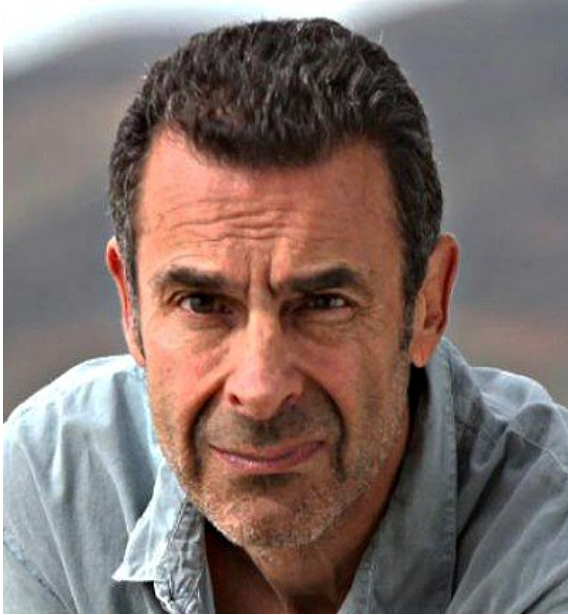


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Embracing Your Innate Creativity to Live Your Best Life

With Barnett Bain

Covid Hope: I hope that I will gain more and more humility, by humility I am not talking about modesty. I want to collapse the boundaries of my structured imagination so they're not so rigid.

Doing Well Now: We're pulling back the layers of the story. We're pulling them back and therapists call this the shadow and where we are embracing more and more of the layers of a shadow complexity.

Action Item: I definitely believe in the modeling of power, particularly the modeling power of films. I think that's one of their gifts, they either reinforce all narratives or they present new ones. Milton's secret was built to present a new narrative.

Three Points:

1. Recognizing the creativity in everything we do.
2. Expanding your imagination to free yourself.
3. Why creativity is essential for your ability to adapt.

Speaker Bio:

Barnet Bain is a writer, director, producer who has brought us such magical films such as What Dreams May Come, The Celestine Prophecy, and one of my favourites, Milton's Secret.

He is also an author and creativity expert whose latest offering called the Book of Being and Doing has so much to teach us about living our most creative life.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Hi and welcome to the Mindful World Parenting Summit. I'm so excited to be joined today by none other than Barnet Bain. Barnet is a writer, director, producer, who has been at the forefront of transformational entertainment.

He's brought us truly inspirational films such as, What Dreams May Come, The Celestine Prophecy. One of my favorites, which we're going to talk a little bit about today, which is Milton's secret. Barnet is also an author and creativity expert and a coach who has created a programming collaboration with the take your daughters and son to work foundation. It is all about jump-starting creativity in your children and ourselves.

He's here today to talk to us about just how we can foster creativity in ourselves and our children and truly live an expansive creative life. Welcome Barnet to the Summit.

Barnet Bain: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Thank you for being here and for all that you do. As we were talking about just before we started recording today, your whole career has really been awakening people to the possibilities and inspiring.

With this notion of that, we can be bigger, we can really step into our creativity. I absolutely love the fact that you created this program that parents can do alongside their children. To me, and maybe you can summarize for us how parents jumpstart creativity in their kids and in their own life to find that inspiration or those aha moments as you call it.

Barnet Bain: There are many things large and small to begin the process of that. The root of it is really to remember that our children learn by watching. They learn primarily by watching us so

how we behave, how we respond, the choices that we make in our lives. These are the building blocks that establish our children's operating systems.

If we want our children to become more resourceful and to have an expanded imagination to explore more possibilities, it begins with us. We want to foster those talents and those skill sets within ourselves and our children are watching. They are watching with senses that are familiar to us, our eyes, our ears, and smell they're watching with those senses, but they're also watching with the returned unfamiliar senses. It's almost as though they are aware of what is being broadcast by us.

When we begin to make a small adjustment, suspending our judgments about things, suspending our reactivity about things. When we begin to pay attention to why we have certain reactions to things, particularly in these very challenging times where we can be so triggered, by the thoughts and the expressions of others by the politics of others.

By the health practices of others, we can become so triggered where if we as parents begin to pay attention to what is it in me that is being triggered. I have a story about how life ought to be, should be, could be, would be, and it is in opposition to what is coming in and so I'm becoming reactive, our children mapped to this.

