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Conscious Co-Parenting - How to have a child-centred not a "child in the middle" divorce
With Rick Hanson

Profound Statement: “It's like a three legged stool. Yeah, and I think of that three legged stool of practice, which is what is in our power to do. We, you know, we can't typically change our circumstances very rapidly or our body, but we can always practice with what's there. So I think of the three legged stool consists of mindfulness, love and learning.”
Action Item: NA

Three Points:

1. Understand neuroplasticity and how we can leverage it to change the brain for good.
2. The importance of processing positive experiences at a deep level in order to hardwire them into the brain.
3. Why mindfulness is not enough in order to build resilience and develop the trait of happiness.

Speaker Bio:

Stacy Thomas: 00:01

Hello and welcome back to the mindful world summit. I'm Dr Stacey and. Oh boy, am I so excited for this conversation we have with us Dr Rick Hanson, Dr Rick Hanson is one of the most prolific psychologist and thought leaders in the whole area of neuroscience, neuroplasticity, understanding how the mind has an impact on the brain. We have so much to learn from this gentleman. He is a

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senior fellow of the greater good science center at UC Berkeley, a New York Times bestselling author so many times over and you know he is just essentially spent decades helping people turn everyday experiences into those where we can experience lasting happiness, love inner peace, and do so in a way that hard wires in the brain. Revolutionary stuff here. So welcome Dr Hanson to the summit.

Rick Hanson: 00:57

Stacy, it's a pleasure to be here. Please call me Rick or I'll call you Dr Thomas. It's an honor to be here and I want to say hello as well to everybody listening or watching.

Stacy Thomas: 01:08

Well, thank you so much Rick. I'd have to pinch myself know that I can call you Rick. No, I don't want to put you on a pedestal, but I do really appreciate how much your work has informed just the, the amazing power we have as humans to make a change in ourselves and in our world. You know, we, I mentioned a, a really big word that many people may not be aware of, and this is this amazing like revolutionary discovery that we've made in fairly recent times called neural plasticity. Can you please explain to us what that is?

Rick Hanson: 01:49

Yeah, it is a fancy word. Plasticity simply means the capacity of something to change. So neuroplasticity is the capacity of the nervous system, especially the brain to be changed by what we learn and heal and also frankly what stresses us out. So we're continually shaped by our experiences. For better or for worse, a, on the one hand, the brain has a natural default toward what scientists call it. Negativity bias. I call it like Velcro for the bad, but teflon for the good. You know how it is. You go through your day, 10 things happen, nine are good ones. Bad. What do you obsess about as you're falling asleep? Uh, it's usually the bad thing, the unpleasant stressful pain protocol tanks. On the other hand, we have the capacity which we're going to talk about, I'm sure to sustain mindful awareness of ordinary, usually small, but very genuine and real experiences that are beneficial moment of feeling connected or friendly with somebody else moment of after you finally get your kids to bed and the house gets quiet and it kind of calms down a moment of feeling understood by another person.

Rick Hanson: 02:59

A moment of feeling really strong inside. We have opportunities to stay with those experiences and in the famous saying, neurons that fire together, wire together. So the longer we keep them firing and the more we feel it throughout our entire body, the more that that beneficial experience is going to

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sink in and get hardwired into us. So we have that power every single day to kind of scoop up the good experiences like a where a human vacuum cleaner and we can even especially look at key strengths that we want to develop inside ourselves to heal or to cope or to feel happy in general. And we can develop them as well. So you're right, it's an incredible power that we have good news. No one can stop you from doing it. Bad News, no one can do it for you to be self reliant. It's very actually old school and that's one of the things that motivates me.

Rick Hanson: 03:57

You know, my dad grew up on a ranch in North Dakota. My mom grew up in the depression with a single mother, a lot of difficulty, both of them faced. And there's something very old school for me about the essence of self reliance that it's on us to grow the good inside ourselves. On the other hand, no one can stop us from doing it and the more pressure we're under, the more were mistreated, the less the world is coming through for us, the more important it is to turn to this fundamental process that's under our control of growing the good directly inside ourselves every day.

Stacy Thomas: 04:33

Okay. So it almost sounds like, like the brain is going to focus on the negative. You don't have to give that, right. It's just the bias it's going to go to, but we do. It might have that need some additional attention to balance or make it through. Is that correct?

Rick Hanson: 04:56

Yeah. The way I'd say it is two steps. Let's let's make it practical. Let's say a parent who wants to grow more patience, how do you be more patient or how do you grow a sense of self worth? It's hard for parents. My very first book was about mothers, the long term well being of mothers and mind, body and relationships, so let's say that you want to develop more of a sense of confidence or a feeling of self worth about yourself. Either one of those, how do you grow patients or how do you grow self worth. You grow through having experiences of whatever you want to grow that you essentially install as a lasting physical change in your brain. Just having the experience alone does not equal learning. That's kind of the dirty little secret in a lot of psychotherapy and coaching and parent education and raising kids and mindfulness programs.

