

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 109: TAMIKA CATCHINGS

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption. Our guest is Tamika Catchings - a four-time Olympic gold medalist and 16-year WNBA superstar who was recently named vice president of basketball operations for the Indiana Fever.

Whitney: Tamika, we are so happy to have you on the podcast today and thank you to Allison Barber for suggesting that we interview you. And, um, so first question for you is, where did you grow up, and when you were a little girl, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Tamika: So, I always like to say that I kind of was a nomad when I grew up (laughs). Uh, my father played in the NBA for 11 years. So I was born in New Jersey when he played with New Jersey Nets. However, I really don't remember much about New Jersey because he got traded to Milwaukee. So I would say, mmm, quite a bit of my early years were in Milwaukee. And then when he finished playing basketball in the States, he actually got traded to the Clippers, but we all stayed in Milwaukee while he went to LA. Then we moved to Italy for a year. That was in first grade when that happened. Second grade we moved back to the States, moved down to Abilene, Texas. Third grade we moved back up to Chicago and stayed. We moved pretty much between my third grade year and sophomore year in high school we moved to different places within Chicago. And then junior year I moved back down to Texas to Duncanville, Texas for my last two years of high school. Went to University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. And then, I've been here in Indianapolis since I graduated. So, a little bit of everywhere.

Um, but my main goal growing up was really I wanted to be a professional basketball player. I made that dream, made that goal for myself when I was in seventh grade, and I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and be a professional basketball player in the NBA.

Whitney: I love that. And you really were a nomad!

Tamika: (laughs)

Whitney: You moved around a ton! That's amazing. Um, I was going to ask you ... okay so you knew what you wanted to be. And it sounds like you said you made the goal when you were in seventh grade or 12 years old. But that, that dream had started much younger, I suspect.

Tamika: It did, and being able to be around my father. But soccer was my first sport, my first organized sport. It was soccer then softball and then basketball. I actually started playing organized when I was in third grade. So, few years in after the fact I was like, "You know what, this is something that I-" you know, my, my first time playing in third grade my

sister and I were on a all-boys team and my dad was our coach. And it was just kind of like, "Yeah, I want to play with the guys, this is where I want to be, this is where I belong."

Whitney: Wait, you were playing basketball with the boys when you were eight years old?

Tamika: Yep. (laughs). My sister and I, and uh, we held our own. We held our own.

Whitney: Question for you - You were around your dad a lot as a child. Do you have a favorite memory um, with your dad?

Tamika: Whoa, favorite memory. I would say, probably after I made my goal, so after seventh grade. And I just remember my dad, even when I made it, and I remember him sitting me down and he was just like, "I want you to be sure. If this is something that you want to do, I'll help you. But I also want you to know as soon as you feel like you want to move on to something else, or you've lost the passion in the sport, I will release you. Meaning, I will not hold it against you like you said you wanted to play basketball and we going to play basketball." I mean he worked hard, he commit- like, I was super committed to working out and becoming the best player that I could be, but I think just knowing that I was playing because I wanted to play and not because he forced me to play.

Whitney: I wonder about that a lot, so we, we've got two children and it's so hard to not try to hand your own dreams to your children. So do you think that was hard for your dad to say, "You know Tamika, if you decide you don't want to, it's okay." Do you think that was hard for him to do?

Tamika: A little bit but probably and I think more so as I got older. You know-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: Looking at, he played for 11 years, I ended up playing for 16 years and so not, and then you know as far as the success too. You know, winning championships and having the opportunity to represent my country and play in the Olympics and win gold medals and all of the success that we've had, um, I think that maybe from that standpoint it was probably a little bit harder because then it gets to a point of, you know, you should be doing this and you should be doing that, you should be shooting the ball more,

Whitney: (laughs)

Tamika: (laughs), you pass the ball too much. So like get that different things like that and at the end of the day, we were two different players and for me it was like, Dad, like not that he was a selfish player, but like I need to figure out ways to engage my team because I need to make the players around me better. And being in the position that I was, he was more of a role player and I was more of a star player so I think it was really important for me to learn how to make the players around me better so that we could all win collectively.

