Mind & Life Podcast Transcript
Wendy Hasenkamp – Widening the Aperture

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Intro – Phil Walker (00:00:04): Welcome to Mind & Life. I'm Phil Walker, co-producer of the podcast. Today, I'm stepping in as host for a very special interview. If you follow Mind & Life on social media, our email newsletter, or the Mind & Life blog, you know that this will be the final episode with Wendy Hasenkamp, the creator of this show and its wonderful host for more than five years. While we're understandably sad to see her go, we're also excited that she'll be pouring all her energy into something she's become increasingly passionate about—the field of herbalism and holistic medicine. More on that in the episode.

(00:00:46) Of course, the Mind & Life podcast will continue on. In fact, over the coming weeks, we'll present a special five-part miniseries on systems change hosted by mindful policy advocate, Jamie Bristow. And later this year, we'll begin sharing episodes with our new full-time host, health psychologist and contemplative researcher, David Creswell. Jamie and David have both been guests on this show, and will now bring new perspectives while staying true to the heart of the podcast.

(00:01:16) Today however, we'll be turning the tables on Wendy, making her the guest. I sat down with Wendy a few months ago to explore her own journey in the world of contemplative science, and her inspiration and experiences creating and hosting this show. Wendy also shares some about where she's heading in this new chapter of her life and career. If you'd like to follow Wendy, you can find her on Substack, where she's already posted a number of insightful essays on her latest endeavor.

(00:01:46) As many listeners know, Wendy is a neuroscientist, researcher, and writer who served in many roles at Mind & Life, including grants manager, science director, and of course, podcast host. Since 2020, Wendy has hosted more than 80 episodes of this podcast—a rich body of work that lifted up many voices. I've had the joy of working with Wendy for many years. She's bright, hardworking, kind, and simply one of the finest people I've ever met. I'm so glad we were able to take time to celebrate her efforts here. It's a real honor to share with you this special interview with my dear friend, Wendy Hasenkamp.

Phil Walker (00:02:34): I am so happy to have Wendy Hasenkamp joining us today on the Mind & Life podcast. Wendy, welcome.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:02:40): Thank you, Phil.

Phil Walker (00:02:41): Seems so odd to say that. *[laughter]*

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:02:42): It's very weird to be on this side of the table.

Phil Walker (00:02:46): So it would be really nice to start out with some of your background, because even though people have known you as host of this show, and many of your colleagues, of course, know your background, but there's probably a lot of the listeners who don't have a good sense of how you came to all this. So maybe you could just walk us through—how did you come to the world of contemplative science?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:03:08): Yeah, wow. You'd think that I would've prepared an answer for this, having a pretty good guess that you were going to ask me, and the fact that I've asked every single guest this. *[laughter]* But I haven't. So I was really interested in the mind—the blend of emotions and our subjective experience as well as the physicality of our brains and bodies—from the first time that I remember learning that those were linked. I was probably a teenager or something. Neuroscience wasn't such a big field back then. And even prior to that, just always fascinated with life and biology and how it all works. So I double-majored in biology and psychology in college, because again, neuroscience wasn't a major really yet, but that was clearly my early attempt to do that synthesis.

(00:04:04) And then I went on to get a PhD in neuroscience, and that was really focused on psychiatry, psychiatric disease. I focused on schizophrenia and psychotic disorders and ended up at that time going down a pretty molecular avenue—looking at receptors and very nitty-gritty stuff at a cellular and molecular level. In large part, now looking back, I think because that's a lot of where the funding was available.

Phil Walker (00:04:37): In schizophrenia?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:04:38): For any psychiatric disease, really for any... The funding was available for diseases, like what happens when things go wrong. Much less so for health and well-being and flourishing, which thankfully now there's a lot more emphasis on studying that. But at the time when I was in grad school, it was really all about studying when things go wrong. And I think there still is in a lot of science and neuroscience, a very kind of reductionist emphasis—breaking things down to the smallest possible unit, and how do these molecules and neurotransmitters interact, and how does that influence behavioral states and psychological states? Which is fascinating and all still really relevant and interesting, but it was kind of very micro level. And I feel like actually my trajectory since then, the aperture just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger in terms of the lens that I'm viewing things through. So that's kind of cool.

(00:05:32) So I studied schizophrenia and frankly, by the end of my PhD was pretty disillusioned with at least that form of science, what I had known. I didn't feel like the work that I... It was obviously very laborious, the work that I had done, and I didn't feel like it actually contributed that much to helping people at the end of the day. That may also be a reflection on the particular work that I was doing... But I had started to get a little bit of clinical exposure in my first postdoc. I started working at the VA in Atlanta and seeing some patients with schizophrenia and doing some clinical research there. And then that lab also had a little bit of a hand in neuroimaging, and it was still close to Emory. (I did my PhD at Emory in Atlanta. So it was right up the road.) And I had been really interested in neuroimaging, but that was something I hadn't been exposed to in my PhD studies.

(00:06:27) And so I still, of course, had connections back at Emory and was in touch with folks there, and attending some neuroimaging seminars to learn things, and that's how I got looped in with Giuseppe

Pagnoni, who we never had on the show, but gosh, would've loved to interview him. He's back in Italy now, but he's a researcher, a neuroimaging researcher, at the time who was working in psychiatry, I believe, at Emory, and was also doing some of the very early studies of Zen monks and brain imaging and things like that. And he was also connected with Mind & Life. This was like 2006-ish, so still pretty early days. And I learned neuroimaging through him.

(00:07:13) And then also just in my personal life at that time, I started meditating and I had had a yoga practice for a long time and meditation had kind of come in as well. I was also going through a really hard time personally, going through divorce and just lots of difficult personal stuff. So meditation and yoga and all those kind of traditions were a real rock for me. And I became just fascinated with some of the changes that I was seeing in my own life from meditating.

Phil Walker (00:07:42): Like what?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:07:43): I think probably the first thing I noticed was a reduction in irritability, and just more clarity of thinking, and being able to kind of sit with emotions in different ways. So then as a neuroscientist, I was like, "What's going on here? Something's definitely happening in my brain." And again, this was 2006, so it wasn't really on the radar very much—a couple, a handful of early studies.

