

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 180: WHITNEY JOHNSON

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide tools and strategies on how to climb the curve of learning in your career and life, I'm Whitney Johnson. And because this is Episode 180, it's time for another solo episode and a continuation of our series where we do a deep dive on the personal disruption framework. Today, we're focused on accelerator number five, step back to grow. We'll talk about what this looks like from both a career and personal perspective, how to prepare yourself for this step back, including psychologically and emotionally, and the importance of recalibrating your metrics of success once you do. We'll then wrap up talking about stepping back to rest and reflect.

Let's start with what does a step back look like? At some point along your S curve of Learning™, your growth will stall, it is inevitable, at which point the only way forward may be back. The only way up, maybe down. You crouch before you jump, you bring your fist back to punch. Personal disruption involves moving sideways, backward, sometimes even down. I love this story that Barbara Corcoran, star of the TV show Shark Tank, tells about when she started Corcoran Real Estate, the high end residential brokerage firm in Manhattan. She says, by anyone's standard, I was a success, but I knew I was going bankrupt. So you know what I did, I went out and I took a full time job while I worked my business. There is nothing wrong with stepping back before going forward. The whole point of personal disruption is to move up the y axis of success, that vertical axis, I want you to take your hand and move it up and down the vertical axis. However, you're defining success over the x axis of time, the horizontal axis moving from left to right. When you Disrupt Yourself, you're making a conscious decision to move down the Y axis, leaving a comfortable perch possibly with pay and status, taking a hit because you believe that the slope of your next curve will be even steeper. So what do I mean when I say that? Well, let's suppose that right now you're at a 12 on the Y axis, that vertical axis, and your life is over one, up one on this grid paper of your life.

When you Disrupt Yourself, you're making the decision to go down from a 12, for example, to a 10 because you believe that in the future, instead of it being over one, up one, it's going to be over one, up three or over one of five or even over one. Up 10. That's the math behind personal disruption. So in your career, what can this look like? Well, let's start with taking a step back inside of your current organization.

Dave Blakeley, for example, he began his career at IDEO as a software engineer. He could have worked his way up to manage technical staff, but instead he volunteered to become a project manager, which his peers dismissed as an escape route from the rigor and detail of engineering. But the backward move allowed Blakeley to broaden his skills and begin to climb a new S curve. Eventually, he became the head of technology strategy during his 25 year tenure at IDEO. This was a calculated move and a relatively easy sell because Dave was assuming most of the risk.

In the case of Bethany Quam, it required more of a self. Quam went to school to be an accountant and despite being technically adept, being a finance, didn't play to her strength as a social extrovert. So she volunteered for a marketing rotation. While for her it was a sideways move, for General Mills, it looked like a step back. So she lowered the risk by offering to go anywhere in the United States for 12 months, rather than the typical six months so that they could increase their ROI. Decades later, after being in sales for a number of years, she is now group president of Blue Buffalo, a subsidiary of General Mills.

So that's choosing to step back sometimes, though, you're pushed like Karen Carter, you're volun-told. Karen started her career at Dow Chemical 25 years ago as an intern after her freshman year in college. It's a fun story. They were only hiring juniors, and when they found out that she was only a freshman because they liked her moxie, they just hired her anyway. Karen quickly becomes a rising star in sales, Dow offers to pay for business school. She studies international business. It's now her dream to live abroad. She graduates from business school and she gets a call and they want her to go into H.R.. They really want her to go into H.R. and she says, no, that's OK. So then the VP of H.R., Larry Washington calls her and says, you know, Karen, sometimes you need to volunteer. It's a good thing she did. After H.R., she does a stint in marketing, eventually gets to move abroad, runs a multibillion dollar PNL. Karen eventually and recently was tapped to be Dow Chemical's chief human resources officer. You step back to slingshot forward.

Similar story with Vala Afshar. Vala was trained as an engineer. Early in his career he worked as VP of Software Quality at Enterasys, a 400 million dollar networking technology company. When Chris Crowell is hired as a CTO and becomes Afshar's boss, one of the first things he does is eliminate some of his engineering responsibilities. Crowell believed that the one thing customers cherish more than anything is customer support over features and functions, even pricing. So he tells Vala, I want you to focus only on customer service and support. He says, I know you don't like this, but I am doing this because it is the most important thing for your career and of course, for our company. Over the next few years, Chris gave Vala several stretch assignments, eventually promoting him to Chief Customer Officer, where he was responsible for several call centers and a 200 million dollar plus business unit. When Crowell became the CEO, he then tapped Vala to become CMO, Chief Marketing Officer. Not an obvious move. But he says "Vala, he had great ideas and because he was customer facing, he was customer focused. So it wasn't that hard of a jump to promote him." Vala then says, and this is what's important, "If Chris had not pushed me in a different direction," if Chris hadn't pushed him to take that step back, "I would still be in a lab testing and releasing products." Today, Vala is the Chief Digital Evangelist at Salesforce.com.

