



MIND & LIFE

Mind & Life Podcast Transcript Eve Ekman – Building Emotion Awareness

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Opening Quote – Eve Ekman (00:00:00): *I really come back to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and his interest in why we should care about emotions. There's no possibility for clear seeing and kindness when we are wrapped up in our own self-related concern about emotions. And if we don't see our emotions clearly, we really do think that the world is making them happen to us. We lose track of the kaleidoscope, the multiplicity of factors that lead to emotion. So it's almost this 'mental hygiene' for us to develop emotional awareness so that we can be more available and accessible for what's happening around us.*

Intro – Wendy Hasenkamp (00:00:45): Welcome to Mind & Life. I'm Wendy Hasenkamp. Today, I'm speaking with social scientist and meditation teacher, Eve Ekman. As you'll hear, Eve's work is focused on helping people understand and navigate their emotions, a skill she calls emotion awareness. She's conducted studies and taught in many sectors, including healthcare, business, schools, prisons... so she's really skilled at translating both research and contemplative practice to wide audiences.

(00:01:21) In our conversation, Eve shares her perspective on a number of emotion regulation strategies, or ways that we can meet our emotions, as well as a helpful framework for mapping an emotional experience to understand it better. We talk about her connection with Buddhism and get into a number of meditation practices. I just love how much nuance and complexity Eve brings into this space. Emotions have a huge influence on our behavior and just our overall experience in life, but I think they can often go unseen, or at least unexamined. We can tend to sweep them under the rug. And there's often a lot more going on than just what's on the surface. So I'm really grateful to Eve for shining a light on that world of emotions, and giving us practical tips for how to navigate it. There's more on Eve's work in the show notes, including a free online resource that incorporates a lot of what she shares today, called the Atlas of Emotions. And there's also a link to a wonderful essay she wrote for our Insights project. So definitely check those out if you want a deeper dive.

(00:02:28) This also marks the end of another season of the show, so we'll be off for a few months making more episodes for you. In the meantime, we've now got over 70 episodes in the archives, so it's a great time to go back and revisit some favorites. Or if you've started listening more recently, check out some of the earlier shows. There's so much wisdom packed into these hours. It makes me really happy to be able to keep adding to this resource. I hope it can be useful to you. And think about if there's others in your life who'd be interested—send them an episode. The show's up on YouTube now as well, if you prefer that platform for listening. Okay, I think you're really going to enjoy this one. I know I learned a lot. I'm so happy to share with you Eve Ekman.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:03:18): It is such a pleasure to welcome Eve Ekman to the show. Eve, thanks a lot for being here. It's great to see you.

Eve Ekman (00:03:25): Such a delight, Wendy, really happy to be here with you.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:03:28): I think you probably know, I love to start with a little bit of background from the guests and your path has been, I think, particularly unique. So I'd love to hear how you got into doing all the work that you've been doing, and how meditation wove in as well.

Eve Ekman (00:03:42): Yeah. It's non-linear, which is great. I wasn't necessarily someone who knew early on, this is exactly what I want to do. And I feel really grateful, you know Mind & Life has been part of my path since an early stage in my life.

(00:03:58) I really attribute my first introduction to, I'd say not just contemplative practice, but the way of life of folks who study in contemplative traditions was when I was 15 years old. I was very fortunate. My high school teacher at the time, Charis Denison, a bodhisattva in her time for sure, just such a caring being. She brought 12 teenagers to Nepal. I mean, that is... Who does that? And it was a service learning program, and we were there to really learn about Tibetan culture, and stay in a refugee camp and do a trek in the Himalayas. And I don't think the service part was very heavy; there's nothing we could offer. I received so much just from the embodiment of living in this village, and the sweetness, the tenderness, the openness, the dedication to ritual, and this little photo of His Holiness of Dalai Lama, most treasured item in every single house. And when I came back, I joined a Students for a Free Tibet group in San Francisco and then was interning—which again, a 15-year-old intern is not that useful, I think I Xeroxed things for the Milarepa Foundation—and got really interested in the confluence of social justice and the beautiful life of the Tibetan people as well as their struggle. So that was really early on.

(00:05:22) And my dad and I have always had a very close relationship. He at the time was just an eminent, well-known psychologist, zero interest in meditation or contemplative practice. And fortunately my interest really sparked his interest. And so that's how we first met Mind & Life in 2000. He was invited by Richie Davidson and Daniel Goleman to the *Destructive Emotions* meeting. And I think famously said to Danny or Richie, "Sounds like a cult thing. I'm sure there's no real science there, but my daughter would probably love to come. Can I bring her? If so, I'm in." And the rest is still winding. But really, that is kind of the origin story for me of how I got involved in this world and this work.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:06:13): Oh, that's wonderful. I didn't realize that there was the piece already in existence before the Mind & Life meeting where you went with your father. It feels auspicious that you've been able to continue this path. So you have focused so much of your work around helping people understand emotions, and the world of emotion regulation and everything around that. So I thought it might be interesting to start kind of big picture around emotions and emotion regulation. And I've been reflecting recently about... just in our culture, particularly in the West, particularly in the US, I feel like historically there's been really quite a cultural norm of not dealing with emotions, not really approaching that whole space, that whole realm of experience. And hopefully that's changing. (I'd be curious your perspective on that because you've been in this field for so long.) But maybe it'd be interesting to just first paint the broad picture of why it's important that we understand our emotions, the different areas of life, and I know you've worked in so many different applications of where this is so relevant. So maybe just your broad reflections there, to begin.

Eve Ekman (00:07:27): Yeah, it's interesting. This morning I was really reflecting on this term 'emotion regulation' specifically. And I'll be honest, I have a little resistance to it. I think it can sometimes flatten the

depth of what learning about our emotions can offer to what we perform. So, "I'm going to down-regulate what feels bad. I'm going to up-regulate what feels good." And while that's incredibly useful for us to have jobs and relationships and get along in this world, there is actually so much more to be learned and understood. And I really love the term 'emotion awareness' as opposed to 'emotion regulation.' And I'll say why, which I think illustrates a bit of the potential power and then also the challenges of living our emotional lives as we do.

[\(00:08:21\)](#) And with emotion awareness, this was a term that my dad and His Holiness the Dalai Lama really started talking about and trying to define together coming out of the 2000 meeting on *Destructive Emotions*. The idea of developing emotion awareness is the sense of recognizing not only how am I acting in the world, what are my behaviors of emotion, which most of us would really enjoy being able to shift and change or at least have some choice about. But it's also getting into what are the root causes, what leads to our emotions? There's a beautiful quote by an early emotion researcher and theorist named Richard Lazarus, and he says, "Emotions are the wisdom of the ages." And I know that he is talking about specifically that a lot of our emotional responses in the present moment have to do with our entire lived history to this point. So much that has influenced us and our perception.

