



MIND & LIFE

Mind & Life Podcast Transcript

Jamie Bristow – Policy, Practice, and Planet

Original Air Date: December 16, 2022

Retrieved from: <https://podcast.mindandlife.org/jamie-bristow/>

Opening Quote – Jamie Bristow (00:00:03): *Although climate change has so far been treated as an external, technical, physical problem, that almost came about by accident, what we found in our research is that the mind is a driver of the crisis in the first place. And this stems from our inability to see the connections in our world, just a lack of understanding of interdependency. So fundamentally, the climate crisis is a relationship crisis. The relationship crisis is that we are disconnected from self, from others, from nature, and this can be solved by reconnecting—and that mindfulness and compassion can act as powerful enablers of reconnection.*

Intro – Wendy Hasenkamp (00:00:45): Welcome to Mind & Life. I'm Wendy Hasenkamp. Today I'm speaking with mindfulness policy advocate and Buddhist teacher, Jamie Bristow. Jamie is the co-director of the Mindfulness Initiative, an organization based in the UK that bridges contemplative practice and public policy, lifting up the inner dimension of social change. Over the past few years, I've read several of the Mindfulness Initiative's policy reports—which are really impressive, by the way. They're thorough and accessible summaries of contemplative research, along with why and how these practices can be helpful. But I'd never gotten to meet Jamie, so I was really happy to be able to chat with him earlier this fall.

(00:01:28) We begin with his story, why he first started meditating, his previous career in advertising (which, interestingly, becomes relevant in different ways, given his current direction), and his growing commitment to climate work. Then Jamie shares some fascinating history of mindfulness within the UK government, and how this spurred the development of the Mindfulness Initiative. He talks about the nuts and bolts of mindful policy work, and shares some recent wins—policy advances in the UK in health, criminal justice, and education. He also describes how he's come to see mindfulness as a foundational human capacity, not just a skill that you can learn, which I found a really interesting and useful perspective. And this gets us into the Mindfulness Initiative's current work on how the mind relates to the climate crisis. Jamie reflects on the consequences of our failure to see interconnectedness in the world, and how mindfulness and compassion can help with reconnection. Along the way, we take an interesting dive into understanding two modes of mind, two ways we can operate in the world, and the role of mindfulness in regulating those modes. And Jamie ends with some thoughts on where we can go from here, in terms of policy and really shining a light on the importance of this inner dimension of change.

(00:02:59) This is the first time we've had someone on the show who's working to integrate contemplative practices at a national level, in government settings, which I think shows just how far this field has evolved. I really enjoyed this conversation. I think Jamie's articulation of how our mindset both

underpins and is also the solution to so many of our major challenges in the world is just about the most important message that can be shared. It's really what this show is all about, actually. So I encourage you to check out the links in the show notes to the work of the Mindfulness Initiative, and take some time to read their latest report. It's called Reconnection: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out.

[\(00:03:43\)](#) And this episode marks the end of our fifth season. So we'll be taking a few months off of releasing shows to work on new episodes. In the meantime, stay tuned to all of Mind & Life's various channels for more wisdom from the heart of contemplative science. And we'll be back in your feeds very soon. And thank you all so much for listening and engaging with the show and sharing it. It's so wonderful to see how the audience is growing. Okay, with that, it is my great pleasure to share with you Jamie Bristow.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:04:21\)](#): Alright well, it is my pleasure to welcome Jamie Bristow to the show today. Thanks so much, Jamie, for being here.

Jamie Bristow [\(00:04:27\)](#): Oh, it's such a pleasure, Wendy. Yeah, it really is.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:04:30\)](#): I always love to start with people's personal stories and backgrounds, and understanding a little bit of how they got into this work. So for you, how did you come to the contemplative space and then also moving into policy work?

Jamie Bristow [\(00:04:43\)](#): Well, I was lucky enough to be taught to meditate when I was about 18, 19, at the beginning of my university life. It was one of those student societies that you join in the first weeks of college where your enthusiasm outstrips probably your capacity to keep stuff up. *[laughter]* So it was just one of those things I checked out. And it blew my mind, really, that I could close my eyes and have a significant effect over my experience, in that moment and for hours afterwards. But like many other teenagers or students, I had lots of other things to distract me. So it didn't really make it a central part of my life until I found myself a few years later, a graduate executive in the advertising industry. And I was still sort of "binging on Buddhism," I think is what I called it, kind of doing a little bit of meditation, reading a book here and there, and then forgetting about it for six months.

[\(00:05:47\)](#) But I really committed to it when I wanted something in particular. I wanted a self-regulation benefit, as the researchers sometimes call it. Quite honestly, I wanted to concentrate for longer hours to sit at my desk to be a better advertiser, make cooler adverts and sell more stuff. And in fact, I was working for Nissan (or Nissan, as I think you say in North America). Yeah like, making adverts for SUVs, not thinking that was a problem at all.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:06:20\)](#): Oh, wow.

Jamie Bristow [\(00:06:20\)](#): And we'll come to later on, I guess, about why now I think that is a problem.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:06:24\)](#): Yeah, interesting.

Jamie Bristow [\(00:06:27\)](#): Yeah, so I got that self-regulation benefit, and then got a whole lot more besides—exploring my own heart and mind and my own role in the world, and in fact decided that advertising wasn't right for me, it wasn't right for the world. But that's later on in the story. So yeah, lucky enough to really commit to it at that point. And quite soon it became almost the most important

thing in my life. And now, well, certainly for the last 13 years or so, it's been hugely important. And I've trained to become a Buddhist teacher, a dharma teacher, a mindfulness teacher, and I've made mindfulness and the secular scientific application of contemplative practices my professional life now for eight or nine years.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:07:10): So how did you get from advertising to policy work, and the work at the Mindfulness Initiative that you do now?

Jamie Bristow (00:07:17): Well, this sort of somewhat still nascent mindfulness practice meant that the same information I'd heard many times about sustainability, the climate crisis, landed in a different way. So with greater awareness and sensitivity, and this courage to turn towards the difficult, as is often said on mindfulness courses, I looked at the evidence, and realized that my work was ethically unsustainable. Within a couple of years, I had quit my job, and started volunteering for a climate change campaign. And then I, like many people, had a really eye-opening experience about quite what we're up against, in terms of the denial, repression, and other kind of psychological barriers to collective action on this predicament. And it was, yeah, it's quite overwhelming. It's quite disheartening. And I realized that what I was doing—just telling more people the facts about what was happening—wasn't going to shift the dial. And I looked at my own life and I thought, why did I start giving a damn? And of course, as I've mentioned to, I credited my mindfulness practice.