If we are able to slow it down for ourselves and be aware that I am having a story that I hold very tightly, that I may not have been very conscious of that is being challenged right now. If I slow it down so that I choose to respond differently, we don't have to deny it. I don't have to ignore it. I don't have to challenge it. That's a lot to take on when I can be curious. I can respond with, huh? Look, what's going on with me.

That creates some space in our very tight stories, our very tightly round imagination circumstances, everything is imagination. Create some space and our children are very sensitive to that. When they see us creating room, we are in turn generating more possibility for our children. Now it is probably the very most powerful technique that I have come upon in 65 years, very powerful.

Another thing is to become more and more alive to what is going on with us right here, right now. We have such a love affair with thinking and over strategizing and trying to think life itself, then that, take a breath, slow it down, to be attentive and in tune to what is going on in our bodies. Why do I feel anything? Do I feel numb? Do I feel the tingling? Do I feel energy moving through it? Do I feel heavy? Light? Nothing? We'll begin to restore our relationship with our

phobia a bit by bit as opposed to living life entirely from the eyes out, living life only through cognitive processes.

There are other kinds of intelligences and to be more fully human, more fully functional, more fully creative, we want to engage as many of those different kinds of intelligence. Now I can hear many people. I can imagine many people saying, what other kinds of intelligence are there? There's just things. There's musical intelligence and emotional intelligence, and any dancer or athlete can talk to you about the physical intelligences that respond to inputs.

Without going being channeled through. Thinking through linear cognitive activity, they're just a different set of responses. When our children witnessed those kinds of behaviors, they can also feel them. When they witnessed their parents enjoying the smell of morning air, without strategizing without making any of the, making a transactional.

When they witness our parents. When we see parents, children see parents who are tuning into the quality of their experience, here's a technique. If you imagine a time in your life when you were in the flow, imagine when you were in an athletics zone, and you run a ball or catch a ball or hit a ball or swim, or you're in the garden and you see so engaged in it, you lose track of time and space. You're playing a musical instrument. You just look beautiful.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: So in the flow.

Barnet Bain: I start as an example by reflecting on a time when I was in the flow, I might be when I'm watching my children or, doing sports or Christmas gifts under the tree and tune into what is the quality of that experience? What was the feeling of it? How it makes my body feel warm, that I look for the most wonderful moment and I call those feelings the most amazing thing. It can always bring me into touch with a piece that is available to me at all times.

We are usually in pursuit of the most amazing thing. What do you think it's popularity we want, or a partner or a job, or the money or assistance success, we strategize. We go into the hat trying to figure that out, these things are never alone. They are the most amazing thing. They're always substitutes for this deeper feeling. If I can return at will and practice to experience the most amazing thing, as often as I can, as often as I want, I asked myself, am I focusing on the most amazing thing or I might focusing on a substitute. That moment is something that I call the aha moment.

As we practice it provides increased wellbeing and resilience. Which a handy tool with which to deal with the challenges of life right now. It turbocharges the developmental potential of our children. There is nothing that fuels the fire of developmental creativity in our children.

Nothing that comes close to that to see your parents engaged in the experience, the feeling of wellbeing, cuts through all logic and reason, cuts through all habits of learning, how to strategize life. It cuts through to what is most beautiful and good and true in being human. This is perhaps the tent pole of the center of gravity of what we can offer our children as a model that allows them to hang their own renditions on that central pole, they'll find their own expressions of it, but they first, want to see what it looks like to expand possibilities of imagination outside of logic, if this, then that, because if this, then that outside of logic and reason.

Logic and reason is wonderful. Logic and reason alone will not bring us to a world becoming new. Logic and reason only gives us the ability to recreate, go into the file cabinet of what was or best practices.

It doesn't give us the opportunity or give us a model, a path forward to innovate, to become resilient, to meet the challenges of life with other tools. tools of self care and wellbeing, developing, sense and increased portfolio for what it means to launch ourselves and to love. Other one is not a head trick.

So more than ever before all and our children. we be better served, to, learn other tools and other school, other skills, which they can, meet life.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I love that the most amazing thing. I love that. And I. What you're telling, as a psychologist, I'm listening to you and the power of the mind, like we can practice the catastrophe.

We do it unconsciously so quickly and that's just the human brain as well. But having this intentional practice of the most amazing thing, and I love the possibility of even talking about that or when I see something happening with my children too, Like when my daughter just sitting there creating a song out of nothing, and she's just sitting there playing with her, I'm just in awe or what I see my son, like hitting a baseball. It was just like this moment of flow as he started it and also practiced it myself for myself.