[\(00:09:17\)](#) But I was also thinking about in general how our thoughts are so non-linear. If we're just sitting there and we don't have an electronic device in front of us, we don't have something going on. Our thoughts do this wonderful dance, where maybe we're looking out the window and we see a bird or maybe we're thinking about what will happen next and then maybe a memory arises and with it comes an emotion. There's so much richness of emotions being not just our immediate reaction to something happening to us, but showing us both that past personal history and also illustrating, again, just the ways that our consciousness isn't just right here and now. It includes all these clues about our past. And so beautifully, the way that contemplative practice unifies with contemporary science of emotion in that we can really see with contemplative practice that there is so much more than what we are feeling through our emotions, that our space of awareness isn't just immediate frustration. There's more than that.

[\(00:10:22\)](#) Otherwise, again, if we're just down-regulating what feels bad, up-regulating what feels good, we might even lose track of the fact that there's something greater than our momentary experiences of emotion. And the goal, of course, is to see things more clearly as they really are. And in terms of our emotion, that means really recognizing it's not just what's happening to you when you become emotional. And it's interesting, when most people think about "why should I care about my emotions", they immediately go to "I want to get rid of or diminish that difficult experience." Maybe it's pervasive anxiety, as many of us are going through. Maybe it's inability to hold anger in a way that feels good. But we aren't thinking also about the ways we sometimes overly suppress. Like gosh, I wish I had said something or done something, but I just pulled it in. I held it in. So emotion awareness includes being able to choose how we respond in ways that are less harmful externally, also possibly more authentic to what we're feeling in a clear way.

[\(00:11:28\)](#) And there's so much of that rich information about our past [that] we learn through the present of our emotional reactions and triggers. And most people don't love this idea of, you can learn from your difficult emotions. They're like, "Yeah, thanks." And one thing I really noticed in working with emotion over these years and helping people understand it is everybody wants to know what to do in the moment, and I really wish I could give them a better answer than, "Develop your emotion awareness." Because that is a reflective, over time practice. And if you start in the moment, it's like how can I prepare for this marathon? And if you prepare the day of, you're not in good shape. But if you're doing your test runs and getting ready, then of course you're going to be more prepared and available.

(00:12:18) But it doesn't have to be work. Emotion awareness is actually part of our meditation practice, or part of our journaling practice, even could be part of your art practice. I heard our Poet Laureate, Ada Limon, just such an amazing writer and speaker. Everything she was talking about resonated with contemplative practice and understanding both the passage of thoughts and emotions. And she really described writing poetry as creating a safe space for her emotions, which I thought was so beautiful.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:12:49): Yeah, I love that. Thank you so much for that nuance around all of that, but particularly around the distinction between emotion regulation and emotion awareness. I'm really with you that that term emotion regulation tends to have this top-down quality or this controlling sense behind it that, "We must regulate. We must do something with this difficult experience to make it go away." And that also links in my mind with what we were talking about earlier about the conditioning in our culture to not really even process emotions, or get rid of them as quickly as possible, those kinds of things.

(00:13:27) So I really love this shift towards emotion awareness, as well as you naming just the layers and landscape of experience that can become clearer with practice too. And you were talking about the realm of our awareness and experience outside of that particular emotion that might be grabbing our attention in the moment. And also for me, even the layers underneath that emotion, right? You were kind of pointing to that too of, where is that really coming from? Is it just this thing that happened to me right now, or there's conditioning underneath and our whole life, as you said, as a kind of prerequisite for that. So really appreciating your perspective on all of this.

(00:14:10) So I was going to ask you about traditional strategies for emotion regulation, *[laughter]* but maybe we don't want to use that term. But I think it could be helpful for the audience just to think about some of the ways of working with emotions that have been developed. And this kind of includes psychology and meditation perspectives, and all of this.

Eve Ekman (00:14:34): Yeah, and I definitely don't want to diminish the value of the term 'emotion regulation.' I mean, I have a job today because of the research on emotion regulation. *[laughter]* And there's such clarity there. There's such specificity. It is so helpful for people. I do worry, sometimes it does give people a sense that they could have greater control than is sometimes possible.

(00:14:59) And I think the emotion regulation strategies, it is so interesting. I was actually rewatching some of the footage of the 2000 *Destructive Emotions* meeting with my dad and the Dalai Lama, kind of seeing where those sparks that end up becoming the flame of my life are first ignited. And this idea of wow, you on the psychological side (being my dad) are describing with specificity a phenomena that's so useful for His Holiness the Dalai Lama who knows that klesha or destructive, disturbing emotions, are really in the way of awakening, in the way of our kind heart. And then His Holiness the Dalai Lama is describing ways to understand and look at these phenomena as they exist and arise in our mind that is extremely helpful for my dad.

(00:15:47) And they were already—meaning the whole field of research and emotion—was already kind of nudging its way towards this understanding of contemplative practice. And when you look at the top strategies for emotion regulation kind of across the board, a lot of this work is James Gross, Bob Levinson, really folks looking at how do we attend to the physiological arousal of our emotion as well as of course the psychological changes that come in. Because emotions are not just thoughts. The body is very involved, and it's kind of this whole cascade of experience at once.

(00:16:24) And I'd say the top strategy you hear about so often is reappraisal. And reappraisal... I mean, I love this word even though even today after dissertation, postdoc, I still struggle to spell it. It's a hard one.

[laughter] I love it because it's encompassing of so much. And in some ways you can think of reappraisal as simple reframing. So if I had a difficult experience, let's say I had a meeting at work in which I felt unseen or disrespected, and in that moment I'm frustrated. Can I reappraise in that moment, "It's okay to be frustrated. This means that you care." So that simple strategy of giving context to your emotion, so powerful. Compassion could even be considered a reappraisal. "Eve, it's hard to feel this kind of frustration. I'm so sorry. I'm here with you. I got you. No problem." So compassion is a reappraisal. Really powerful strategy.