As a manager or leader, when you encourage these sideways and backwards steps, you're helping people build skills and talents. You're stockpiling strengths. And research has shown that companies that develop capabilities before they need them, not when they need them, but before, they outperform on a wide variety of metrics.

So we've talked about stepping back inside of your current organization, now let's look at a step back into a new organization. And I'm going to tell you four stories so you can see what this looks like. The first story is about serial CEO and venture capitalist Carine Clark. Carine was the senior director of network products at Novell and she was building global campaigns for this 800 million dollar business. Then in 2002, at the height of her success, so she's at the top of her S curve, she leaves Novell to run marketing for this unknown little startup, Altiris, a SaaS platform managing IT assets. It's at a third of her former salary. But that step back, that decision to step back launched her personal rocket ship. In 2007 Symantec, a security and storage software company with six billion dollars in revenue, acquires Altiris where Clark eventually becomes the Chief Marketing Officer. After a sabbatical to battle stage three ovarian cancer, she takes another step back. Of course, the cancer was a push back and she battles it successfully, but in her career, she comes back to Symantec. She takes another step back, she leaves to become the CEO of Allegiance, a 20 million dollar software company. So step back, smaller company to slingshot into a bigger role,

CMO to CEO. In early 2015, Allegiance is acquired by a 200 million dollar company, ten times the size of Allegiance, and she becomes the CEO. Calculated backward moves have been the key to her career success. Or as Carine likes to say, you lose to win.

Second story, Dave Hollis. After 17 years at Disney, he's head of sales, he's at the top of his S curve. He's no longer challenged. Because he's also no longer as focused on the loss of status that leaving Disney would involve, Dave jumps to new learning curve to become the COO, the Chief Operating Officer of Hollis and Company, A company founded by his wife, New York Times best selling author Rachel Hollis.

Story number three, Deb Dugan. In the mid 80s, Deb was working on Wall Street. She's a lawyer doing multi-million dollar transactions, leveraged leases for aircraft, but she's also very into new music and bands. Even if it's 2:00 in the morning, she goes to the bottom line or CBGB's. She's also doing pro bono work for a group called Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts that helps artists and musicians who don't have any money to pay for a lawyer. And she discovers that saving a rapper in Harlem 300 dollars on a bad recording deal means more to her than a multibillion dollar aircraft leveraged lease. When volunteer lawyers for the arts calls and asks her, Deb, do you know anybody that could help lead this organization? She says, I'll do it. They say we pay X. X was 70000 dollars less than she was making straight out of law school. She had student loans up the wazoo, but she did it anyway. People thought she was crazy. She was on track to become a partner. Huge dollar signs, prestige, this was the late 80s. She says. I was walking away from the heyday of M&A on Wall Street to work for a small nonprofit. But then she says it was one of the smartest things I've ever done. Nine months later, someone hires her first startup label, SBK records, doubles her salary. She goes to EMI for eight years. Turns out she's good at identifying a hit song and is subsequently hired by Bono to run Red, an organization whose goal was and is to disrupt philanthropy.

And then, and this is story number, or example number four, there's Clayton Christensen, the originator of disruptive innovation Only after being fired from a CEO role did he decide to pursue a doctoral degree. This backward move positioned him to develop a theory that changed the way we think about business.

One of the things that's important to think about with this step back is that frequently things may be working from a functional perspective. You have a job, you can put food on the table, but there's some emotional job that isn't being done. You're not growing. You're not learning, you're not developing. That was true for Dave Blakely, Bethany Quam, Dave Hollis and Deb Dugan. That was true for me when I made the decision to leave Wall Street. Things are functioning, but there are emotional needs that aren't being met. Like for people who decide to have children, talk about a step back in your career, but can this move you forward emotionally? Absolutely.