Phil Walker (00:08:08): Yeah. I'm curious if in your early life you were drawn towards contemplative practice and those types of ideas, or is that something that emerged later for you?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:08:20): Yeah, that's a good question. I think, like I said, I'd already had at that time... This was in my early 30s. I had a pretty strong yoga practice, which I really enjoyed. That was a little bit contemplative, but it was kind of more physical practice, I think, for me most of that time. So I hadn't ever picked up a contemplative practice per se, but I was always very interested in spiritual pursuits. I grew up in the Christian tradition, but kind of moved away from that during college and then was exploring lots of different religions, different worldviews and pretty drawn to ideas out of Asian traditions. I hadn't ever meditated before that time, yeah.

Phil Walker (00:09:07): But you started to see a connection there? Were you influenced by the neuroimaging piece, or where was that coming together?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:09:14): Yeah. I guess I was... just with all of my training in neuroscience and understanding a little bit about how brains work, and just habit patterns in general, and knowing that my day-to-day subjective experience was completely interlinked with whatever was happening in my brain, and then seeing how much that daily experience was changing because of just the way I was shifting my attention or what I was doing with my attention and my mind—it was just kind of a big open question to me. So that ended up really reigniting my interest in science, especially when I realized that this was a very nascent field of actual scientific study. At first, I didn't think there would be any ability to study this in a real rigorous or academic way. This was, again, still in that era when meditation was considered very woo-woo and not accepted by the scientific community very much.

(00:10:11) But I actually ended up going to a conference, it was one of the early Center for Mindfulness conferences in, I think it was 2006, the first one I went to. I just went on my own dime (I think it was in Worcester, Mass... yeah, because the Center was there at the time) and of course didn't know anybody in that world. But I had a friend who lived in Worcester, so I just crashed on her couch and then I checked out this conference, just kind of as a little bit of a, "What's this world about?" Someone had told me, "There's actually people studying this." And I was like, "Oh, for real though? Is it legit?" And at

that conference, it was a lot of clinical experience, but I had had clinical research experience myself and I could tell that this was legitimate work, and people were really taking this seriously and trying to study it.

(00:10:58) So that was inspiring. And then back at Emory in that neuroimaging world, I met a few more people, and Giuseppe had encouraged me to plug in with Mind & Life. It was the first time I had heard about the Mind & Life Institute. So yeah, in the next couple of years, this really kind of was exciting to me and felt like it offered me like, "Oh, if I'm going to stay in science, I could really get into this." And so I started thinking about shifting the direction of my work. Which was a pretty big shift—to go from molecular work in schizophrenia to neuroimaging work in meditation, which is cognitive science, which is something I really didn't have training in, was a big jump. So it took a couple years and I was just so fortunate to be close to that Emory community because there were so many people there around that time that were coming from different disciplines, different angles, but all starting to be interested in meditation from these different perspectives.

(00:11:58) And since I was personally trying to find maybe a postdoc or a job or a way to get into this field, I was pretty motivated to just network. So I had a lot of coffees with people and just tried to chat with all these folks. Everyone was so welcoming and nice. I met Larry Barsalou at that time, who ended up becoming my advisor for a postdoc, which I'll probably circle back to. Susan Bauer Wu was there for a time, who ended up later running Mind & Life. John Dunne was there, Brooke Lavelle, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Chuck Raison, a lot of people. I'm leaving people-

Phil Walker (00:12:38): Tawni Tidwell…

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:12:39): Tawni Tidwell. Yeah. I mean, I'm definitely leaving more people out, but there was such an incredible crew of folks there at that time. Bobbi Patterson was there, Jenny Mascaro, Carol Worthman, Christy Wilson-Mendenhall I met in Larry Barsalou's lab. Sorry, this might sound just like a bunch of name-dropping, but this was my core community for a long time.

(00:13:02) Anyway. Back to 2008, let's say, I think was the first time I applied and attended the Mind & Life Summer Research Institute. And I was still kind of trying to figure out a postdoc situation, but the first time at SRI there, my mind was just blown. As it is for so many attendee—to come into a space with like-minded folks who were really interested in exploring this at the time, kind of new space of meditation and being able to use our minds in particular ways, and what is that doing to our brains and bodies? It just felt like such an open field at that time, so many questions to explore, and learning about the work of Francisco Varela as a really grounding philosophical background to that. And I also had had no exposure in my training to philosophy or the humanities really at all, so I also loved having that synthesis too, just looking beyond only the scientific way of asking questions.

Phil Walker (00:14:07): And I think you told me at one point at Emory, you would gather as a group, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:14:11): So yeah, I ended up really in part to try to form this community... I was talking to all these people because I was trying to find a position, but I realized that none of these people were really talking to each other—but it could be such a great synthesis, and a kind of incubator. That we had the potential. So I started just hosting a journal club at Emory where anyone who was interested in this kind of work, meditation science, from the clinical, also from the Buddhist studies or any religion... And so yeah, we had folks from psychiatry, the med school, nursing school, the psychology department, the religion department in Buddhist studies. And yeah, it was just such a rich intersection.

And we would just meet and talk about either a paper or an idea that someone had for a grant or whatever. It was a very wonderful, kind of the best of academia, just kicking around ideas and getting input from folks and exploring.

Phil Walker (00:15:11): Yeah. So this group of people from these different disciplines, and I think we'll probably touch on this in a larger context as well, is what do you think the central attraction element was here for these people coming from so many different disciplines?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:15:27): That's a great question. I think it was something about the power of meditation and the possibilities that it held as a practice with such varied applications for well-being and healing and health. And I think there was already built in there and understanding—since we had folks who understood the tradition from Buddhist studies and folks who were looking at more applied work—the importance of that conversation and having all of these different perspectives at the table. And I was just so jazzed to basically be able to be in the room and listen to these conversations. I found it so exciting and exhilarating to kind of help facilitate these conversations. Not that I was actually moderating, but just... you put amazing people in a room together and very cool things happen. So we did that for several years. But anyway, I kind of did the administrative organizing for that group for several years, which just was fun and came naturally to me. So that was a good learning experience that I realized I enjoyed organizing in that way and bringing people together, and I just loved the possibilities that would come out of these conversations.