Barnet Bain: You're speaking to another piece of it, because when you're talking, when you're saying, what it brings up for me is that the reciprocity in being with your child in that way, the message is it's not what you do and that it's who you are that I love.

It's not what you do. You can say that and say that certainly doesn't hurt to say it, but to be it requires that we ourselves begin to value ourselves in a different way so that when we can express it so that we can model it.

From that they have access to creative resources that are endless, the battles. I give you permission to be different than me losing my love.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I love that . It's so interesting because you were a create endlessly creative being in terms of people will know that of you from your professional role in terms of work that you do.

But, I think this conversation challenges us to think about creativity more broadly in terms of how we even engage with each moment of our day. The problems that come between us are in relationships or problems that might be in the world. That's just being able to think outside the box and what might be the solution and to approach that maybe in a joyful way.

Barnet Bain: Let's look at what the box is. We go to sleep at night and we have dreaming experiences and suddenly the walls of the box expand and they become permeable and the ceiling and the floor drops, and the ceiling rises so looks at what the box is. The box is imagination itself, that's the box. Our imaginations become bound, I call them structured.

It was structured by the circumstances of our lives, particularly our young life, why to foster creativity in our children, it doesn't help, take my advice, I'm not using it. If you want your children to flourish, you must flourish. The imagination gets structured by it's exposure to other people's thinking and values, entertainment and politics and religion and television, messaging.

Some of them we buy into and others, we reject and those things become the boundaries of what we allow ourselves. We want it to be good boys and girls, we want to fit in and we want to be praised. These things become tribal rules, family contracts, some of them, some of them are written contracts.

Nonetheless, they become very rigid and they define what is possible for us in life and love. They define who we allow ourselves to give heart to and who we allow ourselves to receive heartbroken. They are the batteries, which we separate ourselves from others, or we have the ability to expand and to become one with them. That is the box.

The box almost entirely is a mental construct, almost entirely. Some of the early trauma of our lives going all the way back to in utero. These traumas are not even our own, they're our mother's traumas. We take them on and some of them get grounded in the body. Then as we move through life, there are circumstances that we meet that aren't similar or familiar are the same sometimes remotely, similar to traumas from long past that are held in the body and we get triggered, and we respond. Sometimes in very large ways, sometimes in ways that are out of all proportion to what is apparently going on and responses they're not about here.

These thoughts and feelings we have are not about now. They're old thoughts in their old feelings and they are not about now. All of which is to demonstrate how powerful that box is. When we talk about getting out of the box, we will not think our way out of the box, the tools that got us into the box are not the tools to get us out of the box.

The gifts that we can avail ourselves that are available to us to receive that will expand the box that will lighten up the heavy structure of our imagination. That was our feeling.

Part of the boxes that we're afraid of our feelings so much. Many of us are not aware that we have any. We're numb from it again, threading this back to the impact that we can have on our children. When we allow ourselves to begin either with the most amazing thing, we develop a relationship and intimacy or closeness and tenderness. We're feeling beautiful to you.

Not to be afraid of feelings that are difficult, primal feelings. Primal feelings are rage. I'm no, I don't have rage. Everybody has rage, these are primal feelings. If you have a little hoppy or a little baby and you take them, take it off the breast. It's enraged.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Okay.

Barnet Bain: That is wrong with them and we want to understand that these live in us. If I can not be frightened of them and feel them in ways that are appropriate and safe, they move through. When we don't, they come at us as the way of the world, certainly we are moving through times that are challenging and feel you get heightened emotionality. That doesn't seem to make any sense. Denied emotions in each of us they come at us the way of the world.

We want our children to have exposure to certain models in the body right here, right now. I feel awkward. I feel angry. Okay. I feel the most amazing thing. Okay. Let your child see that. You don't have to act that out. Let's see that feeling. There are no bad feelings there are only the one, whether they are unfelt they become toxic. Let them have and the child watches that. A very small child that has the most dramatic feelings and then five minutes later, they're gone.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Very true. Yes. As I'm listening to you, I'm thinking about the models, all the models that we have for feeling, and, you were in the entertainment world. I just flashed in my mind as I'm listening to you, is that all of the models of the unfeeling hero, right? These like numbness do the thing, no feeling, quite of approach.

When you're just like, wow, like we don't see a whole lot of at least many popular movies there, the nuance of feeling and what you felt in the world is the opposite of that. It does bring me to this beautiful film that you made Melton's secret.

