



MIND & LIFE

Mind & Life Podcast Transcript

Daniel Goleman – Beyond Emotional Intelligence

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Opening Quote – Dan Goleman (00:04): *The four basics of emotional intelligence are (1) self-awareness, knowing what you're feeling, how it shapes your perceptions and your thoughts, (2) managing your disruptive feelings and marshaling productive ones, then (3) empathy, tuning into what someone else is feeling, because they don't tell you in words, they tell you in nonverbals, tone of voice and facial expression and so on, and then (4) putting that all together to have effective relationships. That's what emotional intelligence is. So there's a different way to be smart. It's not just how well you did in school, but this is how you're going to do in life.*

Intro – Wendy Hasenkamp (00:45): Welcome to Mind & Life. I'm Wendy Hasenkamp. It's really great to be back with another season of the show, and I'm very happy to be starting this one off with a conversation with Daniel Goleman. Dan is an acclaimed author, a psychologist, and science journalist. And if you've been around the world of contemplative science or mindfulness for a while, you've probably heard his name. He was one of the early pioneers to bring meditation into Western circles and think about it scientifically. He's been a friend and collaborator of Richie Davidson (another early founder in this space) since the 1970s, and he was a key figure in many of the Mind & Life dialogues between scientists and the Dalai Lama. As you'll hear, he also played a role in advancing educational movements, like social-emotional learning, and he's perhaps best known for his work on emotional intelligence, a concept we dive into more in today's episode.

(01:43) I won't get into all the details here, but this conversation gives a really nice flavor of Dan's career and his impact on the field. For example, several of my guests on the show have mentioned Dan's book, *Destructive Emotions*, as a key factor in their decision to get involved in contemplative science. You'll find a lot more from Dan in the show notes, including links to a few of his many books, like *Destructive Emotions*, also his classic, *Emotional Intelligence*, his survey of contemplative science with Richie Davidson called *Altered Traits*, and his latest book, *Optimal*, which is an update on what we know about emotional intelligence in organizations.

(02:21) It was really a pleasure to speak with Dan for this. He has such a deep and thoughtful perspective on meditation and contemplative science, and really, how we can shape our minds towards more well-being and flourishing—both for ourselves and for the world. I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did. I'm very happy to share with you Dan Goleman.

Wendy Hasenkamp (02:46) It is such a pleasure to be joined today by Dan Goleman. Dan, thank you so much for being here. It's really great to see you.

Dan Goleman (02:52): Wendy, it's such a pleasure to see you again. We're old friends, and this is an exciting podcast.

Wendy Hasenkamp (02:59): Well, it's really wonderful to have you. I'm excited to talk about so much of your work, and intersections with Mind & Life and the contemplative science world, and so many things. But maybe we can just start with a little bit of your path into this work, into exploring the mind, and I know you've done a lot in psychology and meditation. So maybe just a little bit of background about how all that came into your life.

Dan Goleman (03:24): Right. So when I was a graduate student in clinical psychology at Harvard, I got a predoctoral traveling fellowship to go to India. I was already interested in meditation, which was then—this was the '70s—it was like a new idea. "Meditation?" It was very fringe. But I had grown up in the Greater Bay Area, and these things were... There was like a supermarket of such offerings. And so I was quite open. And then I ran into Ram Dass, who, as Richard Alpert, had been fired from the very program I was then in at Harvard. He and Tim Leary had been fired five years before I got there.

Wendy Hasenkamp (04:07): Oh, right. For their work in psychedelics?

Dan Goleman (04:09): For their work in psychedelics. And he now had returned from India as Ram Dass. And he was pretty charismatic, and I loved what he was talking about. So I was very happy when I got this predoctoral fellowship, because it allowed me to look at Asian theories of mind, Asian methods, which included meditation, of course, as well as getting a grounding in Western psychological understanding of the mind. And I followed those two paths, pretty much. I went on to eventually become a science journalist at The New York Times, where I covered mainstream psychology. And at the same time, I continued my interest in contemplative paths, but that was more under the radar.