(00:17:20) I'd say more recently, I'm talking more the last seven or eight years, emotion labeling or emotion granularity has really been shown to be so powerful. So naming with specificity what I'm feeling, instead of "I feel really bad during this difficult meeting." Saying "I feel frustrated," that actually gives way to some kind of decentering process in which I see my emotion, I see myself, I'm less glued, I'm less cognitively fused into that experience. And not only is it the word labeling that can help, I have really found... I'm more stitching together research and then my experience as a teacher these last 15 years, but being able to also label and identify sensations in the body. So, interoception. I am aware that my jaw is tense, my eyes are tight. I might not even have the word yet that I'm anxious. I just know in the body. I feel like it's our early detection system if we can start to label and get specific with those.

(00:18:21) So we have reappraisal, granularity. And it's interesting, I always like to think of pulling out the weeds and planting the seeds. So if pulling out the weeds is maybe, how do I get a handle on all of these difficult emotions as they arise and practice reappraisal? And then planting the seeds of these beneficial or positive mind states.

(00:18:45) So also really, you might not do this in the moment, but really making a place and space for gratitude, appreciation, rejoicing, compassion. That's going to really help when these difficult emotions arise. It may not seem immediate and obvious, but I do find for myself, when I feel frustrated, overwhelmed by frustration, self-compassion arises actually first. And that's because man, I practice it so hard, I need it so much—and I've really gotten that to be a reflexive response to my difficult emotions, not something I need to kind of effortfully apply. So that's been really encouraging.

(00:19:23) – *musical interlude* –

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:19:50): You were speaking about emotional granularity, and I know that has become a topic of increasing research. And I've found that too to be really personally helpful to become more and more nuanced about the labels that we use. And I love you bringing in the body sensations too, because that's also a part of the emotional experience. So it's in a way you can make up in any given moment a little kaleidoscope of words or things that can help to label. Is it known, or what's your understanding of how that process of labeling helps us?

Eve Ekman (00:20:27): Yeah, it's a really good question. I think about it a lot. The research isn't conclusive yet. With the labeling with words, I think really clearly we see there's an underlying mechanism of decentering. Just that because I'm naming it, I'm no longer completely lost in it. Because I'm naming it, it isn't driving the show from behind the curtains, right? It's, "Okay, it's there."

(00:20:52) Then with the embodied awareness, I've really been curious because when I look at the contemplative practices more in the ancient traditional sense, there's not a need to name and identify, "This is anger in the body." There really is more of a more general effort of a pure experiencing of sensation. So okay, there's heaviness in the belly. There's warmth in the chest. And by doing so, we're actually kind of creating the spacious container for the full feeling wave of the emotion to arise and fall.

[\(00:21:29\)](#) And I really struggle with some of the ways that's described in contemplative traditions of like, "Yeah, just make space, and the emotion self-liberates." And I'm like, "Oh, yeah? Is that how it goes?" *[laughter]* I think that's how it goes for people who really have stable attention and awareness and sustained practice, who got enough sleep, who are well caffeinated, well-fed. But I like it as this vision, this hope of, oh, is that even a possibility that the emotion could on its own kind of self-liberate, unfold, unwind? And Tsoknyi Rinpoche has so beautifully instructed us many times with his handshake practice in that.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:22:09\)](#): Oh, I love this practice. Yeah.

Eve Ekman [\(00:22:11\)](#): Oh my gosh, so powerful. And the steps of it—really that embodied awareness of the emotional experience, and this attitude, this kind of stance behind it of essence love. Whatever I'm experiencing right now is being experienced within this greater container of the body-heart-mind of, "I care." So it's not this overemphasis on, "I got to get rid of this emotion," but it's also not overly emphasizing embracing it. You give it the space to be what it is and then naturally unfold. And then his more high level of that is then you get a glimpse of emptiness. And in a secular context, I don't teach that last part.

[\(00:22:55\)](#) But I do find that the handshake practice is unbelievably malleable. I can teach it in hospitals, jails, and schools, boardrooms. It's kind of incredible. Most people know what it's like to feel frustrated and have never usually spent the time to just sit with that in its discomfort, and allow it to have that quality of release without interference, without needing to do anything or change anything. Without an agenda.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:23:23\)](#): Yeah, I love that practice as well. I'm so glad you brought that in. There's a couple of things that came up for me while you were just speaking that are actually all maybe related. Something about the naming of our emotions with labels, with words, and also the naming of our physiological experiences, our sensory experiences feels like (and I'd never thought about it this way before until just now when we're talking), but there's something about it that feels like being seen. To name something, it's almost like if another person were there externally validating you, saying like, "Oh yeah, that's what you're feeling. That's okay, that makes sense." Or it's just a way maybe of acknowledging what's actually happening, which I think so often gets lost if we're not attending.

Eve Ekman [\(00:24:10\)](#): Absolutely. Yeah.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:24:11\)](#): I'm curious what you think about that. And then also that feels like a part of that handshake practice too, is the way that you're just showing up and allowing, like you described that really beautifully, is another way of just being seen.

Eve Ekman [\(00:24:24\)](#): Absolutely. You know, I don't think it's possible to meditate if we don't have some sense of psychological safety. Like, it's okay to be here. I'm okay. And if I had a Bitcoin (so I'm near Silicon Valley, so I'll say that), if I had a Bitcoin, for every time someone said to me, "I can't meditate, my mind is crazy," I would definitely be able to retire and fund a lot of humanitarian aid projects. But it's that feeling like, I can't do this and my mind isn't friendly. It's going to rip me away. I'm going to feel like a failure. And I think you're right. By giving people this option or opportunity of, well, this is naturally going to happen. And why don't we even identify and make friends with, or at least welcome what's coming?

[\(00:25:14\)](#) And when Tsoknyi created that practice, to my understanding, what he shared with me is it was in response to seeing that so many of his Western students were unable to even make it towards stable attention, because so many of the emotions were arising when they sat down. There's a teacher in the

Insight tradition named Matthew Brensilver, and he has this quote I love, which he says, "Meditation is like disorganized exposure therapy." *[laughter]* Like, you sit and then everything comes up. You didn't ask for it, and here it is, and there it is. There you are in the grade school playground and your last breakup, and it's like all this material. And if we don't know what to do with it, we can start to exile it or it might feel like we're doing something wrong—the opposite of what you're describing, naming, but also giving it its appropriate weight. Like, that's actually not what we're doing right now.