Let me tell you about Eric and Emily Orton, they live in New York City, they have five children, including one special needs child. After learning to sail, they bought a sailboat on a shoestring and sailed from the Caribbean to Manhattan. They are not a wealthy family. Financially, this was a huge step back. But for their personal and collective confidence, for their family bonds, it was a huge step forward. There's a lot to learn from sailing about building that sideways muscle. When the wind comes from the undesired three of the four directions, a direction that doesn't directly push the boat toward its objective, the boat has to tack. Tacking involves changing the sails from one side to the other, allowing for progress in the desired direction. To the uninformed observer, the crew appears incompetent. The boat is simply zigzagging back and forth. But to the informed observer, it's the only way forward.

Now, once you've decided it's time to take a step back, so you know you're going to take a step back, whether it's inside or outside of your organization, you don't yet know, but, you know, you're going to take a step back. How do you prepare for this big old zig-zag? Let me give you seven things to consider.

Number one. Ask yourself, where are you on the S curve in terms of your overall career, not just this role, but in your career. If you're on the launch point, you can be more flexible, it's optimal for experimentation. Unless you have a lot of student debt, your overhead is generally pretty low and the job market sort of expects you to make zig-zag moves. Middle career is more risky, lateral moves tend to make more sense. So consider this option first. For example, I had a client who had been in the same job for about 15 years, top of the curve, doing the same things over and over again. He had the option of moving to a large company, which to many it would have looked like a move up. But he was still going to be bored. He thought about becoming a consultant, but that would have been a step back because he didn't have any clients, so he made a lateral move. He went to work for one of his vendors. Food still on the table and doing what he knows how to do, but with a twist. Later in your career, you again probably have more flexibility, maybe there's something you've always wanted to do but haven't, it's, it's an encore career. A great example of this is Phil Holberton. He was the CFO of a number of publicly traded companies, now, later in his career, he coaches and advises full time. It's a very different role, a very different curve.

Are there times when a step back is the wrong move? Yes, of course. Especially if you're stepping back because you're afraid. I love what the Olympic skier, Bodie Miller said, "When you back off, it's easier to make mistakes. For me, it's better to ski fast." But if you're on the launch point of the wrong curve, hitting a snag in the sweet spot, or are topping out in your current role, then it may be time to take that step back and jump to something new.

Second thing to consider, you want to start collecting proof points that this is curve jump makes sense for you. While some people are comfortable with this free fall jump, in my experience, most want to pack a parachute. Especially when the status quo isn't all that bad. Eric and Emily Orton, for example, only after several years of sailing lessons, numerous practice voyages, saving and scrimping to buy a boat, did they set sail to the stream. Dave Blakely, he was already managing people before he became a project manager. He knew that this was something he could do well and he enjoyed before taking that step back. Bethany Quam, she had received input from her manager that she had strong social skills and even in her early interviews for the marketing rotation, her soon to be boss confirmed this was something she was going to be good at.

You may not be able to see what you do well, but it's probably obvious to everyone else like it was for Bethany, like it was for Valla. Chris Crowell saw his potential, this is important for the company, this is important for your career. Sometimes, though, it's not about collecting proof points, but rather repackaging the ones you already have. That's what Wendy Sachs learned when she lost her job as director of content at Gray Advertising. It was in the middle of an industry-wide disruption, her experience was her experience, but she needed to reposition her pitch, as well as be willing to take a pay cut. Again, a step back almost always involves a pay cut, some type of change in status. Now, at this point, no one was really an expert in social or in content marketing, Wendy knew she could figure all this out. But when she would say things to people like I was a press secretary on Capitol Hill, something that had been impressive when she was 25. Capitol Hill was like the Google of the GenX, highly respected. Now, it was you worked on the Hill, well, we don't really like politics around here. She says, after one especially depressing interview with a startup in New York, a bearded millennial in his flannel who didn't understand what she did, she realized something's not working. So she shifted her narrative, I'm a content and brand strategist, she translated what she knew how to do into a language that people understood. Or as I would say, she packed a parachute for her future employer, making it not scary but safe for them to jump to the new S curve of hiring her. She discovered a through line of storytelling, from techs to startups to PR to the Hill to TV production. She then with this new story, this new narrative, interviewed with a well-known PR agency in New York and was hired almost immediately. They concluded, if you can tell that story about Yourself, you can do that for our clients.

Something to be aware of, though, is that when you take a step back in your career, there's likely going to be a loss of identity. For me when I left Wall Street to become an entrepreneur. There was no longer the positive halo effect of

working at Merrill Lynch. I couldn't say Whitney Johnson, Merrill Lynch. It was now just Whitney Johnson, and that was hard. So simple question to ask yourself as you're making a change, as you're stepping back to grow, is how are you going to introduce yourself going forward? Listening to Wendy Sachs advice in the podcast episode that we did with her is a good start.