(00:08:36) And it was at that point that I was like, well, maybe this is a missing piece. It seems people are completely ignoring this inner dimension. It's all treated like an external, physical, technical problem, but yet for me it was a psychological shift that led to radical change in behavior and profession. So maybe I should work on this potentially missing piece.

(00:09:00) But back then there was no... you know, mindfulness was still weird as hell. Meditation was esoteric and taboo. So you couldn't, in the climate world, go straight for that, 12 years ago. So I started off just thinking, well, how do I spread the word? How do I get more meditation into more people's lives? And it was at that time that Headspace, the meditation app, was really kicking off. So I turned up to their offices essentially and said, "Hey, I love what you do, give me a job." And I spent the best part of a couple of years with them, and through that was invited to start contributing to a new initiative in the British Parliament.

(00:09:44) So since 2013, members of the House of Lords, members of the House of Commons had been learning mindfulness on an eight-week course, modeled around the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy course that has been available on our National Health Service actually since 2004.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:10:03): That's pretty amazing in and of itself that members of Parliament and politicians were practicing mindfulness. Do you know how that began?

Jamie Bristow (00:10:13): Yeah. So it was a member of Parliament called Chris Ruane, who had been practicing himself for some years, and he invited the Oxford University Mindfulness Center to come and introduce it to his colleagues. And on that first course there was about 22 politicians and they said, "Hey, no, look, yeah okay, I get it Chris, this could be helpful to me, but don't tell anyone that I'm going to come." Like it was still super weird and risky for them to do. Right? Fast forward a few years later, and we've had 400 members of Parliament and members of the House of Lords, our upper house, take some kind of mindfulness training.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:10:54): Amazing.

Jamie Bristow (00:10:55): And out of that personal practice became an interest in the science behind what they've been experiencing. And like many of us, we think, oh, more people should know about this—how do I share it? And for politicians, the obvious way to share it is through public policy, looking at how this could be applied better in health, in education, et cetera. And that's where I came in, along with a number of other volunteers and experts, to support those politicians who had been practicing themselves to form an All-Party Parliamentary Group on mindfulness. It's like a student society for back bench MPs. There are scores and scores of these All-Party Parliamentary Groups, but many of them do really quite impactful work.

(00:11:35) So you come together on a cross-party basis to inquire into an area of mutual interest and make recommendations for government, and then go and lobby ministers as back benchers to enact the changes you want to see. So yeah, we helped them to form a group like that, and we helped them to conduct an inquiry into how mindfulness training could be better applied in health, education, criminal justice, and the workplace, and produced the world's first public policy report about this, called Mindful Nation UK. And that was really the kicking off point for the Mindfulness Initiative, which is this organization that was the name given to this group of experts and volunteers, but has since become a registered charity and a policy institute working on a whole range of issues around the world with many different parliaments now.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:12:31): Wow, that is fascinating. So does the work of the Mindfulness Initiative now— you said it was mainly in response to a desire from these politicians to know the science behind it—so is it primarily translating science, compiling the research that's known, and then making recommendations on that? Or just giving the information? Can you say a little bit more about the process that you guys go through?

Jamie Bristow (00:12:56): Yeah, I mean that's a lot of it. So a policy institute might otherwise be called a think tank. In fact, it's quite trendy to be called "think and do" tanks now, because you're not just writing reports, but you might be having initiatives. And my joke often is that, being mindfulness, we're a "think and do and be" tank. So we get politicians together to actually not necessarily get involved in the intellectual side or the doing side, but spend a day on the being side before we get into that.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:13:24): Nice.

Jamie Bristow (00:13:24): So yes, it started off being, let's have a look at the evidence. And then out of that it was like, okay, well there's strong enough evidence to really recommend this—as an alternative to antidepressants, for instance, which many policy makers are worried about the over-prescription of. So what we did in those, we had, I think it was 10 or so inquiries back in 2014 in these four different policy areas. And we had professors come in to give presentations on the science and did our own summary of the research. That's one part of it, for sure.

(00:14:02) Then we combine that with the existing public policy landscape. Like, what are ministers and policymakers and advisors currently worried about? What are their current policies and how would mindfulness training be applied within that world? What's realistic? And that's the second thing. And the third thing is the state of implementation, or the state of innovation in the field. So it's really keeping your ears to the ground, or mapping the sector, understanding who's teaching what where, what the needs are in the sector. It's no good us going to government and say, "Hey, we need to train 2000

mindfulness teachers within the next year," if there's no way that's physically possible because there isn't the teacher training capacity, which was one of the issues back in 2014. We had to look at what the capacity was to meet some of these societal needs.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:14:56): Right. That's also fascinating and I admit it's kind of a new world for me to think about. We don't really have any policy initiative like that in the United States, so it's not something I am familiar with the inner workings of. So it's really fascinating to talk to you about this. And I know the UK has done a number of larger roll-outs, like in schools and like you said, policies in health. And really it, to my knowledge, is the only place in the world that's done that at a governmental level. Do you know of any other places?

Jamie Bristow (00:15:27): Well, that's what we've been working on, supporting other countries to do something similar. But firstly, yeah, there was something, the conditions came together in the UK, I think. And when Jon Kabat-Zinn came over to the UK to support us in a couple of events in 2017, I remember him saying, nowhere else in the world is there the superstructures and the undergirding of the mindfulness sector like there is in the United Kingdom. And part of that is due to the leadership of people like Professor Mark Williams, who's kind of like the British Jon Kabat-Zinn I guess you could say, rather than the godfather of mindfulness, he's kind of like the uncle of mindfulness or something. *[laughter]* And the role of Oxford University and the role of our National Health Service officially reviewing the evidence, like I say back in 2004, and deciding that this is gold standard stuff that can be-

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:16:20): 2004?

Jamie Bristow (00:16:21): 2004, yeah. And that it could be applied using public funds for the treatment of recurrent depression. So that gave it a kind of stamp of approval that made it a safe, credible thing, and helped us, for instance, in Parliament. If you say, "Hey, this is Oxford delivering it and it's been available anyway for 10 years on your National Health Service," you're slightly more reassured that you're not going to get pilloried in the press for being associated with it. Although they still did have concerns at the time.

(00:16:46) So yeah, there was something that happened in the UK and there's a level of coordination between the different research and training centers, and we have a national association of mindfulness-based approaches. And that's all been very helpful. And in fact, the Mindfulness Initiative and the work that it did to represent the sector to policy makers and decision makers in different areas of public life, did give it a kind of focal point for everyone to come together and to be collaborative. And we saw kind of a halo effect, a field building halo effect around our policy inquiries and the work that we did.