[\(00:26:09\)](#) And so that kind of internal discipline towards how should we be with our emotions. The idea isn't always to express everything. We know the harms of suppression. We find that people who are suppressing actually have a higher autonomic arousal in their body. So the suppression, it may prevent it from leaking on the outside, but actually at a physiological level, it is more difficult or harmful for the body. But the alternative isn't, "Okay, don't suppress, so express everything, let it all hang out!" Right? It's kind of that titration. If you need to suppress, suppress when you need to, like in the context of being a clinician or a teacher or even a good friend. And then really practice that space to be with the experience of emotion in meditation, through handshake, through journaling, talking with a friend, being seen.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:27:00\)](#): Yeah, that's great. Maybe it'd be helpful to step through, you have this great tool of mapping the process of how an emotion unfolds, or emotional experience. So maybe we could talk through that for listeners and walk through the different parts.

Eve Ekman [\(00:27:15\)](#): Yeah, yeah. It's always great to use an example of a recent emotion episode. And so I won't put you on the spot, Wendy. I'll choose one because-

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:27:24\)](#): Thank you. *[laughter]*

Eve Ekman [\(00:27:25\)](#): Yeah. I'm feeling very generous and compassionate today. And I had a really good one recently where I was like, "Oh, hi. Yeah, that again." So I kind of alluded to this feeling that can arise of being unseen and unappreciated. And that is giving us a little sneak preview into the deeper work of what the emotion episode can show us.

[\(00:27:48\)](#) So at a very simple level, I was at a meeting with colleagues who I respect and admire, and there was kind of a misunderstanding. Folks didn't agree on what we were talking about. The context was, of course, talking about well-being. And in the moment, I realized I could actually feel at the embodied level, like, ooh, I'm feeling... I could feel the sadness and hurt for a moment, but it so quickly gave way to frustration and irritation. And luckily I know a couple strategies, so happily this kind of compassion arose and I was able—very discreetly, luckily video calls make this easier—put a hand on the heart, hand on the belly, and just be with it.

[\(00:28:35\)](#) And so if I mapped that, we would look at how that emotion unfolded. Though the trigger is in 1/25th of a second, very hard for us to map a timeline in the moment. But retrospectively, I'd look back and I'd say, what was my precondition? What was going on at a physiological state? What was the context that was happening? And so I do know that when this happened, I didn't get great sleep. So I was already a little depleted. And then another part of the trigger, not just this feeling of not being heard, like my point of view isn't heard in this moment. Then I have the other layer of the trigger. So there's the context and my tiredness. There's feeling as though this person who's speaking didn't hear me.

[\(00:29:20\)](#) Then there's my database. And it's so interesting because in the contemplative traditions, especially in Buddhism, there's the 'storehouse consciousness' and this idea of all of this imprint, all of this karmic momentum, not only of this lifetime, but many lifetimes. But in this lifetime, what we know

primarily actually through research and psychotherapeutic interventions is we are all carrying an internal working model of the world based on our past experiences—when we were little kids, when we were growing up. And we don't know what gets stored in this database. We know it's likely to be events that are very emotionally salient, emotions and events that happen many times. So you could imagine things that are occurring not just once but repeated. And then also ones that maybe are similar to these evolutionary pre-programmed triggers, these immediate reactions that might be another way that something gets stored in there. So when I look at my database like feeling unseen or unappreciated at work, I have to really face the reality of, gosh, what is this need to be seen, heard, appreciated? Is there an underlying (and then in my case, very true) insecurity that I'm good enough? And so when we look into the storehouse or we look into the database of our emotions, we often find these really young internal working model beliefs of who we are in the world. Nothing to do with the context of who's in that meeting or what was being said. It just was this pattern recognition of, this reminds me of the possibility that I'm actually not good enough.

[\(00:31:01\)](#) And so then what happens at the next stage of the timeline after the trigger is recognizing what's it feel like in the body? How does it change our thoughts and perceptions at the moment? And at that moment, I do remember the sinking feeling in my body of, oh my God, I'm not good enough. I'm not being understood.

[\(00:31:22\)](#) We then have the phase of the behavior. So we think of a trigger, experience, response or behavior. And in that case, my response was not that skillful. The Dalai Lama and my dad talked a lot about how do we improve the way we respond to emotions? We can't change emotions. I can't really affect this 1/25th of a second trigger, but I can change and alter—do I respond in a way that's constructive or destructive? Constructive would really be in that moment, if I could have done this, maybe taking a breath, taking a walk, reminding myself this is an old story, that would've been a reappraisal. But unfortunately for me, my response was to feel frustrated. "I should feel more appreciated in this meeting!" So that became the trigger of my next emotion. "Why am I not appreciated? What's wrong with these people?"

[\(00:32:21\)](#) So my precondition is then that I just felt sad. My database is some of this righteous sense of no one's understanding me, I'm so misunderstood. This isn't fair. Sense of fairness is such a key and core aspect of a trigger to anger. Which can be very helpful, right? Injustice. When we feel a sense of anger towards injustice, it can help remove obstacles and promote activism. So in this case, I felt this anger just kind of flare up. And I could then definitely feel that in my body, shaky, it's hot. And at that point, I could notice enough in my body what was happening to apply a meaningful response or behavior that was constructive, which was, "Oh, Eve, you're angry. I'm sorry." Like, that compassion. And then, "You have to be really careful right now because you're not seeing clearly." And for me, I was able to take a glass of water and sip it slowly just to give myself that time to, in my body, down regulate with some breath and cooling, so that I could then really see more clearly.

[\(00:33:29\)](#) But it actually took until journaling later in the day to recognize what had happened. In the moment, I was just like, okay, missed the fact that I was hurt, caught onto the fact that I was angry. And now it's time to apply an antidote before things get even worse. And using the timeline as a way to journal can be so helpful for people so they can really pick apart and almost use a microscope to look at something that might be otherwise invisible, in addition to being so fast.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:34:01\)](#): Yeah, that's really helpful to think about using that layout as a way to reflect later, to reflect back. And I appreciate you unpacking all the layers that contribute to the beginning of the experience. So your physiological state that day, your whole life patterning of what you've experienced. So there isn't ever just this one cause. But that's hard to see, like you said, because it happens so fast. And if it's a very strong negative emotion or difficult emotion that's so salient in your mind, that it

can be very hard. And I think that's obviously, right, where meditation and increasing that sense of awareness of maybe the physiological triggers, maybe just understanding the whole kaleidoscope of the emotion, and like you said, happily, at least you were able to have some self-compassion and take a pause. And even that is a huge skill and takes a lot of learning.