Whitney: That's a really interesting observation. I, I want to put a pin in that for just a minute and come back to that Tamika because, I'm, I'm curious about that. You know in prepping for this interview, I did some reading and heard a lot about the relationship with your dad, a little bit with your sister, um, but not much about your mother. What have you learned from her? What are some things that you've learned from her that have really um, do you feel like, have influenced you in who you are as a person today?

Tamika: My mom is my everything. Um, literally, you know obviously my faith is a huge part of who I am, but, when I look at just consistency, and my mom and dad got divorced, sh- In seventh grade so shortly after I made my goal, and you know, I, I lived with my mom the

whole time, my mom, we moved my mom to Indiana a few years back so she's here with us. But I, I mean honestly, her, her faith, her resiliency, her determination, her consistency, I mean I can just go on and on with all the words. Her love, um, humbleness, I mean everything. And, a lot of people don't know, even I talk about it in my book, we've pretty much, or I've pretty much, my mom and I have pretty much lived at every single level. You know from being rich to poor to middle class to a little bit of everything.

And, I think that that has been something that has helped me through my life and through my journey. When my mom and dad got divorced, my mom and I moved to Texas my junior year in high school, I remember nights of you know waking up in the middle of the night and kind of sneaking out of the room to get a snack and hearing my mom cry and you know trying to figure out ways to make ends meet and I, I always kind of swore to myself that I would do whatever I could to help her and that she would never have to struggle, never have to suffer. And, and I think that that's a lot of my determination in everything that I do and just the way that I think and my leadership way, I mean everything I feel like I learned a lot from just being around her and watching her and everything that she did. She didn't finish college, um, she followed my dad. You I know they got married young. And so she kind of put all of her hopes and dreams on the back burner to make do for all of us.

I have an older brother Kenja, my sister Tauja and myself. And so she sacrificed a lot and I think in anything that you want to be successful because I look at the three of us and you know, not to toot our horn but we're all doing well and you know, I just, we're super close, the three of us, my brother, my sister and I and a lot of it is because when we moved around, we were, we were always taught about family. We were always taught about love and even more important, like our faith was the bond that kept our family together.

Whitney: Mmm. That's so lovely. So just so that people know, what is your sister doing and what is your brother doing? So that they don't have that open loop of what they're doing.

Tamika: Well, so my brother is um, a pharmaceutical rep, in St. Louis, Missouri. O'Fallon, Missouri. So, he, he's been there for a while, he's doing really, really well. And then my sister is actually here in Indianapolis with me. And she runs our foundation, The Catch the Stars foundation, celebrating our 15th year anniversary this year. I've had a lot of, my, my passion is helping kids. Helping kids prepare their, uh, prepare their dreams and helping kids prepare their dreams.

So, just trying to do whatever I can to focus on the kids that maybe are going through some of the things that I grew up with or that I faced when I was growing up and exposing them to things that they maybe never thought of being exposed to.

Whitney: Mmm. Okay I want to hear more about that in just a, in a couple of minutes. Um, so, so, um, from what I understand you had hearing loss as a child. Can you talk to us about um, about the hearing loss? Some of the struggles around that hearing loss.

Tamika: Yeah. Uh, so I was three years old when my parents found out that I had hearing loss. And interestingly enough, probably a year before that, my older brother, they found out my older brother had a hearing disability. So he ended up getting fitted into hearing aids and then I always talk about my sister, being kind of like the perfect one and, and then I happened. And, had a hearing loss as well. And I think from a, from a parents' perspective, my mom and dad really struggling because neither one of them are hearing impaired and nobody really in our family is. And so where did it come from kind of, like, what, they, it came out of the blue. And not just one but two of your children. And so I think for me in particular, being a girl, an African American little girl, that happened to be, have a hearing disability, you know what type of life would I have?

And I would say that um, really until my freshman year in college, I would say till my junior year, when I moved, when my mom and I moved to Texas, that was really the only time, the first time that I had to learn how to speak up for myself. How I had to learn to speak to other people because my sister and my brother did a great job of always protecting me and always speaking for me. And when I was on my own it was kind of like I had to learn, I had to develop my own skills. And so I would say junior and senior year, the benefit of that's probably the strongest benefit of being a part of a sports team. Is because you already have a built in base of, of family. Like you have a built in base of people that you can talk to and that you can trust and that are kind of in the weeds with you as far as competing on the, the volleyball courts, competing on the basketball court and so and then my freshman year in college, at University of Tennessee, was probably the first time somebody spoke over my life and I say someone, but my coach, Coach Pat Summit spoke over my life and really said, "One day your story will impact thousands, maybe millions of people."

