

Varun Duggirala, Co-Founder The Glitch | On Raising His Daughter & A Start-Up

11 MIN • YOUTUBE • [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=Q7PJHY6M3XC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7PJHY6M3XC)

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SUMMARY

The conversation features a candid discussion between two speakers about parenting, personal growth, and the challenges of balancing work and family life. The guest, an engineer and co-founder of a successful company, shares his journey from a troubled youth to a thriving entrepreneur, emphasizing the importance of personal responsibility and the lessons learned through life experiences.

- The guest reflects on his difficult childhood and lack of direction, which changed when he realized he needed to take control of his life.*
- He discusses the importance of teaching his daughter the difference between good and bad choices using a "red choices and green choices" system.*
- Work-life balance is achieved through scheduling and prioritizing quality time with family amidst professional responsibilities.*
- The guest believes that having children at a later age allowed him to be a better parent, as he had more stability and support.*
- He compares the challenges of parenting to those of running a startup, noting that both require significant commitment and can be overwhelming, especially in the early stages.*
- The first year of parenting is likened to the early years of a startup, filled with challenges but ultimately rewarding as one learns to adapt and grow.*

Speaker 1: My mother calls it the dark ages because my years in Bangalore were terrible for her and for dad because I was just this really, really badly behaved kid. Like, sleep through your stop at the train. So my mother's waiting at the station to pick me up when I come back home. And I've slept and I've gone to like some like five stations ahead because I'm. Let's just say that I'd had too much juice.

Speaker 2: Hey, guys. So I am sure that just like me, there are a whole bunch of parents who are constantly worried, will my kids do anything? Will they make something of their life? Are they too laid back? Is he not coming first? Is he going to be? You know, I know a lot of parents voicing concerns like, is he going to be mediocre? Will he make it somewhere? You know, these are typical concerns that all parents have.

Speaker 2: And the guests that we're actually talking with today is an engineer, MBA and co founder of really, really big company. The company is called Glitch, which was acquired. And he's doing very, very well for himself today. And this conversation is important for me as a parent because I also learned that I think, don't underestimate any, any individual. Who they are today does not determine who they're going to be tomorrow.

Speaker 2: There is a time in each one of our lives where we all make that switch, where we all know that my life is slipping out of my hands and I need to make those changes. And I think Darun is a classic example of just this. And I'm so happy to have this chat with you and I'm chat with him. And I'm sure that you guys are going to absolutely love, love, love this conversation. You come from a family that was, you know, well to do.

Speaker 2: Everything was good. You know, there was, there was never a pressure. And of course, now our kids are being raised with, you know, paradox of toys. Should I play with this toy or this toy or this toy? But I always feel like our generation had this, this hunger, this drive. Do you, how do you feel like you're going to instill that? Or is that even important for you to install into layer? Do you feel like that's one thing you want to instill?

Speaker 1: I feel that drive comes to you. I didn't have drive, which is why I said I was weird in my 20s because I didn't have drive. Right. I was just meandering through life. So studied till my 10th back home, went to Bangalore, did my 11th and 12th there. Terrible. My mother calls it the dark ages because My years in Bangalore were terrible for her and for dad because I was just this really, really badly behaved kid, right?

Speaker 1: Like I would, I would get kicked out of boarding school because I was caught sneaking out. I would like, so all the wrong things you can expect someone to do, like get, get, you know, like sleep through your stop at the train. So my mother's waiting at the station to pick me up and I come back home and I've slept and I've gone to like some like five stations ahead because I'm. Let's just say that I'd had too much juice when I got onto the train.

Speaker 1: So. And from there I felt that at some point life's going to smack you in the face. And that's what happened to me, right? So terrible. Engineering degree. Did a four year degree over six years. Worked in a call center because I said I don't want to work in engineering space. Still, eventually I did manage to go for my postgrad. When I moved for my postgrad, Pune actually sat myself down. I said, okay, I can't keep doing this.

Speaker 1: At some point they're going to say, know why are they going to spend more, you know, why are they going to spend time and money on someone who doesn't seem to care? And I feel we all have those points and, and, and, and the only thing we're trying to do with Leah is okay, you have a lot of options, but some things you need to earn, some things you will get. We're also not trying to make it seem like I never want to be.

Speaker 1: And I, I thankfully didn't have parents like that. Who's going to say that? Okay, when we were younger we didn't have these things, right? I'm like, of course you didn't have these things. I mean world advances but, but I feel what was, what was interesting, what is interesting about what we're telling Leah is we're teaching her. We have this thing called red choices and green choices, which we kind of learned from her school. We've kind of taken it forward.

Speaker 1: We made a thing so we like for Christmas, right? She had to keep making, although my sister calls it a capitalist way of, of bringing in values. You know, you make, you make a good choice in life, you, you get a green star, you make a bad choice, it's a red star. So, so we're figuring a way that no matter what you can get in life, you have to earn it at some level. But end of the day it's going to be her, it's going to be the world smacking

her in the face and then she learned from it is how I see it.

Speaker 1: As long as you don't make her a brat. And I think there's a fine line between letting your kid have the things you want to give them and then becoming a brat. And I think that's more behavioral.

Speaker 2: Varun, I really need to ask you this question. Tell me about work life balance. Especially because you're in a consumer business and you know, with consumer businesses there are clients and deadlines and clients can always sometimes be unreasonable. So how do you go about striking that?

Speaker 1: I like to schedule things. Right. When I say schedule things, it doesn't mean that you have it on a calendar you need to have. Okay, have I spent enough quality time with her? Have I taken care of the things which I have said I will take care of? Right. So as simple as those things. And at some point and thankfully as you kind of scale up as a business, as your role grows, gets higher, you can kind of turn around to someone say okay, I'm with my daughter now.