[\(00:35:01\)](#) I wanted to ask you, we've a couple of times mentioned destructive emotions and you were just contrasting that with constructive emotions. And I just thought it might be interesting to unpack that, because I think there can be some slippage, or just different perspectives from western psychology versus Buddhism about, are there 'bad emotions' or emotions that should be gotten rid of? Or do all emotions have a purpose? And so there's these kind of different views. And maybe also relating to some complexities in the example you showed, not that this was the case in that particular example, but you could imagine a case where feeling unseen or not valuable is legitimate, right? It's actually highlighting a problem in a societal structure, right? So how do you think about all of that space?

Eve Ekman [\(00:35:50\)](#): Yeah. And if it's okay, I want to share one thing before that I think is so interesting, which is, I feel like there should be some small print that you're required to read if you do like an MBSR course, or you start meditating or delving into contemplative practice, which is the more you practice, the more sensitive you'll become to your emotions. And in some ways, the more you'll need these emotion regulation strategies.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:36:16\)](#): Right. That's a good point!

Eve Ekman [\(00:36:17\)](#): Oops! *[laughter]* And I still think it is so much better to develop that meta-awareness and to learn about the experience of your emotions and to harvest the richness. And you do become more sensitive. So it's interesting.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:36:37\)](#): That's a really good point because there is this phase, especially in the beginning when you kind of open this box. Like you said, when you first sit down to meditate, particularly people who, if you never have, there's so much in there that now has been given the space that just bubbles up. And it's a really fascinating experience that all of that, if emotions and patterns and experiences are not processed, they do kind of just ramble on in our bodies. And when they're given the space, they do come up to be dealt with. And so there is that phase of becoming aware of that and you're like, "Wow, there's all of this happening. And maybe it was easier when I didn't even know that this was all happening." *[laughter]* But I'm totally with you that it's worth the process. But it can be become challenging in that space, yeah.

Eve Ekman [\(00:37:28\)](#): Yeah. And I think (I believe Cliff talked about this when he was on the podcast, but) we can increase our empathic response through meditation practice. And if we're learning meditation practice in a maybe not complete way—let's say we're just trying to optimize our attention and focus and we don't learn compassion—we might not know how to be with the fact that this optimization of our attention and awareness includes increased amounts of difficult, disturbing emotions. Not only on the cushion, but we're aware of that everywhere. We can read it, we can feel it, we sense it in our bodies. So it's a real case for getting the full view and picture of how to cultivate the mind, heart, and body.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:38:14\)](#): Yeah. I love that, the fine print.

Eve Ekman [\(00:38:16\)](#): Yeah. God, we need that. I really try to tell that to my students when I teach. Like, "I think this is a really good idea that you're here, and there might be some hazards that you're engaging in terms of your resonance to the world."

[\(00:38:34\)](#) But your first question is such a good question. These terms destructive and constructive emotions have definitely not caught on like wildfire. It's not what everybody's using. I really appreciate the distinction in that it highlights it's not that our emotions are bad, wrong or negative versus positive, good, virtuous. It's that how we enact them. And that is, again, pulling apart... Often we have this very condensed, opaque view of emotion instead of recognizing there's the trigger, the experience and the response. And when we look at it in that format, we can see that what we really want to attend our energy towards is, how can we respond in ways that are helpful to others and ourselves?

[\(00:39:20\)](#) So that was a big topic at the *Destructive Emotions* meeting. It wasn't, emotions by nature are destructive. And there's been this now 24-year ongoing debate with folks like Richie [Davidson] and Danny [Goleman], my dad, Matthieu [Ricard] and Alan [Wallace], all about, is anger ever a constructive emotion? And I am just going to say, as someone who's paid close attention, I think that there have been many times when there's been conclusive agreement that there are ways in which anger can be constructive. And especially when it comes to things like mobilizing for social justice, facing up to things in our life that are not right, like you said. I realize in the context of my work environment or my close relationship, I'm not seen and heard. That's not okay. And there's an energy with feeling frustrated and anger, and that can be according to more of the Buddhist tradition, a very clear seeing. And that's very beneficial. However, very often we kind of indulge our anger and we respond in ways that are in the moment satisfying, but actually quite harmful and destructive for others. Anger is a really tough one to feel in a clear and clean way.

[\(00:40:39\)](#) And then, though we all universally experience emotions, we have learned what is okay and not okay to show with our emotions in very different ways. So we've been instructed within our families of origin, within society, maybe within other structures we exist in, which emotions are okay and not okay to show. And that can greatly influence our ability to express it in healthy ways. So I've heard a student of mine sharing that she doesn't feel it's okay to be angry. First, she's told me, "I don't feel angry." And I was like, "Hmm, that's interesting. You have a pulse, right?" Because frustration, irritation... People don't like the word anger. When I give them frustration, irritation, annoyance, they're like, "Oh yeah, all the time." No problem. *[laughter]*

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(00:41:22\)](#): They buy into that, yeah.

Eve Ekman [\(00:41:24\)](#): And she said, yeah, it's not okay in my family and culture for me to be angry. And so when she's angry, she'll be saying, "I am not angry," while she's yelling and crying at the same time. And she waits so long to express her anger that it then comes out in this overwhelming way.

[\(00:41:43\)](#) And so it's really about titrating. I do think there's a lot of value and benefit coming from the contemporary psychological perspective of looking at positive and negative affect. It's just a very different quantity that's being examined. And I think it unfortunately can inadvertently make people feel some emotions are good and some are bad. So we can learn a lot, for example, I love ecological momentary assessment, tracking your emotion on a day-to-day basis, using modern technology to develop emotional awareness. I'm all in. As long as people recognize that if they're using a slider or emoji or even words, that it's not that they're tracking how many times they feel good and how many times they feel bad, and at the end, it's quantified and gives you a reflection of whether or not you're failing at life or succeeding. *[laughter]* The goal isn't not to feel bad ever and feel good all the time, it's actually the diversity of emotions and the flexibility within them.

[\(00:42:42\)](#) – *musical interlude* –

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:42:56): I was wondering your perspective on... thinking about the intersection of Buddhism and this whole space of emotions, I'm wondering how you have experienced (maybe personally, but also in all of your teaching) the role of the self. And of course in Buddhism, there's often this trajectory of deconstructing the self in some way, or loosening our attachments to this firm idea of the self. And just in reflecting on your work and thinking about emotions—emotions are obviously feel so much about the self. That's what they are seemingly for, or that's how they are directed, about "these are my needs" or "this is what's happening to me." So I'm just wondering if that comes into this realm at all in your work—if you move in that direction of loosening the self, how does that affect our emotional experience?

