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Context to the nugget

Marshall speaks about how he has thought about staying relevant over the 40+ years in the profession. He speaks about the Buddhist concept of starting a new life with every breath. He speaks about how we need to think about each breath, each moment and each day as a new beginning and not live in the past.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): A related question Marshall, one of the things that comes up, you know, one of the people I spoke to us was Lynda Gratton, who has written a book 100-year Life and given that we are going to be working into our 70s and 80s and we are going to be living much longer, one of the questions that leaders come up with or grapple with is how do I stay relevant, you know, whether I am 40 or a 50 or a 60? You have been relevant over four decades. If you had to sort of distil some wisdom around staying relevant, what are some of the things maybe even you are a great role model in terms of staying relevant and the world has changed in terms of what the world was in terms of the industry is the leadership paradigm to what it is now. So, any insights there Marshall?

Marshal Goldsmith (MG): Yeah, assuming I am relevant right now, I made it to my 70s at least. Now, let me give you a way to look at life to answer that question. How do I stay relevant, I am going to use you as an example because I like to talk to real people rather than abstractions? Are you ready?

DJ: Yeah, please.

MG: Deepak, okay, take a deep breath, take a deeper breath. Now, a good Buddhist principle is this, every time I take a deep breath it's a new me, it's a new me. And everything in your life is done by an infinite set of people. Their names were the previous Deepak's, the previous you. Close your eyes. I want you to think of all the previous Deepak's, think of all the gifts they have given you just listening to me talk right now. Think about how hard those people tried; think about all they did to help other people. Open your eyes. Now if any group of people did that many nice things what should you say to those nice people?

DJ: Thank you.

MG: Doing it, thank you, and thank you. Now, did they make a little mistake or two over the years? Let go, let go. Now, back to your question moving forward. The Deepak I am talking to I am writing a new book called the Earned Life, the Deepak I am talking to right now, you haven't earned one thing, and you have earned nothing. Almost everything you have has been inherited; it's a gift from the

previous Deepak's. You didn't earn a thing, they did. The guy I am talking to, you haven't earned anything. Now you have to ask yourself what this person is going to earn. What is this person going to earn moving forward? And yesterday, I could tell you, I am a Buddhist, I really had the ultimate example of the importance of Buddhism yesterday. I talked to one of the most famous people in the world, glamorous, good-looking, mega-rich, famous and I said on a 1 to 10 scale how would you score this test on an average day I did my best to be happy, you know what he said, 4. It's not out there, it's in here. And you also need to think it in another way of life. The previous Deepak's were like your parents, almost everything you have today was created by those people, then through your parents. The future Deepak's are your children. What do you want to give to your children? What do you want to give to your children? And the most moving case study of this was my friend Dr. Jim Kim. He's one of my hundred coaches, he was President, World Bank, he was Head of Partners in Health and in his life, and he has probably saved literally tens of millions of lives. If anybody in the world could say I can coast, it's him. I told him the story you know what he said "I hope I can make mommy and daddy proud". I hope I can make mommy and daddy proud, very touching. Well to me, every time you take a breath it's a new you. You can't live in the past. The person I talked to if you could be happy because what you have achieved you would be the happiest person in the world. The other thing is there are literally millions of people who would kill to be this person for what? For what? To get millions of dollars and fame and so what... so what and you work in the area of transition, I have worked with a lot of CEOs and you can't just play bad golf with the old man at the Country Club and eat chicken sandwiches all day. You have got to earn respect every day and not only earn the respect of other people you need to earn respect of the person you see in the mirror. And when you stop doing that you live in the past. And if you look at ex-athletes in the U.S. football, basketball terrible. Depression, suicide, divorce, bankruptcy, they just collapse. Michael Phelps, the great Olympic champion did a movie, I don't know if you saw it called the Weight of Gold.

DJ: I heard about his depression some time back.

MG: About ex-Olympians, depression, suicide, why? They may think that if I win and get the gold medal, that's it. No, you won the Olympic gold medal and billions of people cheered. What happens tomorrow? If you are not careful your entire identity becomes as my father said 'used to be'. Michael Phelps used to be and Olympic champion. Your whole life used to be. So I think the great way to look at life is we are starting over here and those people from the past have done some great things, that wasn't you. The football player, sitting there drunk and talking about what he did 40 years ago. That guy didn't win the super bowl, some young kid won the super bowl. That old man was talking about the one winning the super bowl. Living in the past doesn't work.

