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Recorded by the author. The source carries no date, and nor does the publisher's live page.

AUTHOR Ravi R. Iyer, MD

SOURCE TEDxUStreet Salon — People's Choice Talent Night, 29 June 2024. tedxustreetwomen.com. No public address recorded for the pitch.

No ted.com event page is recorded for this salon on the author's Wikidata item, and none was found when read on 23 November 2026. The audition is evidenced by the event itself, which was streamed publicly and put to a public vote.

RECORDED 23 November 2026 · record AR-2024-06-001

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

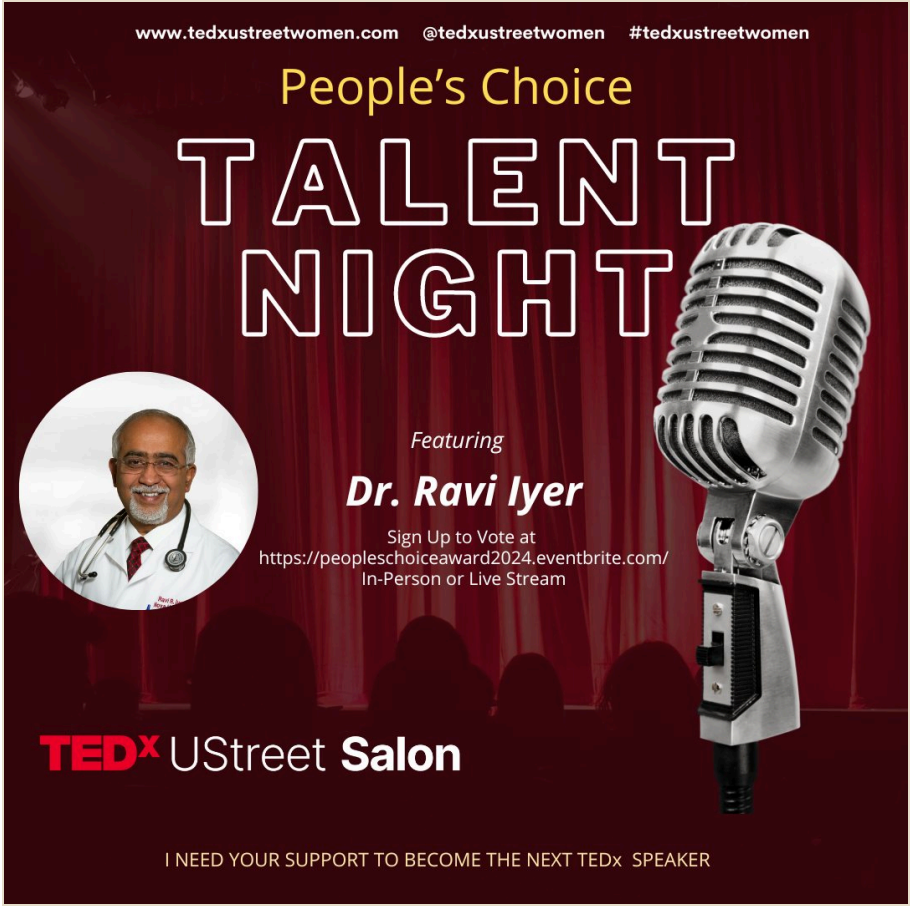
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TEDX AUDITION SCRIPT · TEDXUSTREET SALON

The Power of Focused Connection

The mahout's chain, the wandering trunk, and a method of focus carried from the Ganges to a pandemic clinic.

By **Ravi R. Iyer, MD**



Event artwork and the finalists announcement as issued by TEDxUStreet Salon. Retained as part of the record of how the pitch appeared.

> **WHAT THIS ENTRY IS**
> This pitch was delivered live at TEDxUStreet Salon's People's Choice Talent Night, streamed publicly and put to a public vote, which it won: the author was named top finalist of the five chosen to go forward. He then withdrew, and the main-stage talk was never delivered. The piece is entered in the Record because the audition was itself a public, streamed and voted performance — not because it led to a main-stage talk, which it did not.

Elephants are amazingly intelligent and curious animals. And their curiosity gets them into all sorts of mischief. Let me tell you how a simple technique used by the elephant-keepers or mahouts of India to prevent the mischief of the elephant's curiosity, showed me a method that allowed me to bring focus into my life and create connection within the community I served. I'm Dr. Ravi Iyer, and before I came to the US to join Harvard Medical School as a physician, scientist and research fellow, I grew up in India and every morning I'd swim in the Ganges and watch the elephant keepers or mahouts as we called them bring the temple elephants down to the river for their bath! The elephant's trunks would wander everywhere, grabbing coconuts and fruit from roadside stalls causing havoc of all sorts.

