

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 '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of a man in a suit and glasses, identified as 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman'. At the bottom left of the banner, there is a small note: '*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

Alisa speaks about how she gets every Founder to reflect on 4 things – Strengths, Development Areas, Triggers and Dopamine Hits. She goes on to expand on the notion of Triggers and Dopamine Hits and the implication of this on Leadership.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Diving into the book, Alisa, you talk about leaders to reflect on, strengths, development areas, triggers and dopamine hits, and what I found interesting was we often talk about strength and development areas, but the notion of triggers and dopamine hits was interesting. Can you talk a little bit about what you mean by the terms and why it is important for leaders to reflect on those two as well?

Alisa Cohn (AC): Well, it is so important because basically, the triggers are the things that drive you crazy, your pet peeves, the things that kind of set you off. So, the problem is that, I will give you an example, this was a long time ago, one of the founders I worked with was getting really irritated by one of his employees and like, you know, the employee was just like a normal employee, some good, some bad, but he was getting really irritated. And I sort of said, why are you so particularly irritated with this person and to his credit, he really thought about it, and he said, because whenever I walk into his office, his lights are off and I am like, why do not you turn your lights on. I just thought, wow, that is quite a strange thing, and do you know we would have to hold deep discussion about why that bothered him so much. And I think it was like this, why are you in a cave, and I helped him see actually the guy was not in a cave. But the guy did not like to turn the lights on, like what is the big deal. And that was a trigger and actually caused him, this founder, to avoid this employee, to not take his input in very well, you know, not value as much as he valued other people. And it is the silliest thing in the world and yet, it had meaningful impact on the way he ran the team. If you think of your own triggers, you have little pet peeves like that, you have little things that set you off. Also, when you get hungry, you might be a little irritated and then, when you are the CEO, when you are the founder, and you are the leader, and then you act out like a normal person when they are hungry and upset and irritated with little things that are bothering you, it has an outsized impact on the team as a whole. So, you do not have the luxury of kind of giving in to your triggers. And the same is true of dopamine hits. So, these make you feel great and you are all excited about it, you may make fewer good decisions, you may have team members who are trying to hold you back like, no, let us think about it, let us think it through, but you are not going to listen to them because you are so kind of drunk on your own, like the truth inside of your head and the feel-good euphoria inside of your head. So, all of us have to be aware of those things about us. But when you are a leader and you are the founder, the things that you do that you react to have an outsized impact on the way you manage the team. That is why it is so important.

DJ: And on the dopamine hits Alisa, would you have an example to bring it to life? What sorts of things should leaders reflect on?

AC: So, one good example is, this is a normal thing that happens but there is a founder I particularly work with who when there is a new person, they always feel like oh, this person is going to save us, and this person can do no wrong, and oh, this person is so terrific. And everybody around this founder is like, oh, here we go again. But it is an example of how this sort of shiny new is the thing that turns this founder on and the problem is that, again, he would be sort of over privileging the new person's input, thinking when you do it that way what that person says, and also not giving credit to the incredible, like the hard work and the difficult work that everybody has been doing today. So that is an example of how a dopamine hit, you know, sort of a thing that you are not aware of that makes you happy but still, again affects negatively the way you manage the team. Basically, Deepak, it really has to do with this, it is being impulsive. The things that cause you to be impulsive to have a reaction instead of choosing a response, those are the things you have to be more mindful of as any leader but certainly as a founder, and therefore, you can counteract those things as you need to.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The point Alisa makes about Triggers is a profound one. Something similar came up in my conversation with Rich Fernandez (RF), CEO of Search Inside Yourself, a Leadership Development initiative that was incubated in Google.

RF: *“Well inner calm is the first thing that we talked about earlier which is the skill of mindfulness and being able to manage your attention and something happens when you are able to direct your attention to the present moment, the breath, Mantra whatever you call it where you become calm and less reactive because you are just simply grounded and focused so that’s the habit of inner calm is the habit of mindfulness. Emotional resilience happens when you are able to become aware of the emotion that you are having as you are having them. This has a little bit more to do with open monitoring that I was discussing earlier. You are noticing what’s arising within you as an emotion as it’s arising in real time and it allows you then to take that distance that I was talking about to exercise that response flexibility when you are aware of your emotions you are able to manage them, when you are aware of your emotions you are able to respond rather than react. Now some listeners might say well look Rich it’s really important to react I’m in a business where I have to react and I would say to you unless you are experiencing an existential threat it gone always be far more effective to respond rather than react because responding doesn’t mean going slow.”*

DJ: Very often, people think of using will-power as a key axis for change when it comes to Reacting vs Responding. But avoiding triggers is often a more effective approach. Like in the case with Technology, we often over-estimate our will-power and underestimate the role of the environment around us.

If you want to dig into this, do tune into the conversation with Rich Fernandez at www.playtopotential.com or tune into the Curated Playlist on Mindfulness or Self-awareness. Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [3 levels of resilience](#).

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Mindfulness: Given we live in a world with exponential increase in content creation and with firms like Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple vying for our attention, it is quite hard to reclaim our own space and attention. In this context, being mindful could be a key differentiator and a competitive advantage. Some leaders talk about how they created that space for themselves amidst the noise. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Entrepreneurship: We are seeing a renaissance when it comes to entrepreneurship in this country. But it is not an easy ride. Leaders speak about how individuals should think about taking the plunge to entrepreneurship, how they could pick co-founders, their approach to scaling up their leadership muscle and more. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Self-awareness: Insights around what it takes to build a better understanding of self. This includes perspectives around how we can deepen our picture of ourselves through a combination of inner work, mindfulness practices and by gathering meaningful feedback from the world around us. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating "INTERESTED". Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Alisa Cohn - Nuggets

- 90.01 Alisa Cohn - Triggers and Dopamine Hits
- 90.02 Alisa Cohn - Giving away your Legos
- 90.03 Alisa Cohn - Policing your passion
- 90.04 Alisa Cohn - Imposter syndrome as a founder
- 90.05 Alisa Cohn - Stress and Depression
- 90.06 Alisa Cohn - Economics of praise
- 90.07 Alisa Cohn - Handling Leadership transitions
- 90.08 Alisa Cohn - Co-founder dynamics

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.