

Jerry: Hello there, it's good to see you again. How are you?

Thiyagarajan M: I'm doing great, Jerry.

Jerry: Good. Good. Uh, why don't you take a minute and introduce yourself and, uh, and then we'll sort of dive right in.

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. So Jerry, my full name is Thiyagarajan M. Uh, I go by the name Rajan, uh, in the short form. And I'm, uh, a partner at an accelerator called Upekkha, uh, which is an accelerator based out of India, and we focus on only SaaS based, uh, startups. And, uh, we have a unique focus where we ask people to work on getting the capital efficiency first and then help them grow, from there. Uh, and we call this a way of building SaaS companies as value SaaS. Uh, prior to that, I was a product manager. I did a startup, worked for about 17 years. I started out as an engineer, uh, 17 years ago.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, and, uh, we met live and in person at our recent, uh, uh, investor focused bootcamp that Reboot did. Uh-

Thiyagarajan M: Yes. So yes. Uh, so yeah, I had the pleasure to meet you in, uh, uh, Reboot, early this year. And I would say that, you know, that was, uh, an amazing experience because I'd been following your work, uh, since 2006, 2007. I've been reading Fred Wilson's blog for very long and that's how I came across your work. I'd been following the bootcamp, so finally I've got to attend that this year. My partner did last year. So, uh, uh, great to know you in person, Jerry.

Jerry: Well, it's very, very sweet and kind of you, and, um, I remember you telling me that you've been following me and my work for that long, and, uh, I feel both honored and a little burdened. I wanna live up to your expectations, (laughs) so I'll say that so that I can release myself from that. So, so, um, tell me what would be helpful to talk through today? What, what, what are perhaps some questions you might be holding?

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah.

Jerry: And you're in Mumbai right now, is that correct?

Thiyagarajan M: I'm in Bangalore right now and it is raining.

Jerry: Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. Yeah. So questions that might be helpful for you to hold. Yeah.

Thiyagarajan M: So, uh, so when I came to Reboot, I had put together a North star plan for me, planned out for about seven to eight years, uh, looking into the future and what I wanna do. And I had a framing for that called, uh, game player fit. Uh, the way I asked myself this question is what is the game that I'm playing in professional life and personal life? And, uh, what type of a player am I? And where can I find that game player fit? Different people call that in terms of ikigai or even the

word called slow. So there is an external game that you're winning in life and then there is an internal score that you're keeping. Uh, you know, three months later, you know, many of this, uh, projections or planning has all been torn to pieces. So I am asking a few fundamental questions around the game player fit. So that may be useful to talk about, uh, in the context of, uh, three months from where we talked about it before.

Uh, specifically I would say that, uh, so in, I, like I started out, uh, this accelerator three years ago. And at that point in time, I realized that I've worked with a lot of founders. My past from that was that I'd spend about seven to eight years literally working with about a thousand plus, maybe more founders in India helping build them product businesses in various roles and capacities. So I figured that maybe I'll be best at helping with a coach role with a lot of the folks, and that's why I started out, uh, with this accelerator. And right now, I struggle a little bit with, hey, I can see that there are these, uh, like big shifts that have happened and maybe these startups need to survive. And, uh, usually I have this approach of saying, I'm the doctor, you're the patient, but it is your call finally. But now when I see that this is a startup that needs to survive, and I need to take a surgical decision, should I jump into the player mode or not?

So, so that's a question that has been bouncing in my head. Uh, love your help to think through that. And also I'd like to hear your experience in 2001 to when you went through, or in the past, if you've gone through this experience, and how did you think about it.

Jerry: So as is often the case and you, um, have worked and experienced me enough to know that I'm not gonna give you a direct answer. I'm gonna give you an indirect answer. And because I actually firmly believe you know the answer, but I think you need some guidance on it. So you used to have this plan, and it was a seven to eight year plan. And all of a sudden, life changed rather dramatically, um, six weeks ago, eight weeks ago, whatever it was, whenever it was that, um, the pandemic, the reality of the pandemic hit home for you, and we had to sort of shuffle everything again. So am I naming that right, you're in this sort of new place?