Rick Hanson: 05:47

Just because we're having experiences doesn't mean we're actually being changed for the better by them. For there to be a lasting change, we must change the body, otherwise we're not any different and changing the body as such, especially in terms of the nervous system, so that's a general

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principle when you're having, for example, experiences of patients or related factors like relaxing your body or putting things in perspective or being learning skills that enable you to be more patient because you feel like you can deal with things when you're having those experiences. Turn on the inner recorder. Just because the song is playing on the inner iPod doesn't mean it is sinking in. Yeah, usually just pass us on through because we move onto the next thing before the current thing has a chance to sink in. So in general, we have opportunities many times a day to slow it down for a breath or two or three to kind of marinade in the useful experience to really increase its registration as a lasting physical change.

Rick Hanson: 06:48

That's true in general. That point is really highlighted when you see how the brain through evolution prioritized as negative experiences in January, kind of ignores positive one's mother nature is tilted toward survival, but again, the of life, so when we, in addition to the general reasons for deliberately internalizing beneficial experiences, if we tilt toward beneficial experiences deliberately, then we just kind of leveled the playing field. So those are two major reasons for looking for beneficial experiences that are enjoyable and useful and then taking them in for general purposes and to compensate for the negativity bias.

Stacy Thomas: 07:31

Okay. So what does that mean? So are we searching our environment? Are We, I'm just noticing when something good happens and this literally just pausing and connecting with, with that feels like.

Rick Hanson: 07:44

That's great. Great question. So how do we have. It's really interesting how you and I are both in the growth business and there's no general theory of growth. There's no general theory. So that's what I've been working on, you know, how do we actually grow, how it seems so obvious and, and old school. And yet there's no general psychological theory. The process, essentially, it's a two stage process. First you have to experience whatever you want to develop, you have an experience of it, and then second you have to internalize it or install it as a lasting change in yourself. Moving from states to traits, that's just really a simple two step process. First question is, okay, how do we have a useful state or beneficial positive experience? A useful experience. Number one, usually because we just have to notice what's already there. We already have a little sense of accomplishment when we finished something here in this conversation.

Rick Hanson: 08:39

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I already have a strikingly strong sense of connection with you. That's sort of unusual compared to my experience of many interviews. That's just factual. It was a nice moment. You brush your daughter's hair. It's this comfortable, it's cozy, it's nice, it's happening already, but the problem is because of lack of mindfulness and self awareness and also because of our culture that tends to zoom us onto the next thing and also because other people or media or constantly drawing our attention and pulling it away from the present moment to the next shiny object. For all those reasons, even though we're actually having useful experiences, we're wasting them on the brain. So the first thing is to just recognize and notice something that's already occurring. It's also true. It's also possible to deliberately create some kind of good experience. I mean good pragmatically like calling up compassion for someone who's kind of annoying, but if you call up compassion for them, it helps you and it helps them or maybe someone's being really pushy and you bring up the feeling in your body of, hey, no feeling strong. You call up an experience or maybe you call it gratitude or whatever else you want to call up. There's a place for creating experiences either way. Now you've got the song playing in your inner iPod, either because it was already playing and now you're just kind of paying attention to it or you deliberately created the experience and then you have the opportunity to turn on the inner recorder.

Stacy Thomas: 10:10

Okay. So this is really interesting because it's not you. You keep referencing when your body let the body like these are, these are, these are experiences that go in here. We're not intellectualizing, you know, it's not at that level, but really at the felt experience.

Rick Hanson: 10:29

Yeah. Generally up again, if you think about it, what are we trying to grow inside ourselves and that's where it's kind of helpful to just bring it down to basics. Okay. And people watching or listening. What would it be more useful to have inside yourself each day? You know, the old joke, like what's in your wallet or the advertising campaign. I'm a long time, you know, rock climber, been a wilderness Lod. Little old for it now, but I think what's in your backpack? You're going out for the day. You take your kids on a road trip, like what's in the car? DEF foods, you know, have stuff to distract them a with you. So what do you have inside yourself? Right? So one of the things it is useful to have inside yourself and you know this as a psychologist or useful cognition, useful beliefs, useful ideas, uh, in my early twenties I realized that growing up, I've been a nerd but not a wimp.

Rick Hanson: 11:20

That's a useful idea. Was a useful idea for me or maybe we, through meditation we startrecognizing that experiences are inherently transient. They're impermanent. So trying to cling to them or hold onto

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them is doomed and also makes us suffer. That's kind of an insight or in therapy. People love liberating insights of various kinds. There's a place for that. There's a place for registering ideas, but I agree with you entirely as someone who works with ideas, you know, routine mode, the most important stuff is sensation and emotion. That feeling that you're exactly right, the feeling in the body. And um, I have a friend who uses the phrase, we need to wake down, not just wake up. Interesting.

Stacy Thomas: 12:08

Okay. So it kind of implies getting quiet and looking within like weren't deeply I guess in the body. Again, not just here

Rick Hanson: 12:22

And you just think about it like little moments in the day of relief or comfort.