(00:17:21) – *musical interlude* –

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:17:21): I definitely want to get into the climate work that is the latest work of the Mindfulness Initiative. But I'm curious for you personally, with your advertising background, it's fascinating to me how you must really be able to use some of those skills, in a much more healthy and skillful way. You're still in a role of translating information and... I don't know if it's in a way trying to convince people. I mean that's what policy and politics is about. So I'm just curious your thoughts on how your own background and experience in the advertising world comes into play in the work that you're doing now in, a maybe healthy way.

Jamie Bristow (00:18:25): Yeah, it's a lovely question. I mean, I did a careers questionnaire at some point, post my advertising life actually, but it came up saying as "excels at communicating intangibles" or selling intangibles or something. So I guess in advertising you're kind of selling hope and status and optimism or whatever, via the buying of a new car or something, right? *[laughter]* So although it is a physical thing, really what you're doing is selling an intangible lifestyle.

(00:18:55) And for sure, I mean, particularly in the early years of doing this work... First at Headspace, I was going into corporates as part of my role. This is really early in those days, going into Google or Harvard. So that felt like a part of it. But certainly talking to politicians and policy makers, telling them a good story about what this is and why it's important trumps a big stack of evidence. It's the case for almost all policymaking. You know, the world is made of stories and we think in stories, although we like to pretend it's not. So yeah, I think that's all been really helpful. And I often describe myself as a kind of poacher-turned-gamekeeper, from being the black knight of consumerism to trying to get people to switch away from gas guzzling 4x4s.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:19:48): Yeah, that's a wonderful transformation. So yeah, I love this unique skill of selling intangibles. I think it's actually so essential in the world today. So, gratitude to you for bringing this work into this space. And so before we get into talking about climate in particular, just writ large the work of the Mindfulness Initiative so far, what are some of the policies or successes that you all have seen?

Jamie Bristow (00:20:16): Well, that Mindful Nation UK report that we published in 2015 had a bunch of recommendations. And gratifyingly, in some areas we've seen most of those acted upon—particularly in health, in the area of criminal justice, and the British Department for Education put money into researching mindfulness in schools, for instance. So that was great. And we went on from there to inquire into more varied and nuanced areas, like older people and aging well, mindfulness and blue light services, like emergency services and frontline staff. And a lot of the outputs from these inquiries and briefing papers that we've created for ministers over the years are available on our website. So that original report and everything we've done since then are available on the publication section of our website. And then beyond the public policy development, we've seen great successes in giving politicians a kind of place to hang out where they can talk about the impact of their mindfulness practice, not just on themselves, but on the political process itself.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:21:28): Oh, that's fascinating.

Jamie Bristow (00:21:29): Yeah. And so for instance—having helped to introduce mindfulness in 10 other national parliaments, so like Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and in some cases seen that to really grow and flourish—we pulled together 40 politicians from 14 countries into the British Parliament, had a day of practice with Jon Kabat-Zinn and others. And in the years since then, politicians have become more and more visionary about how they think this could be fundamental. Like, developing these foundational capacities of heart and mind would change how politics is done. And they talk about how mindfulness helps them to disagree better. They're not going to be necessarily any less ideological or necessarily agree on policy ideas, but at least they can have a more productive discourse.

(00:22:23) And we've seen demonstration of that in the debating chamber, where people have stood up and called for calm. And the speaker of the House of Commons, the guy who runs the show, commenting on one particular politician saying, "He's obviously a beneficiary of mindfulness, he's a much more calm and pragmatic fellow these days, which we are very grateful for."

[\(00:22:42\)](#) So yeah, we are seeing some sort of green shoots, I guess. It's been a long time coming, and these are baby steps. But there could well be... there's reason for hope that if this was invested in and developed—as well as all the other areas of society, like the media and others that also need to take them up, practice a little bit of something—then yeah, it could be really transformative.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:23:08\)](#): Yeah, that's fantastic. I mean, yeah, politics is of course one of the most important and influential spaces that shape our entire world. So you mentioned that actually your initial interest in this whole space was related to the climate crisis and issues around that. But as you said, of course it was, at that time not really able to be woven together, but now it's starting to be by the Mindfulness Initiative. So do you want to talk about how that became possible, on your radar as that group? And then maybe we can dig into some of the report that you all have presented.

Jamie Bristow [\(00:23:46\)](#): Sure. So yeah, we published a report recently, which is really kind of five years in development. Because we started out seeing that we were missing the wood from the trees somehow. That we were only really able to talk about the application of mindfulness—and compassion training, which is increasingly part of our interest—where a minister had a particular problem that they wanted to fix, and mindfulness happened to have the evidence base which would recommend it to address that. And this reflects the kind of fragmented evidence base for mindfulness, and the fragmented way that policymaking is done. And in fact, the way in which mindfulness is sometimes described as being helpful for anxiety or depression or attention regulation, it can feel like it's a bit all over the place. And some people use that as a way to dismiss it. It's like, oh, it must be a panacea. They're over-promising and applying to all these different things... Rather than the myriad applications and different types of evidence being a reason to dismiss it, instead, it points to it being a foundational capacity, which affects everything that we do.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:25:06\)](#): Right. So it can have these outcomes in all these different spaces.

Jamie Bristow [\(00:25:09\)](#): Yeah, exactly. But haven't been talking about it like that foundational capacity. We're sort of led by the evidence building, led by particularly the clinical path that it came into mainstream society, we've looked at individual outcomes because that's where the funding for research was, or that's the easiest thing to measure. And we were kind of missing... there's a missing middle of the why of mindfulness, we sometimes say.

[\(00:25:35\)](#) So if you say mindfulness is going to increase our attention regulation by 20% or reduce our anxiety by 16% or whatever, critics will say, oh, that's like the weak balm of self-improvement. Or that's superficial. Nice, but superficial. But then that's not where this started. I mean Jon Kabat-Zinn in his books, and others, have always said that there's a bigger picture here, linking up individual health and planetary health. And in one of his papers, Jon said that mindfulness will be a catalyzing force that will lead to a global renaissance. And these grand pictures, grand claims—they get dismissed as magical thinking, and utopian woo-woo stuff.