(00:16:44) Then my scientific career was also progressing at that time. So I shifted my work, ended up taking a postdoc with Larry Barsalou, which was great. The funding for that came from a Mind & Life Varela grant. After that first SRI, I'd had some ideas about a research project that I thought would be cool to do neuroimaging while people were meditating and look at different states that were shifting in the brain, and I had gotten to know Larry a little bit and he was really excited about that idea too, and he had great neuroimaging prowess and experience. And I didn't even realize what a figure he was in the cognitive science world, because again, that wasn't my background. So I just kind of landed there. Luckily, I got the Varela grant and was able to do that project in Larry's lab, which was amazing. And then that's how I got to know Christy Wilson-Mendenhall, who worked with me on that project. We published a few papers together.

(00:17:41) Yeah, and so then I thought I could really leverage this into an academic career. I was always a little bit on the fence about whether I wanted to stay in academia just because I didn't... I like to do a lot of different things, clearly, *[laughter]* just as evidenced already by that one shift—spent 10 years studying schizophrenia and certain things and then just move in a totally different direction. But as several people warned me, it's a little bit of a risk because you don't have the track record to back up a grant and be competitive, et cetera. So long story short, I had put together this whole big grant to the NIH that would've funded my transition into faculty. It didn't go through. So that all fell apart and I kind of found myself... This was 2011, I found myself really at sea with where I was going, and basically just cobbled together a few postdocs at Emory to pay the bills for half a year or so and was trying to figure out next steps. And then a job at Mind & Life opened up, and probably 5-10 friends immediately forwarded it to me. They were like, "This is a perfect job for you!" I think the job was posted just for a program coordinator, helping run SRI and things like that. But anyway, Mind & Life was still based in Boulder at that time and it was going through a leadership transition. And so I made the jump. I interviewed with Al Kaszniak, actually, who was the interim president at that time.

Phil Walker (00:19:19): Who we had on the show…

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:19:21): Yes, so fantastic. Yeah, I moved out to Boulder and took that job and just ended up taking on more and more different roles over the years. The organization moved to Massachusetts under Arthur Zajonc's leadership for four years. So I was there, and gosh, then yeah... been at Mind & Life for 13 years. So I've done all kinds of different things at Mind & Life, yeah.

(00:19:46) — *musical interlude* —

Phil Walker (00:20:17): You've done just about everything. *[laughter]*

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:20:18): Almost.

Phil Walker (00:20:20): Almost. And it might be worth noting some of that, because I guess you started out, like you said, with programming SRI and then subsequently dialogues, but a lot more, and ultimately became science director and many other things.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:20:33): Yeah. So I wore a lot of hats, and when I joined Mind & Life, as I mentioned, it was moving, so there was a lot of staff turnover. So we were kind of starting over a little bit. In that kind of a setting, everyone kind of does everything.

Phil Walker (00:20:47): Right. Small staff, a lot of aspiration to do great things.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:20:52): Yeah, a little bit of a startup energy. So it was fun. There was a lot going on, but it was fun. So I was pretty involved in SRI planning in terms of from the content side, bringing together the planning committee, chairing those committees and helping organize how the content unfolded and which faculty we were going to have, et cetera.

Phil Walker (00:21:12): It might be worth just a minute or two on what the Summer Research Institute is.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:21:16): Yeah, totally. I know, there's so much... I think this is probably going to be a little bit of a "Mind & Life insider" type of episode, which is great. So yeah, the Summer Research Institute is a phenomenal event, and it's kind of the keystone program. That as well as the Varela grants that I mentioned before are paired programs, and have been the cornerstone of Mind & Life's work pretty much since 2003, 2004 when these programs were put in place. And the idea of the Summer Research Institute was, it's a week-long retreat-like setting and it's a bit of a mashup of an academic conference and a meditation retreat, which at that time was completely novel. And probably still is. There isn't really very much else out there like that. So it was blending a standard academic conference—there's plenary lectures in the main hall and there's poster sessions and there's breakout groups and things like that—but you're all living together at… we always have done it at the Garrison Institute in upstate New York, which is a beautiful venue, an old kind of monastic institution. So you're living together in this beautiful old building, you're having meals together, and then you're meditating mornings, evenings, there's yoga practice, there's Tai Chi, other contemplative forms are woven in. And then, it's done different ways over the years, but there's big chunks, either a full day or two half-days of silent meditation retreat in the midst of all of this.

(00:22:57) So it's such a unique experience and blend of having the first-person experience, because of course the topics are all around meditation one way or another, and then you get the chance to do it yourself in the first-person way and experience [it]. So you have this, what Varela often would refer to

as like the "inner laboratory" that we carry around with us all the time. So it was just kind of a perfect synthesis of experiences and the way it was held at Garrison—and still is. It's just phenomenal.

(00:23:30) And then of course there's network[ing]. You get to meet a whole bunch of amazing people who are interested in the same kinds of stuff you are. So the community, I think, is at the end of the day, the thing that rises to the top from SRI. There's so much great information shared, great personal experience. For those who are newer, it's a lot of learning too about meditation that can happen there. But as with everything, it's the people and it's the relationships that are built. And that really for many years was one of the only ways that the community, which evolved into kind of the contemplative science space, was coming together.

Phil Walker (00:24:07): And those Varela grants were significant for many people.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:24:10): Yeah. So the Varela grants are small, kind of meant to be pilot funding for when they were conceived, 2004, very fringe ideas at that time—to be studying meditation scientifically. Of course, now it's become a lot more mainstream, I would say thanks in large part to all of this work of Mind & Life and this community. But at the time, there was really no way to get funding for this kind of work. You couldn't apply to the NIH for meditation research, that just wasn't acceptable. So I think it provided pilot funding for people to get ideas off the ground for so many of the folks... Another thing I did at Mind & Life was oversee the grants programs. So I got to be pretty familiar with a lot of our grantees and their work. And so many of those early Varela awardees went on and are now the established folks running labs and publishing papers and really advancing this whole field. So the model that they designed in those early days, it really worked. It's amazing.

Phil Walker (00:25:17): Yeah. I'm curious too, [about] other roles that you played at Mind & Life. And I'm thinking in particular about the dialogues, because you were instrumental in helping to program some of those... and also wrote a book.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:25:31): Yeah! Oh, that was one of my favorite projects. So yeah, that's another aspect. I ran the grants programs and the SRI, and then I was also very involved (particularly in the early years of my time there) in planning the dialogues with the Dalai Lama—which is another core feature of Mind & Life's work, that it grew out of actually. So that's really about bringing together some of the top thinkers in very diverse fields, again for a long, intensive... In the early days, it was a five-day intensive meeting there in Dharamsala with the Dalai Lama, exploring all kinds of different topics from cognitive work to even, in early days, there was a lot of emphasis on physics and the nature of reality. So many implications of this dialogue really between Buddhist traditions, particularly the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and modern science.