DJ: And just picking up on that Marshall, clearly one is about living each moment, each new moment as a new you, but we also live in a world of abundance and...

MG: Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah... in my book what Got You Here Won't Get You There, have you ever seen that book? What Got You Here Won't Get You There, a really good book, yeah. One of the things in the book is when people say things to you, you never say yes but, but what you just did, and all my clients who do that have to donate \$20 to charity. Now keep going, but leave out the but.

DJ: Sure, I was saying, in a world where there are abundant choices, I come across a lot of people who feel paralyzed, you know, they have achieved success in a certain domain like you said, it could be a sports person or it could be a business CEO, but then you know that you have another 20-30 years ahead. How do you make choices and what has been your observation around people who are thoughtful about these transitions when they transition effectively from one sort of innings if you will to another?

MG: Yeah, the people I work with for example in a way they have abundant choices, in a way they have very few choices. Here's the problem that could they get a job? Yes, they don't have to work anyway. Guy who I talked to yesterday was worth tens of millions of dollars, they don't have to work. Could they get a job? Of course, you might say there are abundant choices, in terms of a job, there are not abundant choices, and there are also no choices, why? You can get a job; it's you can't get a great job. Yeah, you can get a job, if you can't get a great job, you can get some boring job, some job you don't want to do. To get a great job is not easy. And the people I work with I say look, you don't want to have a mediocre life. Yeah, there are a million choices where you can have a mediocre life; there are not a million choices where you are going to have a great life. And what you really want to say is how I can have a great life and there aren't a million choices for that and you've got to start over and pretend you are in sales, you are like a kid, going out there in the job market. Now, you might say well, I am a big CEO. Yeah, you are, but guess what? Everyone else applying for that job has been CEO just like you are. Yeah, and they are all big deals. And so, you are just starting over. It's much healthier because when our egos get in the way then we have this thing well, I don't, and you say things like I don't need this. Well, nobody applying for this job needs it. Now, any job you want all the applicants don't need it. So, make me... you don't need a big deal, don't say that, it's not impressive, yeah, you do need it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I remember asking a similar question to Atul Kasbekar (AK), one of the top photographers in India who is now a well-known producer. I asked him how he had thought about staying relevant in the context of the digitization in the world of photography in the event of smart phones and smart software and here is what he said.

AK: "I love the word relevance, because I think I hats off to people who have manage to do that in their careers for long, I mean like for example whatever criticism anyone let's say does of Mr Bachchan, I am a huge admirer and I am a huge admirer just from the fact that he wakes up every day and he things to himself that this is the new day it's a new fight kal tak jo kiya hai bhul jao aaj kya kiya hai batao! And I don't know when the man sleeps but he still just right his blog and he will date it and he will number it and its incredible and yet stayed relevant and he is getting paid a lot of money and more power to him whether to endorse something or whether to whatever, so I think if you can do that over a sustain period of time it is only because over couple of things I think one is the fear that you will be number four or five or eight or forgotten and that's traumatic to most so then you work extra hard. I was just talking a couple of days ago about let's say film directors, look at Clint Eastwood, I mean somewhere in his 80s and they were talking Dirty Harry who made some who made some utterly time pass westerns in his time I never had any great respect for him then in his head as actor but man I will touch his feet if I meet him now because I mean oh my god, A- as an actor, B- as a director what has he done he is like you cannot doing American Sniper at 80, he is 80 something, it's a really complicated film on location and bombed out areas and this is like hectare and you know if you have been in a film shoot you know how difficult it is what he has done and he is doing that at his 80 something, he is not saying haa yaar what I have done is enough for life a lifetime achievement in whatever the hell I wanted to be and lets now stop and ok it's a new morning."

DJ: If this topic is of interest, please visit playtopotential.com, go to the Curated Playlists section and look up the Playlist Staying Relevant. It has insights from leading thinkers, sportsmen, CEOs and others on how they have thought about playing the game over the long term.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Atul Kasbekar that is referenced: [Staying Relevant over the long term](#).

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Marshal Goldsmith - Nuggets

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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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