Eve Ekman (00:43:54): Yeah, it's such a great question. I have to tell you, my immediate response is just such great yearning to be farther along on the path. Because I'm so clear that the more I can loosen that over-identification with who I am and how I'm perceived, the more freedom I'll have. And I think the reason His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been so passionate about work in emotions—both the Emotion Atlas and CEB and these other projects I've gotten to work on—is he sees the freedom possible when we can really have a calm mind. And that doesn't mean that there's no emotions. It just means that we've reset our baseline, and that calm is where we are operating from. That's the host of our experience, and not this reactivity.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:44:41): Right. Maybe calm with the awareness that you've been pointing to.

Eve Ekman (00:44:45): Yeah. And I think that there's these other layers too where, as I was mentioning, if we're continually cultivating compassion and every day we're clear, "My real goal is peace of mind and liberation for the sake of all beings." Or if you want to say it in a secular way, "I want to be less of a jerk and more kind." Great aspirations. That actually starts to be in the mind stream, be in our conscious awareness. If we're really setting that intention clearly, then when events arise, that's actually part of our precondition, like being tired or hungry. So that desire and that wish for peace and kindness may help us. And I will say, I do have moments (that I feel very proud of) where I see these emotions arise that are kind of pulling towards this egoic sense of "that's not right for me." And I can see them and be like, "It's fine. Everybody wants to be happy. Everybody's doing their best." Kind of the reframing reappraisal before I get pulled all the way in.

(00:45:51) So I see that loosening of the self-grip is that compassion without boundary, recognizing that universality, that shared humanity can really influence our perception—and maybe even get in the database. So we see the world through that way. And I do think when I've had the good fortune to spend a little time with people who I feel have that level and quality of practice where emotions are a bit more like that feeling wave that arises and falls, it's very inspiring. And like I said, big yearning towards that. There's just no other way. It's so hard to learn about your emotions, and to become aware and to recognize all the work you have to do, but the alternative is worse. There's no other way to do it, and there's no technological device that can do it for you.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:46:48): Yeah. I appreciate that distinction of, it's not that emotions disappear if you're able to kind of loosen the grip on the self, but there's more space, it seems. More awareness. And even the way you were speaking reminded me of the word equanimity, which maybe that's a concept to unpack a little bit, how that fits in.

Eve Ekman (00:47:09): Yeah. I mean equanimity, of the four immeasurable practices, it gets the nomination for least understood. *[laughter]* You know, compassion, lovingkindness, everyone's like, "I'm in." Even if it makes the heart tremble, it feels good. Rejoicing. Why not? Equanimity... It's like, huh?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:47:27): Right. It can feel very kind of flat and just like everything's the same.

Eve Ekman (00:47:32): Yeah. I've heard so many beautiful teachings on equanimity, and I think it's wonderful that there are so many different approaches. I think they will resonate for different people in different ways. And I even feel like the same teachings resonate in different ways for me over time.

(00:47:51) One of the ways I have understood equanimity is really having that huge view. And so, I'm in this meeting feeling misunderstood. Equanimity is, will you remember this in two months? And do you actually understand the full complexity of what's happening right now? There are a couple phrases by the 8th-century master Shantideva on being with anger that I feel like are very 'equanimity in pith.' And one is to recognize complexity. You have no idea what else has gone on in the other people involved in this, and the day that happened for other people before this. You don't know the complexity of actually what's going into this moment that you feel like is happening to you. Recognize complexity. You don't even need to know. Who cares if they had a bad night's sleep or a bad childhood? Just recognize that you don't know. Complexity.

(00:48:50) And then the second is scope, which we just talked about. In the big context of things, it's fine. It's fine—for those difficult experiences that are acute. Now I think the scope, when it comes to something like facing and feeling anger towards systemic oppression, inequality, it's not that it's fine, but you're recognizing in this moment. In this moment, this emotion has its own kind of place throughout the entire spectrum of what needs to happen, and what has happened prior.

(00:49:27) And then there's two others, and one is to really kind of rejoice in the opportunity of working with this episode of your difficult emotion, because there will definitely be more. So to take this bodhisattva attitude of like, "I'm training for future adversity. Maybe this is hard, but this is going to help me."

(00:49:47) And then the last one, which is so sweet, because I never understood it until just actually a year and a half ago. And it was, be like wood. I was like, what? A piece of dead wood floating on the water, or...? I couldn't figure it out. And I got the chance to ask Mingyur Rinpoche, Tsoknyi's brother, about that. It came up in a conversation and he said, "No, no, no. The translation, it's not right. It's be like the tree that's rooted in the ground." So if you're getting swayed back and forth by this emotion, buffeted by the winds and the rains, just root.

(00:50:28) And I feel like all of those are such beautiful instructions for equanimity. Some of them are really taking this huge view, and some of them are in the moment feeling the ground. And I really feel like equanimity is helping us see just the kind of the relative coming and going, with this deep core of compassion.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:50:48): You mentioned a little bit ago that you're a big fan of using modern technology to help us become more aware of our emotions and potentially work with our emotions. And I know you've been doing some work in the tech space out there in Silicon Valley. So do you want to share some about that?

Eve Ekman (00:51:02): Yeah. My most unexpected of journeys. *[laughter]* It's funny, amazing. I feel very fortunate how life has unfolded and opened up for me thus far. I did my postdoc at UCSF and was very fortunate to start working with technology then. I had this hunch or this sense that if people were paying attention or becoming mindful of their emotions every day, they would recognize something greater about

their experience than if they just at the end of the day or the end of the week reflected like, how was the last two weeks? How was the last month?

(00:51:42) These early studies of ecological momentary assessment or EMA, they were using beepers or diaries at the end of the day. This is Ed Diener and Csikszentmihalyi who are looking at, how can we understand the life of depressed patients outside of the laboratory, outside of the survey? They wanted a rich, contextualized daily picture. So they're asking folks to maybe make a phone call after they got beeped. How are you feeling? What's going on? And something that was surprising to them is that just doing that improved their overall well-being and reduced their symptoms. It wasn't meant to be an intervention, but that increased awareness really was beneficial, and I loved that.