Thiyagarajan M: Absolutely. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right. So let's talk about the nature of planning for a moment. Um, in all my years as an investor, not one company ever successfully executed all of the things that they were ... that I invested in successfully executed all the items and the exact plan as they laid out when they sought funding. Um, and just take that in for a moment. We spend an enormous amount of time plotting and planning and then life happens. And I have been talking about that or relaying, in reality, relaying the teachings I have learned about that, about the nature of impermanence, and the, uh, way in which we should hold lightly plans for over a decade. And it's still viscerally shocking when all the plans are torn asunder.

But it wasn't supposed to be this way, right? You and your partner were supposed to have an accelerator and you were gonna have a couple of exits. You were gonna take that money, you were gonna roll into another investment program, and then sunshine and roses, sweetness and light and honey for the rest of your lives, right? And then all of a sudden reality hit. And, uh, for those of you who are listening, um, Rajan is nodding a lot, (laughs) right? So what is the, what was the point of planning in the first place? What was it that you were trying to do?

Thiyagarajan M: So I was trying to find, uh, unchanging core, right, um, in the sense that, um, a startup, in the journey of startup, uh, you're gonna be able to have to make decisions with, uh, there is gonna be not a lot of data, um, very uncertain environment, but within that, find that anchor around which when like everything is doubtful, uh, we could say that, look, I'm going to anchor around this. And then like, you know, if you use that North Star as the guidance, then kind of think backwards from there, what else do I need to shape and put together? But, but, but, but really the key point was like what is gonna be that North star? And so, so, so in times of difficulty, that could help you, uh, make those tough decisions. So that was the first point.

The second one was like, am I going to allocate my time in accordance to that particular North star, right? Those were like, you know, the high level two components I would say the part of the plan. I mean, we can't, um, like, you know, create essentially dreams and say that this is exactly what I will do on this particular day, but the principles that went behind the planning were these two.

Jerry: And so, uh, what you were trying to do, let me reflect back what I hear you saying, what you were trying to do was to find the thing that was unchanging in the midst of all this uncertainty. The thing that you could always say, and you said it yourself, use, you used the term, the North star, the thing that would guide you. And what you associated with that core was, uh, "the plan." Am I getting that right?

Thiyagarajan M: Yes.

Jerry: Right. And so in a sense, what I think you were seeking was a map of the world. Um, uh, you know, a sense of, um, uh, that, that if I had the plan of action, then I could ... what would it, what would it do for you emotionally if that were the case?

Thiyagarajan M: I would have a sense of I would say like, you know, calm achievement. I mean like for me, if I had headed in this direction, I thought I would get the flow or that ikigai, is the word that we use, saying that if I went in this direction to make it very specific, right? So I said, you know, if I work with 100 founders, have them, advise them, get them to a financial meaningful outcome for them, then that'll be great. Right. So now like where that is changing is that maybe I should work with one of them, rather the two of them than to work with 100 of them,

right? So initially, my North star was, I wanna work with a few set of them versus now saying, that's the second part of my question, which is that now do I become a player or should I continue to be a coach?

Jerry: Right. And so you want an answer to that question in order to give you a sense of what, safety? What does, what does it do for you?

Thiyagarajan M: It's not safety. It is more a sense of, uh, like, uh, like, you know, this is a, this is a game that I will feel at peace.

Jerry: So what you really want is to feel at peace?

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. This is a game I know that if I like play this particular game and sort of be playing a coach and sort of being in the arena and being, working with the founder or being the founder and, uh, building a business, in saving that business is what may give me more peace. So that's, that's the change in North star that I'm, uh, seeing.

Jerry: Right. Right. The, the, uh, this reminds me of the experience that often happens to me, which is that folks come looking for a direction. They come looking for an answer. They come looking in effect to say to myself or to another coach or therapist or guru or a minister, please tell me how to go. Please tell me what steps to take. But, and I know you've read my book, but as I wrote in the book, a map is a poor substitute for a life lived. See, what can happen is in that anxiety, in that wish for safety and serenity and equanimity, we can, uh, project into the plan things that it's incapable of giving us, which is serenity, equanimity, right? Because what's real is that, um, the unexpected happens.

Thiyagarajan M: That's right.