(04:59) And then thanks to Bob Thurman, who was then teaching at Amherst College, and I was living near there, I met the Dalai Lama. This was in maybe the early '80s, I'm guessing. And he said he was very interested in talking to scientists. And I thought, "Wow, that's interesting, because here's someone who's deeply grounded in Asian thinking and systems of the mind, and what to do with it and how to develop it, who wants to have a dialogue with the West, with modern science." And I had just become a science journalist at The Times, and I started sending him the Science Times, which then was every Tuesday.

Wendy Hasenkamp (05:48): You sent the Dalai Lama the Science Times?

Dan Goleman (05:50): Yeah, I did. *[laughter]*

Wendy Hasenkamp (05:51): Ha, that's great.

Dan Goleman (05:52): Highlighting different articles for him that I thought he might be interested in. And at the same time, I met, around that time, Adam Engle and Francisco Varela, who had just started Mind & Life. And I went to the second Mind & Life meeting as an observer, having just moderated a dialogue with psychologists and the Dalai Lama called *Harmoni Mundi* or something like that—Worlds in Harmony. And that was the very place and time he learned he had won the Nobel Peace Prize.

(06:32) So I was there. And it was interesting to me, because I had arranged to take a friend to have tea with him, and it was the day he had just learned that he won the Nobel Peace Prize. He didn't mention it. We were with him for an hour. He just never brought it up. And then the next day, he had his press

conference, and I was there, and the first question was, "Well, how does it feel to win the Nobel Peace Prize?" And he said, "Well, I feel happy for the people who wanted me to win this prize." And that is so emblematic of the Dalai Lama as a person, and his posture toward events, good and bad, and wanting well for other people. I was very taken by that. So anyway, I went on to organize a number of meetings with the Dalai Lama for Mind & Life.

Wendy Hasenkamp (07:27): Yeah. I was going to ask you about that. You organized and moderated many of those conversations. I'm just wondering about reflections—I mean, I love that, what you just shared about when he won the Peace Prize and how it wasn't really necessarily the top of his list of interest perhaps—but yeah, maybe just some takeaways. That's such a foundational time in... certainly the history of Mind & Life, but really in the larger conversation between Buddhism and science, and the way that meditative practices have come into the West. So just wondering [about] your reflections of those times and experiences.

Dan Goleman (08:08): Well, I think there are two parallel streams. One is what the Dalai Lama took away from those meetings, that's one stream. But another is how that impacted the course of science itself. He early on said, "These meetings are giving me ammunition." And what he meant by that was he would get nuggets—for example, that children as young infants and toddlers naturally seem to have compassion. That was a takeaway for him. Or that anger, chronic anger makes a person more likely to die younger from all causes. And these, he repeated in his public talks and I believe in some of his talks at monasteries too, because he thought that science was supporting much of what Buddhism was saying. Another big one for him came from quantum physics, and that was the difference between the relative and ultimate nature of reality. We all live in the relative reality, but he loved the fact that quantum physics said there's another level of reality that we don't know, at which it all falls apart. None of this is real. And that fit very well with his understanding from Buddhism. So that was one stream, the Dalai Lama's takeaways from science.

(09:39) And then the other was how he impacted science itself. One way was in his powerful influence on the scientists who came to speak to him, which we can't really quantify. But another was in urging what has now emerged as contemplative science. I remember early on, he told Richie Davidson, "You ought to study compassion." This was just when positive psychology was emerging in the field, and there were no studies, really, of compassion at that time. I remember during that first meeting I had with him, just when he won the Peace Prize, he was surprised to hear that compassion in the West only meant for other people, not for oneself. He said, "You need a new word, self-compassion." And I don't know that there's a line between his saying that and [Kristin] Neff's work on self-compassion, but it's definitely exploded now as a field of interest. And Richie Davidson went on to study compassion and to then work with Matthieu Ricard, who's been very important in these meetings, to develop protocols for very advanced yogis, who he flew over one by one to study. And that's been a very important series of findings in contemplative neuroscience. So I think he had a hand in putting that field on the map.