In particular, these really nuanced performances and Donald Sutherland, he's the star of this film. I don't know if he channels, maybe that snap. I don't know. Maybe that's you, something happened like there, that film where I can watch that so many times that I've actually recommended it to clients of mine to watch it. It's really interesting to hear what people pick up on.

I'm wondering if you could talk to us a little bit about this film and what motivated you to make it, and what you hope people take away from this movie that you put in the world?

Barnet Bain: Thank you for asking that. I'd want to pick up first of all, on something that you said that is very near and dear to me. This infatuation that we have with heroes is unhealthy. Heroes are appropriate or adolescents.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Interesting. Okay.

Barnet Bain: Mature human being. I should move through the hero stage. Journey and all of this stuff that is about you're a therapist so you well know that is about the individuation from a mother and it is not a prescription for how to live your life.

Meeting challenges and obstacles, obstacles, meet conflict. That is not a prescription, not a template or how to live a meaningful life and then to say, be a savior of self and others and to martyr. These are not struggle and hierarchy and it's a roadmap for a school yard politics era in a post heroic.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Interesting. Okay. Tell me why.

Barnet Bain: I'm not interested in Shiraz. I'm interested in authentic human being and Milton's secret is a movie about a child, impressionable who is on the one hand exposed to, through his parents, to conventional challenge that is struggle and a grandfather who is not in the hero cult,

Who provides an alternative for the boy. An alternative roadmap for how to conduct himself through life. By being present, not being overwhelmed and intoxicated by awful. I call it awfulizing this terrible thing going to happen.

We learn how to awfulize. We learn how to bully ourselves, that is what bullying is. It begins as an inside job and then eventually we all are so adept at it that we train each other, and pretty soon it goes from inside to outside where we either become victims or we become bullies, same thing.

This is all part of the hero cult. Very unhealthy, very immature and it's supported by everything. Milton's secret is a story of a boy who is dealing with the hero cult in his school, in his world and his neighbor, who's a bully, who bullies him everywhere. Who is blessed to have a model of an alternative way of meeting life and his grandfather played who supports him in becoming more and more present and less attached to the thoughts and beliefs. Not Donald federal and says to him, don't believe everything that goes on in your head.

It's just a signal. It is a story of a little boy who's blessed to have that relationship and a rite of passage in some ways that is, triumphant riches and a different order of that is a man is a triumph that is more than victory. It's not about victory over it is about lifting oneself to a triumphant understanding.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I love that.

Barnet Bain: Okay. So victory is the hero's model.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: The distinction being victory is like a domination over.

Domination.

Barnet Bain: Triumph is seeding self like when a rose springs up and you get the calyx and then it bursts into bloom. There is a triumphant moment, but it's not better than the calyx.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I see, I love that.

Barnet Bain: Developmental progression and so that is really what the movie is about. and It models certain rule behaviors and certain sets of choices that are clear. In a beautiful way as I could imagine.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Yeah. It truly is such a beautiful offering. What I love is this modeling of what causes this thing that we're doing here is a mindful world parenting summit. This word mindfulness is now everywhere. What does that mean in terms of how he lived? What does that mean in terms of how we engage? And what I love about this film is that there's the beautiful moments of examples of no this is why we do these practices and these things so we can actually be present and show up in this loving and compassionate way, even with them self.

Barnet Bain: This word mindfulness, It is for me, it speaks to developing a closeness and tenderness with the cognitive process. Then instead of being identified with it, instead of splashing around in the pool, I can sit on the edge of the pool and become relational. I don't want to be identified with it. I don't want that's a hero's journey. I don't want to be about challenge impact. I don't want to be in a struggle or in a me, you relationship to the world. The tools for that are logic and reasoning and mindfulness that if this, then that there's a whole hierarchy of hierarchical structure, it was built on that a whole architecture.

Mindfulness is first of all, becoming aware of that and then it leads to something else that is not mindfulness at all. It leads to an embodied, its embodiedness. And then what is the body? In our religious texts, there are pointers to what is the body and Christianity there is the body of Christ. What is that? At some point when we relax our overidentification in your logic and reason.

We can begin to open up here is my body. I feel alive in it. Instead of only in my cognitive activity, can it be alive with character energy, moving through it. Now, can I feel attuned to the tree outside? Can I feel a chance of a person across the table from me when I feel chilled to the community? It's one thing at a time, if we can't one beat at what is my alignment again at night in a dream state, I still move through that territory. Pretending I'm going to get this little avatar the night, see through spending. In the morning I realized I created the avatar I created the entire world.

