

Mindful Compassion

An Interview with Dr. Paul Gilbert and Ryan Stagg

[0:00:08.5] Ryan: Hello and welcome back to the Science of Meditation summit, this is Dave Fuller and we're talking about self-compassion and loving kindness. I'm really excited to be here today with really a leading expert in the field of self-compassion, Doctor Paul Gilbert who is a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. He also founded the Compassionate Mind Foundation, and is the author of many books, including more recently Mindful Compassion, so thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

[0:00:42.3] Dr. Paul Gilbert: It's my pleasure, thank you so much for inviting me.

[0:00:45.1] Ryan: So I thought we'd start off our conversation by talking about suffering, particularly the kind of suffering we cause ourselves because this is really the ground for why we would even need to talk about self-compassion. And so there's a couple of ways we can maybe get into the causality of the situation we're in and one of them comes from evolutionary biology and it's around the interactions between our old brain and our new brain. Maybe you can start by explaining what that's all about?

[0:01:16.3] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Ok, so that's a great question. So the first thing that is understanding that we are biologically created beings, we're created by the genes we inherit from mom and dad, and they build us a body and they build us a brain, and that brain is designed by evolution to do certain things and to want certain things. So into your brain you have systems that hang there, anxiety and jealousy and sex and all of that, that's all being built for you, all those motivation systems are being built for you, you didn't design them and sometimes you don't even want them. But about two million years ago we also started to develop social intelligences which allow us to think in a particular kind of way, and these intelligences, the way we think and stimulate and activate some of these underlying emotional and motivational processes. So imagine a zebra running away from a lion, as soon as the zebra's away, they can't smell it, see it or hear it, there is nothing to stimulate that threat system so the threat system calms down quite quickly. For humans of course that doesn't always happen, we would be relieved of course we would, but then humans start thinking about imagining what would've happened if I've been caught, can you imagine being eaten by a lion? As far as we know, zebras don't do that kind of thing, they don't worry about tomorrow, they don't worry if there are going to be two lions tomorrow, whereas humans can, so humans can do an awful lot of thinking and ruminating and worrying, and this maintains our threat systems in an active position. And those systems weren't designed to come on and stay on, they were designed to come on and go off once the threat was gone. But we humans can continue to think about it, and it's not just anxiety, anger the same, we can ruminate about our vengeance, the people who are making us angry and what we want to say and what we want to do. We can worry about tomorrow or the day after or we can worry about what we have said and had done or hadn't done, so our brain is capable of holding and stimulating these underlying threat systems in a big way. The other big point to recognise is that what you hold in mind, plays in your body as much as your mind, so if you are very hungry and you see a beautiful meal, this will stimulate an area to your brain called your hypothalamus, which is right in the centre and that in turn will stimulate your stomach acids and saliva, but equally you can just fantasise a wonderful meal and that will stimulate exactly the same pathways in your brain, whether it's real or imagination. An easy one to maybe think about is thinking of something that's maybe a bit sexy, a little bit erotic, and right, you see something a little bit naughty on the television and that can stimulate your pituitary and that will release hormones into your body which will cause arousal. But interestingly of course you will know, we can just lay in bed and fantasise and in some cases people are even fantasising

that they're having a real partner and they do that because the fantasy is a powerful stimulator of hormones in your brain and your body. So this is absolutely fundamental because it's important for mindfulness as well, because what plays in your mind plays in your body, and what plays in your mind on a regular basis stimulates pathways in your brain through a process we call neuroplasticity, that is the more systems are activated, the more those pathways get developed and laid out. So, coming back to your question, we have a new brain, we also have this old brain which is full of underlying desires and motivations, capacities for fear and anger and anxiety and vengeance and sex and also joy of course, and then we have this new brain and this new brain is really really important. It can do wonderful things, because it's science is <inaudible 0:05:15.0> if you're not careful it creates loops in MRI where we become, we worry about things, we ruminate about things, we hold on to anger, we go over and over things in our minds, we worry about tomorrow, and that is going to have a major impact on how our brains are working and what's happening in our body. So this is really quite important and you're really interesting series of programs on mindfulness, why do we need mindfulness? We need mindfulness because actually our brain is a bit of a mess, it's a bit chaotic in there and unless we have mindfulness it's actually really difficult to see what's going on and bring some stability to the mind.