Jerry: And so let's go back. I, I really admire your wish for the unchanging core, but I think that you're conflating the map with the unchanging core, and that the core for all of us really needs to be the answers to the core questions that I always ask. Who are you? What do you believe to be true about the world? What kind of a leader are you? And I know you identify as male. What kind of man are you? What are your values? How would you like the world to be? See, the answers to those questions will point you to your own core. And I get that the pandemic has up ended all of the core, all of the plans you had for the accelerator. But what has it not appended? That's the question. What remains true?

Thiyagarajan M: I think, you know, helping, working with others or like, like working myself or working with others, the whole idea of helping them with meaningful founder outcomes, I don't think has changed at all. I mean, I'm not asking questions about that, right?

Jerry: Right.

Thiyagarajan M: But like how many of them do I work with in what specific ways I work with? I think that has, uh, you know, that has been like I would at least say tested.

Jerry: So I'm gonna reflect back what I've just heard so that you can hear it. The what has not changed. The how has changed.

Thiyagarajan M: Right.

Jerry: So from where I sit, what needs to be rewritten is not the what, but the how.

Thiyagarajan M: Understand.

Jerry: So the answer to your question of, should I be more player than coach? I don't know. Perhaps. But if we use, as the true North star, I want to be in service to entrepreneurs in India, right, if that's the true North star, then the answer to the question of how becomes what's in more ser- what's in the best service to those entrepreneurs? What do they need? Does that have any resonance for you?

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. Yes, it does.

Jerry: Right.

Thiyagarajan M: So I like the point that you said about, uh, conflating North star with the map, right? You know, maybe like the unchanging core is that of, like, i- it can be the map that is the unchanging core, right? I mean it can be an unchanging map, maps change, but, uh, like it's, it's, it's beyond the map that has to be asked, and maybe it's in the realm of what and why and not in the realm of how. Um, I didn't get ... maybe there is, the same thing applies and I'm just, you know, sort of thinking aloud with you here, Jerry, uh, that was the part of my second question, right, and this is something that we discussed in the bootcamp as well, that I said that in all of us hold these beliefs, and, uh, those beliefs, we can call them as maps. But if we changed all of our beliefs, like change all of our maps, right, then the problem of Ship of Theseus comes up, right? So who am I, right, if I keep changing, um, a lot of that? And then how do I distinguish between am I changing the unchanging North star or am I changing the map? The blind to both. How do, how does one distinguish between the two?

Jerry: Well, why don't you take a minute and explain what you call the ship of theseus problem.

Thiyagarajan M: So the ship of theseus problem, uh, is this, uh, old Greek mythology where there is this ship, which is supposed to be a mighty ship and a lot of people have used it for, uh, many, many years for war, but then it's made of wood and woods decay. So they change one plank and over a period of time, every engine, nook and corner of the ship's flank is changed. So then the paradox really is that if every plank of the ship has changed and the leadership, what's called thesis, then does it remain thesis anymore? So every belief that I hold, if I have to

change, or like every map that I carry, if I have to change, then am I the same person or not? And so how, like how, how do I distinguish, that becomes how do I distinguish between map and the unchanging core?

Jerry: I think here again, you're conflating. And I think what you're conflating as we were describing it before metaphorically, the North star and the map. Okay. A map is an instrument, it's an approximation, just like a business plan is an instrument, an approximation, right? It's a tool. But a business plan, a life plan are neither ... and, and business plans and life plans are not businesses in lives, right? And so the good captain holds the map while they're, they're on the, uh, you know, while they're, they're traversing the landscape. But they're simultaneously reading the maps and reading the landscape. And many times, many, many times, the map was written by someone who missed parts of the landscape or the landscape has changed.

And you're worried. And I think when you, when you, when you get fixated on the Ship of Theseus paradox, you're confusing the changes in the plans that are necessary with somehow changing the core mission in the first place. What remains is this mission of helping entrepreneurs. So let's reinforce that for a moment.

Thiyagarajan M: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Why is it so important that entrepreneurs in India be helped? Why is it important to Rajan, not theoretically, but to you?