Wendy Hasenkamp (11:18): Yeah, absolutely. So the early dialogues were happening through the '90s, really, the late '80s and '90s. And then later on in the early aughts, I think that you and Richie came up with the idea together of creating the Summer Research Institute for Mind & Life. Can you talk a little bit about that and what the goal was?

Dan Goleman (11:40): Well, the early meetings were in a format that was established by actually Jeremy Hayward in the first meeting of Mind & Life, which was about cognitive science and Buddhism. The second meeting, which I had attended as an observer, was on neuroscience. And then the third meeting I put together, which was on emotions and health. And Francisco Varela was a presenter there, I think

maybe Richie was, I can't remember exactly... Jon Kabat-Zinn. And then after a while, I put on a meeting on destructive emotions, which was a topic he had requested explicitly. I said, "Are you sure you mean 'destructive' emotions?"

Wendy Hasenkamp (12:26): Yeah. Can you unpack that term a little bit?

Dan Goleman (12:29): Well, he wanted to talk about when emotions become destructive, and his criteria for destructive was very different. In the West, the psychologists who were in the meeting meant by destructive emotions when an emotion makes you harm yourself or someone else. The Dalai Lama's standard was a higher threshold—he said, "When an emotion interferes with your equanimity or biases your perception." Which is actually almost always. *[laughter]* So there are two different standards.

(13:05) Anyway, so around that time, Richie and I and some others came up with the idea of having a summer institute for postdocs and people who were interested in this field, because if you were interested in doing work on meditation or contemplative anything, you were probably alone wherever you were. You were isolated. So putting together a network of people from all over the country, actually all over the world, who had similar interests was very, very important and was one of our agendas— to let people know that they weren't alone in this. So the Summer Research Institute was meant to encourage people to include research on contemplative practices in whatever it is they went on to do, and I think has been very, very successful in seeding a field, which was the original idea.

Wendy Hasenkamp (13:56): It has been extraordinarily successful, and I would say it has worked. So many folks who attended those early Summer Research Institutes and then maybe went on to get grants through Mind & Life for the research, and they are now the people leading the field.

Dan Goleman (14:12): Exactly.

Wendy Hasenkamp (14:13): So it's been amazing to see that unfold and to be a part of it from inside to the extent that I have been... I know you've also played a really important role in the development of the social-emotional learning movement, it's known as SEL, in education. I'm wondering if you could share what SEL is about and how that's unfolded over the last several decades.

Dan Goleman (14:37): So actually, the SEL movement has been spearheaded by Mark Greenberg and Roger Weissberg and others. I was kind of peripherally involved in the following way. Before I wrote the book *Emotional Intelligence*, as a science journalist, I wrote about a very tragic killing that happened in a school in New York City, and I was talking about what were then pilot programs in what we called emotional literacy, not SEL. And it really was teaching kids at grammar school and on upward the basics of emotional intelligence, which are self-awareness and managing your disruptive emotions and reading emotions in other people, empathy, and putting that all together to collaborate and have harmonious relationships. And I stumbled on an initial program, about three of them. There were really pilots then. One was Six Seconds in California, another was Linda [Lantieri]'s programs in New York City schools and elsewhere, and then a third was what was called Social Development, which Roger Weissberg and Tim Shriver had developed for the New Haven Public Schools.

(16:01) So when I wrote *Emotional Intelligence*, it was, in a sense, an argument for this education, which I saw as an education in emotional intelligence. Roger founded a collaborative of people in the field, educators, researchers, academics, who were furthering this agenda in different ways. And when he moved to University of Illinois Chicago, he took that with him from Yale. And I was one of the founders

in a group of maybe eight, and I've always cheered them on, but it was really others who developed the curricula.

