

Extraordinary Lessons - Resilience

Speaker 1 [00:00:02] Seeking The Extraordinary is sponsored by the Colony Group, a national wealth and business management company that seeks the extraordinary by pursuing an unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering their visions of tomorrow. To learn more about how The Colony Group manages beyond money, visit thecolonygroup.com

Speaker 2 [00:00:28] Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary. Welcome to our shared quest. A quest not for a thing, but for an idea, a quest not for a place, but into deep, inner, unexplored regions of ourselves. A quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that. Extraordinary stories of overcoming anguish. Every single one of them had lost somebody from their family. I will never give up on trying to do less than that. To people who have stood up to challenges with true courage, do something in life, you have a passion for something that you enjoyed and you find fulfilling. That's where you'll have your greatest success stories that will enlighten and inspire. What I said to him is absolutely a cliché, but the journey is more important than the end result. May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach. Join me now in Seeking the Extraordinary. I am Michael Nathanson, your Chief Seeker of the Extraordinary.

Welcome to another edition of Extraordinary Lessons. Today, we're going to speak about modern resilience. A while back, I received a call from a journalist who was writing a story about resilience. Now is, as is so often the case these days, she was writing largely about COVID and the difficult economy supply chain issues. But she seemed to be thinking about the topic much more broadly than just that. And I told her that I've come to think of resilience.

Resilience, both of individuals and organizations, not so much in terms of being strong enough to withstand and recover from adverse conditions, but more in terms of being flexible and adaptive enough to do so. I cited one of my favorite learnings from the ancient philosopher Lao Tzu. He said an unbending tree is easily broken. I also talked about the Stockdale Paradox. You may or may not be familiar with the Stockdale Paradox.

It refers specifically to Admiral Stockdale. You may remember him as Ross Perot's running mate. He was also a very accomplished admiral, and he was shot down and taken prisoner in the Vietnam War. And he spent several years in horrific conditions in a Vietnamese prisoner of war camp. He watched as many of his fellow prisoners died one after another, and he noticed that they all would say things like, Well, we'll be home for Thanksgiving, or don't worry, we'll get home by Christmas or we'll get home by the New Year.

But it never happened. And Admiral Stockdale realized that while it was good to have hope for the long term, he had to set his mind to accept the harsh realities of what is right now and how difficult it was going to be and not tell himself that, well, I'll be home in two weeks or a month or two months. And he says that the key to his survival was that mindset, in this mindset has since been renamed the Stockdale Paradox, a name given to him by the great Jim Collins.

I also spoke to this reporter about the work of Martin Reeves. And Martin Reeves is a brilliant thinker from the consulting firm BCG. He's done TED talks and written several articles, and one thing he wrote about was the human immune system, and he wrote about how there's so much we can learn by looking at the human immune system and applying it to organizations today, and that if organizations are able to adapt to some of the things that the human immune system has adapted to and embrace some of these components of the human immune system, then an organization could very well go on and live for 100 years or 90 years, whatever you consider to be the lifespan of a human being these days. And by the way, that's a long lifespan for any business organization.

He talked about six key principles embraced by the human immune system and in turn by resilient companies. Redundancy, diversity, modularity, adaptability. Prudence and embeddedness. Now, I'm not going to get into those six factors. That's something that I'll let you all look up. But, you

know, think about these things, these ideas of redundancy, having multiple systems that can work when one's not diversity, the idea of having many different ways to be successful.

Modularity is just this concept that if one part of a system or say, a company goes down that won't take the rest of the company or system down. Adaptability. I think that's something that speaks for itself, as does the prudence. The concept of prudence and embeddedness is just this idea that resilient companies like the human immune system understand that they are part of something broader. In the case of an organization, the community, the industry that it finds itself in, and this is this notion of embracing embeddedness, obviously, for the immune human immune system, it understands that it is embedded within the human body, within the host, and that if it does not recognize that it could very well kill the host and therefore kill itself.