(00:52:25) And so I was really fortunate to get a grant from UCSF to create a simple app that would ask extremely burnt-out residents working in a hospital setting their daily emotions twice a day for two weeks. I had a hundred participants. And what I found, which was really beautiful, is over the course of those two weeks, you could record up to five times, but on average it was 1.8, so about twice a day. And they had very high levels of burnout, which is not surprising during residency, but actually even higher than some other rates (which makes sense, UCSF is kind of an intense teaching hospital, an R1 university). And over the course of these two weeks, when we looked at what emotions people were logging, over 50% of their emotions were enjoyable emotions, which was surprising. They were very burnt out, high scores on the PSS and the enjoyable emotion triggers, like 30% of them were something they just did for themselves. We had them write it in, so it was sweet, like, "Listened to Bob Marley this morning." I was like, "Great!" Or, "Made myself a healthy lunch." Really simple. Residents are getting very little sleep. They're being constantly evaluated. They're in a very new setting—this is almost all first-year residents—very new setting, treating patients. It's a hard time. There's not a lot of flexibility of what they get to do.

(00:53:49) And then coming in hot at 17% was feelings of fear, including anxiety and worry, and then 14% anger and frustration. And again, such differences. The fear there was primarily related to being evaluated. Did I do something wrong? So one was like, "My co-intern threw me under the bus," or, "I'm not sure I'm doing it right with this patient." And then frustration, interestingly... So it was almost all related to work, like 40% of that. But with the frustration, the lion's share was related to oneself or one's friends and family members. "So I was so angry that I lost my glasses." "I was so angry that my boyfriend showed up drunk again." These little snippets we get.

(00:54:35) And then when I did a focus group after and asked people, what do you think about these results? One of the things that really struck me was they said, "Well, we're not allowed to be angry at work, so we take it home." And that really gave me this inspiration of like, wow, what can we learn about targeting interventions? And also, how can we help people recognize the goodness that's in their day? They were all blown away by how good they felt generally. And it wasn't just the desirability—they weren't doing it because they thought they should. They were like, "Yeah, actually I'm okay more often than I thought."

(00:55:10) So I was working at Greater Good Science Center a couple of years later as their director of training. It was such an amazing role. You get to bring science to so many different places and create little curriculums and teach. And I did a lot in healthcare and was asked to teach one session at Apple and shared these results with them. And much to my surprise, the next day they said, "You got to come work for us. What can we do to make this happen?" And I really had no idea about working in technology, and yet I clearly saw from the people I talked to, their dedication and care of bringing well-being into technology.

(00:55:49) And in my time there, it's been super fascinating to see, how do we create a definition of technology that's generalizable? How do we create experiences and products that support well-being? And

especially because so many of the results of technology have created these unintended consequences of isolation, apathy, polarization, at least through social media. And I got to work first on creating the meditation program through our Fitness+ app. Something like maybe like 100 million users.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:56:25): Is that the basic app that's on Apple iPhones?

Eve Ekman (00:56:28): It's on, but it's subscription. So it's behind a paywall. So that limits it to subscribers, but still so many. And to create... I thought I knew what creating accessible meditation was. I've done this, again, in hospital settings and juvenile jail settings, but it was so different when we really are creating it for 100 million, or a billion people. So it was wonderful. It forced me to the edge of, what do I absolutely think we can't do or can do, and it no longer becomes a practice that's beneficial or transformative? How light can it be, or how simple can it be? And it became really clear that words matter, but you can really actually, you can remove a lot of them and just get the feeling.

(00:57:18) I also got to work on our recent release of a virtual reality experience for meditation. And I actually think it's completely excellent. And I actually think we might find that virtual reality becomes a place that helps people with meditation in a way. I think of your interview with Brendan [Ozawa-de Silva] about how to really recognize that people are not using meditation? And that if we keep publishing research on why it's good, that won't necessarily lead to more people doing it. So what do we do? How do we get more people to do it? And my thought was, we might need these immersive experiences where there's sound, there's visual. It's tough because you can, and I've seen some apps do this, go to the direction of, it becomes stimulating and exciting. You know, there's butterflies and unicorns, and you're like, okay, it's an escape, but this isn't like training mind and heart. But it was really beautiful to see in the context of what we are offering, this very pared down, very simple, but very immersive feeling of being held in a meditation practice that really senses you. Pretty interesting.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:58:32): Yeah, that's great to hear about, and I appreciate that perspective. I think so much these days, the conversation around tech and AI and all of these developments is in a pretty negative frame about problems that it's causing, or potential problems. So I'm wondering how you balance that, but I really appreciate the work you've been doing to harness the potential on the positive side.

Eve Ekman (00:58:58): Yeah, and it's simple. So we did release emotion tracking this year, which was like a dream come true for me—that every single person who has a phone can track and log their emotions, and gain insight from that. And hopefully learn how to maybe shift or change behaviors to support their well-being, or just deepen their care and meeting of what they're and why. And journaling was another project we did this year.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:59:26): Are those built in to the standard... Is it just on iPhones, right?

Eve Ekman (00:59:30): Yeah, just on iPhones.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:59:31): That's cool. Where do you find that? Is it in the-

Eve Ekman (00:59:33): So for the emotion tracking, you find it in the Health app, and then journaling just populates on the screen. And it's really interesting. It gives you all these different memories or experiences to reflect on. Often when we're journaling and we sit down, we're like, "What do I want to write about? What happened?" And so this opportunity to have these prompts that are created through your own life experience. And journaling, exercise, meditation, if you're going to look at the top three, that's what we've

got to get people to do in terms of preventative and supportive practices for well-being, and technology can really help us do it. There's no question.

[\(01:00:14\)](#) Now, connection? Not sure. Of course, right now we're talking over the internet. So that helps, right? That's technology. But I do think there is an interesting way that we can feel the difference between being in-person and being virtual more and more. I think the pandemic helped us with that, of like, actually what is the difference and why does it matter? And I've been surprised. It took a while, but I lead a Wednesday night drop-in meditation group and have for years. And when we had to come off the Zoom screen into real life, it took a while. And people were like, "Oh, I'm not in." And then we're full house again. And that feeling of being together, like hearing each other breathe, even the annoying stuff of car alarms going off. There's a richness that's possible in person. So yeah, it's interesting to try to highlight—can technology show us what is incomparably important in real life? And also, I do think that especially emotion tracking, technology can do a better job than most of us can do. Like, I don't know how I felt last Tuesday at 2:00 PM. So yeah.

[\(01:01:26\)](#) – *musical interlude* –

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:01:26\)](#): Well, there's a couple of programs that I know you've been involved in, and I just wanted to give you a chance to share about. One is Cultivating Emotional Balance, or CEB, as I think you were mentioning earlier (which actually emerged from that 2000 Mind & Life Dialogue way back when), which is a training program. And then a free resource online called The Atlas of Emotion. So please share how people can find those.