Thiyagarajan M: Um, I, I think, you know, it's, I can identify that as, as a cause, which is beyond myself. Um, I've been involved in building a lot of products, and I've been involved with a motley crew that believes that like we as a country can become a product nation. We did, uh, in the last 30 years really great in, uh, being, uh, the center for, for IT services.

Jerry: Yup.

Thiyagarajan M: And, uh, now like we are rising up in the value chain and that's been a belief since the last 10 to 12 years. And I've been involved with, um, a lot of such initiatives and I've seen that it takes a different kind of mindset to be successful in that. And, uh, I've seen a lot of mistakes being made. I've seen like great entrepreneurs pour energy, including myself and that not turning into any, um, outcome for them. And, uh, I, I feel that like, you know, that's something that needs to be supported. I've gone through that experience myself. So, so it's a larger than myself purpose that I can align myself to, and, uh, that has like great joy for me and it has like meaningful impact for, uh, people around me, whether it is at a personal level, family level, friend level, or at a country level.

Jerry: So I'm gonna reflect back to you some of the things that I heard. Having meaningful impact at the personal, family, friend and country level gives you great joy. That you and this motley crew, as you called it, are really focused on

doing something for the country, which is, to use your words, moving it up the value chain, or in other words to make the country, which really consists of people like you, your family, your friends and countrymen be more valuable.

Thiyagarajan M:

That's correct.

Jerry:

And so by helping entrepreneurs, what you're helping is the entire country of India and its billion plus people to move up 'the value chain' or again, in other words, to be more valuable. Tell me what part of that personal mission statement has changed because of coronavirus.

Thiyagarajan M:

None of it.

Jerry:

None of it, but, but, but the planks, every single plank on Theseus' ship has changed. But the core purpose of the ship, which is to travel the wide seas remains same. So what does it matter if Theseus' ship is the same as it was at the beginning? You see the conflation that may be going on for you?

Thiyagarajan M:

That's fine. Yup.

Jerry:

Let me ask you something. Why is it so important that India be more valuable to you? Not some theoretical. And if you, if you quote Greek mythology, I'll yell at you. Why is it so important to you?

Thiyagarajan M:

Yeah. Um, so I, I would put it this way. I always, uh, found it joyful to do projects which are beyond myself, right? There is a mission, and I work with great people and we are furthering that mission. And this is a mission, I would say at least for the last 12, 15 years, I've been able to inch towards with different set of folks or in different ways. Whether it was a think tank that I was part of or, or the communities that I've built in, uh, in the past before that or even the product leader roles that I was, uh, laying or doing before, in every one of those roles, I was able to see myself and being able to find this cause which is larger than myself, and that giving me joy. So I don't think, you know, it is like something outside. It is when I work in a project like this, it gives me joy. I feel the flow. I feel energized. I say, oh, like, "This is the kind of projects that I need to be spending my time on."

Jerry:

So at one level, it produces an internal sense of flow for you to be working on a mission that is outside of your own self, outside of your own purview, or in your own little bubble of you. Okay. I got that. And is there any reason why it's important why a nation of a billion plus people should rise up in the value chain? I'm projecting and leading a little bit here?

Thiyagarajan M:

Well, I mean th- th- there I can talk about some projections. You know, India as a country, I mean in the IT services, it created about \$360 billion of, uh, market cap, uh, which means that it has given jobs to about four and a half million people, right? Um, and if we build it, and if we build it through product companies, then the same number of people will generate about a trillion dollar

of value, right, and that creates a lot of value for, uh, you know, the entire economy. So that's more a financial projection and like, you know, things that you can estimate and say, hey, this is how it is gonna be. But if you really look at what IT services did is, is brought a lot of people from middle class, lower middle class to middle class, middle class to like creating wealth for themselves. That's the big change that IT services in the last 30 years, uh, brought to the country. And like few rise up in the value chain, that impact only gets multiplied.

Jerry: What happens to, what happens to individual families and individuals if there's more economic activity? What happens to their ability to feed their children, send them to school, give them clothing, give them shelter? What happens?

Thiyagarajan M: They lead, lead more meaningful lives, I would say.

Jerry: So what we're talking about here, the mission and purpose that is unchanging is outside of you is to lift up the lives, not just of companies, but of individuals, people. And here again, seems to me that's a value expression that is also unchanging. So what remains is the question of how. And the short answer to your question is, I don't know how, but I bet you do. How did you come up with the idea of the accelerator in the first place?

