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## Context to the nugget conversation

Michiel speaks about how leaders can access their skylight and what rituals they can build before, during and after an event.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Back to the book Michiel, one of the things you talk about quite a bit is this concept of dual awareness and you use the term Skylight in this context, can you talk a little bit about, I mean awareness I understand but there is something specific you have in mind when you say dual awareness, so could you expand on this one?

Michiel Kruyt (MK): Yeah, dual awareness is a new concept, I have not seen it before brought together. That is what we are trying to do in this book, especially because the world has changed so much and there is so many high change situations that people find themselves in. So we want to make them aware of two sides, the external world and the inner world. So the external world, we basically ask people to make a judgment. The situation that you are getting into, is that a familiar zone situation where you know the answer, you know what to do, it might be high stake, it might be low stake but it is clear what to do or is it an adaptive zone challenge where you actually do not, there is so much change going on that you do not exactly know what to do and you need to enjoy the learning. That is the learning agility. If in situations like that you are actually eager to learn and you can focus everyone on learning and improving and finding the answers and moving, being adaptive, so that is the external awareness, and then, we have the inner awareness around how do you respond to that. Now these two things need to be in balance with each other because if you have a high stake adaptive zone challenge and you are not aware of your inner response, we just hear it from the learning of protection discussion that you will be naturally wired to go into protection, and then, you will contract and you would not be able to bring your potential to the situation. So that is where the inner awareness becomes very important around, hey, what are my thoughts, feelings and body state when I am entering a situation like this.

DJ: Hmm. And what do you mean by the term Skylight that you use in this context?

MK: Yeah, so the skylight, that is in the old wisdom schools, people talk about the observer or to witness consciousness, you are witnessing yourself whilst you are in action, and the skylight is actually a simple metaphor practice where you imagine yourself looking down on yourself from the skylight, and you see yourself act, you listen to yourself talk whilst you are in action. And that is a very important practice to master that witness consciousness.

DJ: And can you talk a little bit about how one gets there, what are some of the approaches for people to build this muscle? Clearly, it is not a switch that gets activated overnight, but if you could expand on some of the ways people could build this dual awareness and the skylight to observe...

MK: Yeah, so there are a number of things. So you can build in your work practice, and so let me start with work and then I go to personal, in your work practice, you can build in rituals to actually check with each other, are we getting into an adaptive zone challenge. If we are, let us be really aware of how we respond to it because we know we are at risk of getting into protection. So let us be very aware and let us be very open to help each other get in learning, stay in learning and notify when we get triggered in protection. So that is a practice that you can actually do before you get into meetings, or if you do it individually, if you look at your agenda, you can look at, hey, what are the external situations that will trigger intense emotions in me. This is a little bit almost like a pre-situation practice.

DJ: Before you enter the battlefield kind of a practice.

MK: Exactly. It is a locker room practice before you go into the field. Now when you are in the field, that is actually when you need the skylight, and the way to practice that. I mean, we all have heard about mindfulness and so, meditation is a good mindfulness practice where you can practice this skylight in the silence and the peace and quiet of not doing anything but just sitting on your cushion, and that transfers to real life. So getting that same reflective mode while you are being an action, that is the practice. And the third step is doing it afterwards. So you have it before, during and after. Now clearly, the during is the most difficult part, and people in business are actually not really trained in it. If you are an athlete, you are continuously in the competition and you get immediate feedback if something goes wrong and you have immediate responses or they have rituals that are much more designed to actually develop this skylight capability, in the business world, it is a bit more difficult.

DJ: Hmm. Interesting. Would you be able to share an example or two in terms of how athletes build that skylight in their training?

MK: Yeah. Well, you see it. So for example, I am a competitive golf player, so I can use a golf example, but when you are playing golf, you actually train yourself to have a ritual where you visualize your shot. And then, before you start getting into the action, you step into your performance box where you do not think anymore, you just trust your body and you're training and you let the wisdom do the work. And when you make a mistake, you actually do not linger onto it. You know that you want to linger onto it but you actually let go and you move forward. And when you look at tennis players, they will have their rituals with their service and all their little things they do. And Nadal is a great example, he is probably the most impressive one who does this.

DJ: Elaborate rituals. Actually, it came up in my recent conversation with a gentleman called Ethan Kross of Michigan who has written a book called Chatter and he says that some of these rituals help us bring order. When things are not in control, you do a few things to tell yourself that okay, there are a few things I can control and have it sorted, and in a way, he goes on to say that that at least quietens down the chatter in our minds.

MK: Yeah, I think there is a difference between a tennis player and a businessman. The tennis players often know what the unproductive chatter is. When you are in business, a lot of CEOs have a little bit of an impatient demeanour, I am generalizing again but just as an example, many CEOs I have worked with were impatient and want to get things done quickly. They actually might believe that that is a helpful mindset. What they do not see is what the impact is on the team and that

people are not committed to the decisions because they have not really deepened them out enough, and then you cut corners. So it is quite important that you understand and you do work on yourself to understand what are the patterns that are useful and productive and what are the ones that are unproductive.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Sometimes, accessing the skylight doesn't need elaborate practices. If we work hard enough to build the muscle of pausing and observing ourselves, we can slowly access that vantage point that Michiel calls as Skylight.

Rich Fernandez (RF) of Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute suggests that we can bake in mindfulness in the small things we do to get there.

RF: *"When people think about meditation, they think about having to do exactly what I have just said which is set side you know x block of time and you know sit in a certain way and close your eyes and protect the space for formal practice. But there is also a way to practice mindfulness and meditation in an integrated way. For example, as you move through the course of your day, integrate it into your day between meetings if you need to walk to the rest room make that a walking meditation. I am actually serious about that. Become aware of your bodies as it moves for space between your office and the rest room. Become aware of your foot fall, become aware of the felt sense of your body. How are you feeling actually in that moment? Or take the opportunity to focus on breath or this being in India this Podcast you know if you have a "Mantra" that you are familiar with or particularly like us that. And I say "Mantra" and there is an often a religious component to that but here what I am referring to is really finding an object of your attention to train your attention upon it whether be "Mantra" or breath or walking or sensation you can really do this throughout the course of your day. I was driving to work today and I was focusing on my breath not so much that I wasn't able to drive but there but when there is a red light when I was stopped in traffic in and out for three breaths, I noticed my breath. Next stop like same thing integrated practice is also helpful one."*

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [Developing the meditation habit.](#)

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### Michiel Kruyt - Nuggets

- 99.01 Michiel Kruyt - HUL to McKinsey to Transformation Work
- 99.02 Michiel Kruyt - Pausing to Reinvent
- 99.03 Michiel Kruyt - Learning Zone vs Protective Zone
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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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Podcast Transcript [99.04 Michiel Kruyt - Accessing your Skylight](#)

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