And I remember looking at her like, Pat I don't even talk to people. (Laughs) There's no way my story's going to impact because there's no way I'm going to be speaking in front of a whole bunch of people and sharing my story like that. And, now you fast forward, that was two thousand- that was 97. So, um, now I'm a public speaker. That's what I do, I go around, I speak, I tell, I share my story and share stuff about leadership and all the different things that I've learned throughout my, the course of my life.

Whitney: So did you never talk when you were younger.

Tamika: I did not. (laughs)

Whitney: Like when you were in, you just did, you just didn't talk to people. And you could talk? Right? You didn't use sign language you just, just didn't talk because it was just too uncomfortable and too painful?

Tamika: Exactly. And, and some of it was being-

Whitney: Yeah.

Tamika: I got made fun of. You know I got made fun of for the way that I talk-

Whitney: Yeah.

Tamika: For the way that I look, for the hearing aids that I had to wear so most of the time, I just wanted to be invisible.

Whitney: Yeah. How tall are you Tamika?

Tamika: I stand six two. Yes.

Whitney: Oh yeah!

Tamika: (laughs)

Whitney: Proud. Right? Proud, proud, proud, six two. Hey so here's a question for you. Something that I'm wondering. Um, how do you think being hearing impaired has made you a better basketball player?

Tamika: I think being hearing impaired has made me not just a better basketball player, but I even think a better person. Because-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: I'm able, I think when I'm on the court, let me start with that. So, on the court-

Whitney: Yeah.

Tamika: Made me more observant. Because I, I don't wear my hearing aids on the court. And I can, I can hear without my hearing aids in, but I use a lot of, like I read lips. So, it's easier when I don't have my hearing aids in, or even when I do have them in, I like to face people. I like to see their lips. I don't need them to talk slower, louder, anything like that, it's just, uh, a comfort thing for me to be able to see their lips. To be able to fill in the blanks sometimes. My mind doesn't operate that fast. Um, so I think on the court it really helps just being really observant. When you think about basketball you think about sports in general, it's a lot of sign language. And you know, a play call, you're holding up fingers because not only is it loud in there, all of us can't hear so we're all on the same playing field at that point in time. So, I think that it's made me a better basketball player to be able to think before things happen. Um-

Whitney: Interesting. So you're, so you're, you're more attuned to body language than most people-

Tamika: Exactly.

Whitney: Because you don't have that one ability to hear what's happening. And it's kind of like did you ever see that movie, it's, it's really, really old, it's called "Wait Until Dark" and it had Audrey Hepburn and she was blind, um, and, and she was always disadvantaged except when there was someone trying, threatening her life, and so she put out all the lights and then all of a sudden she had the huge advantage. And that's what it makes me think of. Like on the court, when everything's deafening for everybody else, you're like, not deafening for me. I'm good.

Tamika: Yes I would say that. I would definitely say that.

Whitney: Interesting. Okay. Um, you were going to say something else so how the loss of hearing has helped you as a leader as well. So I'd love to hear, hear that as, hear that too.

Tamika: Um, being more observant. Knowing my surroundings. Kind of like you just shared that story about the movie, so kind of the same thing. When I'm out, and that's one thing, my husband's like, "You're never fully, you're never fully like here." And I'm like, "I'm always fully here, I'm just always looking around. Like I'm always observing situations."

Whitney: (laughs)

Tamika: And I think that's because when you're in loud rooms, and people, even if it's not loud, but people are calling my name from behind me and I can't see them, so I'm always looking around, I'm always kind of like, I see stuff before he sees it, I, I see things happen before he sees them happen. He's like, "How did you know that? How did-" I'm just like, I just, I don't know, it's just my super power.

Whitney: Yeah. Oh that's so cool. Like you, it's like, yeah, it's like super power, you're just like this heightened awareness of what's happening in your physical space.