(00:26:28) So one of the dialogues, actually the first one that I ended up organizing was really kind of a special event because it was the first time that... His Holiness really wanted the experience of the dialogue and that interaction between scientists and philosophers and Buddhist scholars to come out of what had basically been his living room into a much larger setting. So this is a larger background, but many, many Tibetan monastics have come as refugees from Tibet, since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, moved into India following the Dalai Lama, and set up new monasteries there in various places in India. And they're quite large, thousands of monastics at each one. So the Dalai Lama wanted to host one of these dialogues at those larger monasteries to bring in the wider monastic community. Which interestingly, I had already been working with a little bit because of my work at Emory. *[laughter]* I don't know if that's too much of a side tangent, but yeah, there's just so many interweaving threads. So I'll just say a little bit of that tangent.

(00:27:37) At Emory, they had developed, or were developing what was called the Emory Tibet Science Initiative, another program that was spurred on by the Dalai Lama's hope to integrate the monastic community into this dialogue between science and Buddhism. And the monastic community traditionally didn't have any training in science, they have very rigorous training in logic and philosophy and those kinds of things, but no training in modern or Western science. So over the years, of course, the Dalai Lama had been learning more and more about science and its modes of inquiry and what scientists were interested in studying around these questions of mind and matter and all those things, so he wanted a [science] program to be integrated into monastic training at these large monastic universities.

(00:28:26) And so Emory—because of Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, who was there, who had come also from India and was connected with the Dalai Lama—began that program. And so this is now, rewind a few years back when I was at Emory, 2009, 2010, working on the early phase of that, developing curriculum to be able to go over to India and teach the monastics about science—particularly about biology, physics, neuroscience, and mathematics.

Phil Walker (00:29:00): I find it really beautiful that the Dalai Lama had that impetus, that he wanted not just for Buddhism to be informing science, but that science would be informing Buddhism.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:29:12): Oh, totally. Yeah. It was always such a two-way street with him and his interest in this conversation. So yeah, I was, again, just so fortunate to be at Emory at that time, and I got plugged in with the ETSI (Emory-Tibet Science Initiative) in the early days. So I had worked on some of those curriculum for the neuroscience program and had actually gone over to India and helped teach in the summers. So now fast-forward again to my job at Mind & Life, 2013, and I'm planning this dialogue, which is to take place in the monasteries, and some of the students that we had taught over there in India were going to become major players in this next wave of science becoming integrated in the monastic community. So that dialogue that we planned was kind of retrospective a little bit or almost like a greatest hits of the history of the dialogues and the topics that had been explored over the several decades that this had been going on, as a way to give an overview almost and also an update of these topics to the larger monastic community. So that was a pretty incredible event. And for the first time, yeah, being there with an audience of thousands of monastics, whereas before, usually the audience would be maybe 50 people at most. So a very different feel, very different setup of the event itself.

(00:30:40) That was a really exciting moment also because around that time in the monastic community, the abbots had gotten together and approved that this curriculum that Emory had developed would become part of the actual training in a regular way at the Geshe level (it's kind of like an equivalent to a PhD level) of the monastic training. So yeah, it kind of marked this new phase in how monastics would be educated, and what their roles would be really in the world, their ability to have this conversation with science about the mind and the role of the mind.

(00:31:18) So at that time, it had also been the tradition (this was before YouTube was a huge way of conveying information), we would actually publish books from each of the dialogues. Sometimes they were more of a transcript form, just as a record of the interaction. Sometimes they were more narrated and crafted depending on the author and the topic. But yeah, Mind & Life engaged me to work on the book for that event. So I got to edit with Janna White, who was an amazing co-editor with me. We worked for several years on that project and published a book called *The Monastery and The*

Microscope, which was a little bit of my interpretation in some places, and then a very heavily edited crafted transcript record of those conversations. So that was an amazing project as well.

Phil Walker (00:32:11): Yeah. And a beautiful work. I mean, I think about the difficulty of that, of bringing together voices from so many disciplines and pulling that into a narrative context because as you and I know, the dialogues are often all over the place, right? There's a tendency for a central theme and there's a desire to that, but part of it is the messiness. Which is the beauty, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:32:33): Yeah, exactly. So that was another amazing opportunity. And I've always loved communications and the teaching element of communications, just basically ways of sharing information, sharing knowledge seems to kind of be a core theme. So I got to do that in so many ways at Mind & Life. I was involved in communications, wrote blogs and essays over the years. And actually, I guess that leads in a little bit to how the idea for the podcast came up.

Phil Walker (00:33:02): Right! Yeah, you want to dive in there? Because that's around the time that you and I met, and I seem to recall that when I first came to Mind & Life, I asked you if you'd ever considered doing a podcast and you showed up the next day with a five-page proposal that you'd already been working on. *[laughter]* So I was very happy to hear about that.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:33:22): Yes. Oh, it was such a good fit. Yeah, so I don't know when the idea first arose, but somewhere in the mid-teens, podcasts came on the scene as a media form and really took off. I became a very fast podcast addict and was consuming so much information on all these different topics, and learning so much. And I think after a few years, something about my experience of listening to podcasts and then my experience of being present in all of these conversations that were happening—at the dialogues, at the Summer Research Institute, even all the way back to the conversations at Emory at our little journal club—something about the power of conversation and the excitement that can come from just listening to people exchange ideas, I thought it would be such a perfect fit for this field.

(00:34:15) And I had also been working for so many years in written medium, trying to convey what we've been learning and what these ideas are about. It's a very complex field. And also, I guess overlaid on that, there was at the time... This was kind of, I would say, "peak mindfulness hype" era. So mindfulness and meditation were not accepted, totally underground for a long time, and then they just exploded on the scene, and as the media does when it gets hold of anything, things get very oversimplified, very over-hyped, lots of conclusions are drawn, and now it's mindfulness everything. And those of us that had been working in the field were watching all this happen with some dismay and some concern that things were moving too fast or being diluted. Just the complexity and the nuance was really being lost. And I have always been really drawn to complexity and nuance. So that was another reason that I had struggled or I had seen the difficulty in trying to convey some of what we were learning through written pieces, which kind of have to be succinct in certain ways. And even in the book, editing the book, there's so much that gets taken out just to make a clear piece.