[\(00:26:17\)](#) And what we're missing is something in the middle, which links up these somewhat siloed benefits and this bigger vision that we practitioners and teachers and advocates intuitively feel is a potential. And I got the sense, actually, I was inspired by one of our politicians to try and find the story which makes sense of this foundational capacity, in an event that we held around 2016 on mindfulness and social change. He said that he sees mindfulness as a foundational proposition, beyond the applications in terms of health. And what he means there is that it's a kind of enabling factor in a whole

range of policy interventions—even ones that look at, say, social deprivation or how citizens engage with their communities and with the state, et cetera. And I was like, "Wow, that's actually pretty visionary there. He's seeing this as a foundational... like the lubrication in a system, or something that's an enabling factor." And yeah, he's absolutely right.

[\(00:27:16\)](#) So what's the story that's going to make sense of this? And how can we, robustly as we can, review the evidence and pull it together into a framework, so this isn't just a kind of magical thinking story, but actually feels like something we can hang policy recommendations on, and give people really strong reason to believe? So we started this work looking at mindfulness in particular, and it's potential to meet the crises of our world, most broadly. So this is what we call the meta-crisis, or some people have called it the perma-crisis or the poly-crisis. This is the way in which our democratic crisis, our economic crisis, our social and environmental [crises], all interleave with each other and are really part of the same problem—which could be summed up as our inability to handle the complexity of the world that we've created. And we as individuals and as societies just need to become a lot more complex and handle that complexity a bit better. And of course, inner capacities, capacities of heart and mind, are part of us individually and collectively being able to handle that complexity better.

[\(00:28:22\)](#) And so we created a story (because you know as I said, the world is made of stories) and we pulled together a framework at the center of it, and we published this in a document called *Mindfulness: Developing Agency in Urgent Times*, to really counter that idea that mindfulness is somehow passive, or it's just about rest and relaxation or something. But saying that actually it helps you to live more of the time on purpose, to be more attuned with your inner compass, to be able to act with others, to be able to perceive things more clearly, understand things better, and to act with clarity and purpose.

[\(00:28:56\)](#) So that was really the foundation step that took us from the policy work that was more about specific things that we can recommend right now, to this more visionary think tank long-term stuff. And then it was finally time, like you say, for me to be able to work on the thing that's been motivating me this whole time.

[\(00:29:19\)](#) So rather than looking at mindfulness in particular, we broadened it at that point to look at mindfulness and compassion training. Because I felt that through that previous work, in our definition of mindfulness there is care, there is kindness and compassion increasingly taught as part of mindfulness training programs, I was always rolling that into the concept of mindfulness. But I felt like the time is right and actually amongst politicians and policy makers, I could now use that C-word [compassion] without turning them off. And it was a problem initially, but now we can bring it out and put it side by side and say, right, we've got mindfulness and compassion training together. And most commonly one includes the other—they're just sort of slightly different emphases, rather than being very different things. And so we broadened it on the next phase of our work to include compassion.

[\(00:30:08\)](#) And rather than looking at the meta-crisis in general, we were like, "Right, let's hone down and look at the climate crisis in particular, perhaps our most pressing existential threat." And yeah, we conducted a research partnership with a leading sustainability sciences professor—who I believe is a fellow of Mind & Life—Professor Christine Wamsler at the Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies. And together we set out to create a policy report which could help put the inner dimension of the climate crisis into the frame in policy thinking. And then with that, position mindfulness and compassion training as two of the leading, most evidence-based ways in which we might be able to intervene and develop these sort of capacities that make such a big difference.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:30:53): Yeah. Well let's just spend a moment maybe talking about... in the beginning of your report it lays out these issues around disconnection, and how we have these multiple levels of disconnection that's part of our worldview and mindset around separation, and things like that—and that that's what's enabled and facilitated this crisis. So maybe we could unpack that a little bit.

Jamie Bristow (00:31:17): Yeah, for sure. Having learned the importance of framings and stories, it was really important for us to find a clean and clear way to summarize the issue at hand, and particularly the way in which the mind is a driver of the crisis in the first place. So what we found in our research is that politicians, policymakers are increasingly familiar with how the mind is a victim of the climate crisis, particularly amongst young people.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:31:55): Can you say more about that, a little bit?

Jamie Bristow (00:31:57): Well, "eco-anxiety" as it's now called (the word is starting to be thrown around quite commonly), eco-grief, depression, overwhelm, stress are starting to be evidenced and a serious drag factor on the mental health and the well-being of people around the world. And it becomes a barrier in itself, a barrier to action. Because people actually don't become more engaged, it seems, they can become less engaged, with their head in the sand. So that's the first and the most commonly understood way in which the mind and climate change interact in the inner dimension of the crisis, you might describe it as.

(00:32:37) The second one, that environmental psychologists or climate psychologists are getting increasingly clear on, is that the mind is a barrier to climate action. So this is, we repress emotions, we deny the facts, we have future discounting bias, confirmation bias, all of these heuristics that served well on the savanna, but now are basically making it very hard to act in our collective best interests. So yeah, mind as victim, mind as a barrier to action.

(00:33:05) And the third one is that the mind is basically the cause of the issue in the first place. And this is much harder for policymakers to see, or less common. But it's starting to get there. And that is, although climate change has so far been treated as an external, technical, physical problem that almost came about by accident somehow—"Oh, we've got this issue we found it's happening..." Which I suppose you could treat it like that back in 1970, when the scientists first started ringing alarm bells. But now 50 years later, it's so manifestly not a technical issue, otherwise... We've got the evidence, we know what to do about it, we have the policy instruments and now we're seeing that it's really just a symptom of a wider problem. And it's only one symptom. We also have all these other ecological planetary boundaries that have been transgressed or about to be—so ecosystem collapse, loss of biodiversity, erosion of soils. We've got 10 years of harvest left or something like that, plastic in the ocean, et cetera, et cetera.

(00:34:15) And this stems from our mindset and our inability to see the connections in our world, and to feel those connections. We are insensitive, we are insensible to the harm that we create on the other side of the planet. We are just not connected to it. We're not connected to the harm that we're doing to others as a result, other forms of life, other people. And part of this lack of care and lack of awareness stems from a basic lack of connection to nature. And this interrelates with a lack of actually connection to ourselves. That there has been a way of seeing ourselves, a way of seeing the world that has created a society that has reinforced that disconnection. So this goes right way back to the Greeks—Greek

philosophy, Judeo-Christian ideas, to contrast with actually some of the ancient ideas in the East. And it's not... talking about East/West now isn't appropriate because we're all kind of modernist thinkers and probably we're all actually quite separated in our thinking, and separated from our own bodies, separated from emotions, separated from our deeper values. So this stuff goes really way back. And one element of it, for instance, is that we tend to, in Western thought, think of human beings at the top of a pyramid of power, in dominion over nature, nature given to us to sort of be in dominion over and exploit. Whereas in some of the Eastern philosophies it was, humans are enmeshed in a harmonic web of life where every action has a ripple effect through the chain of relationships, et cetera, et cetera.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:35:52): And in many Indigenous cultures around the world. Yeah.