I also, when I spoke with this journalist, spoke about my own experience living with a brain tumor. Well, only a few hours after that interview, I got the latest news from my son's girlfriend that our son was on his way to the emergency room with shooting pain in his shoulder, jaw back and left arm. That kind of pain can mean different things for different people. But our son, some of you may have heard his podcast is not your typical young man, at least not from a health perspective. He has congenital heart disease. He's been very public about it, and he had just had his most recent open-heart surgery only a few months ago.

Early the next morning, we learned that our son had an aneurysm in his aorta, possibly caused by an infection, and that an emergency open heart surgery was imminent. The next day, completely sleep deprived. We were on our way to the hospital where our son lives in the city he lives in to be with him for his latest heart surgery and was going to be the second in under three months. Now, he ultimately recovered from that surgery. He's had to have other surgeries since, but he's doing okay and he's actually doing really well. He's married and he's looking forward to a great future and so are we.

But his experience, though, I thought was another example of resilience. And I want to derive some learning from that experience. My son has remained brave, confident and fully resilient every step of the way. And that brings me back to this concept of resilience. Only a few hours after my interview, when we got that call, my perspective on resilience had already expanded and I gained greater clarity. Though the times were difficult during my son's surgery and his subsequent surgeries, I asked everyone for their thoughts and prayers and noted that that sometimes maligned cliché was actually much more than a cliché for my family and probably for those in need.

But I now realize that I was only scratching the surface. And again, sorry for that cliché when I made that that that plea for thoughts and prayers. What I've come to realize is that resilience starts with flexibility and adaptability, but that the kind of resilience exhibited by my son is powered by something more. That's something includes the thoughts and prayers of friends, family and strangers. But it also includes the broad, diverse support of an entire community. It's more than thoughts and prayers that have sustained my family and my son. He's been supported not by one, but by two medical communities, one in Chicago, one in Boston. His friends, especially his wife and family, had been there for him every day and at all hours. Our temple has supported him. His school supported him. His mentors and teachers supported him. And my wonderful colleagues and friends at work have supported him too. In this way, I've noticed how deeply my son is embedded in his in our communities.

Going back to Martin Reeves. When Mr. Reeves speaks about the attribute of Embeddedness, what he is talking about is that resilient organizations recognize and account for the fact that they are part of an entire ecosystem that includes their customers, suppliers, advisors, business partners, competitors, and even regulators. It's the same for each of us individually. We too are part of an ecosystem and our resilience is maximized only by understanding that fact. Now, I would not presume to suggest an improvement to the wisdom of the enduring master philosopher Lao Tzu. He's one of the greatest philosophers of all time. Instead, I'm just going to suggest that Lao Tzu might have chosen a tree for his metaphor for a specific reason.

It's true. An unbending tree is easily broken. But even the most flexible tree must be firmly rooted in its surrounding soil. Or it will just as easily be swept away by the very wind that otherwise would break it. My son's resilience starts with his ability to snap back from these great health challenges. But its incomparable power lies in his ability to harness the power of the broad and deep community that supports him. Like the soil surrounding Ladsous Tree. This community nourishes him and it holds his roots in place. Despite the best efforts of the heart disease Tempest to uproot him.

The same can be said for all of us. We can be resilient on our own if we are able and willing to be yielding flexible and adaptive. We can be most resilient, however. Only when we seek and receive the full support of a broad and deep community. I think about people who have been less fortunate than my son and find myself wondering. Did they have the same support that my son had? Were they bending trees? They got swept away. Not because they were unbending, but because the soil around them was just too dry and too loose.

It's time that we all recognize that resiliency is not exclusively an individual trait. It's a community trait too, and we are all interdependent with each of us having an important part to play as members of that community. And with that, we conclude today's extraordinary lessons. Thank you to our sponsor, The Colony Group. The Colony Group is a national wealth and business management company with offices across the country that itself seeks to extraordinary as it pursues its unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering their visions of tomorrow.

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