(00:35:38) So I was missing that richness of the fullness of these conversations and ideas, and podcasts just seemed like a perfect medium for this because it's the way the humans are built to take in information. We love listening to people talk about things. And it's a lot faster, you can get into nuance and complexity in a way that I don't think is as easy to do in writing and it's still palatable to listen to. So I got pretty excited about this possibility. And because of my good fortune of having been already at Mind & Life for several years at that time and been in the field and having all these connections of these

amazing people that I had been exposed to, I was just like, "Oh, this is a no-brainer. I could just talk to these people." (I mean, famous last words, I thought it would be so easy.) *[laughter]*

Phil Walker (00:36:35): We're going to talk about how "easy" it is in a minute, but in that early period as you were conceiving of the podcast, what were your intentions? What did you imagine was possible? You're talking about the nuance and complexity, which I think is really important. Was there a bigger picture inside of all that?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:36:53): Yeah. Actually, it's funny to look back because I think my original idea for the show is not how it has turned out, which is all just wonderful. But it's funny how things evolve. I think in the beginning, because we were in this era, as I mentioned, of the media really oversimplifying things and at times misrepresenting what meditation was, what the possibilities were, all of this, I had the idea... And I've always been interested also in science communication and exploring science and being able to convey science to a more public audience, and so I kind of thought that it could be a show that was helping people understand a little bit more about the actual science of how things were done. Like how you set up a scientific experiment around meditation, what the complexities are there that are different from other kinds of science, what makes you able to make certain conclusions or not from the outcome of a study. These kinds of things. You know, this was my wheelhouse, right? As the science director, this is what I was thinking about all the time in terms of the science around meditation and what we know, what we don't know, what we can say. And I was also quite taken at the time by shows like Hidden Brain, for example, or other podcasts that were exploring science in a way that was really accessible, but yet still research-based. So I had this vague thought that maybe we could do something like that with the show. And I think I tried that early on in some of the interviews, or I tried to push the conversations in those directions, and I don't know that it's the most exciting thing for a general audience to listen to. *[laughter]* And it's also maybe not always what the researchers wanted to talk about either. I think there were larger implications and frankly, more interesting things that we ended up discussing a lot of times.

(00:39:06) So as you remember, we were on this journey the whole time together, but we, in those early episodes, were kind of trying to figure out what the show was and let it evolve into its own thing. And I think it really did become just much more conversational. There were times when it got more nitty-gritty into the science, but times when there was nothing about science really in the episodes. And for me, it became just really about lifting up the voices of these folks in our community, who I had had such good fortune to get to know and really see the depth of their work. And the depth of their hearts, honestly... amazing human beings. So yeah it really... I think it just ended up being more about that.

(00:39:53) – *musical interlude* –

Phil Walker (00:39:53): I think the nature of the work, the nature of the people drawn to the work, seems to have lifted something up where the interviews were more about what was transformative for them inside the work, or what they felt the impact that was coming through the work, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:40:47): Yeah.

Phil Walker (00:40:47): So I think there was at least fertile ground there for you to have that avenue in, and that bringing together the two worlds, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:40:56): Definitely. You were talking about the impact and how a lot of these conversations have ended up being about the impact of the work, and that was also, I think, a shift that

was happening certainly within Mind & Life at that time. In its early chapters, Mind & Life I think had been very insular, academic-focused, speaking mainly to other academics. And I think that's important in the beginning of a field, to have that kind of protected space and a really generative area where ideas can form and collaborations and all of that.

(00:41:31) And I think then it was around this time that Mind & Life was starting to broaden out as well a little bit and think about, "It's great that we have helped support this academic work and help form this community, but what is the larger point of all of this, and how can we communicate that and how can we get more of the public to understand what this work is?" I think within Mind & Life, we were holding that piece too of, "How can we get this out a little bit more accessibly to the public?" So it was just a nice fit for all those goals.

Phil Walker (00:42:07): Yeah. On that note, I'd love to hear your thoughts on supporting critiques of meditation and mindfulness practices. I'm thinking of Willoughby Britton. She and others have done great research on challenges that people may face engaging in these practices, especially around trauma or the nature of self. So I really appreciated your exploration of all sides of these issues, not just positive outcomes.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:42:37): Absolutely. And I think that's really the beauty of the original exploration that this field came out of. That is what academia and scientific inquiry should be, it should be critical and it shouldn't be assuming outcomes. That's the core of scientific training, is to actually test hypotheses, but remain open to possibilities. And I think there's an interesting dynamic there between what you learn in meditation about leaving your mind open, or not just falling into habit patterns of the mind. Which we know this is how our minds are built basically, to repeat patterns that have worked in the past because it's energetically efficient and all the rest. But that can be also pretty tricky and potentially dangerous if you set up a belief system and then you stop being open to other possibilities.

(00:43:36) So that's the core of science, is gathering evidence and yet remaining open. And I think Francisco Varela really embodied that too, from what I... I never knew him personally, but from what I've learned of his work, that was core to what he wanted this conversation to be too.

Phil Walker (00:43:57): Yeah. Well, maybe we could jump over to some of the thematic parts of the podcast that sort of emerged for you, or maybe you were looking for as the podcast work developed. So what are some key thematic pieces that were part of, at least were in your mind as you're doing interviews?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:44:18): Well, one of the things that I really liked to get into with guests was talking about the self, and the nature of the self, exploring how meditation and different contemplative practices can shift that. Also, how what we're learning in science could shift that. And I guess just to... It's hard to summarize that whole area. *[laughter]*

Phil Walker (00:44:45): Ha—please give us a five-minute overview of the self, Wendy. Yeah.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:44:48): Yeah, just to try. And I'm well out of my depth; I'm thinking of so many scholars who could explain this so much better than me. But I think our day-to-day experience as humans is that we exist as kind of separate entities, in some way distinct from the world around us, from other people. And there's a lot of good biological reasons why our brains might be set up that way to perceive the world. We have to protect this organism for survival, for thriving, hopefully. But I think what can happen, and what Buddhism teaches so beautifully, and what you often start to see more and

more through a contemplative practice is the kind of illusion—or some call delusion—of that viewpoint. That, in fact, we are part of a completely interdependent, interconnected system that includes everything in the universe, pretty much potentially. But even on smaller scales, you can think about a community, a family, the planet, just different ways... It's really just in our own mind, where we draw the boundaries of the system that we're thinking about. But there really aren't any actual boundaries in the real world.