To prevent this the mahouts would hang a chain for the elephant to hold in its trunk and by connecting with this chain, the elephant's trunk no longer wandered in distraction after other objects. When I saw this, I wondered if I could use this as a metaphor for a strategy of focus that would anchor me to a grounding idea of purpose as a physician. I began to search for methods of focus and in medical school, I learned to use the technique of focused ideation and attention on my breathing to concentrate my distracted mind. I did this quietly, secretly while doing all my other work. As I developed skill in remaining focused, my career grew and the lesson of the elephant became a tool in my medical practice for me to help my patients handle the chaotic

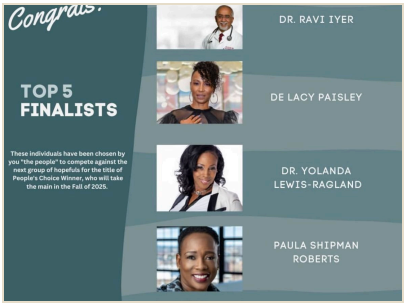
narratives of fear when confronted by disease. The strategy of focus on a grounding idea became my resource of assistance during the COVID pandemic... where everyone's mind was a flailing trunk of fear and division. We saw the disconnection caused by the Us versus Them narrative of the pandemic and the unraveling of human connection as a serious problem and we focused all our efforts on combating this with actions based on shared human connection. We kept our clinic open, continuing to care for patients, and created a space of constant focus on the human principles of connection over conflict ..... connection even at the risk of disease.... remaining grounded with focus in our belief that a life of equitable connection was worth defending at all costs, even our own ... We were able to show our community a way to shape their reality for themselves and move forward without becoming overwhelmed by fear .... and to remain connected and functional at work, generate income, thrive, and flourish at a time of universal economic distress and devastation. Our experience of performing nearly 100,000 COVID tests, treating nearly 10,000 COVID positive patients and executing hundreds of housecalls to homes of COVID patients while remaining safe and disease free, illuminated a fundamental truth: fear is a product of attention misplaced-- attention that latches like a chaotic elephant trunk onto the wrong things, spinning narratives that trap us.

What we accomplished during the pandemic was proof that the methods of focus can erase FEAR and create community, and connection saving lives and economies. Nations and Democracies are nothing more than communities connected by a grounding narrative, and it is the spike of Fear driven by the Hammer of disconnection that fractures communities, nations and Democracies. The problem of disconnection and distraction is not trivial. We live in a world where we are inundated by constant stimulation and distraction by design through multiple channels that all compete for connecting to our attention. Whether it is apps, or phones or internet or the emerging technologies of AI and machine intelligence, everything drives us as individuals and communities towards distraction and disconnection.

In such a world, when we help ourselves and others discover the central eye of connection within the storm of our conflicting fears ... through the method of focus we provide an anchoring chain for our wandering minds and shape the way life manifests for ourselves and those around us. Therefore I bring to you the ancient wisdom of the mahouts of India and their glorious majestic elephants and suggest that the strategy of finding that 'inner anchoring chain' — through the application of focused ideation upon human connection, linked to the common grounding narratives that bind us as individuals and communities— may offer a solution to some of the biggest problems facing us as individuals and as humanity. It is a simple strategy that is available to all without restriction, requiring only the discipline of daily practice to set ourselves and our communities free. I am Dr. Ravi Iyer and this is my Idea Worth Sharing. Thank you for your consideration, your time, and your vote.

IMAGES FROM THE ORIGINAL





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ravi R. Iyer, MD is a physician-scientist, entrepreneur, author and five-time TEDx speaker who has spent four decades exploring a deceptively simple question: what makes human beings, and the organizations they create, perform at their best? A Harvard-trained physician, corporate strategist and the founder of multiple healthcare and performance ventures, he is the creator of Neuroalignment, a framework for building high-performance organizations around the realities of human cognitive diversity. His work sits at the intersection of biology, leadership, technology and human behavior.

THE AKAASHIK RECORD

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Name forms. One person, credited as Ravi R. Iyer, MD; Ravi R. Iyer; Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer, MD; Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer; Ravi Iyer, MD; Ravi Iyer; Ravi Ramamoorthy; R. R. Iyer; R.R. Iyer; R. Iyer. The author's name is Ravi Iyer, and has been for many years. His work is nonetheless credited under several forms. In India the canonical surname is Ramamoorthy and Iyer is the clan name appended to it, and where a form is entered under that convention the credit follows it: on the signed speaker release for TEDxChantilly he entered Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer, and that talk stands credited on the TEDx channel to Ravi Ramamoorthy. The five ted.com event pages credit him under four different forms between them — Dr. Ravi Iyer at TEDxGary, Dr. Ravi Iyer, MD at TEDxHandley Blvd Women, R.R. Iyer at TEDxUMKC, and Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer at both TEDxMontgomery College and TEDxChantilly HS. The Record lists every form the work is credited under, so that it remains findable under each.