Alright, so, um, your dad in, in one of the articles I read and you alluded to it a moment ago, of how your dad said you could have, have done more. Um, you know in terms of and you

talked about this idea of the role versus the star. Could you explore that a bit more and, and how your willingness to be supporting of other people actually helped your team be better. I'm just curious if you can just talk a little bit about that. Because he had one instinct in terms of here's how I think you should play the game and you, you played it very differently in terms of sort of the emotional context that you were creating. Um, as a player and I'd love for you to talk to us a bit and kind of riff on that for a second.

Tamika: My dad's like, I think a lot of way that you played and ended up playing had to do with how you were raised, like how we raised you. Because it's a team sport. Right? So in basketball, in the beginning my sister and I, and my brother as well were so much better than the kids that we played with, that we had to like, they were, my mom and dad were like, okay, like you have to pass the ball, you have to do this you have to do that, you have to make sure that everybody else gets a shot. You know?

And so sometimes, we look at it as, is that a ball hog or is that somebody that's really good at the game and that knows how to play. And so we grew up that way and so then of course, by the time you know I got to college and Indiana to the pros, that was kind of the way that I played. But I would say in high school, was when my dad started getting on me, you need to shoot more, you need to score more, you need to do this, you need to do that. And at that point it was like, for so long in my life, we'd worked on developing all the other players on the team. And I think, honestly I love the way that I play. I would, I wouldn't go back and say, I wish I was more selfish wish I would have taken more shots. I don't think any of that. But I look at the players nowadays that we put into that category that are so much better than everybody else and that shoot the ball and take those shots that my dad probably would have been like, those are the shots you need to take. But when you look at them in a different light, oh they shoot the ball too much, oh they're too selfish, oh they're this, they're that, and so it's kind of like, you're on the fence of well - what's right and what's wrong.

And so I think for me when I look at my game and I think about my dad and I and our relationship growing up, a lot of it was, early on we were taught to share the basketball, to share and make your teammates better and that's how you win and everybody worked together and all of those good things. And even my coaches along the lines. But at times, you have to have a little bit of that, you know, kind of that, what do they call the Mamba mentality now with Kobe and being able to take those shots and to know when to take those shots. And so I think that is the difference between my dad and I's game is he was always in the role player so he was always kind of that player that fits in to whatever the team need them to be.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: And, whether he accepted that role or not while he was playing, that's his problem right? (laughs).

For me it was kind of like, I was that player. And so I was always trying to figure out ways to get our role players to accept maybe a little bit more responsibility and when you look at the team especially our 2012 WNBA championship team, I mean we played against Minnesota Lynx. Indiana Fever played against the Minnesota Lynx. They had three Olympians on their, four Olympians on their team and we had me. And my teammates. But the difference was my teammates and I, we played together. Like we played as a team, there was- Even though I was an Olympian and all this, in that moment I wasn't that. We were just like, we're going to-

Whitney: Hmmm.

Tamika: Nobody expects us to win, so we're going to go out there, we're going to put, we're going to play our hardest, we're going to do our best, and practice all season long to put ourselves in this position and to be able to have where my teammates didn't feel like, oh Tamika needs to take that shot. It was like, hey, I trust you that you can take that shot and they knew that I believed in them and that was the most important thing.

Whitney: What do you mean when you're saying the difference between a role player and a star player? I haven't quite used those, heard those terms used in the way that you're using them. Could you talk us through that?

Tamika: Well, when you look at basketball, and I would say maybe even you can translate it to life in a in a sense but when you look at basketball, like there's players on the team that there's certain, there's high expectations. So your star player would be, I mean you think about any NBA or WNBA team you have like your top three players where everybody, those are the key players. When, when I'm doing my scouting report and I'm scouting a team, these are the three players that you have to be concerned about what they do. And then over here you might have-

This player is really good at getting rebounds, I'm going to assign my teammates to to guard this player and they're only job is to box out this person. They cannot get a rebound, that is your only job. And then over here, we might have somebody that's a really good screener or a really good passer and so if they're a really good passer they have a really good eye for seeing the floor. They're not necessarily a scorer, but they do a great job of setting up the star players, so as a role player you do a really good job of setting up your star players to get the shot when they need to get their shot. And so those, that's the difference between your star player who is somebody that you expect to make those plays and that you expect to um, to score the points and to be that focal point for the team where the role player is, I don't want to say a lesser man because it's not a less, like, role players are very important, they have to know their role, they have to know what it takes for your team to succeed.