[0:05:53.6] Ryan: So I thought maybe we can zoom in on one of these loops in particular, which is self-criticism, which seems very prevalent in our culture. And I wonder if you could just, you've just spoken to a kind of evolutionary biological view of how we create certain loops, but it also seems like it might be fueled also from a cultural angle, from how we're brought up.

[0:06:17.0] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Yeah, very much, so self-criticism again is something that we suspect, we don't know for sure, but we suspect no other animal does, we suspect it's unlikely that chimpanzees will hang around and be critical of themselves, because of the way they interacted with another chimpanzee yesterday, or they found they've put on some weight or something like that, where as human beings we do that a lot. So self-criticism is part of our human monitoring system and is linked to para-detection, so we focus on the things that are going wrong. I didn't do that right, I should've done that better, and that could be better blah blah blah. So the next question you asked which a very important one is can culture increase our tendency to focus on the things that are going wrong within us. And it absolutely can, now we know that self-criticism has many different pathways, many different routes, so one of the routes is exactly as you say, social comparison. So if you look at societies that have low levels of self-criticism such as in Nepal or places like this, what you find is that these are societies that don't engage in all the social comparison, they're societies that are very socially integrated, they're much more socially cohesive. Whereas in our society, particularly in the last thirty, forty years, we've become more and more and more focused on social comparison, social media, how am I doing compared to you, and this really drives or can drive social comparison. So for example suppose you get a pay rise of a hundred dollars a week and you were only anticipating fifty, you say yeah, fantastic! A hundred dollars, twice as much as I thought, its brilliant right, that's fantastic! But then you hear your friend who's doing the same job, they've been altered two hundred dollars, so the moment you have social comparison, you become disappointed in what you've got compared to what they've got. So social comparison drives disappointment and when it's linked to yourself it drives that same sort of disappointment and frustration, oh, they're smarter than me, they're more attractive than me, they've got more friends than me, they're more popular than me, blah blah blah. So that is one source of self-criticism which is generated by the culture, there are many other sources but that's a culturally driven thought source on self-criticism.

[0:08:51.0] Ryan: So maybe we could get into a little bit of the kind of emotional profile of self-criticism, of like what kind of emotional responses does it invoke? And how might those sort of affect our bodies?

[0:09:04.9] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Yeah, well we've established, didn't we that the way you think and how you imagine things has a really major impact on what plays in your body, what stimulates, how your mind is stimulated, and so we know that when you, you know, imagine that you make a mistake about something, imagine that for example you forgot to record this program, so <inaudible 0:09:30.2> . Ok, so the thing is that if your friends around you say oh, this is usually done, you know, don't worry, Paul will be quite happy to do another interview with you, blah blah blah, that will calm you down, so you will face having made a mistake, an unintentional mistake, you will calm down. If on the other hand the people around you are critical, how could you do that? I mean you've done it so many times, it's stupid, now look what you've done, you've got us in a real mess, that will actually make your problem twice as difficult to cope with, so it's like a double whammy, on the one hand you have the disappointment of the thing, and then you have the criticism from the other people that makes you even more distressed and upset. So when things are going poorly, if you're around people who are supportive, it will help calm you down. And self-criticism works in your brain in exactly the same way, people don't realise this, but it does, so remember, if you lay in bed and you have a fantasy, you don't need a real person in the room, you can do it yourself right, but it's the same with criticism, you don't need somebody else attacking you as you could do it for yourself. Now if you do it for yourself and you're hostile and you're aggressive and you tell yourself I'm useless blah blah blah, you're going to stimulate areas of your brain that are linked to stress, and in fact we've done studies showing that if people are very self-critical of themselves, they're stimulating deep areas of the brain called the amygdala and this area is associated with threat processing, so self-criticism, particularly the emotions of self-criticism, the anger or contempt or whatever, this is no good. So people say oh, so does that mean I shouldn't be so critical? No, it doesn't mean that, what it means is be careful of the emotion. So we have a thing which we call compassionate self-correction that is that you correct yourself because you want to be your best, so it's encouraging you. So supposing you make a mistake, then the way to deal with that like you forgot to record this program is to actually try to say okay, so how did that go wrong? What did I do? Because I don't want to do it again, I don't want to make the same error twice, so you hold yourself in a kind of a kindly supportive recognising yeah, that wasn't terribly clever, you'd made a mistake, working out what happened and then making a commitment to improve next time. The same as if you have an argument with somebody, maybe you lose your temper a little bit with somebody you care about, the same thing, you can come away from that being very self-critical or you could think hang on there, let me think about that was about, why did that happen to me? Because I really want to understand that, because I don't want that to happen again. So when we're compassionately self-correcting, we have a real desire to be at our best, a real desire to but through encouragement, support and understanding, where self-criticism, particularly that associated with anger, you stupid person! Why did you do that? That isn't going to help you, not in the long run, it will make you feel bad.