Thiyagarajan M: So, so the accelerator was actually, uh, created by my partner. I joined a few months later. And, um, you know, it was, uh, based on his experience. He was at Microsoft Ventures and their accelerator program for about five years, and, uh, realized that the B2B companies cannot be shoved down the unicorn path. They need more than three months of support, and they need, uh, the ability to get to product market fit, and we saw that the highest mortality rate was that. And I was doing different programs called round tables. And I was at Intuit. I ran an accelerator inside. So I had also kind of came to a similar conclusion. And we said, getting everybody to just fundraise and look for more fundraisers is not the answer. We should spend two years with them, get them to \$1 million in revenue, and they should be able to do that in less than \$200,000 of funding. That was the going in thesis.

And we had seen that work in our past life. And we said that this is what we should do. Uh, and then we also said that like, we need to design this through, uh, skin in the game principles. So we said that we will head, help these companies get to \$1 million, and then based on hitting the revenue outcomes, we will take equity. And then said after that you decide whether you wanna build \$100 million dollar company, wanna fundraise or, uh, you wanna just like build a lifestyle business is a choice that you take later.

But on the day of starting the company, don't decide are you going to be a Shaquille O'Neal or not, right? You know, you can't decide him and he's in kindergarten. You need to allow him to grow a little bit. You need to give him that support. And then after that you should decide to, uh, like go big or go home. So reducing the mortality rate and getting to that million dollar, which we had witnessed between 2011 and 2016-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Thiyagarajan M: ... uh, is what led us to create this, um, uh, accelerator called Upekkha.

Jerry: So what, what you need to do now is develop a slightly altered plan for how to go forward, and to sort through what is the relationship between myself as player and myself as coach. Meaning, am I more of an operator now than an investor or am I more of an investor than an operator. And, and navigating and calibrating around that needs to change in response to the changed landscape.

Thiyagarajan M: [inaudible 00:31:24].

Jerry: I know you had some other questions, and, and I wanna make sure that we leave time for some of those.

Thiyagarajan M: Sure. Um, so, so there's a entire event of, uh, last few weeks has, uh, left the world to be like a Bermuda triangle of beliefs. So every belief seems right and the opposite, uh, one also seems right. So wanted to ask you, Jerry, do you have any beliefs that have held steadfast across, uh, the last few months or maybe across, you know, the, the last big shock that you personally witnessed, which was in 2001, uh, to now?

Jerry: You know, um, I've experienced a lot of emotions in the last few weeks, um, sadness, fear, anger, joy, happiness, profound human connection to others. I remember just a few weeks ago, for example, you and I spoke and we spoke to, I don't remember the number, but some number of entrepreneurs in India.

Thiyagarajan M: 70 founders.

Jerry: 70 founders, and it was a delight to feel that inter connectedness. Um, but I have not found my core beliefs shaken. I've actually found my core beliefs strengthened. So for example, a core belief that I have is that, um, and it's really comes from teaching, core belief I have is that the world is constantly falling apart all the time. And that our plans, no matter how well crafted are constantly being challenged because I thought this was gonna happen and then something else happens. What I have been taught and what I have come to see the visceral truth of is that holding tightly to those perceptions and, and projections of way, the way the whole world is supposed to be and should it be in the future produces an enormous amount of pain and suffering.

And, uh, and yet just not caring doesn't really work at all. And so w- what, in, in the strengthening of that understanding of the world, I've come to appreciate emotionally the value of grief. I'm gonna say that again. I've come to appreciate the value of grief. And we can grieve the loss of plans, the loss of dreams, the loss of wishes. And it's important to go through that grieving process in order to create space for the reinforcement of that which we know to be true.

So for you, for example, you noted, you know it to be true that, uh, that people in India have benefited from economic activity even as some, there's probably been an exacerbation of inequality in many ways, but many people have benefited. And you know it to be true that, that moving up the value chain, as you put it, will benefit more people. And that in your heart, that is a good thing, because it means more food on the table, more education, more capacity to grow for people.