Whitney: So it's interesting hearing you say this, so from what I understand then, you were in a role as a star player and yet there were many instances where you played the role of a role player. Um, is, is that fair to say?

Tamika: Yes. What I would say in my-

Whitney: Okay

Tamika: Looking at Olympic years, so on my WNBA team I was the star player, and then-

Whitney: Yep.

Tamika: In August, we stop our WNBA season, we reconvene as an Olympic team somewhere to train to get ready to go for the Olympics. Now I go from being a star player to a role player because my main focus on the Olympic team was to play defense. I guarded the best offensive player on the other team, my, my job was to shut down whoever I guarded and not let them score. That was my job. And then once the Olympics were finished and we won a gold medal or on the platform and now we're on the flight back home and it's like, okay you go from being a role player for three weeks to now, now you got to get back into your mindset back into being a star player because everybody is relying on you. So, yeah it's different but it, it's what makes you who you are.

Whitney: Do a lot of players have to be able to toggle back between being the role player and the star player? Is that something- is that unusual or is that sort of an interesting useful skill set that you've developed because of the opportunities that you've had?

Tamika: I would say it's a useful skill set that, that's been developed. Not a lot of players-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: But when you look at just the Olympic teams in general, there will be some players that have to sacrifice maybe the role that they, that they currently serve on their WNBA team for the benefit or for the better of the Olympic team. We can't all be scorers. Even though we all know how to score and we're all the main focal point, uh, players on our individual WNBA team, we can't go to the Olympic team all be the main scorers.

Whitney: If you want to win.

Tamika: Won a gold medal yes.

Whitney: Yeah, yeah, interesting. Okay so, um just for everybody, I'll probably say this and I probably will have said this in the intro but um, Tamika's won four gold medals at the Olympics. Okay? So, we're, we're, we're very impressed. I, I'm certainly very impressed. Um, okay so you now, um, what are you doing today? You've retired from playing um, and so now you, tell us what you're doing now.

Tamika: Well, I am doing a lot of different things right now. I just got named the Vice President of Basketball Operations for the Indiana Fever and I'm super excited about that so, that's my, my job and then from there I, I own a tea shop that's called Tea's Me Café, here Indianapolis. I love tea, we grew up on tea and that was kind of the, another one of those things that brought our family together so, I own a tea shop and then my sister and I, we have our Catch the Stars foundation here in Indianapolis.

Whitney: Okay so let's talk about the foundation for just a moment. Tell us what you're, who you're focused on and then maybe a success story. Of something that's happened because of the work that you're, you're doing at this foundation. It's called Catch the Stars right?

Tamika: Yes. Catch the Stars. So we focus on boys and girls ages seven all the way up to 18 and we provide programming around fitness, literacy and youth development. So we do a lot of different things back to school celebrations, basketball camp, fitness clinics, mentoring programs and one of the success stories I would say would come from our scholar athlete dinner. We give out scholarships every year which we actually have our dinner coming up here soon and remember a few years ago we gave out \$20,000 scholarships, so \$5,000 renewable, \$5,000 for four years of school. And there was a family the, the kid that won it. I remember, his name got announced and he started crying and his whole family stood up and everybody's just like bawling, and not that, not that, like \$20,000 that's a lot of money for, for scholarships.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: But, I think the reaction that we got, like, I started crying just because they started crying, and um, after the dinner they came up. And the father came up, he had just lost his job, his son was a senior, they literally were trying to figure out how was he going to go to college. And so, this just happened. He was a pastor. It was crazy. He used to be a pastor and lost his job, so you know his wife wasn't working because he had a job and so like all of this stuff had happened literally in the course of the last two weeks before leading up to the dinner. And he won the award, won the scholarship and now, so it's been, it's been about



seven years, so now, he actually is about to apply for law school to be a lawyer and still does a lot of stuff. He volunteers for our foundation, he's awesome, he's amazing. It just goes to show, like goes to show, for me, my hope or my dream one day is that we'll be able to offer full scholarship. But until we get there, right now it's like kind of baby steps and we're getting more and more traction and more and more people are giving money to, to give out for scholarship money. But I just think it's really cool to see like, the traction of his life and how he now is able to impact the lives of all the kids that are coming up underneath him through the foundation and through all of the other things that he's doing but he's a, he's a role model and I just feel like it's just awesome to see him.