Rick Hanson: 12:30

These are so easy to dismiss and yet I bet we'll talk about it in terms of the evolution of the brain or our biological evolution, which is a fact of our modern way of being is so recent and superficial. It's like if you boil milk, you get this little tiny skim on the surface. That's the scam of civilization and modern conceptual thought. The rest of it is very primal. So has large, complicated animals we need, we need, we need to feel safe and protected. We need to have our little burrow, our little, our little blanket, our little cat crawls into our lap. You know, we need to have our kids close to us among many other things and experiences like that that are so simple. Relief drinking when you're thirsty, picking a bigger breath. If you're feeling a little tense and then staying with that experience for a breath or two or three, it makes such a difference as you go through your day and it's poignant.

Rick Hanson: 13:37

It's shocking to realize how often the jewels are already present. We're already in it. We're not making it more than what it is. I don't believe in positive thinking. I believe in realistic thinking. I want to see what's the truth. Right? On the other hand, routinely we make it less than what it really is. We don't come into a receptive intimacy with our experience. We're not humble enough to realize we need to receive what we've already been getting been given in the moment without getting grandiose about chasing the next thing, the fundamental, what happens to, as a bonus benefit when people start practicing in the way I'm talking, I call it taking in the good, um, and for those who would my worry that taking in the good is just another way to avoid negative experiences or get caught up in forms of craving. It's actually the opposite because as you've taken the good, you'd be more.

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Rick Hanson: 14:34

You become more able to really see all the injustice, all the mistreatment and all the pain out there in the world and all the difficulties inside yourself because you've grown strengths inside that enable you to cope with them better and also as you fill yourself up authentically, as you said in the body again and again and again from the bottom up, from the inside out, you crave less because you meet the next moment. We're already with a sense of fullness and balance inside yourself. Enoughness already. Uh, it's a beautiful process. So as you do this process that I'm describing a handful of times, each day, less than 10 minutes a day will actually change your life and it'll change your brain from the inside out. And one of the reasons it does is built into this way of doing things or approaching your life are built in benefits of I'm treating yourself like you matter. And coming into an intimacy with your own experience, kind of living below the neck. I entered adulthood from the neck down. Spock had nothing on me, you know, really learn and are not just wake up. That also is a bonus benefit. So anyway, that's, that's, that's what's so cool here and it's great to teach kids how to do this as well. I worked with kids a lot.

Rick Hanson: 15:59

Teenagers, you have to be cool with teenagers. You have to be kind of real definite like, you know, hey, you can be the boss of your own brain or none. I mean, I don't care. It's up to, you know, drop a little line like, well, you know, the less stressed you are, the fewer pimples you'll have, but whatever. I walk out of the room, not examples. Yeah, that's. He does know. They like it especially as well because you know, if you think about it, kids in general, teenagers in particular, they want to have a sense of control and agency and no one can control what's happening inside their own mind. They really liked that idea and they're being bossed around all day long by Mel. Well meaning people like their dad be. We've got two kids, adults town, so they liked this idea that wow, I can really grow the good inside myself.

Rick Hanson: 16:53

I can put. I used metaphors for kids, you know, leaving little ones, little little ones, even like putting jewels and a treasure chest or having that nice warm feeling come into you if you're cold or your hands or on a cup of hot chocolate and it gets warm. They liked that. And also I think kids, even teenagers I would say especially teenagers feel so often like things are taken from them. Their time is constantly taken from them or what they really want to pay attention to is taken from them and they're forced to pay attention to something else. And so for kids to feel, wow, I can control more what I pay attention to and then I can take from it for me and it will stay with me, goes into my inner piggy bank and I've got it. I keep reading that really appeals to them.

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Stacy Thomas: 17:46

And so the other thing that you can do when you. It sounds like when you have that real strong memories, something that's been encoded have many levels within your being is that it sounds like that serves as a well that we can go to because we got those jewels when we might need it.

Rick Hanson: 18:07

That's such a wonderful point and it's the distinction to go back to states and traits. In other words, the trait, I'm using that term broadly, but basically anything that's stable as a quality of, you know, like traits of patients are traits of sensitive your ability. Yeah. Either one more trade, distractability or trait, mindfulness, steadiness of mind. These are traits and the trait is what we can count on. Again, part of what motivates me in part from a long life and looking at the world with his problems is a recognition that many people disappoint. Uh, many institutions disappoint us. There are many challenges that come at us. People are routinely, horribly treated, um, and the world isn't gonna rescue you. So at the end of the day also, just in reality, we lose people we love or we lose position. We sometimes we have to face a disability or illness.

Rick Hanson: 19:17

What we have inside ourselves psychologically as mental traits of various kinds, patients, self-worth, skillfulness, skillfulness with her own minds or mindfulness, etc. That's our last resort. That's what we can for sure count on. And when you know more and more that you've developed these strengths inside as durable traits, including the trait of happiness and the trait of lovingness and the trait of inner peace. As you have that more and more in you, it gives you greater confidence. That if the waves of life come at you, um, you, you're going to be less disturbed by them. And I'm thinking of this wonderful quote I bet you not from Howard Thurman who talks about developing the capacity to look out at the world with quiet eyes. World might be noisy, but including the inner world can be noisy, and yet they're the core of you remains quiet and strong and not hijacked and disturbed by what's happening around you are inside you. It's a one thing to develop and to know that you can develop it however lots of it's been in the past. You can always grow and learn from here.