[0:12:31.5] Ryan: So I think what I'm hearing you saying is that there's a way of being actually a good mentor to ourselves rather than being a big critic to ourselves, so maybe connected to this you, in your book Mindful Compassion, you had these interesting diagrams comparing green that's motivated and organised around a competitiveness or a criticalness and one that's organised around being compassionate or caring. So maybe you can just get into, first of all, how a green organised around one is different from the other.

[0:13:03.8] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Ok, so that's a wonderful question. So the key thing is that motives organise your mind, what your motive is and when we come onto compassion we

will talk about the concept of compassion is about motivations intention. So how does motives organise your mind? Well, think about this, you're going to go to a party right, now suppose you're going to go there and you're motivated for competitiveness. In this party there are going to be some colleagues of yours who are looking to get a top job okay, and your boss is there, so you're going to have to kind of impress them more than your friends or you colleagues impress your boss, so you're in a competitive frame of mind. So going to the party, now let's look at this bit by bit. What are you paying attention to? Who are you paying attention to? What are you thinking? What are you planning? How do you behave? How do you react? Somebody comes past you and looks a little distressed, how do you react? Because you need to get to your boss, because this is your one chance to impress them right, what are you going to do? So your competitive mind organises your attention, your thinking, your behaviour, your emotions, supposing your boss seems very interested in you, then your emotions will go up, supposing your boss does not seem interested in you, your emotions will go down. So supposing on the other hand that you go to the party to, I don't know, find a sexual partner, what you attend to, who you talk to, how you talk to them, all of those things will be very different. Supposing that you go to the party and your intention is there to be friendly and a good friend, find out how people are doing, take an interest in other people and so on and so forth, then what you attend to, what you feel, what you think, who you talk to and how you talk to them, will all be very different. So the motivation that we have and what carries us around and what organises what we attend to, how we think, how we behave, what kinds of feelings are going to arise in this, if it's going to be a good thing or a bad thing, is very much dependent upon your intention. If you're very competitive right, supposing you're very competitive, very narcissistic, then you go to the party to impress your boss and you find your boss was rather unpleasant to one of your colleagues and they become a little upset about it, so it's clear they're not going to get the promotion, now if you're very competitive there'd be a part of you that would be pleased about that because they're out of the game now, okay, whereas if you're in a compassionate mind, distress will cause you to be unhappy, you wouldn't want to see that. So the same signal of stress or distress will depend upon whether you're in a competitive mind or a caring mind, okay, so even the same signal will be different according to motivation. Now, the point that you made I think at the beginning of your introduction was the fact that tragically, over the last twenty or thirty years our competitive motivation was simply highly high jacked by the media and politicians, they're driving up, ratcheting up people's competitive motivations all the time, now this is quite serious for people like me, because what's happening is that people are becoming more and more self-focused and less and less community focused and we see this in politics and all kinds of ways. So it's a problem, because competitive minds are not particularly empathic, I have to say, and there has been a drop in empathy over the last twenty years or so, so you know we've got to be careful of what modus we stimulate in ourselves, I think.