Third thing to consider as you take a step back is don't think of it as something final, but rather as an experiment. Let me tell you about Darrell Rigby, so he's a partner at Bain and Company and been there for more than four decades. When I asked him, I interviewed him about a jump that he had wanted to make at Bain and his stakeholders said, that's a big leap, Darrell, he said the hardest one was starting up the innovation practice. A lot of people said Bain, we're not really in innovation kind of firm, but he was convinced that it's an essential part of any change management program. It took selling. It took convincing to get funding. But in the end, he just said, let me try it for six months. If it works, we have a new platform. It's good for our clients. It's good for the people who want to work on it. If it doesn't work, I'll find something else. So they let him try it. And it's been more than six months. Darrell then said something interesting, and I'm gonna to digress for just a minute, because I think it's really important for you to hear. Just the other day when I was doing a training around the personal disruption framework, one of the participants said, oh, well, so now everyone after listening, is going to go leave and become an entrepreneur. Well, that is the perception. That disrupting ourselves means we move to a new organization. Darrell said, remember, he's been at Bain for 40 years, it seems like too many people who feel they're not learning and growing believe that the only way to change is to leave the company and find a different place. I'm sure that can work, but unfortunately, a lot of companies have the same fundamental underlying bureaucracy, so you change and it wasn't as different as you thought. I believe and this is Darrell still talking, he says, I believe that before you leave a position, ask yourself. What can I do to change this position, to take more personal responsibility? Talk about a step back when we take that personal responsibility. What can I do to be a cause for my own experience to create my own opportunities?

All right, so first thing to consider is where are you in your career? Second thing, collect that evidence that suggests, yes, this does make sense for you to take that step back, to jump to something new. Third, you want to frame it as an experiment. Now, let's go to number four, which is to remember what the theory of disruption says, that the odds of success are six times higher when you pursue a disruptive course. That's for companies, but directionally, it's true for you as well. As you play where others aren't, oftentimes, it involves a step back. You're more likely to be successful when you remember this theory, the data behind this theory, it will limit your fear factor. Number five, practice makes permanent, you get good at stepping back by practicing, and right now we are getting a lot of practice. For me, for example, speaking up until covid, that was a big part of our business. The obvious step forward has been to do a lot of webinars, but what else is there for our business model? That's what we get to figure out.

Then there's the personal piece of this. It's an opportunity to establish new family, new personal routines. For example, I recently started doing yoga, a step back to be more flexible. You also practice when you allow other people to step back, other people to jump to new S curves. After building something grand, there is this impulse to say, I built this, I like my fiefdom, I like my people were right where they are. Whether you're jumping or not, when you let others jump, you're going to be sacrificing productivity in the short run, undoubtedly. But in the long run, the productivity for the person jumping goes up. Whoever was coming up behind them gets to step up, which will give your organization a leg up.

Number six, 360 reviews, this is a great way to practice stepping back in a 360 year, blind spots are revealed. What can push you off the S curve, your weaknesses, but it can also reveal your strengths because we're often just as blind to our strengths as we are our weaknesses. And so then you can know, all right, I took the step back. Now I know what I need to double down on. Scott Pulsifer tells the story of a 360 he received while he was general manager of a

new business line at Amazon. He claimed to be caring, he meant to be caring, but when tasked with an impossible deadline and high stress, he became mechanical. He stopped caring. He became the boss that no one wanted to work for. Step back, more like a punch back. But with the guidance of a good manager who told him, Scott, you've lost sight of who you are, Scott started to reprioritize people. Today, he is the president of Western Governors University, the largest nonprofit university in the United States with more than 120,000 students. And he is beloved because his focus is on people.

Number seven, you prepare, you psychologically prepare to step back by learning to step back from your ego. Which begins with, as we discussed in Episode 160, stepping back from our addiction to being right. Especially because when you step back or even are pushed back for a while, you're going to know less than the people around you and this can be a blow to your ego. In achievement oriented cultures, it's very difficult to look dumb, even temporarily, because you're asking questions to lower status team members like am I doing this right? MIT professor Edgar Shine describes a willingness to acknowledge that, quote, in the here and now, my status is inferior to yours because you know something or can do something that I need in order to accomplish a task or goal, end quote, as the art of humble inquiry. For many, this can be very painful, in fact, in some cultures, says Shine, ask failure is preferable to humiliation and loss of face.

