

BUILDING LEADERS

EMBRACING THE VULNERABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNING SOMETHING NEW



Jim Yong Kim immigrated to the United States when he was five years old, growing up in a town called Muscatine, Iowa. To simply describe him as talented would be to disregard the instructive value of his journey altogether. By the same token, it would be easy to do because his achievements are difficult for mere mortals to wrap their heads around.

For example, he was named valedictorian and president of his high school class while also representing his school athletically as the quarterback of the football team and point guard of the basketball team. In college, he graduated magna cum laude from Brown University before going on to Harvard to get his M.D. and Ph.D. in anthropology (which answers the age-old question many of us have struggled with: Why settle for one doctoral degree from Harvard when you can have two?).

In his professional career, Dr. Kim has gone on to positively impact millions of people around the world. A partial list includes:

- Becoming a founding partner of Partners in Health, an organization dedicated to the treatment and prevention of diseases like drug-resistant tuberculosis, HIV and Ebola in economically challenged regions of the world.
- Accepting an appointment as a director of the World Health Organization with a charter to help developing countries scale-up their protocols for treatment, prevention and care.

- Being named the 17th president of Dartmouth College.
- Becoming the only president in the history of the World Bank whose professional background was not in the political or financial sector.

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Beyond all of that, many of you have seen and heard him the last year or so addressing the once-in-a-lifetime challenges presented by COVID-19. Amongst all else, he has developed the ability to break down extremely complicated information — like virus-induced disruptive change — in a manner that communicates the facts, as well as a sense of hope and confidence that people need during times of uncertainty.

EMBRACING LEARNING

With such an accomplished background, it's not surprising that Jim Kim would have an interesting perspective on topics related to upskilling, reskilling and learning. When asked for his thoughts on these subjects, it's clear you hit a nerve. Before Kim says a word, he pauses, takes a short breath and ever so briefly rolls his eyes skyward to make sure he

“gets this right.” He then says with a tone and in a manner that suggests he is convinced he is sharing a message that encapsulates the essence of his vast and impressive personal experience:

“I have never felt more alive than the moments in my life when I stared my insecurities directly in the face and embraced the vulnerabilities associated with learning something new.”

Setting aside his intellectual gifts, consider the possibility that the primary driver of Dr. Kim's legendary success has much more to do with this personal philosophy of learning than anything else. Consider a bit further that all of us, including learning professionals, will be subject to ever-increasing demands to learn new things and upgrade our skill sets.

THE PATH FORWARD

As Dr. Kim has clearly figured out somewhere along the way, your past ... is just that! It is a documented road map you can point to that highlights the destinations you have passed through to get yourself here. Your value moving forward will be a function of your determination to explore territories that you have never been to and, likely, know very little about. 🔄

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