(00:46:10) So I think starting to shake up that sense of solidity of yourself and the separateness, is a core process on the contemplative journey, at least it has been for me. And I think that's been one of the most transformative aspects of all of this work. So I think I liked bringing that in, also from different lenses—speaking with Buddhist scholars about that or scientists, whether that's what they're studying in the brain, for example, or just in their own experience from practice, things like that.

(00:46:46) And of course, there's all sorts of implications on a societal level, on a planetary level, how that concept of self plays out. So it is really the foundation of the process of othering (which now I'm thinking back to the conversation with john powell, one of the first conversations, and he's so brilliant on those points), how we can form just in our minds, conceptually, different groups based on whatever characteristic, and then we can craft—or other people can craft for us—the concept that they are different from us and separate from us. And then you can go down a very dangerous road of all the isms: racism, sexism, tribalism, all the othering processes that are really so at the core of the problems in our world today. Even othering between us and the larger environment and nature, that's another form of othering—that we think that we're somehow separate from nature or the environment, when in fact we are an integrated part of it.

Phil Walker (00:47:52): It occurs to me, as you're saying this, the nature of self and coming to terms with it can be very destabilizing. It is perhaps inherently destabilizing. And so that has often happened in the context of a sangha, or a community, or with a teacher or something like that. And so we do have a world now where most people are not within a sangha that's just studying the dissolution of self or something like that. But what occurred to me when you said that—because you talked about doing science communication, doing this translation work of research into sort of the mainstream—that maybe we're all in a process of reconciling that our understandings of self. Maybe we're all part of this ongoing experiment of reconciling the self in the context of others, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:48:48): That's a really great point. I think we are definitely in the process, as a people and as a planet, of shifting awareness into this larger understanding of interconnectedness, and it's definitely a bumpy road. I think there's a lot of fear that can come with that. And that's another... coming back to the themes of the show, particularly in later years, that's a theme that I liked to return to too, is the critical importance of safety for any kind of healing or development in these ways. Fear is such a basic function in our bodies and minds. (Actually, I just want to start putting those words together as bodymind. It's just one thing.) But for so many good reasons, we are wired to respond to fear and there's a lot in our world, the way we live in the world today that gives a sense of instability, or lack of certainty, lack of support.

(00:49:52) But I've really been drawn to these ideas of safety and how we can create safety in community, in our social spaces, in our own bodies. It's so central for our bodies to be able to function properly. And so part of, I think, this larger shift that's happening as we become more aware of our interconnectedness is dealing with that fear and instability that comes with that. If you don't have the secure foundation from which to step into this interconnected web, I think it can be terrifying because you lose... If you're very identified with that sense of self, and that's being threatened just by the reality

of interconnection, that can be completely terrifying. Yeah. And so there can definitely be difficult pathways through that.

Phil Walker (00:50:51): What's really ironic is that sense of the other that can be destabilizing, it also speaks to our interconnection with others and the natural environment and other things. And that actually, that interconnection has its own safety and stability to it, if we can understand and accept it in some way.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:51:14): Yes, exactly. Exactly. And of course, there's lots of nuance here too. It's not to say that everything is actually great and there's no reason to ever be afraid of anything. That would be foolish. So there's some discernment that's always needed in these spaces.

Phil Walker (00:51:30): Yeah. And you mentioned the body, and that also came up a lot in the podcast, and I'm curious about your sense of the body in this work.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:51:41): Yep. That is something else that has shifted tremendously through my time at Mind & Life, through my experience in the contemplative space, and even now with the work that I'm doing moving forward. The fact that the body and the mind are two sides of the same coin... It's not really correct to say they're the same thing exactly, but they are so completely interwoven, it is incorrect to think about them separately. And it's funny, I think that fact is the same kind of mind-blowing fascination as when I was a teenager. I still am so fascinated by that relationship—the fact that the mind and body are two sides of the same coin.

(00:52:30) And I think that is something within the field of contemplative science that has also become more and more apparent, which is wonderful. So I think people are looking more... In the early days, at least in the scientific work, it was about the brain primarily in the early days because we associated mind with brain—for lots of good reasons, but that's also very limiting to think that the mind is only the brain. It is completely integrated with every system of our body, our digestion, our immune system, our cardiovascular system, endocrine, everything. It's just all one soup. And it has this kind of funny side thing of having our subjective experience be looped in with it, but there's a lot of it that's actually not consciously felt, but it's still going on and still influencing these processes.

(00:53:24) And then beyond the body, of course, it's the world. Our social interactions are completely influencing our minds. These days, the media that we consume is a huge factor in what's happening in our minds. So just information coming in. And our physical environments. I've really come to see all of this as what the mind is. So I think, yeah, you're right. That's another big, big topic that we explored a lot in different conversations on the show from different angles.

Phil Walker (00:53:58): Yeah. So I'm curious, as we were creating the show and it's happening, was there anything that surprised you in the process of creating shows, or doing interviews, or anything like that?

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:54:11): Oh, wow. Certainly. I think it's funny, like I was saying earlier, I had this naive idea that was like, "Oh, I'll just chat with these people, and that's a thing." Which hopefully that's how it comes across, but there's a lot more going on behind the scenes. So aside from just the editing process and the production of the show, I had no... I mean, I'm trained as a neuroscientist, so 'interview skills,' I didn't know what this was, or that it was a thing.

(00:54:47) So there was definitely a learning curve for me about the unique context that an interview is. While it is a natural conversation in some ways, but then as an interviewer, you're also kind of holding questions or points that you want to bring up, and a larger arc that might be good, and how this is all coming across to the audience. Not to mention the things that are coming up for you based on what the guest is saying in that moment, and also being present with the guest and what they're saying. So I really have come to respect and admire and appreciate what goes into interviewing people. I have... I mean, yeah, I don't know if there's more to say about that.