Well, one of the things that I know to be true is that we need each other deeply and powerfully. And I cannot imagine a calamity happening to humanity that is a more visceral powerful expression of the lesson that we need each other. I need you, Rajan, to stay home even though you're thousands and thousands of miles away from me. I need you to wear a mask outside, and you need me to do the same thing.

So one of the things that I have come to have strengthened for me is that when the world is falling apart, what is absolutely more true than ever before is that we need each other. How we can help each other, well, that's very different, because six months ago, the how might have looked like ... You know, when we first met in January, the how might have looked like, when is Jerry coming to Mumbai to talking to the entrepreneurs?

Thiyagarajan M: Absolutely.

Jerry: And that's the wish, right? That's still a wish I hold. I can't wait to get off a plane in Mumbai and experience that. But right now, that is not how I can help. That is not how I can demonstrate the interconnectedness, the interdependence of you and I. But I can do that over a video call.

Thiyagarajan M: So Jerry, I got reminded of one thing that you said at the bootcamp. I think you were quoting Pema. You said, uh, the, the terrifying thing, I might not be getting this right, but the terrifying thing about knowing that you're falling is that you're falling and falling and then there is no place to fall down to. I don't know if I got that right. And I got reminded of that.

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's Trungpa Rinpoche. And he said something like this, uh, who is one of teachers. He said, you know, the terrifying thing, to use your language, is that you are falling through space. And the good news is there's no ground, right? And so we have to experience the fact that we are falling, falling, we're free falling. And we have to remember that there's actually no ground. There never was ground. We were always free fall. It just didn't feel that way. And that's that, that, you know, that's one of the, uh, painful gifts of this time is that, um, is a realization that, uh, there was never ground in the first place, right?

Um, now, to be clear, we have to operate as if there is ground, right? Um, I, I plant a tree fully expecting that the land that I'm planting that tree in 20 years

from now will not be bulldozed and turned into a housing complex, right? I believe in a certain set of the future. And so for me to experience the joy that comes from planting a tree, I have to believe that that tree will still be able to thrive and, and experience watering and sunlight and all the things necessary for the tree to live into its purpose.

But if I hold too tightly to the belief of what that particular plot of mine will look like 20 years from now, then I am bound to suffer. And so what our task is, is to hold ourself in this sort of center space where we believe in the future as we anticipate it to be, but we hold that belief lightly. But what we hold tightly are our values. The why do we do things, the why of who we are.

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. You know, that also reminds me of the metaphor for use for planning, uh, that you pointed that out about like if you're trying, if you're planning to build a building, then you would create a blueprint and you would measure it to the length and you'd expect it to go according to plan. But if you're trying to create a garden, you can't measure it. You just spoke about that right away. You can only tend to it. You can till your sand, you can water it, then it'll bloom its own way. Like all you have control to is, is how you're gonna water the plant.

Jerry: That's right. That's right. And I suspect that your accelerator is more garden than building. And that your task, like a good gardener, is to tend to it. And it turned out that these plants did not take, but those plants are taking. And so let's tend to those plants in that particular way and give those plants everything.

Thiyagarajan M: So Jerry, one more question from our bootcamp, uh, which I felt very powerful about was you telling me that, you know, sometimes you don't ask this question to answer this question. And that question was about asking yourself saying, am I a good man? Right? So in, in times like this, has that question changed or does it still haunt you? I keep asking myself this question again and again.

Jerry: Yeah. Sure. You, you, you, um, let us note that the question of, am I a good man or am I a good woman or am I a good adult, however I identify, is a powerful, powerful question, and it can sometimes haunt us negatively. It can sometimes hallow us and make us feel, uh, that we question our worthiness. And like all good questions, um, it can also compel us and drive us to the next level of behavior. Um, and another way to look at it is to say to ourselves, am I living up to my aspirational values? Or as my teacher, Parker Palmer and I once asked on a podcast, how have I been kind?

So you asked, am I still haunted by that question? Yes, but I would use a different verb at this point. I would say I am still guided by that question. The haunting is a little bit less so, meaning the way in which I've attached my sense of self worth to a positive answer to that question has been reduced. But I still allow the power of the question to guide me, um, knowing full well that there are days, there are moments every single day, which I do not live into those values. But as my therapist, Dr. Sayers, once said to me, not bad considering,

um, for the most part, I do. So. But I recognize you, you, you also noted that that question came up for you as recently as last week. So tell me about that.