[0:16:40.0] Ryan: I think especially when we're children and we're feeling triggered or feeling stressed out or feeling getting caught up in a competitive cycle, one of the sort of natural aids that we do with this is like going to a parent and say we're having trouble with this thing, or you go to a teacher and you sort of seek out these connections and these soothing sources in our lives, I think maybe some of the potential that we're talking about with self-compassion is that we can sort of become a refuge to our self and some ways that we can start triggering this more compassionate, soothing motivation in our mind is a way of actually maybe down-regulating this threat system or this competitive organisation in our minds. Is that right?

[0:17:24.3] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Yeah, that's absolutely right. That's absolutely right, so the caring signal from other people has a very profound impact in your brain, it affects the frontal cortex and various emotion systems, it affects your body, it's part of your also a

nervous system called your parasympathetic system, so receiving caring kind signals has an impact on a whole range of physiological processes, so we know for example that when people are going through stressful things, for example when they're having a medical examination, if they hold hands with somebody they care about their level of stress arousal is much lower, and many many things like that, children as you indicate once they distress they immediately turn to the parent who cares for them and calms them down, so we're biologically, particularly humans are biologically set up for a certain kind of signal to activate a whole array of physiological systems in our brain that calms down. But this is important because it's not about reducing threats, that is part of it, but it's actually a specific signal that itself has a calming property, okay, so these signals of affection and caring and friendship, are specific signals they're not just reducing threat, they're actually also creating a particular kind of physiological pattern within us.

[0:18:50.5] Ryan: So, maybe we could turn towards the actual potential of cultivating compassion and self-compassion, and there's a few different modalities I think you're familiar with, one is from a therapeutic feel the thing's called compassion focused therapy.

[0:19:07.4] Dr. Paul Gilbert: <inaudible 0:19:10.8>

[0:19:11.4] Ryan: Yeah, and then there's also mindfulness practices and there's also compassion cultivation practices, and so there's sort of a broad open question, but you know what is the real efficacy of cultivating more of this kind of motivation?

[0:19:27.1] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Oh, I think the evidence in favour of cultivating compassion now is pretty good, I think it's pretty overwhelming actually. The main problem that you have therapeutically when you're working in my area which is with people who have depression and anxiety, is there's a lot of resistance to it, they don't like it, and they say well I don't deserve compassion or compassion is weak, or it isn't really going to help me, or when I start to be compassionate I'm just so sad I can't cope with it, or sometimes people would have a lot of anger and <inaudible 0:19:58.4>, so you don't want to squeak all their fears, blocks and resistances. So these are people that are trying to be compassionate, no, they're not even trying, but where they actually don't... engaging in compassion is very difficult. So that's the therapy, we'll talk about that a little later, but for those individuals who are able to focus on compassion stimuli and once again it's not rocket science you know if you lay in bed and you think of something sexy that stimulates your brain and your body, if you focus on a compassionate signal, that will stimulate the areas of your brain that are very good for how can you calm down, feel content, feel grounded, feel peaceful, and there's a saying you know you have a friend who speaks to you in a very kind, friendly way when you're struggling, and somebody that is critical to you, but if you yourself create a kind and friendly tone to your own thinking, the way you think to yourself, this can also calm you down. Now we began compassionate focus therapy back in the late eighties, we were doing therapies called cognitive therapy and in cognitive therapy people will take like you know extra critical like I'm not good, people don't like me, you know I messed up this, I messed up that, and then you would ask them to actually stand back and imagine they were looking at it in a more objective way, and so people would say ah, okay, perhaps it's just one friend that made a negative comment and that's what upset me, maybe my friends actually do like me because they phone me up, so. What we've discovered is that people can do that but the emotion of the thoughts is hostile, so even though they're thinking to themselves, actually perhaps I am liked more than I thought I was, they're still not having a friendly texture to that thought, it will be "Come on, look at the evidence, you don't need to think like this, you have friends who like you, they phone you up for god's sake!" So the emotional texture was hostile right, so the first thing we did really was just to teach people to create a friendly voice, right. So just to create a really friendly voice, so when you're thinking these alternative thoughts