Phil Walker (00:55:33): Well, let me say something. Which is that, as your co-producer of this show, I really admired your skill, and I recognized that you were going to be good at doing this. Because you have a natural curiosity, and the thing that you hold is a really strong knowledge base, both on the science side and the contemplative side. And just recognizing that you could step into that place and interview people from that purchase. I saw that as like, "Oh, this is going to work beautifully." And recognizing, and you and I talked about it a lot, how difficult it can be to navigate that with any kind of coherence.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:56:22): Well, I'm thankful for editing. *[laughter]*

Phil Walker (00:56:25): Yes, exactly.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:56:27): Well, before you say anything else, Phil, I really just want to thank you so much, and I'm sure I will do this again and again and forever, but I'm thinking of those early days when we were building the show and I didn't know what I was doing. And you have a lot of experience interviewing and you have a whole background in documentary filmmaking. So I've learned so much from you and you've been such an amazing supporter of me, because I truly did not know what I was doing. So you've helped me so much and kept me going as my best cheerleader, and you've made everything sound amazing. This show would not exist without you. So I'm just so grateful.

Phil Walker (00:57:08): Well, you're very kind. Thank you. The whole process for me has just been a pleasure. And it's also probably a good point for us to acknowledge all of the guests who've been on this show. Just a remarkable group of people. And I think many of them you knew or knew their work, which was also really helpful. But just a huge shout-out to all of the people who came on the show, and just really appreciate all those many voices and the graciousness that they brought, and sharing aspects of their own lives.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:57:48): Yeah, I agree. I mean, the guests are obviously what make the show at the end of the day. And each and every one... It's impossible to pick favorites or anything like that with these episodes, because each of them have just truly been a wonderful exchange. And some folks I knew very well for many years, obviously. Some folks were brand new to me. And in each case, it's just such a joy and really an honor to be able to kind of have this protected space to engage with someone. It's an intimate form of exchange, and I think that's also part of the appeal of listening to podcasts, is you are listening to this kind of intimate exchange between people. I learned so much from each of these conversations, not only about the work that these folks are doing, which in some cases I already was familiar with, but learned so much more. And also just about them as people, as humans. Even folks that I've been colleagues with for over a decade, I didn't know their origin story, or I learned things about them that I had never known. So it's a beautiful medium, I think. Yeah, I'm so grateful for all of it.

(00:59:02) – *musical interlude* –

Phil Walker (00:59:33): I'd love to turn now to a big picture view of contemplative science.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:59:37): Sure.

Phil Walker (00:59:38): Given your long history and experience in the field, I'm curious your thoughts on where it's come from, where we are now, and perhaps where you see it going in the future.

Wendy Hasenkamp (00:59:51): Yeah. It's so interesting to have been... Again, I just feel so lucky and fortunate to have been in the position I have with relation to the larger field of contemplative science, because since Mind & Life is such a hub, I've been able to watch the evolution of a field, which is a really cool thing to experience. So it's interesting, in the beginning, I think it was, as I mentioned, very neuroscience-heavy, very brain-focused, also very attention-focused in terms of what we were looking at in the realm of meditation. And maybe because those were very "acceptable" domains of science at that time, and so maybe that was a little bit of a way in, in terms of... There was a lot of work done by Richie Davidson in large part, and many others, in those early days to legitimize this work. So that naturally had to build on fields that already existed in science and that were acceptable.

(01:00:58) So I think that makes a lot of sense in terms of that early focus. And all of these things have then remained, but then there's just other things that have been layered on. And so yeah, in the early days, it was a lot about mindfulness and of course the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn—completely foundational, putting mindfulness on the map through MBSR. The reason that that was so critical from the scientific side is because it was a manualized program. It was the first manualized program, which meant that it was repeatable, which meant that you could actually study it with scientific methods.

Phil Walker (01:01:37): And it did the work of moving it out of conversation and dialogue and into the world.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:01:39): Yes, into medical contexts... I mean, yeah, so much foundational work there. And so early focusing on mindfulness and attention, and even with Jon's work, looking at stress in some ways, things like that.

(01:01:54) And then I think the next wave was really looking at compassion and looking at more emotion-based aspects of meditation. So the whole affective realm of research, and acknowledging and appreciating and exploring the fact that many meditation practices explicitly work with emotions. They're not just about training attention. That's a foundational layer of what you do in contemplative practice—because if your attention's all over the place, you can't really do anything else—but once you get a little bit of facility to work with your attention and it becomes a little more stable, another aspect that can be layered on is working with emotions... in many practices, cultivating positive emotions such as compassion. And I think a very large wave of research around compassion and systematized training programs around building compassion came into the scene.

(01:02:49) So all of that work related mostly to the individual and thinking about how meditation changes the person who's practicing, and we would study just the one person who's practicing. And I think more recently, there's been an expansion... Again, it's this aperture expanding, expanding into what are the implications of these practices or the possibilities of these practices in relationships? How about interpersonal shifts that can happen, impacts on society, larger societal things? So you start to think about processes like othering. You get into the self and othering pieces.

(01:03:27) And I feel like, again, that's even expanding [further] now. In the last few years, I feel like there's been more and more interest in thinking about nature and the environment, of course, in response, in large part to climate change and everything that we're facing on this planet. But in a way, it's been a real turning back, I think, to the roots of our being as natural beings, and as part of what we conceive of as nature, and some of the loss of connection that's happened there and the inherent interconnection that does exist. And so nature-based practices, I think, are really gaining traction now, things like forest bathing and lots of related practices that involve connecting with nature. Again, I see weaving in there the safety pieces. There's a lot that we know about being in nature that's around safety.

(01:04:22) And of course, the exploration of consciousness is also really at a root of a lot of this work in different ways. So that has implications for work with psychedelics and also, of course, AI and things like that, that are exploring different aspects of consciousness. And I think even, this is maybe less so far, but I'm having a sense that this might be emerging on the horizon, who knows, but work on the subtle body, which came up a few times, I think, on the show in different conversations. So energy body... Really starting to almost move beyond the strict materialist viewpoint of modern science. So I think that's all really exciting to see. I'm just excited to see where everything's going to go.

Phil Walker (01:05:08): Yeah, me too. I want to go back to something you mentioned earlier about our connection to nature, and I know that's been an evolving interest for you. So I'd love if you could share a little bit about how that's developed and the new path that it's put you on.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:05:26): Yeah! Yeah, so this is really where my life is going, at least for the next chapter. I've really been increasingly interested in the plant world. This started actually during COVID. I happen to live up the street from a fairly well-known herbalist. And I didn't really ever have an interest in this before, but a few folks recommended her workshops and it was literally like five houses away from me, so I checked out some of her work. It was in 2020 when I started doing this, and I just became really enamored and fascinated by the wonders of plants, of the whole plant world that has... You know, we all live completely surrounded by plants all the time, but I've kind of been missing things.