[\(16:44\)](#) Now there are probably more than 100 programs in social or emotional learning worldwide. It's not just an American movement. It's a global movement. And I'm very happy to see it because I think our standard curriculum underserves children, because it may help them with math and language... it doesn't help them with their lives. And knowing how to be aware of your own feelings and manage them, and tune into other people's feelings is absolutely an essential life skill.

[\(17:17\)](#) – musical interlude –

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(17:36\)](#): I wasn't quite sure how, when you were writing the book *Emotional Intelligence*, how that played in with your involvement with SEL. So it sounds like they were really parallel streams. So can you share a little bit about how you got to the place where you were writing *Emotional Intelligence*? And you said a bit about what that is, but it was such a huge hit and splash. I'd love to hear a little bit more about that concept and how you came to that.

Dan Goleman [\(18:02\)](#): Right. The '80s had been kind of proclaimed as an era of investigating emotions in the brain, and I'd been covering it for The Times. And I wanted to write a book about the findings because I thought they were very relevant to people. In 1990, I had read an article called Emotional Intelligence by Peter Salovey, who is now the president of Yale, and his graduate student then, John Mayer. (Jack Mayer, we call him.) And I thought, "Wow, emotional intelligence. What a great oxymoron—to put together intelligence and emotion," because usually, we don't think they go together at all. But it means being intelligent about emotion. So I used that as the title for my book, but I hadn't really intended to write about emotional intelligence per se.

[\(18:53\)](#) And the four basics of emotional intelligence, as I've said, are (1) self-awareness, knowing what you're feeling, how it shapes your perceptions and your thoughts and impulse to act, (2) managing your disruptive feelings and marshaling productive ones and helping you work toward a goal, for example, and then (3) empathy, tuning into what someone else is feeling, because they don't tell you in words, they tell you in nonverbals, tone of voice and facial expression and so on, and then (4) putting that all together to have effective relationships. That's what emotional intelligence is. And when I wrote about it, a lot of people, I think, had the thought, "Oh, so there's a different way to be smart. It's not just how well you did in school or on an IQ test, but this is how you're going to do in life." And that appealed to many, many people, and I think it was because they had a flash of recognition, "Oh, I've already known this, but now I have words for it."

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(20:00\)](#): Yeah. It's really interesting just to hear you enumerate the different aspects of emotional intelligence, because from my perspective, having been in the contemplative science field for, I don't know, 15 years now, actually, all those elements have been major through lines in the research world. Right? So like awareness, self-awareness, attention, all of that, emotion regulation, management of emotions, empathy, and compassion. And now, I think the latest has really been more in this interpersonal, social, relational space. So that's really fascinating that it lines up so much with what you were thinking about all those years ago.

Dan Goleman [\(20:44\)](#): Yeah. I think you could easily do a crosswalk with contemplative traditions and emotional intelligence, as you just said. Exactly.

Wendy Hasenkamp (20:53): And so, you had been influenced, you said, already for so long by contemplative traditions when you were working on that, right?

Dan Goleman (21:01): Well, yeah, and I think the influence of those traditions was more osmotic, it wasn't intentional. But that was kind of the way I thought about things. I had realized early on that what was of great interest wasn't just the content of people's thoughts and cognitions, but the very process of awareness and cognition. And this was a way of talking about process rather than content alone.

Wendy Hasenkamp (21:30): Yeah. There's so many links there with contemplative work. It makes me think about, I'm curious, you said your original training was in clinical psychology, and I'm thinking about psychological therapeutic approaches, and some overlaps there too with contemplative approaches of ways of getting to know your own mind. So I'm just wondering if you have reflections there. I know you moved away from clinical psychology per se, but psychology has stayed a big part of your space.