Stacy Thomas: 20:40

I'm really hopeful message and I just, I just need to go back to something that you slipped in there because you talk about happiness as a trait. Yeah. And not state.

Rick Hanson: 20:45

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100 percent. Great. Okay.

Rick Hanson: 20:48

Well, if we can have trait depression, trait blues, we can have trait well being and people can actually good research on this. Actually you can nudge your resting state of well being down or up and on. Me really, Claire as a key point here, the world affects us too because I'm a psychologist. I focus on what we can do ourselves inside our own minds, but obviously it's important to do what we can to aid the physical body in terms of health and also do what we can to help the world around us. Be better. Get the stop sign put in outside the kids school. I get more money for the kids' school. Have healthcare for everybody. What a concept. Duh, that a really important things to that effect our resting state. That's sad. Absolutely. People can grow their resting state of wellbeing and happiness in terms of a trait over time and as people develop their resting state wellbeing and work of barbara fredrickson, as you know and and others on positive emotion shows that as people increase trait wellbeing, trait happiness, which I think has, I'm going to define that in a moment.

Rick Hanson: 22:08

If you like. you know, kind of is a broad statement. I don't just mean kind of that passing giddy happiness that you're finally or something really wonderful happening in a kind of bone deep sense of wellbeing in your core that can also include physical pain, worry about those you love, a sense of fiery pushing back and an injustice to this, but in the core of you, there's a fundamental quality of peace and contentment and love. These three fundamental attributes of core wellbeing, et cetera, and as we develop that core, as barbara fredrickson is shown, people bounce back faster from stress and trauma. They're less able to traumatize, be traumatized. Resting state happiness makes us stronger. It makes us tougher, more able to sustain in the face of hardship.

Rick Hanson: 23:06

Smith's is either these professional grinches, these days you're going to snare it happiness and it seems crazy because we want our kids to be happy. We want our friends to be happy, we want our partner to be happy, we want ourselves to be happy, and if anybody would, if these professional grinches would look at the research, they would see that happiness is the best medicine. It's one of the best things you can do for your physical health and protects your body from wear and tear from stress. It makes you more motivated to take action over time because you feel energized, connects you with others to be happier. We're more likely to connect with people who are happy than people who are grouchy all the time. Could just think about that. Happiness is good.

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Stacy Thomas: 23:48

Oh, it's really good, but we've been chasing it in the wrong, like pursuing the wrong things, right? You know that you're going to be happy one day when you. You reach a certain status or you get those things or you look a certain way, like they're very external.

Rick Hanson: 24:07

I, I agree with you and yeah. Yeah. You know, there's a metaphor from Ttibet, it's a hell realm. It could be real, but minimally a metaphor, the realm of the hungry ghosts and these are being, assuming now this godlike powers in an enormous appetites representatives, giant bellies, but their capacity to satisfy their appetites is a pinhole of a mouth. That strikes me as a lot of modern consumer culture in America and other consumerist countries. I'm sure. Like, I like your blouse. I liked my shirt, so now it's a nice shirt. Okay, have your shirt accomplished. Something feel good about that. You know, do the dishes, so you've got to do the dishes. That said, what's it like to be you while you are pursuing your goals? Is there a contaminant already from the inside out or is there as there as for so many people, what's the throw line? Most people live lives of quiet desperation. Is there an internal sense of agitation, uneasiness, inadequacy, and we start wherever we are. maybe we have those feelings of inadequacy or sorrow for good reasons, but then we can grow from here. So to me, both things are really true. I call it aspiration without attachment, we can pursue our goals. I'm pretty ambitious, you know, I'm still added. I got, I'm, I'm working on my next book now going after the next thing, but on the other hand, can we feel contented already, right? Yeah. Right.

Stacy Thomas: 25:48

So the difference, like the goal giving us the direction that we're really engaged in the process of getting there.

Rick Hanson: 26:09

Yeah, that's right. And that's what we want to help our kids with. Right. We'd want them to be both ambitious while feeling already a sense of well being and like, and enough as a person already even as. Yeah. You got to try harder next time. Homework actually less than what the teacher says. What a good idea.

Stacy Thomas: 26:24

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Let's go back to some basic definitions because you're really interesting and we've been talking about mindfulness throughout this whole summit and you'd say that, you know, mindfulness is actually misunderstood and so what have you. Yeah. So if you could clarify for us what is, what is mindfulness and misunderstanding sometimes.

Rick Hanson: 26:49

So I'm jusT sort of say three things here. First people use the word in different ways. that's okay. As long as we know how we're using it, so the classic understanding of mindfulness really originating pretty much in the buddhist tradition. 2500 years ago, the buddha did not invent mindfulness, he just kind of called it out, is really important for personal practice, so it's not a buddhist idea, but that said, the original notion of mindfulness is simply sustained, present moment awareness. That present moment awareness can be applied externally or internally. It can be very narrowly focused on getting a thread to the eye of a needle or concentrating on the sensations of breathing at the upper lip or it could be very broadly focused to include the whole stream of consciousness rolling on by, right? Mindfulness is morally neutral. A burglar is very mindful.