(01:06:18) And just studying with her in the beginning and learning the most basics about herbalism, and working with plants as medicine, and the capacities of the basic weeds in my yard—dandelion and planting and violet and things like this—really just opened my eyes to a whole other world. And I think that both my longstanding interest just in biology and life as systems, as well as... We didn't really talk about this and I wouldn't say that my interest has been in medicine per se, but my interest I think really has my whole life been in healing and thriving and flourishing and how we can live better.

Phil Walker (01:07:01): Well, I think you even said early on when you were doing work at the VA, you wondered how much the work you were doing was actually helping people, right?

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:07:10): Yeah. And so just starting to tap into, peek into the wondrous world of herbal medicine and working with plants as medicine—which of course has been in every single Indigenous tradition and culture of humanity for thousands and thousands of years—it just excited me on a lot of different levels of possibilities for healing that I had not really looked at before. And also there's a kind of really earth-based energy that I realized I had been missing, just like being down on the ground with the plants and getting to know the plants. (I mean, this all sounds maybe a little bit hokey if you're not into it.) I remember when I first started studying herbalism and the teachers would talk about the plants as their friends or talk about them as if they were basically like people. And it's been about

five years now that I've been studying this, and it's starting to get that way for me. I really do start to see the personalities of the different plants, and have developed relationships with certain plants.

Phil Walker (01:08:19): Right. Our biological heritage over millions of years has been a complete integration with plant and animal life, and it's maybe only been these last few hundred years of us as human beings separating ourselves.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:08:36): Exactly. And I think what you raise is a huge part of the declining health of our society, that we have removed ourselves from the natural ways that our bodies actually evolve to live, and that's causing a lot of problems for our bodies. But when I first started becoming interested in this, I thought that I would be most into what's called phytochemistry, and understanding the different constituents of the plants and how they work in the body and with different receptors—kind of hearkening back to my early days in my graduate work, thinking about it through that reductionist lens and kind of medicalized lens of like, what is the chemical doing? And there is all of that, and that is super cool. That's definitely a part of it. But it's been interesting that I've... You know, my teachers when I first started talking about that, I was like, "All the phytochemistry and learning all the nerdy biology!" and they were like, "Yeah, that's cool..." and I could tell that they were like, "But it's kind of not all of the thing."

(01:09:40) So now I'm getting a little bit of a bigger picture too, of at least the Western herbal tradition that I've been studying. There are of course many herbal traditions on the planet from different cultures. In fact, all systems of ancient medicine are based on plants. But yeah, the system that I've been studying is called energetic herbalism. So it's just a completely different lens from conventional medicine in terms of how you think about bodies and what is going on in them. So thinking about different continua within the body, like hot to cold, damp to dry, tense to lax. So working in those domains about different tissues as well as a whole-body constitution. And then the plants, you work with the plants specifically, they have actions that can tonify tissue or moisten tissue or... Yeah so it's just a really different system of how to think about bodies.

(01:10:39) And then within herbalism, it's of course one of the forms of holistic medicine. So the training that I've been lucky enough to be involved in is very holistic and it takes into consideration so many of the foundational aspects of health—like nutrition, like stress [management], like sleep, like movement—that we know, I mean, there's buckets of science on each of those domains. There's no debate on the essential need for good functioning in all of those domains, but it's not really what's often focused on in our conventional medicine systems. So learning those foundations, learning how to work with all those foundations and then integrating the plants into those domains is just so exciting.

(01:11:27) So I'm thrilled. I'm kind of in the middle of my schooling and next year I'll probably start a little bit of the clinical direction that I hope to be going in. But it's been so eye-opening and there's so much overlap that I see with my work in contemplative science. It is looking back to an ancient tradition that kind of has been lost, and thinking about health and healing through those lenses. There's a great interest from science in looking at these things, but it's also complicated and nuanced because the science doesn't fully understand the tradition. So there's lots of overlap that I see. And yeah, again, I feel like it's another widening of the aperture, thinking a lot more these days about all the bodily systems and learning so much that... you know, I was a bio major and have a PhD in neuroscience, but there's a lot that I either have forgotten or never learned in the first place *[laughter]* about how our bodies really work. And interacting with our food supply and our natural environment and all these things. So yeah, it's really exciting to be, I guess, reinventing myself yet again.

Phil Walker (01:12:45): Yeah. I think that's beautiful. I really do. Well, Wendy, I guess our time's coming to a close here.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:12:53): Yeah, wow. This has been really great.

Phil Walker (01:12:55): Yeah. And I just want to thank you for so much. You mentioned earlier what you've learned. I just want to say I learned so much from you in this process of creating these shows, and it's been really fun and beautiful, and you did an amazing thing.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:13:12): Well, we did it together.

Phil Walker (01:13:14): We did. We did.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:13:15): I think, yeah, we've said so many times over the years that we probably have benefited the most from working on this show because we get to get so deep into each of the episodes, and listen to them so many times, and get the knowledge in such a deep, deep way. So I just feel beyond grateful and fortunate to have been able to do all of this work, really—with Mind & Life, and to be able to do this show, to work with you. It's been pure joy. Yeah, I'm just so grateful. So grateful for all the incredible guests, for the amazing listeners—so many folks have written in over the years and have been so supportive. That's always been really heartwarming to hear the stories of how the show may have impacted folks. And of course, all the people who have supported the show financially over the years. and Mind & Life leadership who've been behind us with this idea from the start. So yeah, it's just been a phenomenal experience.

Phil Walker (01:14:18): Yeah. Well, thank you, Wendy.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:14:20): Thank you, Phil, for everything. This has been so fun.

Outro – Phil Walker (01:14:29): *Mind & Life is a production of the Mind & Life Institute. Music is from Blue Dot Sessions and Universal. Show notes, transcripts, and other resources for all our episodes can be found at podcast.mindandlife.org. 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 find these conversations valuable and you'd like to support the work that we do, you can make a donation of any amount at mindandlife.org/give. Be well, take care of each other, and thank you for listening.*