Jamie Bristow (00:35:55): Exactly. And even in Britain, North America, some of these places that are now bastions of individualists and separate thinking, actually the Indigenous culture had it right first time. So that's what we mean by the separation that we have in our mindset—the physical separation from each other, from nature and from ourselves underpins a mindset, a way of being in the world and behavior, which have ultimately led us to treat our only home like a trashcan, and to not even be connected to future generations. It's just a lack of understanding fundamentally of interdependency, of what teacher Thich Nhat Hanh calls interbeing.

(00:36:35) And we did this research, Christine Wamsler and I, of talking to policy makers and politicians in these sort of semi-structured interviews. And we also did a large consultation survey of about a hundred experts working at the intersection between inner and outer sustainability. And we asked them all, if you talk about an intervention of the climate crisis, what do you say? And we found that you almost had a hundred different answers. And this is a problem because policymakers, for them it'll just be like noise—a big cacophonous, everyone has their own different way of talking about consciousness or mindfulness or interbeing or whatever it is. All of which are part of the picture, but it's difficult, if we're not all singing from the same hymn sheet, to cut through.

(00:37:20) But the one narrative that we did see coming through and we felt was most helpful to be able to say what we wanted to say, was this narrative about fundamentally climate crisis is a relationship crisis. The relationship crisis is that we are disconnected from self, from others, from nature. And this can be solved by reconnecting. And that mindfulness and compassion—this is where we come in—mindfulness and compassion can act as powerful enablers of connection. They have throughout human history, been foundational capacities for connection. And particularly in this time, they will help us stay connected—in spite of the great difficulty it is of being aware of what we've done and what we're doing—to help us shift that mindset towards one of interdependence, and to connect with each other and connect to our compass, and connect action and intention. So that's essentially where we got to with our narrative.

(00:38:15) – *musical interlude* –

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:38:34): That's wonderful. That was really so beautifully said. Thank you for sharing that in such a clear way. Would you like to dig into some of the research, and pull apart a little bit the ways that mindfulness and compassion can help us with this reconnection?

Jamie Bristow (00:38:49): Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So we had these two chapters in our report. The first is the way in which connection's been important throughout human history and all times. And then the way in which it's super important right now. In that first chapter, we split it into capacities of mind, then

capacities of mind-body, and then capacities of mind-body-heart, because we had to talk about these things linearly even though they're not linear, et cetera, et cetera. Completely interdependent faculties, but we kind of layer them up in that way.

[\(00:39:20\)](#) So within the first section on mind, we look at the foundational role of attention regulation, like how our attention faculties render our world for us. They pull together, bind together, all of our other cognitive and emotional faculties. And what we pay attention to is our world. And if we are not paying attention to a problem, how can we solve it? So we look at the way that attention's always foundational, and the way in which it's increasingly being undermined. The way in which that regulation capacity is underdeveloped and undermined now because of digital media, social media—and actually social media is just the latest assault in what's been a sort of 200 or 300-year assault on our attentional faculties by the attention merchants, as has been described.

[\(00:40:10\)](#) So we start there and then we obviously frame mindfulness as a potential enabler of regulation. But then we go on to look at how mindfulness isn't just about attention and regulation, actually it's a capacity for awareness of a particular quality, and that is awareness that is open, allowing, curious, and kind. And we look at how those attitudinal foundations work together to broaden the bandwidth of perception to enable us to be more receptive, particularly to new and challenging information—which obviously in the context of the climate crisis is absolutely fundamental, because our collective "sticking heads in the sand" is probably what's most dragged us back 30 years in terms of action.

[\(00:40:53\)](#) And then we look at the evidence for the importance of not just attending and broadening awareness, but learning how to take new and different perspectives on things, including new and different perspectives on our thoughts and cognitive faculties. So bringing that cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking. So in each of these sort of sections, subsections, we first of all frame why this is an important inner dimension of the crisis and then towards the end say, and here are the reasons why mindfulness and/or compassion have evidence to meet this, or underpin this faculty.

[\(00:41:30\)](#) So we move on from that into the body. And first of all we labor the point that we now understand our bodies not just as vehicles that take our heads from meeting to meeting, but instead we are emotional, extended, embodied cognizers. And that actually it's hugely important to connect with the body. For instance, our inner compass, our empathy—we actually listen to our own bodies rather than directly perceive the emotions of others. And if we haven't got body awareness, actually we struggle to empathize. That kind of thing we look at.

[\(00:42:04\)](#) And then we go on to look at the threat response system. And what is the climate crisis now, apart from one whopping great threat? And how that threat is dealt with by individuals, groups, and society will have a lot to do with what state our nervous system is in. Will it trigger fight, flight, freeze? Or will we be able to maintain an approach state that is required for us to move towards each other and the problem in a way that is productive? And of course, as we now know, the likelihood that our system is able to be in that kind of collaborative mode, or in a fight-flight mode has a lot to do with our past traumas, intergenerational trauma, collective trauma. And so we treat that as well. And it's interesting actually, a lot of the policymakers and experts that have read our report, that's actually still quite a new idea for them. And so this whole report is a kind of pick mix of different ideas, and for some they're completely new concepts.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:43:02): Yeah. This is so synthetic and it really is integrating a lot of very current and new ideas about minds and bodies, and how it all works together. So I can imagine that it's... I'm just so appreciative that you're bringing that level of intellect and thinking into the policy space.

Jamie Bristow (00:43:21): Oh, thank you. Yeah. Well, I hope I so. And it's really important, actually, I should have emphasized quite how many people have been involved in this. In the initial Mindfulness: Developing Agency in Urgent Times, and then into Reconnection, we probably have had our text read and had significant comments from well over a hundred of leading experts around the world. So we're sort of standing on the shoulders of giants. And so yeah, being able to go to true experts in, say, the area of trauma, or the area of compassion or whatever, to bring in their expertise has been a big part of this story, I should have mentioned up front.

(00:43:56) And then, speaking of compassion, then we go to mind-body-heart is the next section. We look at the role of emotional intelligence, empathy in connecting to each other, connecting to ourselves, and then the kind of jewel of our evolutionary inheritance, or the maker's gift, however you see it—compassion—and show how this isn't just a kind of nice to have fluffy thing, or a kind of motherhood and apple pie, everyone agrees that it's a good thing, but don't know how to actually do it. This is a crunchy, serious, practical thing that has basically been vital to our survival so far, and the cohesion of our societies. And we absolutely need to cultivate this right now, and not just talk about it. And so yeah, we lay out the reasons for that in the context of the climate crisis and introduce that.