Dan Goleman (22:00): Yeah. Actually, I think that's been put together very well by my wife, who's a psychotherapist, Tara Bennett-Goleman, in her book, *Emotional Alchemy*, which looks at very common patterns of dysfunctional emotional habit and brings mindfulness and a mindful awareness to working with them. Frankly, I think it's a much more useful book than *Emotional Intelligence*. [laughter]

Wendy Hasenkamp (22:25): I think one of the things that, just for me reflecting, the ability to see thoughts as thoughts, which is... you were talking about the process of thinking rather than the content of thinking. That seems like a very strong piece in both traditions.

Dan Goleman (22:40): Yeah. So the way Aaron Beck, who developed cognitive therapy, put it was striking. He said, "You don't have to believe your thoughts." That's amazing, because we always believe our thoughts, or at least that's our knee-jerk reaction. But what he was saying was that a therapeutic platform inside your own mind has to do with seeing thoughts come and go. And as anyone who's done mindfulness knows, that's what you learn, how to see thoughts come and go. And Tara, in her book *Emotional Alchemy*, took that many steps further, because it's not just that you see thoughts come and go, but you can talk back to your thoughts, for example. You can change your thinking habits. It's very profound.

Wendy Hasenkamp (23:31): Oh, that's really cool. Another piece that came up for me when thinking about links between psychology and contemplation, I heard you talk in a previous interview—I think it was talking about emotional intelligence as applied to leadership, which I think it's had a big impact in the business and leadership world—I think you said, "With an emotional intelligence, you can create an environment of psychological safety."

Dan Goleman (23:55): Right.

Wendy Hasenkamp (23:55): And that really struck me as... I guess for me, I've just been thinking more and more about the very deep need for safety in the mind and how that's a foundation for any change to then be able to happen. So I'm wondering if you could just talk a little bit more about that idea.

Dan Goleman (24:13): Sure. So when Google looked at their top teams, what emerged as the differentiator was psychological safety—the sense that you can take a risk with a new idea, of saying what it is without feeling you're going to be shot down and criticized, like, "That's such a stupid idea." But you're safe to do that. And I've been working with a woman named Vanessa Druskat, who has been studying top teams for many years, and she finds that this... She calls it a sense of belonging. The sense

that, "I belong here. This is my family. I'm okay just as I am. I can bring my whole self here," is really essential to any working group, particularly on a team.

(25:03) And this sense of belonging, she's found in her work, can be enhanced. People can understand and create habitual ways of relating to each other that support that. And if you think about it, this is kind of a ground-up way of accomplishing diversity and inclusion goals, because the sense of belonging is what it's about. You're included, no matter how diverse you may be. And so, I think that those two goals meet each other in terms of highly effective teams in the workplace—leadership that produces such teams, which I think is emotionally intelligent, I've argued that for many years, and then the sense that "I belong here" for team members.

(25:52) So in my new book, *Optimal*, I go into detail on how this works in teams and why emotional intelligence throughout a whole organization, particularly among leaders, helps with effectiveness, helps people feel that they like what they do, feel they had a good day at work, and they can do their best.

Wendy Hasenkamp (26:18): So you've been around contemplative science since it began, really. So I'm wondering, it's been so interesting how things have unfolded in the public space, in the media space around meditation and mindfulness. I'm just wondering if you have broad reflections, and then maybe we could go into a little bit of detail.

Dan Goleman (26:42): Sure. Richard Davidson and I wrote a book called *Altered Traits*, which kind of reviews the arc of contemplative science emerging. When he and I... We were fellow graduate students at Harvard, same time. And when I came back from India, I wanted to do a dissertation, do my dissertation research on meditation, showing that there's a "there" there.

Wendy Hasenkamp (27:09): Which, at that time, was a very revolutionary idea, I'm sure.

Dan Goleman (27:13): It was a fringe idea, and my faculty thought it was a stupid idea, actually. But somehow, I had an ally, David McClelland, who was on the faculty. He was actually a meditator, and he recruited a guy from Harvard Medical School, Herbert Benson, to be on my committee. And once someone from the medical school took it seriously, then they let me do it.

Wendy Hasenkamp (27:38): And he had already been developing his work, Herbert Benson, at that time?