Rick Hanson: 27:46

A sniper is very mindful. Just because you're mindful is not inherently a good thing. Other things need to be present that add moral value to the mindfulness, such as your purposes where your intentions or loving wholesome qualities in your own heart. Right? So that's kind of the first point. Now that original definition of mindfulness has been really broaden these days and I fear often that when we stretch our definitions a lot, we start losing clarity and we lease our leaving things out or would make a mess. Nowadays, mindfulness kind of generally means being super mellow, accepting everything chilling driven on the right. It has that total vibe to it, and those are good things. Acceptance. Oh, also with qualities of self compassion. Hey, a kind of tenderness, great self. Compassion is great. Self acceptance is great. A sense of gratitude for all that is, is great, but those are added to the fundamental core of mindfulness.

Rick Hanson: 28:51

And if you strip them away, you can still be mindful. Okay, so first point that's all said to me, the misunderstandings that have crept in are in two places. The first place is the notion that, um, mindfulness only equals exclusively receptive, passive witnessing, choiceless awareness. It's sometimes called in which you're just being with what you're experiencing, but you're not making any efforts inside yourself to nudge your experience one way or another. so let's suppose that there you are in your mind. You're really caught up in a resentful, upsetting. You feel hurt, you're angry at your person in your life when you're really caught up in that. So, uh, it's often taken that all. If we're going

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to be mindful, all we do is watch it. We just kind of observe it. Maybe we explored a bit, but we're not trying to nudge it one way or another.

Rick Hanson: 29:56

That's a wonderful way to practice. That's wonderful, but it's not the only way to practice with your own mind. And the therapist know, and the great spiritual teachers, including the Buddha, knows that there's more to practice than just passive witnessing. There's a place for active effort inside your own mind, such as there you are with your resentful wrangle, with let's say your partner. You can do things like you can let go. You can release tension in your body. You can let go of feelings. You can disengage from these angry thoughts that are just way over the top. You can let go of these vengeful plans for payback. You can let him go and then also lead in. You can grow the good. That's been my focus narrowly, so that's the context here. You can let in and you can develop like greater patients were more compassion for your partner or more understanding about your own role in the matter.

Rick Hanson: 30:53

Didn't really justify your partners over reaction, but going forward you realize, okay, next time I'll I'm going to do things a little more skillfully that will just not create so much reactivity over there. You can grow those things or maybe you can grow the knowledge inside yourself. Hey, I had nothing to do with your craziness here and it's not on me at all and I'm going to grow that inside myself. Legitimate and so I've often been in situations where I'll talk with people in the mindfulness world about wise effort inside your own mind, which has two aspects, letting go of letting go, reducing, preventing or decreasing the negative and also letting in growing, increasing, protecting that which has beneficial and wholesome and I've had people come right back at me say, that's not mindfulness. I'm like, no, that's not a correct understanding because you need to be mindful in all three ways to engage your mind.

Rick Hanson: 31:50

Mindful. If you're just witnessing this treatment of consciousness and mindful that you're able to keep staying with it rather than getting distracted, you need to be mindful while you're letting go of tension in your body or releasing beliefs that make you crazy and others to, uh, you need to be mindful while you let him, while you grow the good while you cultivate the wholesome inside yourself. Mindfulness is to be present in all three ways of working with your own mind. So to me, that's the thing that's really left out. And if you start, if you read common statements about mindfulness these days or listened to them with an ear to what I'm saying, you'll hear that mindfulness tends to get reduced only to a kind of accepting self compassionate, you know, um, being with this, you know, what's happening rather than actively intervening in it. And my point is we can intervene actively in the world and in our own minds

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while being mindful

Stacy Thomas: 33:01

At this. And so if I'm understanding you, it means that what we've been talking about is often just the first step being with being with what's there without necessarily dancing. But it's taking that step further and saying, what do we want? What do we want to create in this moment? Right,

Rick Hanson: 33:24

Exactly right. I think if I use a metaphor, the great burden of practice as to being with and working with would be with what's there is the most important because that's sometimes that's all you can do. And as your own practice matures and you develop this unshakable core of well being that we've been talking about, resilience, well being, it can manage, you know, the waves of life. Um, as, as that develops more and more, you just kind of being with the moment because you're already pretty cooked. You've already done a lot of work calls, you know, uh, that sad. The burden has two wings and we need to work with what's there as well and working with as these two aspects, letting go and letting you

Stacy Thomas: 34:08

Okay, so that, that's very relevant to those watching more in parents and they're, they're, you know, have the best of intentions of creating a positive relationship with your child. They want to engender a sense of resiliency. And you know, this suggest that you know, the pause and step back and observe that we need to create a space where it's okay to look inside and just notice that you're annoyed with your job. Like we can notice that without getting caught up in it or reacting to represent. It's like, okay, what do I want to, how do I want to transform? How do I want to connect? What is the message?

Rick Hanson: 34:51

Yeah. And that little structure let be let go, let in, or I think of the mind is like a garden witness the garden, pull weeds or plant flowers and they all work together. They're all really important. But that, seeing that, that those three ways to practice, to engage your mind usefully, um, give you also a kind of sequence, that kind of road map when you start out, you're bothered by something, something happened, right? And so you with that initially, including sometimes sensing down to what's more vulnerable or deeper or even younger under the surface, like the hurt that's often under the anger. you do that. And then there's a natural move moment. Typically, I call it the Goldilocks moment,

Rick Hanson: 35:38

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That just drive moment, not too tall, not too short, until I called Goldie locks where you shift and it just feels okay, I can let this go. Now I'm going to shift into letting go is okay. Um, and then after awhile you've been releasing and then there's kind of a space there, an opening in which you can now receive into the space of what you've released. Some positive thing you want to grow, like a gardener knows you need To put flowers where you pulled the weeds, otherwise the weeds will come back. So maybe to use a quick example, you're, you're irritated with your partner. You feel hurt and angry at your partner. I know that experience. So I'm married 36 plus years. Okay. So there you are. And um, um, you know, for, she'd be with him. You try to allow it, you accepted, you try not to fight it, you might want to explore it a, you're wise enough to realize that like when someone who's annoying is knocking on the door, you have to open the door or they're going to keep knocking.

Rick Hanson: 36:39

You have to open to experience to allow it to flow through you all right, that for a bit and then maybe after you kind of reflect on what happened or you sleep on it overnight or maybe it's a very typical situation. Like my wife has always advising me how to drive a. It's very familiar to me. Uh, you know, you maybe you just recognize it quickly it after 10 seconds or a few breaths or a minute and you go, okay, time to kind of disengage and to move on and you move into letting go. So now you're letting go. And then, um, after you've let go for awhile, let's say you kind of let the tension flow. Maybe you realize that, you know, my, my thoughts about this or just I don't need to believe them. I can let them go. Uh, maybe you've exhaled,

Rick Hanson: 37:36

Uh, and then you let in, what do you want to let him? What would be. This is a really key point. What would be matched to what you've let go. that's the useful antidote to this is very useful for kids too. So let's say it's in my car and my wife, and so I would let in, um, you know, compassion for her. She's nervous in a car. She had also her, her spine is fragile, so it's very important to not get a fender bender and I get it. I try to keep that in mind. So it's more I developed a trait of recognizing my wife's fragility overtime. Uh, maybe I want to grow that to replace my, uh, thoughts about who are you to tell me how to drive. You don't drive anyway, you know, so, um, that would be an example and that gives us a nice little road map.

Rick Hanson: 38:28

Let be let go it in. If you move into letting go and letting in and it doesn't have traction, you need to go back to letting be. You got to be with them. It's not fallen and you can observe yourself to and know what your skills are. Like I was good at letting go and I didn't want to feel my feelings. I had to learn

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how to let be. I had to learn how to be with it to really feel it. On the other hand, I know a lot of people, they're great mediators, they can be with their experience forever and they're still annoying as all heck and they haven't grown in their minds because the brain is a physical system. It's foolish to think that it's just going to change by observing it. It's physical and it wants to hold onto negative material in particular.

Rick Hanson: 39:14

So that's, there's a place for active intervention inside your own mind, which means as well physically actively intervening in your brain. So is this what you mean by growing the green? All the green zone? Yeah. So, uh, I, you know, what are we trying to grow and it's easy to get very kind of new age if you will, or locked high falutin about this. That's where I think it's so good to bring it down to basics. What do you, what would be useful to have inside you? Greater self worth? Greater patience? Um, you know, more insight into other people, more skillfulness. Like how to manage a tricky interaction with your annoying in laws. What would be good to grow inside yourself? What are you trying to develop inside your child? It really helps to kind of bring it down to earth. So these are the good things.

Rick Hanson: 40:03

These are the flowers, but as an end, as we grow them, we become more able to, I call it live from the green zone. So maybe I'll sketch this kind of. I need to give me a minute here to sort of explain that. I'll try to do it. Okay. So in humans, like other animals have three basic needs for safety, satisfaction and connection kind of broadly defined. And we manage those needs by avoiding pain. Okay. Um, by approaching pleasure and by attaching to others. So we have avoiding approaching and attaching the classic model and the ways we go about avoiding approaching and attaching are really affected by the three stage evolution of the brain with its reptilian brain stem, mammalian sub cortex and primate human neocortex, which are very focused on managing in order safety, satisfaction, and connection. Okay. So then the question becomes, we've got to manage our needs one way or another.

Rick Hanson: 41:25

How do we go about doing it? What do we feel inside as we deal with a threat to safety or a challenge to satisfaction or some kind of breach of connection? Do we manage that? The need feeling disturbed and like something's missing inside us so we move into fight or flight or clinging or freezing to deal with the challenge. Do We deal with the challenge on the basis of fear, frustration or hurt, right? That's the red zone and the brain is really designed, we're tough creditors to go into the red zone, at the crack of a twig in the jungle or an angry face across the dinner table and you just. We all know what that feels like. Something happens, we'd go read, right? And it's not that it's bad to go read, but

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it is costly and mother nature's plan is to go into the red zone as you need to and get out fast and also have a short lifespan.

Rick Hanson: 42:37

So hasa going, don't really matter when most people are dead before they're 40 years old, back throughout almost all of history until very, very, very recently. So that's the red zone. It's on the other hand, there's another possibility we can manage threats to safety while feeling calm and strong and capable inside, like I've done a lot of rock climbing, we in which I'm in a physically hazardous situation, standing on edges, half the width of a pencil and having the time of my life because I know what I'm doing. Uh, my heart's beating a little faster. I'm a little very aware of the storm coming in, little worried about it, but I'm okay. Think about challenges in life where people are aggressive at us or we're dealing with a health issue. We don't really like it. We wish it was different, but we're not deeply upset about it where you have a sense of calm, capable coping in the face of that threat.

Rick Hanson: 43:34

In other words, we're able to manage that threat to safety with a core feeling of inner peace. Even as we deal with a hazard for the challenge. Um, it's like, what's our relationship to the anxiety that arises or what's our relationship to this health issue or financial issue? Yeah, it's challenging, but are we overwhelmed by it or are we able to retain a core of well being no matter what's happening around us and the same as satisfaction? Can we handle, uh, you know, long hours of work while feeling happy along the way? Can we handle frustration like, uh, you know, can you read a one star review of your book on amazon without getting really upset about it? Can you hang in there? Can you aspire without attachment to the results in satisfaction? And also connection? When you're challenged in connection, when conflicts with others or maybe you're looking for your soulmate and you haven't found that person yet, can you engage that challenge while still feeling okay enough deep down inside yourself?

Rick Hanson: 44:40

That's the green zone. And so the question is how do we stay in the green zone when the world is flashing red, but we developed strengths inside the healthiest cope too. We internalize again and again the residues, the emotional residues of feeling that our needs are met in when we do feel safe enough, satisfied enough or connected enough, slow down and take it in. So more and more you build up inside and unconditional sense of peace, contentment and love that you can draw upon and take refuge in even when those three needs for safety, satisfaction and connection are being challenged. That's how you develop a green zone brain, and the larger implication of this, which is really quite profound, is to realize that until the last couple of generations, we could not reliably enable

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all humans to live from the green zone. We couldn't. We couldn't control pain. A reproductive control is not available in any reliable way.

Rick Hanson: 45:49

A rule of law was impossible to sustain. Famines were common, et cetera, but in the last generation or two, the object of resources are now available across the world. Technology's available. All the scientists agree, even the un policy makers. What's lacking is the will and also what's lacking is the personal practice because it's not just enough to change the circumstances around us. There are a lot of people trapped in the red zone in hollywood who are millionaires. A lot of millionaires live in their day, in the red zone. I grew up in LA. I saw a lot of that there. Um, I live in a fairly, you know, upper middle class, privileged part of the world has so much suffering and stress and craziness and driving beamers down the freeway. Are you crazy? You live better than a king queen did 100 years ago and you're upset because you're only given three bars on your cell phone.

Rick Hanson: 46:48

You know, sometimes I say that to myself. If you imagine, what would it be like? And in the world, there were a critical mass of people in the green zone inside their own being. Most minutes of most days, those people are a lot harder to manipulate by the classic manipulations of fear in grievance and appeals to vengeance from authoritarian leaders. We've seen that throughout history. We see a lot of it currently. Also, when people feel in the green zone, they're less manipulable with greed and consumerism, which is a major driver of global warming, uh, and also people much less easily manipulated by us against them. Tribal rivalries, which were very vulnerable to is hunter gatherers who lived mainly and bands of about 50 people until only about 10,000 years ago generally world. So that's my vision ultimately, that we both, um, um, make efforts to implement the material conditions in the world that objectively feed children and protect women and girls and do other good things for the sake of the whole world. And also recognIze that that is not enough itself. We must internalize those experiences that now our environment is enabling us to have. We must internalize those experiences of feeling safe for satisfied or connected enough to build up this green zone core. Otherwise we're going to be like all those unhappy people in hollywood would good circumstances, but still caught up living in that hell realm of the hungry ghosts.

Stacy Thomas: 48:33

So it is, it is something we can all cheers. It's a practice. It's going to take the will and the practice over and over and over again to build that solid core that can keep us still when things are tumultuous around us.

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Rick Hanson: 48:55

Yeah, and it's. So if you. I know we're going to be finishing in a moment, um, like it's, I have this little saying, you know, Recognize complexity, practice simplicity.

Stacy Thomas: 49:10

Yeah. And

Rick Hanson: 49:13

If I could really boil it down to three things that will take about 10 minutes a day, 10 minutes a day, okay? First, as you go through your day, a handful of times each day, a handful of times each day for a breath or two at a time, slow down to take into yourself the ordinary sweet little moments of daily life, even in a terrible, horrible situation.

Rick Hanson: 49:44

I just came back from India was an extremely impoverished situations and India has no monopoly on extreme poverty as well. We have plenty of that throughout America to even in those situations, there are blades of grass coming up through the sidewalk. There is someone who's smiling at you. You can recognize your own good heart as you get through the day. There are, you know, you look out, you see a star, you see the moon rising over the ganges, down which dead cattle are floating, but you still see the moon rising over the ganges. Uh, those are those little moments throughout your day. You finished the dishes, you get your kid to bed, you drink water when thirsty. Take it into yourself. That's right. There are a couple of minutes, a day to three minutes, a day. Second, pick one thing you're trying to grow inside yourself these days.

Rick Hanson: 50:38

What are you developing? What are you trying to grow? What's the muscle you're trying to make stronger? What's that strength? You're building up. What jewel are you're trying to put in the treasure chest to your heart. Know that one thing, and then it gives your day purpose. You're looking for that thing you're trying to grow. It's so good to have two or three, but especially one. What's the thing You're trying to grow a little more sense of, worth a little greater trait? Gratitude, a greater sense of connection in your religion or your spirituality, more of a ongoing felt sense of connection with the divine. If that's meaningful to you, whatever it might be, trait mindfulness. What are you trying to grow? Pick one thing. No, you're developing inside yourself these days. That's another minute or two

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in a deliberate way for a minute or two or three every day. Slow it down to help yourself feel increasingly peaceful and calm in terms of safety, kind of calm strength. Exhale and sit with that a moment, no at that slide, and then move on to contentment. Maybe think of what you're grateful for even in a really tough life in which many things have not happened well for you.

Rick Hanson: 52:00

Gratitude, some satisfaction, recognized many things you have accomplished, open to a sense of of arriving in the moment continually so you don't need to keep chasing out there satisfaction. ThInk of things that bring a smile, silly moment with your kid, good times with friends, standing there under the stars, whatever, and then third connection. Love marina, mine. You know beings you care about bringing to mind beings who care about you, not getting into the story of it, as you said earlier, going into the experience, out of the concept, going into the feeling with ashton, kindness, friendliness, just warm heartedness. Have a lovingness rest their peace, contentment, love, or to put it in a really metaphorical and goofy way in terms of the three stage evolution of the brain, which there's an inner lizard, mouse and monkey as it were, reptile mammal, primate pet the lizard. Feed the mouse and hug the monkey, and if people did that, I guarantee you one day you do it. Just like, wow, this day was better. Do it. Do it for a week in a row, 10 days in a row and look around and go, wow, something's really happening inside, and if you want, you can go to my website and other things and check how to use these approaches actually for healing, old pain in addition to growing the good you want inside yourself.

Stacy Thomas: 53:33

Amazing. Dr rick hanson, since you mentioned your website, could you mention it?

Rick Hanson: 53:39

It's my name, rick hanson, s o n dot net, or you can disagree with me. I'm sure you'll have links to the us, but if you go, there are tons of freely offered resources, vIdeos, audios, guided practices, little articles I've read and people can subscribe to my free weekly newsletter. It's called just one thing each week. It's one thing, It's a little practice each week, shortness. We also have some online programs and money is never a stop because we. We love enabling people to do these programs at no charge if there's any financial difficulty paying for them and they're all reasonably priced anyway, so those online programs are really very neat as well and then they went on around the world can do them and you can go deeper into this material if you want, so just go to my website, [inaudible] dot that and you'll see what's there.

Stacy Thomas: 54:34

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Amazing. Dr Rick Hanson. I wish we had more time, but you know what, you've given us so many practical tools and the new way of thinking of mindfulness. It's, it's really adding that intentional and understanding that we have this capacity to choose if we can just slow down the process and really connected at a deep level and keep doing that over and over and over again.

Rick Hanson: 55:00

Yeah. Thank you. You know, lately again, think about simplicity. I think of practice. It's like a three legged stool. Yeah, and I think of that three legged stool of practice, which is what is in our power to do. We, you know, we can't typically change our circumstances very rapidly or our body, but we can always practice with what's there. So I think of the three legged stool consists of mindfulness, love and learning. Okay? That's the three in my fullness alone is just like a pogo stick. You know, you need the other two legs. Love being, you know, wholesome morality and self compassion and warm hardheartedness and benevolence love, and it's not enough to just be mindful or loving if you're not growing, if you're not healing, if you're not developing or transforming or awakening along the way and they all serve each other as you learn, you're more able to love people who are challenging. As you're loving. It's easier to sustain mindfulness because you have a warm heart inside your calmer inside. A mindfulness helps you learn. Mindfulness is necessary for learning and mindfulness really helps us be more loving over time. They all work together that people can ask themselves, okay, my three legged stool of practice as one a lot longer

Stacy Thomas: 56:23

Than the other two and that's where I need to work mine. Thank you so much for that and a great way to close the three legged stool. Mindfulness, love learning, and all of us can really take a step back and look and see where do we need to grow and be in charge of that. Dr Rick Hanson, thank you so much for all that you've given us all that you continue to give the world. I want to see your vision come to pass in this 21st century. A billion brains on green. Legitimate.

Rick Hanson: 56:58

Well, thank you Dr Stacey. It's been fantastic. All right. I am going to say goodbye, but we, uh, we look forward to continuing to engage with your teachings in the days and weeks to come. Take care.

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