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Context to the nugget conversation

Ethan speaks about the line between having negative thoughts (which can help us move forward) and Negative Chatter that get us into an unproductive never-ending loop that can prevent us from making progress.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And from a self-awareness perspective, Ethan, just for me to understand where is the line between let's say the inner voice and inner chatter? When does it tip over to becoming unhealthy? Did you have sort of a rule of thumb for it?

Ethan Kross (EK): Yeah, it's a great question, I wish I could, it would be a dream if I could do a blood test to figure that out or have a little chatter thermometer that physiologically indicated that oh, you are in a harmful zone right now. The best we can do at the moment is it is a more subjective appraisal of where you stand and the indicator for me is, it's not about whether you are engaging in negative self-talk. Many people think, I want to rid my life of all negative self-talk. That is not actually a goal that I would argue is a healthy goal or an attainable one. What I mean by that is this. Negative emotions are functional when they are experienced in the right proportions. It is healthy and adaptive to become angry for a short period of time when insulted. The experience of envy when you come across some colleague or friend who has achieved in a way that you haven't, that can be very motivating and it has been shown to be such. The anxiety that I experience when I think about all of the things, I have to do next week, that is useful because what it allows me to do is not just watch TV and read for fun but actually do the work that I need to do to prepare. So, negative emotions in small doses are great. And with those negative emotions comes that negative self-talk. What makes those emotions harmful is when they are prolonged. So, if you find yourself turning over the same negative experience in your mind in a way that is not in your progress forward and take constructive action, that is an indication that chatter is taking hold. If you find yourself sitting at the dinner table with your family asking your family questions that they answer and respond to but which you don't hear; you hear physically of course what they are saying but you don't attend to it, so you ask them to repeat themselves whereupon they say, I just told you that. That is an indication that the chatter is becoming harmful. If you find yourself unable to sleep at night because your mind is racing over the negativity, not allowing you to turn off your brain for the eight hours that you need to get the slumber, that is a sign that the chatter has taken over.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the point Ethan makes about the role of negative emotions. I guess, from an evolution perspective, they have had a role to play in our growth and progress.

I was recently reading the book Toxic Positivity by Whitney Goodman. The book speaks about the Positivity movement that we are seeing around the world and how harmful it can be if we don't process the negative emotions appropriately.

I guess the key challenge is ensuring that we stay in the emotion but don't get engulfed into it. This is where Ethan's work comes in.

Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

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Ethan Kross - Nuggets

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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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