Dan Goleman (27:42): He had started doing some research on meditation. But we were pretty much alone. There was no peer-reviewed article I could find anywhere on meditation that I could cite in my literature review. It just was a brand-new field. Now, there are, I think, about 1,000 published articles a year on mindfulness or meditation. We have a graph in our book showing the rise of the field. And I think one way the field was seeded was through Mind & Life's Summer Research Institute. But there's a kind of emerging zeitgeist too, that there's a lot to understand about it.

(28:26) So there are people like Jud Brewer, who's now at Brown, who are doing seminal research showing the clinical applications of this. But there are many, many others showing that mindfulness can be effective as an intervention in lots of psychological disorders, which, back when I was doing my dissertation at Harvard, was nonsense. Nobody would believe that. And now it's kind of taken for granted.

Wendy Hasenkamp (28:51) Yeah. It's amazing, the shift. I'm wondering your thoughts on what's been called McM mindfulness. And maybe you could describe your understanding of that term, and then if you see any downsides of the way things have unfolded.

Dan Goleman (29:07): Well, Richie and I in the book talk about going wide or going deep. Going wide means getting as many people as possible to practice, and I think McM mindfulness is one indicator of that. And by McM mindfulness, I mean a very thin version of what meditation is, which is more palatable, I think, to a wider range of people. Deep means you pay attention to the real traditions that mindfulness and other meditation practices come from and see that there are levels that you can attain through dedicated practice.

(29:52) And part of that is the revelation that lots of parts of meditation have been left behind in Asia when they came to America. Devotion to the idea that you can improve the mind this way? Left behind, pretty much. Maybe there's a bowdlerized version of it. Ethical codes? Forget it. But they were step one in Asian traditions. And there's a list of things. There's a very good book by a guy named McMahan.

Wendy Hasenkamp (30:28): David McMahan?

Dan Goleman (30:29): David McMahan, I think, yes, about the Americanization or Westernization of meditation versus the actual traditions from which that method occurred. And meditation is just one of a large array of practices. You know, the West is very pragmatic, and the benefits of meditation are real. You get calmer. Your attention gets better. It is training in attention, and many such. But those are all seen in Asian traditions as kind of trivial epiphenomena.

Wendy Hasenkamp (31:05): Like side effects?

Dan Goleman (31:07): They're side effects. I mean, they're real effects. (By the way, in medicine, side effects are actual effects.)

Wendy Hasenkamp (31:13): Also real effects. Yeah.

Dan Goleman (31:14): Yes. But they're not valued. You want a particular effect. You want to get better focus. You want to get calm. And that's the way the West looks at meditation, pretty much. That's the wide approach, which you could call McM mindfulness.

Wendy Hasenkamp (31:32): Yeah. So then from your perspective on the Asian traditions, what is the goal, instead of the calm or the focus? What are those deeper goals that could be achieved?

Dan Goleman (31:45): Well, I think that getting focus is a first stage in meditative practice of all kinds. And then the more focused you are, if you get really focused, so you don't have other thoughts, you get into an altered state, meditative altered state—sometimes called samadhi in the yogic traditions or jhāna in Buddhism. And from there, you can look at the mind more readily and see, as you said, that your thoughts come and go, and you can let them go. And apparently, you can get to a stage where you just see them going, which means your focus is more and more refined.

(32:30) Joseph Goldstein, who's one of the leading teachers of this practice called vipassana, which is mindfulness and beyond, talks in terms of noticings per minute. How well do you notice what your mind is doing, and how often in a minute? And he says, "The greater that sum is, the better your practice." And then you can get into, ultimately, a state that's called sometimes awakening or enlightenment,

which seems to be a non-dual state, which is to say there are no concepts, no thinking. But there's raw experience. And it's said to be very rich, and it seems to be a common goal of many different meditative traditions.

Wendy Hasenkamp (33:25): We talk about that sometimes on the show, kind of where the sense of self dissolves or the distinction between subject and object kind of comes apart... It's hard to talk about.