Speaker 1: Can, can this wait till the morning or can we talk tomorrow? I'm in a family thing. You're able to say those things and that's the only way you'll have balance. Like I was a person at terrible balance. Like I, I would bring work home every single day till at some point I was told, you're not bringing work home. Right. So Rohit hated it when he and I were roommates. Pooja's hated it since we got married and it's been a thing.

Speaker 1: So I bring it home. But I feel what's happened especially with Leahs. I know there are certain things which I should really do. And it's not like someone has a tear. Many times I have to be told or okay, will you do this? But many times it's me like I know, I like you know innately yourself if you are not doing what you have to do and you kind of throwing the load on the other person, right.

Speaker 1: So you can kind of take care of stuff which you know, they don't like to do. And that's how I've dealt with it. So early days of lockdown, dishes I'll take care of, right. Transition from my diaper and potty face. But it's just all the cleanups happen with me, right. So I feel that's the only way to have work life balance is I don't believe in saying okay, mornings are with family, afternoons for work, evening is with family.

Speaker 1: For me it's. It's bits and pieces. You're going to be splitting things around. So I have many times I have like a, I keep my about a half an hour gap in my afternoon meeting so I can hang with Leah for a bit, just kind of be, just play something with her, sit with her or something. So I break it up that way and that's really helped me because I, I have a focus issue. I can't focus on one thing for too long.

Speaker 1: She has that as well, which everybody hates.

Speaker 2: Also you mentioned that your parents had you really, really early. So how old or young were you when you had your child and did that have an impact? Did you ever feel that? You know, I feel like having kids early really helped my bonding with my parents and I don't want to have kids very late or early.

Speaker 1: I don't think it's really made a difference. I think there are pros and cons. I think depends on people. But. So my parents had theirs early. Me and Pooja have been married for now eight years now. I'm 38. We had Leah what three years ago. So yeah, so I'll be like what, 34, 35. And I, I think it was good because I feel that we settled down in life a little bit if it was in our 20s and the kind of work we were doing, I mean I, I don't think it would have been possible for, I don't know, it could have been if you have a kid.

Speaker 1: But I, I feel that we, we kind of built support systems for ourselves. I don't know if I would have been a good, as, as decent a parent. I wouldn't say good. I, as decent a parent as I am now, if I, if I had a kid in my 20s, I was, I was a very weird person in my 20s.

Speaker 2: How old were you when you started glitch?

Speaker 1: Started glitch 11 years ago. So I'm 38 now, which means I would have been. I'm terrible with math and I handle finance for the first four years.

Speaker 2: Which one's tougher to have a child or having a startup? I can pop three more babies but I think running a startup is like taking on something else.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's all consuming. Right. You can have a kid and still have other things you want to do but I guess if you have a startup there is nothing else you can really do first couple of years. So I kind of agree with that part of it. I'd say it was easier to do the startup weirdly for me because at that time that was literally so we Started the glitch. And I remember me and Rohit had this conversation right when we started off.

Speaker 1: And what we said was, okay, great time. We don't have any responsibilities. We just need to make rent to be able to have enough for. We said. We said bread, bed and beer was the thing, right? So we had only things I had to pay for. We didn't have to give money back to our parents. We hadn't saved enough money. We thought we had. We literally had money for about two months, I think, at max. And then.

Speaker 1: So we said, it's a great time to start. I feel that the lack of responsibilities and when we started it made it great for us to start it. I find that a lot of people when they do a startup, much later on as well. I've had friends who start in recent times who kind of say, okay, how did you handle these things? I said, I didn't have those pressures. When we start from our apartment, we could do what we wanted.

Speaker 1: I feel that in a startup, the tough part is once you cross the first couple of years, it's great when you're a small. When you're like just a few people or a small team. But once you kind of scale up to my threshold was when we cross like 30, 40, 50 people is that's when it becomes real, right? Because then you have to hit payroll. You have to do those things. That's when it becomes. Actually, I feel those years are the most.

Speaker 1: They consume you the most physically and mentally as well, because you're really trying to. You're trying to figure a way to scale up. Like now we're about 350, 400 people, right? So now it's a cycle. Now we're

in a system. It is a way it functions. You can move stuff around, but when you're at between that 50 and 100, I mean, that's the toughest part. So I would say that was the hardest part. The same as I say the first year of having layer.

Speaker 1: The first year was tough because we. She's a terrible eater, doesn't feed well. So we had to figure ways to feed her. Those feeds would go on for an hour and a half. Odd. I thankfully didn't have to do as many feeds because at some point of time they were like, you want to go to match this? You. You want to. She's. She's a she. You take care of the poop as. As my job role was and the night shift.

Speaker 1: But I think some of those things kind of took their entire toll on things. She had a medical emergency very early on where there was, it was. I, I don't remember what the reasoning was but she basically, she couldn't take in any food and there was almost like a blockage so she actually had to go in for a proper procedure and there to unblock. And this is like a kid who's not even six months old, right?

Speaker 1: Yeah. So. And, and she was super brave about it. Like she had to get like, you know, you have a six month old getting an IV that's like, that's heartbreaking. Right. You don't know how to deal with that. So. So yeah, so the first year had a lot of these things for us. Kind of then got into the zone of it towards the end of year. So we warn all new parents saying first year is like the middle years of a startup.

Speaker 2: Thank you so much for chatting with us Marun today. It's been an incredible conversation and I am so looking forward to catching up with you when this is over.