Whitney: Oh yeah. So we'll include the [link um, in the show notes everyone if you would like to](#). And I'm going to make a small donation, not a big one, but a hundred dollars just to say thank you for this good work and, and college is so important and just letting people know that there are opportunities. So, so thank you for that good work.

Tamika: A hundred dollars is a lot of money. So we, as, I, I really appreciate that.

Whitney: Yeah. Yeah, yeah I think when, and maybe that's actually a good point is sometimes we feel like well, if I could only give you know, thousands and thousands of dollars, but I guess you're, thank you for honoring that small contribution. I guess what you're saying is, a lot of, you know, many hundred dollars add up to make big donations and big dreams happen. Um, so tell us, so basketball operations, VP of basketball operations. What does a head of basketball operations actually do?

Tamika: Well, I think the biggest thing is just, for, for the team is just overseeing the team. And we, we have not in the past couple of years

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: Have had the best season that we want and so I think really just being able to work with the staff that we have, our coaching staff and our players and try to figure out how do we put together the best team. A lot of it as you probably know, a lot of it starts with culture. Culture, leadership and just kind of a vision for where you want to be and so, my job is to figure out do we have the right culture? I know the vision that I have and I want to win championships and not just win championships but I think along with winning championships being able to create the best version of all of our players that they can, the best version of themselves. I think that's really important. Not just what you do. Basketball is what we do, it's not who we are. And so helping them not only with, not only be a champion but lead a championship life. So that's something that's really important to me.

And then, you know of course from the coaching staff just making sure that we have the right leadership and, and uh, and then even for me like I want them to challenge me to be the best that I can be in my role as well.

Whitney: Interesting. So getting the culture right. So that, so this idea that you've talked about. Of learning to be a star, being a role player what does that look like? Being willing to not always have to take the shot um and just creating that culture. And that ethos that you've lived with your entire life and, and bringing that to the, to the court, um, where you are-

Tamika: That would be correct, yes.

Whitney: Is that correct? Yep, very cool. Um, okay so I think, a couple, just a couple final questions.

So as you think about um, we talked earlier about your mom and how she had been such a stabilizing influence for you and I love the, I love the compare and contrast of your dad and

mom. It sounds like you've got a really, kind of won the jackpot when it comes to parents in terms of different parenting styles and the different gifts that they gave to you. Um, when you think about your um, life on the court. Are there one or two coaches that stand out for you that were really a strong, stabilizing influence for you in terms of helping you kind of anchor so that you could go out and play really well.

Tamika: Yes. I would say my coach from college, Pat Summit.

The thing that I love about her, and I, I get a chance to talk to her, talk about her a lot, but she, she always said that we're not just going to be great on the court. We're going to be great on the court. We're going to be great in the classrooms, we're going to be great in the community, but even beyond that we're going to be great people.

And so I think.

Whitney: Hmmm.

Tamika: Watching her, without really watching her, meaning she had all this success and everywhere we went people were screaming her name and coming and running to take pictures. I mean it's just, her presence alone was, amazing. Especially as you're a college student coming in and it was just awesome to see how much love and how much support she got from everywhere, like the fans, the community, everywhere she went people just loved on her. And the thing that I remember the most about her is just her humbleness. No matter how much success she had she was always humble and so for me, no matter how much success that I've had I always try to remain humble and I want people to check me if I don't because that's what, that's how she lived her life. And I, you know how you watch people, without knowing that you're watching them and you're just around somebody you're around their presence and you know, you might be focused on something else and doing something else, subconsciously your mind and the things you hear, and the way that she was, that's what rubbed off on me and those are the things that I remember about her.

And so everyday, I'm part of her legacy now and so every day, even though I'm creating my own legacy I'm still a part of her legacy.