(00:44:49) And again, many people who are interested in mindfulness training are unaware that there's an evidence base for compassion. Many of the people who I find are actually experts in compassion, scientists looking at compassion, don't even really mention that it can be trained. There was a famous very widely read book called *Humankind* by Rutger Bregman recently, a whole book about this side of the human condition and human nature. And then there's one sentence going, "Some people think maybe it can be trained." We'll tell you what, it can be trained. I think there's really good enough evidence—and not say two and a half thousand years worth of contemplative traditions—that say it can be, and we absolutely should on a much wider basis. Anyway, so that that's our kind of connection through human history.

(00:45:31) And then I'll mention in the second part perhaps more briefly, which is once we are connected, how do we stay connected when this is so difficult? And so the first section of our second chapter, we call staying with the trouble. And so this is, first of all, that radically new coping mechanism or approach for coping, which is turning towards the difficult, rather than putting everything in a box, which is what a lot of us do with climate change. And at some point we're going to have to let it out and process it, or integrate it.

(00:46:01) And I know personally, I experienced serious climate grief and repression. And it gave me heart pains and it gave me back problems and it stopped me sleeping. And I had no idea what I was doing, until suddenly I realized—and I had hardly did any work for three weeks, I was just like... the damn burst and I was just completely inundated or overwhelmed by feeling, and then this sort of depression. And finally I got through to a kind of post-tragic mindset that I could find joy and motivation again. So we look at the courage and the resource required to do that, and how inner capacities can support it. We look at the role of difficult emotions and how regulating and integrating those is vital. And we look at positive emotions—joy, hope, awe, optimism, and how mindfulness and compassion practice... and actually how compassion is what they call a transcendent emotion, which expands our identity and our sense of self.

(00:47:01) Which neatly actually draws us into the next section, which is about how we don't just see connectedness, but we understand it and feel it. And it really infuses our sense of who we are, and our sense the world. So I mentioned before about how that vital role of mindset. Are we at the top of a pyramid, disconnected from other things? Or are we enmeshed in the harmonic web of life? So we have a section called holistic worldview and expanded identity. So like I said, compassion and mindfulness seem to allow us to expand our identity, to not just see that connection but feel the connection, actually feel a sense of identity which is larger than the traditional narrow self. And to shift that mindset or that world view to one that better holds interdependence.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:47:44): Yeah. Can we pause on that for one moment?

Jamie Bristow (00:47:47): Sure.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:47:47): Because when I was looking through the report, that section really jumped out to me as like... *that's* the thing, right? To me, that's the goal that will counteract this state of disconnection that you were talking about before. And again, like you were saying, it's a worldview shift, it's an embodied understanding of interconnection. And that almost naturally leads to compassion... These things are all interlinked. But I feel like if you can come to that state or approach that state of that different worldview, that holistic or interconnected worldview, that will then just naturally affect all of the steps that you take from there, which includes policy and action and all of these things.

(00:48:37) So I just wanted to pause on that for a moment, because as a scientist of course I then immediately think, "Well how do you measure that? How can you measure a change in worldview?" Which I do think—we've talked about this a lot at Mind & Life too—that that's one of the key longer term things that comes out of this contemplative space, are these worldview shifts and this expansion of the self and understanding of the reality of interconnection. But I'm just wondering from your perspective, in trying to compile evidence and all these things, what's your sense of being able to get a handle on that? Is it measurable? Is it tractable? How do you even know if that's happening? I think people know it in themselves and they can report it, but beyond that... I don't know, just what's been your experience of that space?

Jamie Bristow (00:49:27): Well, firstly, I just want to validate your insight there—both that this is a crux of the paper we put together, and also a crux of the situation and what we can do about it. When I send this report to people and I think they might not read the whole thing, I often recommend a chapter that's most appropriate to their work and then say, just make sure you read the holistic worldview and expanded identities section, because that I think is the nub of it.

(00:49:52) And also this is what sustainability scientists call a deep leverage point for change. So it's... a shallow leverage point might be, I don't know, recycling more, recycling education or something like that. Do you know what I mean? Easy to access, we can send out some brochures or do a television advert, or something. Easy to access, but minimal impact. Deep leverage point for change, much harder to access, but once you do, there's a cascade effect on everything. Like, our world is an emergent phenomena based on some fundamental ways of looking. And that's what we're talking about here.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:50:30): Yeah.

Jamie Bristow (00:50:31): And yeah, how do you measure that? I mean there are ways, there are questionnaires that look sort of like at independent versus interconnected self-construal, I think might be some of the language. And I think there needs to be... Yeah, I'd love to inspire researchers out there through this conversation to go ahead and look at that more directly. What we look at are reasons to believe that both mindfulness and compassion might be an important shift, might help that shift. But what we also emphasize is that it probably needs to be in combination with direct inquiry into what our ways of looking are, what our mindsets are, what our worldviews are, et cetera. And so it won't be enough. There's some evidence to suggest that if you come with an independent self-construal and you practice mindfulness, it reinforces that and vice versa. If you have kind of an interconnected one, then that becomes stronger.

(00:51:24) So one of our themes through this report actually is the new innovative movement towards social mindfulness. Which is to say, mindfulness training helps us to inquire into patterns of distress and well-being and flourishing in our own lives, and where they might come from, what might be causing them. But the scope of that tends to be limited to the things we can control. You know, having longer lunch breaks, or having better relationships with your whoever, or responding not reacting to stressors. But actually we need to broaden the scope of this inquiry to sources of distress and well-being at a group and societal level, and then structures and systems potentially.

(00:52:05) It's a fraught territory because as soon as you do that, ideology can creep in, and then people can really reject it and go like, "Don't come here with your brainwashing and telling me that I need to think about things in a certain way," et cetera. So how do we make it an inquiry, and one that's palatable for a broad mainstream audience so we don't make it exclusive, at the same time as broadening that lens to inquire directly into this worldview issue.

(00:52:30) But we do offer some reasons to believe, even though we hope that there'll be much more researchers on this in the future. And one of the things that we have a whole box on is the association of mindfulness with the holistic intuitive mode of mind.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:52:44): Oh, I'm so glad you brought that up, because that jumped out at me too, and I wanted to ask you about it.

Jamie Bristow (00:52:48): Oh great.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:52:49): Yeah, so please unpack that. Thank you.