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. I think, you know, we talked about, uh, like, you know, recognizing the mortality of, uh, upsells and, you know, in our, uh, last conversation that we did with our founders. And, uh, I was, uh, thinking to myself in the limited time that I might imagine, am I allocating my time in the right way to all the people that are important in my life, which includes my son, my family. And I was asking myself this question, have I allocated enough to my, enough time to my son? So that question triggers this again, and, you know, I have a estranged relationship, uh, so I don't stay with my son. So, so that mortality realization again poked that question back to me.

Jerry: What, what c- yeah.

Thiyagarajan M: You know, I couldn't, I couldn't, you know, think of a different answer. I said, you know, I think I'm doing everything that I can, which is in my power. Um, like I'll have to recognize the, um, like, you know, uh, lack of control that I have over this. If I could, I would definitely spend all my time. Like whatever I could, I've definitely done. So that, that question comes up back to you to ask. Have you done enough?

Jerry: Um, what is your son's name?

Thiyagarajan M: His name is Rishikesh.

Jerry: Rishikesh. If I can, uh, suggest a framing about how to respond to that question that arises for you, and I wanna acknowledge that, um, you're estranged from his mother and that you don't see him as much as you might like. And that in the loss of that time together, this question seems to arise even more so. Am I seeing that correctly?

Thiyagarajan M: Yes.

Jerry: So we just sort of pause and honor that. That's painful. I want you to think forward into the future, 20, 30 years. Rishikesh, uh, is an adult. Um, he might be in a relationship. He might even have a child. How would you like Rishikesh to answer that question?

Thiyagarajan M: Yeah. I would like to, I would like him to be less haunted by this question.

Jerry: So you'd like him to, we were using the phrase before, guided perhaps, and not haunted by.

Thiyagarajan M: E- exactly. Yeah. That's a good way to put it.

Jerry: And so perhaps as I often say that i- if we want our children as adults to live in a particular way, then the calling to us is to be that way ourselves. And so when

the question haunts you instead of guiding you, perhaps the thing to do is to envision what it is that you want to model for Rishikesh so that, that someday in the future when that question arises, it can guide and not haunt. It's hard. That means letting go of the underlying self criticism and the questions of whether or not you are worthy of love, safety, and belonging, as I word in the book, which then give rise to that question as a means of haunting and not as a guide? Maybe if you can forgive yourself, maybe if you can step into a place of seeing your value just simply for being human and not for the accomplishments that you have, have made in your life, then you can use the question of, am I a good man to guide you into making decisions that you will, uh, be proud of rather than stepping into guilt and regret. Is that helpful?

Thiyagarajan M: Thank you for that, Jerry.

Jerry: You're welcome.

Thiyagarajan M: And that changes my framing.

Jerry: In what way?

Thiyagarajan M: Exactly the way you said it, right? So instead of being, uh, troubled by it, use that as a force to move forward.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think if you do that-

Thiyagarajan M: We tied in that. Yeah. Right.

Jerry: I think if you do that, um, you're practicing the art of not only growing up but being a good parent, because you're creating space to forgive yourself and creating space to, what we say in Buddhism is the, the, the, the experience of begin again. I failed, tomorrow I begin again and again and again and again. And, uh, I am worthy regardless of whether or not I fail today, and that my goal is to try again tomorrow.

I wanna thank you for coming on the show. You know, from the ... I, I recognize that you have been following my work from afar and that, so our friendship is now only a few, our mutual friendship is now only a few months old, but, um ... and one of the things that I have experienced about you since we first met is the thoughtfulness with which you hold such questions. And I often see your mind trying to puzzle your way through to an answer. And I just wanna to respond to you more as an older brother than as a coach or even someone that you've perhaps may have put on a pedestal from afar and just say, I see you. I see what you, what matters to you, and I admire that in you.

Thiyagarajan M: Thank you for that, Jerry.

Jerry: You're welcome. And thanks again for coming on the show. I really appreciate it.

Thiyagarajan M:

Yup. Thank you.