Dan Goleman (33:38): Well, they say you can't talk about it.

Wendy Hasenkamp (33:40): Right, because words are conceptual.

Dan Goleman (33:42): Because it's nonconceptual. Exactly, and we only have words.

Wendy Hasenkamp (33:46): Yeah, yeah. If there's a way to talk about starting to dissolve the self a little bit, and I don't think it has to be a dichotomous state, but what do you think the implications are there when you reach that place?

Dan Goleman (34:01): Well, I think one reason that it's stated in terms of dissolving the self is that most of our thoughts revolve around ourselves. And so, it's just another way of saying that the reality that we build from our thoughts develops cracks and maybe falls apart. And part of that is that the sense of self is not as defining as it used to be.

(34:30) – musical interlude –

Wendy Hasenkamp (34:34): I'd love to talk a little bit about your experience in journalism and as a science writer. There's so much value in that kind of communication. I think it's so essential, and I think so much that happens in the world of science is often not communicated too well to the public, or all kinds of things can happen in that process. So I'm wondering how you hold that tension between trying to simplify things for the public versus holding the nuance of what's actually going on in the scientific space.

Dan Goleman (35:23): The way we put that dilemma at The New York Times and the science desk was, you want to write about science in a way that millions of readers will understand and be interested and, at the same time, not have the handful of people who know that topic well complain to your editor that, "You got it wrong." That's the balance. So you want to be accurate but engaging and have it be something people can approach. That's the art.

Wendy Hasenkamp (35:57): How do you do it? *[laughter]* I mean, that's a big question. Obviously, you have a ton of experience, but do you have any tips or lessons that you've learned over the years?

Dan Goleman (36:10): You know, scientists... Before I was at The Times, I was an editor at Psychology Today. And basically, what I was doing was having academic psychologists write about their work. And one of the big problems was jargon. They thought in terms, and in spoke in terms, that was code. It was just a language that other people in their field understood, but the general reader had no idea what they were talking about. So one of the key things is to translate for an imagined other. You know, your aunt at a cocktail party—how are you going to explain this to her? She has no idea about this scientific field. How do you put it? But then when you put it, will the scientist who came up with it buy it? Is that okay? Those are the questions to ask yourself.

Wendy Hasenkamp (37:03): Yeah. Well, you've done such an amazing job over your career so, deep gratitude. It's not an easy line to walk.

Dan Goleman (37:10): Well, it wasn't easy to learn. And I have to tell you that there was an executive editor at Psychology Today who sat down with me and went over every sentence I had written to de-jargonize it, and that was great tutorial for me. And at The New York Times, everything you write went through at least three levels of editing, and that was very helpful too. So those were real learning experiences.

Wendy Hasenkamp (37:39): Well, I know you mentioned that you have your latest book, *Optimal*. Is there more you wanted to say about that? Because I know it's quite new.

Dan Goleman (37:47): Well, when I wrote the book *Emotional Intelligence*, just as when I did my dissertation on meditation, there was no real research. Emotional intelligence in '95 or '94, when I was writing, was a brand-new field. There was virtually no data on it. There was data that suggested different aspects of it, but that was here and there. So I gathered all that here and there in the book. Now, 25 or so years later, I've written *Optimal* with Cary Cherniss. Cary and I were co-directors of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, and we were fostering and collecting all those findings.

(38:35) So in the book *Optimal*, we have the advantage of being able to look not just at individual studies, but meta-analyses, aggregates of studies, and the results are very powerful and very corroborating. They show that individuals who are higher in emotional intelligence, or leaders who are higher in emotional intelligence create an environment where there's more engagement. People are more productive. They feel better about their work. In other words, you have a good day at work. And that's where we start.