Jamie Bristow (00:52:51): So this is the model from cognitive scientists—particularly I like the work of John Teasdale, whose new book on interactive cognitive subsystems of mindfulness really majors on this and takes it to a whole new level of understanding—and associating mindfulness with holistic intuitive, which some people like Ian McGilchrist, the popular writer, associate with the right hemisphere, which is sort of like, parallel processing, wisdom, slow, intuitive, seeing the woods from the trees, big picture stuff. And then on the left hemisphere (if you go with McGilchrist, which many don't, admittedly), then it's kind of serial processing, logical, rational, verbal, conceptual, which is great at breaking the world into small parts, manipulating them in a kind of way that they have sort of linear relationships, or a small number of relationships that you can fit into your head and with your working memory sort of figure out. Not so good when you have thousands, maybe millions of inputs and you need a kind of "fuzzy logic" in terms of a computer science term, of a parallel processing.

(00:53:59) And so for instance, holistic intuitive tends to be upregulated in nature, whereas if we look at human made objects, the verbal conceptual gets stimulated. And this fragmentation, siloing, disconnection that we're seeing is part and parcel of the problematic worldview, is part and parcel of the verbal conceptual mode of mind. And the two go hand in hand. And that both nature connection and mindfulness are likely to help us to see interdependence, shift to a worldview that handles it, because it's a movement to that holistic intuitive mode of mind.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:54:38): Yeah. When I read that section of the report, I wasn't familiar with that term holistic intuitive, but it reminds me of a dichotomy that many people have made about different modes of operating—this kind of open receptive mode versus this conceptual thinking mode. And I don't know that I'm a big fan of localizing those into hemispheres of the brain, but certainly we have these different ways of operating. And it struck me a little bit, and I'm just curious with your experience in Buddhism as well, it struck me that that holistic intuitive felt like a non-dual kind of space. Like if it is meant to be a non-conceptual way of engaging with the world, do you think that that's a parallel that makes sense, or is that too far?

Jamie Bristow (00:55:24): I do. I do. And I'll throw in a couple of other slightly controversial things. I do buy McGilchrist's hemispheric thing, which isn't to say, it isn't true to say either hemisphere does any one thing on its own.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:55:40): Right.

Jamie Bristow (00:55:41): So the question isn't what does it do, it's how does it do it? So both hemispheres sort of do everything, but each does it differently and therefore adds a different sort of quality to our conscious experience.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:55:54): Yeah, okay. That's a helpful distinction.

Jamie Bristow (00:55:56): And there's one of the most popular Ted Talks is of the neuroscientist (I forget her name) who has a stroke in her left hemisphere. And she describes basically this non-dual experience of just like, perfect oneness with everything. That, and a huge amount of other case studies and bits of evidence that McGilchrist puts in his books, *The Master and his Emissary*, and *The Matter with Things*. So yeah, I would say yes.

(00:56:22) And the other thing which is starting to come into our thinking is realizing how Newtonian physics has shaped our understanding of the world, of ourselves of social change, how we see things. And quantum physics is offering a new model, a new analogy for understanding ourselves. And it's like one mode does nouns, and the other mode does verbs. One mode does Newtonian—there are discreet entities that have their inherent existence and suchness in a discreet number of relationships with each other, in a causal way that we think we can figure out logically. And the other one does a kind of quantum feel of just knowing in a pattern of relationships.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:57:03): Yeah, exactly. Like one mode separates things, and one mode integrates things, or sees things as connected.

Jamie Bristow (00:57:10): Exactly. And crucially, McGilchrist suggests that one evolved as a primary function, and that's where *The Master in His Emissary* comes in. The master should be the holistic intuitive, which brings in the verbal conceptual when we got a problem to solve.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:57:24](#)): When needed.

Jamie Bristow ([00:57:25](#)): When needed. But we've created a world with the verbal conceptual that then has a feedback loop, which means that the verbal conceptual goes nuts because it gets stimulated by everything.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:57:36](#)): That's all it does.

Jamie Bristow ([00:57:37](#)): Yes, exactly.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:57:38](#)): Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. Yeah, I like that. Because you do need, there's value in both and you need both to be able to navigate the world of... I'm reminded of a conversation I had with Sharon Salzberg on the podcast a little bit ago. She was talking about a tree, and in one way you can see a tree as a distinct separate entity, and in another way you can see all the interconnections—under the earth, and the air.

Jamie Bristow ([00:58:06](#)): Exactly.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:58:06](#)): And the fact that both of those are true in different ways. And so we need to be able to work with both of those. Yeah.

Jamie Bristow ([00:58:12](#)): Exactly. Now I have a little provocation for any researchers listening here wanting a project.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:58:17](#)): Please.

Jamie Bristow ([00:58:17](#)): You may well be familiar with the very influential *Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow* book and research around behavioral economics. So they have the System 1, System 2. Thinking fast is sort of derided as being that's your intuitive. And then System 2 is the slow, which is the more verbal conceptual, deliberative, logical, et cetera. Where does this holistic intuitive fit in that model? Because I would suggest that it's not thinking fast and thinking slow, it's thinking fast, thinking slow, and thinking even slower. Because the kind of processing that actually you can't do in an afternoon, actually, you need to sleep on it. Actually, you need to do it for a week or a month. And just let it kind of marinate and gestate within your wisdom, intuitive sense until finally this answer just pops out. Having been synthesizing all of these millions of inputs and data points, [it] just suddenly goes, oh no, I need to, I don't know, leave this relationship, or get a new job, or make this decision, or this purchase or whatever. And I think you need to draw in the verbal conceptual to help you with that process, do some logical analysis and some charts or whatever. But essentially our big life decisions largely get made by that thinking even slower. And that isn't really on the map of the *Thinking Fast, Thinking*—its Kahneman right?

Wendy Hasenkamp ([00:59:40](#)): Yes.

Jamie Bristow ([00:59:40](#)): Daniel Kahneman, yeah. I definitely think someone should research that, basically. That that's the holistic intuitive in action, and we need to have more faith in that, whilst also being aware of our biases and knowing how to mitigate those, and make sure that they aren't what's shaping our thinking.

[\(00:59:55\)](#) – musical interlude –

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:59:56\)](#): Well, I've taken us on this tangent, and I think you were about to wrap up the last section of the report. Did you want to come back to that?

Jamie Bristow [\(01:00:31\)](#): Yeah, so I can gloss the rest because having got a felt sense of connection, there are things which might get in the way. So polarization. So we treat political polarization, and the emerging evidence that mindfulness reduces affective polarization. So this is the work of Otto Simonson particularly, where we tend to dislike or distrust those who think differently from us. And mindfulness seems to reduce that tendency. And so these are ways in which we can yes, stop the increasing disconnection or fragmentation in our political landscape.

