 Ayelet Fishbach - Choices post financial independence
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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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