(39:11) But also, we see this as not just key to leadership, but to entire teams and organizations. So we talk about how these qualities or strengths or competencies help a team and can be diffused throughout a whole organization. For example, if you want to have an emotionally intelligent organization, we really think it's important, and have found this to be the case, that you have someone from the business side, not just human resources, say this matters. And keep saying it. And then in a performance review, it's not just did you get the results you're supposed to, but how did you get the results? Did you do it in a way where people hate you, and want to leave the company? People leave bad bosses. Or did you do it in a way where people love you, they're inspired, they're guided by you and coached by you, and they love working here and love working for you?

(40:05) And also, we found it's important to offer development opportunities for people in organizations. Not just a weekend, or someone like me comes in and gives a keynote, then leaves—that has a very short half-life of effectiveness. But rather some ongoing training that really is going to work, and then we outline what that is. And those are key ingredients in an emotionally intelligent organization. So that's the arc of the book, really.

Wendy Hasenkamp (40:38): I'm wondering, just stepping back and in this moment in the world, what you think about concepts and skills like emotional intelligence and self-awareness and empathy, compassion, all the things we've been talking about, kind of on the world stage where we find ourselves in the various crises that we face now as a society and as a planet. I'm wondering, yeah, just...

Dan Goleman (41:07): About the collective self-awareness?

Wendy Hasenkamp ([41:10](#)): Yeah...

Dan Goleman ([41:11](#)): Yeah. Well, I think it's clearly disastrous. It's not happening in the way we wish it would. There is, of course, a bias in the information we get. And the bias is that on any given day, if you were to put it on one of these scales—like the Statue of Justice or the scale that has two sides—on one side, if you put all of the acts of kindness and goodness, parents helping their kids or friends helping friends, or if you put that on one side and then you put on the other side all of the horrible things that happened in that day, the good side would far outweigh the bad. But it never gets reported. It's just not news. News is what's upsetting. We write news... I've been with a newspaper. What leads is news that's going to scare you or anger you. In other words, that gets emotional engagement. And so, we have a distortion.

([42:13](#)) I think that we also suffer from some horrendous blind spots, one of which is... Actually, we spoke to it a bit in a Mind & Life dialogue, Ecology, Ethics, and Interdependence. We talked about the need for transparency about the actual impacts of things we buy and things we use. There's fiscal transparency. If you want to buy a stock, you can find out about earnings and dah, dah, dah, dah. But there's zero transparency on the actual impacts of things we buy. There may be greenwashing, where a company will take one thing that looks good and feature it, but they'll never tell you the total impact. And there's a methodology for this, life cycle assessment. We can get a metric for anything. And I would like to see that transparent and visible at point of purchase, so that people could buy the better alternative rather than not knowing, which is our current state. And I think if that happened, we'd create a market force that would make companies want to chase market share, particularly as younger generations care more about this. So that's just one of the things that I think would help, which means a collective upping of our awareness of the actual consequences of our actions.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([43:40](#)): Yeah. Well, I'm wondering for you, as we kind of come to a close, just a personal question about how your experience with meditation, which you said has been most of your life, how you feel it's changed you personally. If you could tell. *[laughter]*

Dan Goleman ([43:59](#)): Well, the question is, do you force meditation to fit with your life, or do you make your life support meditation? And I think that most of my life, I've done the former, not the latter. I wish I had done more, gone on longer retreats, for example, or more retreats, but I haven't. So now, at this point in my life, I'm thinking, "I don't know how many years I have left, but I think I should use them better." And I think that meditation and contemplative practice has been a great source of strength in my life, particularly amidst the downs. Not just the ups, but the downs. And I'd like to have done it more, and I hope I do.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([44:49](#)): Well, Dan, this has really been so wonderful to chat. Is there anything that we haven't touched on that you wanted to talk about?

Dan Goleman ([44:56](#)): No, I think we covered quite a lot. It was great.

Wendy Hasenkamp ([45:00](#)): Yeah, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us, and thanks for all that you've given to this whole space.

Dan Goleman ([45:06](#)): My pleasure, and thank you for what you're doing.

Outro – Wendy Hasenkamp (45:13): *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.*

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