Eve Ekman [\(01:02:19\)](#): Yes. Thank you so much, yeah. I feel so, again, fortunate for these opportunities that have changed my life and really directed the course of my life. So Cultivating Emotional Balance was this beautiful coming together of folks at the end of the 2000 meeting of, how do we bring together the ideas from psychology and contemplative practice to support emotion awareness and choice in our emotions? And a of folks gathered that evening, I think Richie and Danny and Matthieu and Alan and my dad. And Alan and my dad self-selected themselves to create this initial curriculum.

[\(01:02:58\)](#) Fast-forward, I have been teaching it the last 15 years. I got to teach it for 10 with Alan Wallace, which was just an education in and of itself. He was such a great meditation master, such clarity. I owe such a debt of gratitude to him of learning how to apply these really specific, really nuanced practices in a secular way. And bringing in this emotion work and I, gosh, I learned so much by teaching people how to teach others how to be with their emotions. And we have teachers worldwide. I feel so fortunate. We have a CEB teacher training in Brazil, one that's starting in Mexico, and hopefully in Europe. And I feel like I get to be a bit more of this parent or grandparent role watching CEB kind of start to take its own legs, and naturally evolve into the settings where people are really interested and care.

[\(01:03:51\)](#) And the Atlas of Emotion project was actually the first and only time I really got to collaborate with my dad, which was such a rare opportunity. And this was probably five years into me teaching Cultivating Emotional Balance. So I had a real sense of how people learned about emotion. And my dad invited me to come and give this pitch to the Dalai Lama of, "We want to create this Atlas and we want your support." And very happily, he was entirely on board. He said it has to be based in science, and it really has to be accessible for people so they can find their way to a calm mind. And the original Atlas project we created between 2014 and 2016, did a new edition maybe two years later.

[\(01:04:35\)](#) And I'm very excited to share that we'll be releasing three new pages on strategies (so very appropriate for our call today). The Atlas, in and of itself, is developing emotion granularity. Recognizing

with specificity what emotion we're feeling, what might be the ways we're responding, and giving you a way to look at the timeline. But we also wanted to create a way for people to understand when they can apply strategies. There's two main buckets—you can apply a strategy in the moment, or reflectively. In the moment, it's very limited, but reflectively, using the timeline, there's so much opportunity.

[\(01:05:12\)](#) So I've been working with this wonderful designer, Jasper Speicher, and we will be sharing this with the world for free soon. But the current Atlas site, translated now into seven languages, is freely available for anyone. And it makes my heart feel very happy that it's out there. And I get emails now and then from people who are using it and appreciating it, like school teachers and therapists and parents and recently someone who's making a temple at Burning Man. *[laughter]* Whatever the need is, Atlas is available freely because of the generosity of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So, very grateful.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:05:48\)](#): Oh, that's wonderful. And we'll be sure to provide links to both of those in the show notes. Before we leave, I know you're a big surfer and we were just talking about how you've been surfing the last couple of days. Is there anything that you want to share about the experience of surfing? I just know it's a big passion of yours, and maybe intersections with anything we've been talking about.

Eve Ekman [\(01:06:09\)](#): Yeah. I mean, I really hate to be so cliché, but it really is such a great metaphor. And especially surfing the emotional waves and this idea of the emotion coming... And there's one way that we can try to face our emotions. So I imagine, when I get into the ocean, often there's the waves that are crashing right on shore. And I could try to just walk into it and just get the shore pound and get hit back to shore, or I can dive under and in. So I think that's one great metaphor of just getting into the ocean of the emotion experience.

[\(01:06:47\)](#) And then it's funny because I meditate and I surf, people are like, "Oh, it's just so blissful, I bet, being out there. It's like meditating surfing." And I was like, "I don't think you've surfed." *[laughter]* There's a full range of emotions like anxiety, "Oh my God, that big wave!" And frustration like, "Oh, I missed that wave..." And jealousy like, "Oh my God, are they going to get into my wave?" *[laughter]* I love it. There's nowhere in which I regularly fall, laugh at myself and also have the rejoicing, especially surfing with others.

[\(01:07:21\)](#) And the connection to the natural world. You know, we are in a time of such climate distress and anxiety. I just am fortunate to be working with Elissa Epel right now on a course that's helping undergrads manage climate anxiety. And being able to recognize our emotion experience helps; so does rejoicing in nature. And again that garden metaphor, planting the seeds of, I love this natural world and it loves me. That kind of more than human sense, which we're getting from the contemplative sciences outside of Buddhism, from the Indigenous traditions.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:07:59\)](#): Yeah. Well this has been so great, Eve. I've really enjoyed this conversation. As we're wrapping up, I wonder if you have big picture reflections on the relevance of understanding our emotions and building emotional awareness for global issues that we're facing. Some of the greater challenges, and just how you view that relevance in those spaces.

Eve Ekman [\(01:08:21\)](#): Yeah, huge question. I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on it. I really come back to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and his interest or intent on why we should care about emotions. There's no possibility for clear seeing and kindness when we are wrapped up in our own self-related concern about emotions. And if we don't see our emotions clearly, we really do think that the world is making them happen to us. We lose track of that multiplicity—I love that you said the kaleidoscope—the multiplicity of

factors that lead to emotion. So it's almost this, the mental hygiene to develop emotional awareness so that we can be more available and accessible for what's happening around us.

[\(01:09:10\)](#) I mean, I think if everyone did a course in emotion awareness, we would be living in a very different world. And I'm so heartened to see how much social emotional learning—I know Rob [Roeser] was on the program recently—and so many wonderful people working in the space of developing these tools and skills for kids. And we can't give up on adults and elders. We all need it. And I do think it's getting a little less scary. You know, I'm so grateful for Pixar and Inside Out, these playful ways. I think we really need humor to laugh at ourselves and the ridiculousness of how we feel these emotions. And I really appreciate poetry and writing... If we look at all the arts, they would not exist without emotion. And so to kind of have that appreciation of what learning emotional awareness can do, just in terms of our ability to express and appreciate what's around us, as well as hopefully reduce harm.

Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:10:16\)](#): Well, thank you, Eve. This has really been a joy to speak today, and thank you for all the work that you're doing in this field. And thanks for taking the time to be with us today.

Eve Ekman [\(01:10:25\)](#): Thank you, Wendy. I so appreciate you and so appreciate Mind & Life. It is such a joy to be here.

Outro – Wendy Hasenkamp [\(01:10:36\)](#): *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.*

[\(01:11:06\)](#) *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.*