The whole thing was my body. this is not different. We begin to slowly wake up to that. To wake up to that. We begin to understand that how I treat myself extends to how I treat others, there are no others.

So interesting.

There is a complex scaffolding of logic and reason that separates me from others and that is a cognitive construct of strategies in order to dominate other materials.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I see. Yeah. Interesting.

Barnet Bain: This is coming down. In one just collapse but it's coming down to coming down for thousands of years, but it's accelerating.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I know this is an epic conversation in itself. So much and so many connections, then you're referencing this incredible tumultuous, but important time that we're in right now. Someone says that this pandemic is a sign of it, like a massive paradigm shift. You've asked today possibly but I'm going to ask you more directly, what is your hope for how humanity might evolve as a result of this really special time in that word?

Barnet Bain: My hope for how I will abide over all, I'm not separate from humanity, to the world. My process is I hope that I will gain more and more humility. By humility I am not talking about modesty. I want to collapse the boundaries of my structured imagination so they're not so rigid. Even though every crow I see outside my window has appeared to be black, in the very next moment I could see a gray one.

I want to relax my fixed ideas about life, about myself, about other expressions in myself, people and so doing. I can imagine more wellbeing, a greater sense of greater capacity to receive a love and care and others to feel it. I wish that for myself and for other people and for the world. So not suggesting for one second that the pandemic is a good thing, but I have an opportunity as we do to make the best lemonade I can out of this basket of lemons.

How can I respond to this dreadful crisis in a way that is affirming and uplifting? Expands my experience of who I am and expands my experience of, of others.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Awesome. I am on board with your wish. Tell me what do you see that we're doing well that makes you feel hopeful about the future.

Barnet Bain: We're pulling back the layers of the story. We're pulling them back and therapists call this the shadow and where we are embracing more and more of the layers of a shadow complexity. More and more we are recognizing and acknowledging and owning the rigidity of our stories of our narratives, where owning how we're recognizing how tribal they are and how familiar they are, how community-based they are, how culturally based they are, how familiarly based they are.

Where we are going more and more aware of how they're constructed. Not all of them, some of them, enough of them. We can only take in what we can take in, and we are putting Humpty Dumpty back together again,

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Hopefully, and then in a new way.

Barnet Bain: I'm going to mangle this, but you can't change everything in your face. We can't change anything with our placing mangled it, but you get that.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: I get it. We got it. Yeah.

Barnet Bain: We are more deeply in the process of that systemically. That's a big deal. There always have been individuals for whom the whites are not, but a whole culture at the same time. It's a pack of change, it's so beautiful and it's such a privilege and we'll never, who said it has to be easy,

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Right. Oh, I don't know that it can be.

Barnet Bain: Feeling a lot of feelings that have been taboo. Now we are allowing ourselves to vent them and to feel them in ways that are healthy, healthier, much healthier.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Okay. Barnet, you've shared so much in this interview and so much great advice also for parents and that is I know that they are watching anyone who's watching. I'm wondering if there's one thing that you would like our viewers to action today that you think would make a big difference for themselves and their families, what would that be?

Barnet Bain: I do, I definitely believe in the modeling of power, particularly the modeling power of films. I think that's one of their gifts, they either reinforce all narratives or they present new ones. Milton's secret was built to present a new narrative. I heartily recommend to our listeners that they take advantage of firewood. The opportunity to see the film for free.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Yes.

Barnet Bain: I'm very grateful to Mindful World for providing access for free to whoever wants to come and watch me at the secret. I hope that people will go to www.miltonssecret.com and watch the film. Maybe watch it with families, watch it with your children, watch it with your parents.

One other thing that I would love you to take away is, please just remember the love, remember the love.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Absolutely. We could base our whole world on that. Can you imagine? Barnett Bain, thank you so much for everything you do, everything you shared here today and for you really like bringing all your gifts and talents. This film that's in secret again, it's so close to my heart and I love watching it. I do watch it over and over again, and I do believe the power of image and story and these characters and watching them so honestly, lovingly you know, falling apart and coming back together.

It's just the thing that we need right now. So thankful for you for all of them. So everyone. I will highlight www.miltonssecret.com. You can watch it for free. Share it widely, discuss it, reflect on it, watching it again.

Barnet, thank you so much for everything you do to make this more mindful, creative, beautiful, loving world.

Barnet Bain: Thank you so much for inviting me.

Dr. Stacy Thomas: Okay. You take care. Bye.