[\(01:01:03\)](#) We look at the particular importance of nature connection. Those who are connected to nature are twice as likely to exhibit sustainable behaviors. And nature helps people to be mindful. Mindfulness helps people to actually be in nature rather than Instagramming it, or thinking about their to-do list. And so there's huge potential for mindfulness courses in nature, nature connection courses that are mindfulness informed and compassion informed.

[\(01:01:29\)](#) And so that's the end of that section. And we wrap it up often where people start talking about mindfulness. And that is how it helps us to interrupt autopilot, to respond, not react, to act more in line with our intentions, to act more of the time on purpose. And that has, we think, huge implications for what sustainability scientists call the values-action gap. So there is an important gap between what we know and what we think, what we think and what we do. And because fundamentally mindfulness is about bringing awareness and regulation of the mind—and behavior has something important to say here—and compassion also can help us to act collectively, to feel that inspiration to act, and to act together on our shared issues. And as I mentioned before, also there's an important function of the inner compass and how that could help close this gap. Because as I think I said, politicians often describe this, "Mindfulness helps me in the maelstrom of politics to be clearer on what's important, and to act in line with that more of the time."

[\(01:02:42\)](#) And we end up by making recommendations for change, for policymakers, for leadership development in business, for a range of sectors. Some of these admittedly are stretch goals. *[laughter]* Like, we should have a government department or unit that looks at the inner development of citizens more broadly as important to societal flourishing—like the inward form of citizens, no more so than in our sustainability responses.

[\(01:03:12\)](#) So yeah, that's my job for the next... well, however many years, basically. It's only a tiny bit of the work is actually researching and writing this report. Now it's telling people about it, and particularly telling, hopefully, people in power.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:03:28\)](#): Yes. That was going to be my next question is what are the next steps now that... I mean, firstly I'll just say this report is just such a comprehensive and synthetic piece of work. And so, deep gratitude to you and all of those who've been contributing to it. I know you said it's been a kind of five year journey, and it shows because it's really, it's quite a tour de force. So thank you for doing that and I hope that it has great impact. So yeah, what happens now?

Jamie Bristow (01:03:55): Well, thankfully there are some nascent programs and initiatives that are the kind of natural implication or conclusion of what we're proposing here. Things are already being done, in other words. So we have a case study in the report of the European Commission, which is part of the European parliament, European government. They have a climate leaders program called the Inner Green Deal, where they have senior civil servants doing a mindfulness and compassion informed climate leadership program. And there are many innovators in the space, who should be supported using public resources to develop what they're doing, to research it, and to make it scalable. And I think in the short term, leadership training is something that we can get going with right now. And there are many good examples as well as the Inner Green Deal.

(01:04:53) We'd love to, for instance, see sustainability education a right of every child in school. But you can't just tell kids about the state of things without also providing some resource to be able to deal with that information, and to act on it. Now, ultimately the thing that's going to make a difference to them is action—feeling like their adults, their leaders are actually doing something. But in addition to that, there's a lot we can do to support young people. Where I think it's 87% are very worried or extremely worried. And half of those, almost, that's having a negative influence on their daily life. And so that's just a couple of examples. But this has until quite recently been a completely missing piece, the inner. So first and foremost, just include it in your thinking.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:05:49): Yeah, how is it landing for politicians, especially? A lot of the pieces that we talked about, as you said, are very deep, fundamental, sometimes could be considered esoteric ideas, cognitive science things. And so how is it landing when you discuss it with politicians or those in power? Are they getting it, I guess?

Jamie Bristow (01:06:11): God, through our interviews we just realize it's so different, the way people see this problem. On the one hand you have Christiana Figueres, the former general secretary of the UNFCCC, the UN body trying to address this mess and the chief architect of the Paris Agreement. And she says, there'll be many changes we need to make in our lives and in our countries, and they'll be different wherever we are, but they'll all start in one place, in our mindset. She gets it. She practices mindfulness. That's probably part of why she gets it so much.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:06:47): She's amazing. Yeah.

Jamie Bristow (01:06:47): Really amazing. So on one hand, you have someone like that. On the other hand, you have such... It's staggering, actually, how little awareness people have of psychology, of how culture works.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:07:02): That would be my guess. Yeah.

Jamie Bristow (01:07:05): And so you're just starting from an extremely low base. So how has it landed? I mean, we have another visionary politician in the UK who is probably the most well known environmental campaigner in a political sense, Caroline Lucas. She said the report was brilliant and wonderfully important, and has helped her to understand why we haven't acted. So even someone who has made her life goal basically to work on this stuff still finds this sort of revelatory, in terms of the inner dimension and why we haven't acted.

(01:07:38) And so there is a need to get some of this research out of climate psychology and into the minds and hands of policymakers. And this is just the first step. So do get in touch if you're working on

this or want to, because we are hoping to pull together a list of resources, projects in this area, signpost people to colleagues that they could work with, et cetera. And we hope that a halo effect of this work is a kind of the field of inner-outer sustainability work, becoming aware of itself, and working in a more joined up way.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([01:08:12](#)): Yeah. Well, wow, thank you so much. This has been a really fantastic conversation. Our time has just completely flown by. Really grateful to you, and of course we'll be linking to all of the resources from your organization on the show notes for this, and definitely encourage people to check out this report and share it. I can't really think of anything more important in this moment that we're facing. To facilitate this mindset shift, I think is what we all need to be doing. So really deep bows of gratitude, and thank you so much for taking the time today to chat with us.

Jamie Bristow ([01:08:48](#)): Thank you so much, Wendy. It's been a pleasure, and a deep bow of respect to the Mind & Life Institute. And yeah, really looking forward to ways in which we can all work together on this neglected area.

Outro – Wendy Hasenkamp ([01:09:05](#)): *This episode was edited and produced by me and Phil Walker. And music on the show is from Blue Dot Sessions and Universal. Show notes and resources for this and other episodes can be found at podcast.mindandlife.org. If you enjoyed this episode, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts, and share it with a friend. And if something in this conversation sparked insight for you, let us know. You can send an email or voice memo to podcast@mindandlife.org.*

[\(01:09:36\)](#) *Mind & Life is a production of the Mind & Life Institute. Visit us at mindandlife.org where you can learn more about how we bridge science and contemplative wisdom to foster insight and inspire action towards flourishing. If you value these conversations, please consider supporting the show. You can make a donation at mindandlife.org, under Support. Any amount is so appreciated, and it really helps us create this show. Thank you for listening.*