"well actually I do have friends who care about me and actually my friend did phone me up the other day", you have that friendly voice. Then we taught people how to generate parasympathetic arousal through breathing, teaching them to breathe slower and deeper than they would normally, because when you get tensed up your shoulders curl in and your breathing becomes shallow and that is your sympathetic systems, okay, so by putting your shoulders back, opening your chest and diaphragm area, slowing the breath, creating the compassionate voice, these are signals in the brain which will help you to calm down, so these signals are really really important, of body, breathing, focus, intention, friendliness, all of those signals, then you practice and train to activate those signals when you're getting stressed and upset, so that is for us the beginning of self-compassion. And you have compassion which is orientated to understanding that suffering is a common issue in the world, your suffering may be different to other people's suffering in its detail, but suffering is part of life, of course Kristin Neff talks a lot about this. Then we have people develop an empathy for themselves, but you need to understand a little bit about why they think how they think, <inaudible 0:23:38.2>, so there are many other aspects to it, but self-compassion comes by this ability to know this and to ground, and that's where mindfulness comes in because mindfulness teaches you to alert and aware of what is going through your mind, because you know, sometimes when we're working with depressed people, they don't even notice they're being self-critical, it's so routine for them, so every-day for them, until you stop them, sit them down and get them to pay attention, they haven't even noticed. So mindfulness is the beginning of a journey to notice, ah, that's my critical voice, it seems quite contemptuous, quite angry, okay, so I'm going to take a breath and allow me to bring my friendly compassion voice to help me in this moment of difficulty.

[0:24:25.6] Ryan: So it sounds like mindfulness can be a tool that can be supportive in this path of cultivating compassion, but it might not actually lead to it, there really seem to be two different tracks to me where mindfulness is more about cultivating this awareness of the present moment in a non-judgmental way and there's almost a quality where it's engaged, but it's almost slightly aloof in comparison to compassion, which is more about, from what I understand, opening up to particularly difficulties and suffering and when you meet those things having a sort of will to alleviate any suffering that's there, so I guess maybe the question is, does mindfulness now actually lead into compassion or there's really two different tracks that we may be cultivating simultaneously.

[0:25:17.3] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Yes, I mean it's a wonderful question. So there's a lot of discussion about this, so mindfulness is attention, compassion is intention, okay, so one's motivation, training, and the other one is attention training and they're very different. So there's some people who teach mindfulness who say well, you automatically become compassionate when you become mindful. Well, that may or may not be true, not all of us think that's the case, you can become mindful for many reasons, you can become a mindful piano player or guitar player, so you can become mindful in all kinds of ways, it doesn't necessarily follow that the intention of how to become fully present in this moment is benevolent, and it might be, but not necessarily. Whereas compassion is about intention, motivation, now this is very very important of this distinction, the Dalai Lama has a brilliant example about why we must cultivate compassion and intention, or cultivate compassion intention. So he tells a story that when he was a young man, he used to like to fix watches when he was in Tibet. Travellers would come and they would give him their broken watches so he could fix them, so he told this story about one day when he was sixteen or whatever it was, he was fixing a watch and he dropped a screw right into the middle of the mechanism, and in that moment of frustration he picked up a hammer and smashed the watch right, so then he looked at his audience and smiled as he said the problem with that is no more watch, the issue is this he says, within that moment of mindlessness, okay, I actually did the exact opposite of my intention, my intention was