Whitney: Mmm, that's lovely. So her her display of humility really you know, as you're going out and receiving all these accolades as a player, you're continually just watching and observing her and, and that grounded you it sounds like. And, and kept you in check.

Um, so who keeps you in check now? Who are your truth tellers today?

Tamika: My sister (laughs)

Whitney: (laughs) Your sister? Shout out to Tauja.

Tamika: And my mom, and honestly, everybody that I'm around. But, all the people that have been with me from my playing days to now beyond is cool because I've built kind of my own little infrastructure of people that I rely on. There's so many people that kind of are part of my infrastructure central, not necessarily we hang out every day. But if I say something or I move something or move in the wrong direction, they know that I am open enough and I'm humble enough and that I want them to tell me if I'm doing something wrong or if I'm saying something the wrong way. And they can check me. And those are the people that I appreciate having around me, I don't want people that are like, "Oh you're great and you're awesome every single day and everything you do."

Those are the people, like, okay like, let me put my straight arm out and love on you from a distance but not necessarily the ones that I want in that infrastructure.

Whitney: The people that you trust that you know will tell you the truth. Alright, what advice when young, young men and young women come up to you and ask you for advice, what do you say to them?

Tamika: Set a goal and write it down.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Tamika: Because I think a lot of people, young and old will say, "Oh! One day I want to do this" We're like well one day I want to do that, and we don't write it down. When I was in 7th grade, I literally came up on my goal. I wrote it down. I put it on my mirror. But every single day when I woke up, that was the first thing that I saw. Every day before I went downstairs that was the last thing that I saw. And, every, and throughout the day I knew that every single thing that I did, would allow me to get either closer or farther away from my goal that was posted on my mirror. So when I share that story, especially with our young people it is about have a goal. Write it down. It might change, and that's okay. But if you constantly in your mind are changing, one day you want to do this and the next day you want to do this and they next day you want to do that, then your mind doesn't, can only function in one way. And so really being able sit down, figure out what it is that you want to do. Even if you make small goals. I mean I made a big goal but obviously I had smaller goals to get to the bigger goal so it's really important. Goal setting is a huge part of everything that we keep through our foundation. And my foundation even where I am. So really being able to set, sit down, have a goal, know you're going to have to work hard for it, but put yourself on a path for success.

Whitney: Alright. So, Tamika, what goal is on your mirror right now?

Tamika: My goal on my mirror right now is to win a championship within the next three to four years.

Whitney: Love it.

Tamika: And I can't be on the court.

Whitney: Love it, love it, love it.

Tamika: But I sure can be the best cheerleader I can possibly be. (laughs)

Whitney: (laughs) Yes you can. Well this has been a pleasure, thank you so much for being on the, on the podcast and it was a delight to have you.

Tamika: Thank you so much I really appreciate you.

So many of our guests on the podcast have done an amazing job of embracing their constraints and turning them into superpowers, and I love that Tamika told us that her hearing loss literally is her superpower. It makes her more observant in her life and on the court. Changing how she played ball, and then it gave her an advantage when the crowd got loud. Such a lesson there – constraints, especially ones you don't choose, often give birth to superpowers.

Like moving a lot as a child – this could have been a disadvantage, but instead, it gave her flexibility and confidence. She learned to speak up for herself and that flexibility made its way to her basketball game as she learned to switch between being the “star player” at the Indiana Fever and the “role player” on the Olympic team. She was good at both.

Finally, I loved hearing Tamika talk at the end about continuing the legacy of her college coach, Pat Summit. As Tamika creates her own legacy both on and off the court like with the Catch the Stars foundation, she’s aware of the fact that she’s part of Pat’s legacy too.

Practical tip:

Set a goal and write it down. And write down not only why you want it, but how it will bless the lives of other people around you. Constraints don’t usually give rise to superpowers unless you’re working towards something bigger than you.

If you’d like to prepare yourself for growth for something bigger than you, we have a free audio course that comes directly to your email. The link is in the show notes at [whitneyjohnson.com/change](http://whitneyjohnson.com/change).

Thank you again to Tamika Catchings for being our guest, to Alison Barber for introducing us to Tamika. Thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Libby Newman, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I’m Whitney Johnson  
And this is Disrupt Yourself.