So recapping things to consider in taking a step back. Number one, where are you in the curve of your career? Number two, pack a parachute. Data proof points that this is the right jump right now. Number three, frame this as an experiment, not something final. Number four, remember the theory of disruption. The odds of success are six times higher when you pursue a disruptive course. Number five, practice stepping back. And right now, circumstances are giving us a lot of practice. Number six, 360 reviews. Another great opportunity to step back and see what isn't and what is working. And number seven, step back from your ego, your addiction to being right.

So now that you've taken a step back to either gain momentum along your current S curve or you've jumped to a new one, it's important to get the metrics right. So what metrics will you use? For example, if you historically gauge success by how much money you make and you've taken on a new role that makes less money, you clearly have a new metric. So what is it? How much am I learning, am I happier at home, how many people am I helping? I love the story of Sabina Nawaz. Sabina holds a master's degree in computer engineering. She started her career as a software developer at Microsoft. She'd been working on Windows, Internet Explorer, was offered a project manager role quickly moving up the corporate ladder and every once in a while sitting in meetings with Bill Gates. But after getting some positive feedback about her management skills and emotional intelligence, rather than sticking with this predictable path of looking to the next rung, she stunned her colleagues. Remember, people think you're crazy sometimes when you step back, she moves to H.R. to work in management and leadership development. Sabina says, I knew the formula for success, but I no longer wanted the next title or promotion, I wanted to stretch my boundaries. After seven years in HR, she eventually left to start her own leadership consultancy, Sabina's metrics changed. She no longer measures success by making VP or shipping a product to millions of people. She measures it by the impact she's having on individuals and how much she enjoys her work. John D. Rockefeller said, if you want to succeed rather than travel worn paths of accepted success, find new paths. And that new path includes a willingness to when you jump to let go of the old metrics and apply the new ones.

Here's a simple, real time practical example, let's say, for instance, you have a very successful newsletter, tens of thousands of people read it, now you want to start a podcast. What metrics will you use to decide if the podcast is successful? A number of listeners, lead generation for your newsletter, for your business? If those are your only metrics, you will likely be disappointed, at least initially. You also do yourself a disservice. Because while there may be a functional job for doing the podcast, I can almost guarantee that you want the podcast to do an emotional job, make sure you think about both. Maybe the emotional jobs are you want to study interesting people, rid yourself of

verbal tics, or what about just because it sounds fun? Every time you hop to a new curve, you can and need to recalibrate the metrics by which you measure Yourself. And even along the curve, those metrics shift. At the launch point, the metrics may be focused on perseverance and on learning as fast as you can, even when your brain is screaming at you to prove your worth by performing. In the sweet spot as you become increasingly competent, perhaps you focus on productivity so you can free up cognitive bandwidth in order to become even more productive. At the high end, maybe it's about being mindful of finding the challenge in something in which you're already an expert.

The one metric that is universal, regardless of what is curve you're on or where you are on the S curve, is showing up. Research by Keith Simonton shows that the odds of a scientist writing a groundbreaking paper, groundbreaking being defined as the number of citations and other works, is directly correlated to the number of papers the scientist has written not to the IQ of the scientist. Similarly, Similarly, Rob Wiltbank, a professor of management at Willamette University, he found no material difference in the returns of the winners and the finalists in various pitch competitions. The runners up had an equally good chance that their company would succeed. It's called the Equal Odds Rule. If you want to write a frequently cited paper, you publish a lot. If you want a successful business, you get to work. If you want to sharpen your skills as a disruptor, you disrupt, a simple metric. Show up and keep showing up.

As you look to tip the odds of success in your favor, beware the undertow of the status quo. The metrics you use to measure yourself are comfortable, as are your established habits, you are performing well practically automatically. You can almost convince yourself that staying put is the right thing. But there really is no such thing as standing still. The use it or lose it principle applies to our brain cells, just as it does to the muscles in our bodies. One of the best ways to activate your brain cells, to stimulate your neural pathways, to keep them healthy, is to do something unexpected, like stepping back, sideways or down.

So we've talked about what a step back looks like, how to prepare to take a step back and then getting the metrics right once you do. I want to wrap up by talking about stepping back to rest. Because just like a Tesla needs to recharge, so do you. What we know from the neuroscience is that after you focus intently on a project or problem, your brain needs to fully disengage and relax. Composer and musician Brian Eno said, "The difficulty of always feeling that you ought to be doing something is that you tend to undervalue the times when you're apparently doing nothing." And those are very important times. It's a time when things get sorted out. If you're constantly awake, work wise, you don't allow that to happen. Or as John Cleese more pithily said, "If you're a racing around all day, ticking things off list, looking at your watch, making phone calls and generally just keeping all the balls in the air, you are not going to have any creative ideas." Remember to encourage this stepping back, this healthy rebellion by example, just last week I took a break. I rested. Yesterday when I asked a junior team member for feedback, she said, thank you for setting an example, for signaling that it's OK to rest. Which surprised me sort of because I work really hard, I no doubt inadvertently set a demanding pace. My taking a break gives her permission to take one two. For any of you, that exercise, which is probably most of you think of this, is interval training for your mind and body. You run, you walk, you run, you walk. When we do nothing, we defy the Always-On mindset, recognizing that we, like our muscles, become more productive if we alternate work with rest.

A few months ago, I received an email from one of our newsletter subscribers, C.A. Hurst, which really got my attention. Here's what he said. I'm in my mid 60s and I'm watching a whole bunch of very bright, talented people in their 30s and 40s and 50s who have been caught up in an intensity trap for lack of a better term. All of you have so many resources available to you that you could make huge changes in the world without burning yourselves out, if you could just figure out how to let yourselves relax into who you are. Wise words, take a break, rest, relax.

Let me tell you about Tiffany Shlain, she's a filmmaker and author of the book *24/6*. You can listen to her on podcast Episode 133. Tiffany takes a step back by turning off her electronic devices one day a week, she calls it a technology Shabat. Which is an unlikely lifestyle choice given that she founded the Webby Awards and in the 90s was an early champion of using the Internet in everyday life. But here's what she said. What if we thought of rest as technology? The promise of technology is that it makes things efficient, it saves time, and it allows us to get things done. By giving yourself a complete day off each week from screens, from responsibilities, from being available, letting you reflect and connect, tech Shabat becomes the ultimate technology. She then goes on to say, "Our tech Shabat is a force field of protection that gives us strength, resilience, perspective and energy for the other six days."

While unplugging for an entire day is not realistic for me, here are three things that I am doing which might be helpful for you. Number one, on Saturday nights around 9:00 p.m., I pause my inbox until Monday morning. I now have one day where the world is not too much with me. It's lowering my stress level and Sunday is becoming one of my favorite days. I learned also from Boomerang that because I'm occasionally pausing, I have saved one hundred and thirty hours of focus, 130 hours. Anna Levy Lyon said "Time is the ultimate form of human wealth. Without time, all other forms of wealth are meaningless." It is this insight that makes keeping a Shabat both spiritually profound and politically radical. To reclaim time is to be rich. Second thing I'm doing, I'm making a conscious effort to respect everyone else's right to unplug, doing what I can to decrease their stress. So I may want to send a work related email at midnight on the weekend or on someone else's vacation, because it's making me anxious. But that doesn't give me the right to make someone else on my team anxious, too. So I write it, I put it in the queue, so it's delivered when they're back at work. Third, when I take my break, I take time to reflect. Sometimes this involves thinking about the big picture, what I want in life, in my business, thinking strategically. On a daily basis it means I quickly review the day, what worked, what didn't. What did I learn? Examine your experience, be deliberate about the meaning that you're making, tell the stories about your life that you want to be told.

The most typical dictionary definition of rest is not moving or tranquil. But another definition is a thing or place to put something for support. Rest is life and work support. It reinvigorates us so we can get things done, it allows us to subvert our inner workaholic, liberating our innovative self. It also allows us to pause, to gain perspective, to plumb the meaning of our life.

A final thought. In his book, *Sabbath*, author Wayne Muller recounts a conversation with Oscar Castro-Neves, an accomplished guitarist and composer, in which Castro-Neves teaches it is common in a dramatic scene to gradually bring the music to a crescendo and then stop, rest, silence. Whatever is spoken on the screen in silence is heard more clearly, more powerfully. The words are lent an additional potency because they are spoken out of silence. When you listen to music, listen to the cadence of rest. Martin Luther King in the most famous speech of his life, listened to the cadence, free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.

After a break comes the breakthrough. The most important and hardest disrupting you will ever do is to step back from who you are into who you could be. If you want to be an agent of disruption, first become its subject. So what step back are you willing to take? How will you step back? In order to grow. I'm Whitney Johnson and this is *Disrupt Yourself*.