to create a beautiful watch, that was my intention. To create a wonderful working beautiful watch and in that moment of anger I actually then did exactly the opposite of my true intention, and the point about mindfulness is you cannot always stop what arises, but by being mindful you don't reach for the hammer, because you keep in mind my intention right, what's in mind all the time is my intention, what is my intention? So for those of us who follow the tradition of compassion training, as opposed to pure mindfulness training, we cultivate the issue of intentionality, in any moment, what is my intention, in any moment that I'm with another person, or in any moment that I'm dealing with an argument I go, what is my intention? So for example I'm having an argument with somebody I care about, has my intention drifted off into I just want to hurt you? Or can I hold my intention, as you know my intention is always to be at my compassionate best, right, so I've got to work out what this argument is about, I've got to not let angry self, the angry part of mine control my mind. I know it's there, but I'm actually going to hold to my intention. Mindfulness, in the tradition that I work with hold you to your intention and this is why we train people in intention, because if you haven't trained in the intention, the motivation, the desire, and worked on the issues of what allows you to be compassionate, developing your empathy, developing your compassion to others and so on, then it becomes difficult, so for us, compassion training is very different to mindfulness training, but mindfulness training is really essential to hold, to be able to be aware and keeping to your intention and building your intention.

[0:28:47.6] Ryan: So in your compassion training, how do you go about cultivating this intention?

[0:28:53.3] Dr. Paul Gilbert: Ok so that's a great question, so the first thing is helping people understand why would it be useful, why would you want to do it, right, so why would you want to develop compassion to yourself or anybody else? And to some extent this is self-interested, because if you're compassionate to other people they'll obviously be compassionate to you, and that's real nice, okay. The second thing is that you discover when you're compassionate to other people, you actually, your relationships get easier, you discover that there's a joyfulness in compassion, because when you can be helpful to others there's a certain joyfulness to that as well, it gives me pleasure to see that you are feeling better, it gives me pleasure. And it's interesting that you know one of the most important motives that people say they have in life, when you ask them what would you like your life to be about? They say I'd like to make a difference, I'd like to be useful to people, I'd like to be, you know, I mean somebody would say well, I'd like to make a lot of money, or run for president of the States or something, but actually many many people desire, the motives are to be helpful to other people, so being helpful to other people is really quite important. So there are three dimensions to compassion training, which we work on, first is the compassion to others, looking at how that is and how we gain empathy, how can you be compassionate to an angry person for example, being compassionate to somebody you like, that's easy, how can you be compassionate to somebody you don't like? How can you be compassionate to somebody who has different values to you? How can you be compassionate to somebody who might not appreciate you or might not reciprocate? If we're only compassionate to the people we like, well that's easy, but that's not real compassion, so the first thing is learning to be compassionate when it's difficult. And the second is compassion flowing in, right, so are you able to appreciate other people's compassion, ok, how much do you notice other people smiling at you or being kind to you or when you're in the shop how much do you notice somebody just say have a good day? I mean, do you dismiss that, oh that's just silly, they're just paid to do that, or do you allow that to land, you know? So what we know is that for many of our people that I work with, the very core of being able to experience compassion coming in, they're very good at noticing people when they're critical but they're not very good at noticing people when they're helpful to them. Gratitude, learning to be grateful for the

things that other people do for you, in a positive way, not in a sort of guilty, obligatory way, but in a positive way. So practicing compassion coming in, sometimes we give people meditation exercises where they imagine a compassionate figure or compassionate other or a compassionate mentor, and then imagine what that figure would say to them that would help them, or what that figure would want to do if they were real. And then the final one that you've mentioned of course is self-compassion, so in our system all of these trees are interconnected, we find that self-compassion tends to grow in conditions where people have received compassion, where they're open to compassion. So recent work's showing receiving compassion is probably as important if not more important than self-compassion, so self-compassion and this taking this friendly open empathic orientation to oneself, wanting to try to understand oneself as best one is, and using in our model evolutionary wisdom, in other words look, your brain wasn't designed by you, even the sense of yourself wasn't designed by you. If I was being kidnapped as a three day old baby by a violent drug gang, this version talking to you today would not be here, okay, a very different version of Paul Gilbert would exist in the world. Even my genetic expression would be different, because we know that genes, its genetic expressions are affected by die environment. Now I wouldn't have chosen to be kidnapped as a three day old baby, so when it comes to understanding my mind, it's important that I mindfully recognise I have nature's mind, I have a mind that's been built for me, I don't have to earn it, so if I have urges of rage or depression or anxiety, that's nature's mind right, I didn't design any of that stuff, so self-compassion allows you to become an observer of what's happening in the mind without earning it. Okay, now this is very important in the Buddhist traditions because what happens in the Buddhist traditions is that people have illusions because they get caught up in this content, they think this is what they are, anger, anxiety, passion, jealousy, love, sex, so because they're having all these experiences they think this is what they are, but in reality they've all been created for you by your genes and by your background, right, you're just another human being passing through and that's why. So one of the key things of self-compassion is understanding you have a mind that's a little bit chaotic through no fault of your own, it's not your fault, it really isn't. But what you can do is going to be mindfully aware and start choosing where you want to put your attention. Because where you put your attention will have an impact on how your mind and your body plays out. And if your attention sits in rumination or anger, you will suffer through no fault, it's not your fault, your brains designed that way, but you don't have to accept it, you can learn how to step inside of it.

[0:34:16.1] Ryan: So that last bit sounds like you're kind of using some modern scientific understanding so it's almost like a form of analytical meditation to start loosening the grip of self-clinging on some level, where we're not totally in control of this thing, and if that actually starts to loosen, it will open up the space for self-compassion, is that right?

[0:34:41.4] Dr. Paul Gilbert: That's absolutely right, the illusion of the self, you know, for us the biggest illusion of the self is in the over-identification of the biological, your sex-drive, your anger, your fear, they've all been created for you and it turns out many many other animals have systems in their brain that will do the same right, these systems in the brain. Your capacity for observing, your knowing awareness, that awareness, now that is something you do not show at random as far as we know, that is very important, right, so just being aware that this capacity for an awareness, this consciousness, the ability to be mindful, that is something quite special but that is pure, you know in this moment of observation you can observe your anger or your pain or whatever, this... the observer, the observing part of your mind is not in pain, it's not angry, it's observing it, but this is very important, I'm sure you in your mindfulness you do it all the time, don't identify with what you observe. So you know your mind is like a spotlight, you can shine on many things, but it's not the thing it shines on. My good colleague Matthieu Ricard says your mind is like water, this observing mind, this expansive mind is like water, it can contain a medicine or

a poison, but it is not the medicine or the poison, so the content of mind, what comes into mind, anger, rage, passion, sex, violence, that content is human, right, it's in all of us because we've been built this way, but your capacity to be mindfully observant and hold an intention that in this chaos of my mind, I'm going to try and bring the spotlight, the candle of compassion, to try to help regulate the stuff because it's not my thought, I didn't design it, I've just discovered, I've got this brain in this body doing all this stuff, and so all I need to do is just to be mindfully clear of my intention, but when my rage arises, which nature built, and my fear arises, which nature built, I hold my intention and when my sexuality arises, which nature built, I didn't cause harm, I can enjoy it, but I didn't do things that are harmful, right, so this is the <inaudible 0:37:07.8> hold your intention and mindfulness comes in, we don't over-identify with the content, but do take control over them as best you can.

[0:37:18.8] Ryan: I think that's a good spot to bring this conversation to a close, thank you so much for taking the time to share your wisdom with us and this audience, and for everyone out there in the audience, you can scroll down this page and you'll see a further bio about Doctor Paul Gilbert and some links to learn more about his work and his books, I encourage you to do that, and thank you again for taking this time.

[0:37:42.8] Dr. Paul Gilbert: That's wonderful, thank you so much for inviting me and come and see the website, there are many videos you can see on our website, so it's a wonderful opportunity to talk to you all, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity.