



MINDFUL IN MAY

Dr. Elise Bialylew, founder of Mindful in May (mindfulinmay.org) and The Mind Life Project (www.mindlifeproject.com) and author of The Happiness Plan, interviews Jon Kabat-Zinn

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Jon Kabat-Zinn is a world-leading pioneer of mindfulness that helped to catalyse the mindfulness movement. He created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) and is internationally known for his work as a scientist, writer, and meditation teacher engaged in bringing mindfulness into the mainstream of medicine and society. He is professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and author of numerous books, including Full Catastrophe Living, Wherever you go there you are, and Coming to Our Senses.

Elise: John, this is a real privilege for me. Before we get into the conversation around what we're going to talk about, I really just wanted to take this opportunity, selfishly, to thank you from the bottom of my heart. Because, you know, before we even got talking, I sat in meditation. I was surprised, actually, as emotion came up for me. I had tears arriving, and they were tears of gratitude.

I have all these books (for the listeners that may not know). This one's particularly well-worn. It's actually yellow. Pages have gone golden-yellow. I was just reflecting on how incredible it is that a human being, when they are connected to their (as you call it) karmic assignment or purpose, can so profoundly touch so many people's lives that they don't even necessarily realise: For me, personally, it's reading your books, having your narrative and your articulation of this practice of mindfulness, really, over the past 40 years of my life. Also, having been fortunate enough to come to your retreat when you came to Australia. What you taught and what you transmitted really helped to unlock some really limiting self-narratives and stories that literally did transform my life and has helped me to be of much greater service to the world. I just felt I had to share that with you because I am deeply grateful.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Thank you, Elise. I'm virtually speechless at what you're saying and very deeply touched because of course, that's why I do what I do, because there's something about this practice, the cultivation of mindfulness that's not a thing, and it's not mechanical. It can't be very easily or trivially described. But it can be transmitted in a way that changes people's lives. If that's happened for you, of course, the gratitude is mutual because that's why I do the work that I do. Part of the beauty of this – and this is true for literally millions of people – is that the only way to repay that gratitude, or even to respect that, is to simply transmit it, pay it forward. Do you know what I'm saying? You, from what I understand of your whole enterprise about Mindful and May, and what you're trying to do in terms of social action and support for really important causes around water scarcity and so forth, is huge and exactly what we need in the world today for mindfulness not to simply be some nice little meditation technique that reduces your stress and makes you feel a little “glowy,” or all better, or for that matter, lengthens your telomeres. It's something that's actually profoundly transformative and healing for the world.

In order for that to be the case, we have to, basically, live what we mean by practice.

Elise: You started this roughly in your 20s, or thereabouts.

Jon Kabat-Zin: I was 21 when I started meditating.

Elise: You were a student, MIT. I don't think there would be listeners that haven't come upon your work, and they can Google you and find out more.

Jon Kabat-Zin: I hope there are.

Elise: Really, you've been doing this for 40 to 50 years, and teaching this with your whole soul. This is a question you've been asked a million times. If you could define mindfulness.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Let me preface this by saying, when reporters or journalists ask me, "Well, okay. You've written all these books and everything. Just give me, what is mindfulness in one word, for God's sake?" I come up with a couple of answers. One is awareness. There's really no difference between what I mean by mindfulness and what I mean by awareness. Pure and simple. Pure awareness. Two words. The other word that I use is relationality. I'm not even sure relationality is an English word. I don't mean relationship; I mean relationality. The fact that any arising is not completely self-independent but is related to the causes and conditions that give rise to that arising. Everything is, in some sense, nested or interconnected with everything else.

We say for instance, if we're going to meditate, "I'll get my body on the chair or on the cushion." Who's saying that? There's a "you" that's going to get your body on the chair, but it's not your body. This is built-in, baked into the English, and almost all other languages. They're certain dualisms: subject-object dualism. That "I", whatever the entity of the personal pronouns are pointing to, has a body. I have a body. The beauty of this – again, coming to

Zen and what a koan functions as – it’s to ask: what are these personal pronouns? Who am I? Probably, of all the various millions of meditative practices, the absolute core practice would be to ask oneself that question. Then not try to fill it in with cognitive responses, but to just listen. Who’s even asking the question? Who’s breathing, for that matter? Who’s aware? Who’s meditating?

We’re a little off the definition, but I guess we’re playing jazz. I like to joke. I ask people by the thousands in large audiences, “Who here in this room is breathing?” Of course, thousands of hands go up. Then I say, “That can’t quite be true because if it were up to you to be breathing, you would have died a long time ago. You would have gotten a text or a phone message, or something like that, distracted. Whoops! Dead.” The brainstem, and the phrenic nerve, and the diaphragm— whoever you think you are, whoever the “you” is, that “Me, I am breathing” – won’t let you anywhere near the real breathing apparatus. You could hold your breath for a little bit, but you can’t commit suicide by holding your breath. In a very real way, it’s not fair to say that you are breathing.

We use language in a way that prevents us from seeing the actuality of the deep interconnectedness, and the impersonal nature of even the breathing, never mind all the other homeostatic, metabolic processes that go into this galaxy that we will call the human body. It’s got as many atoms as a galaxy has stars, at least. Most of it is empty space, if you get down small enough, just like a galaxy. The human body is, itself, a remarkable manifestation of actuality. We don’t walk down the street thinking that way at all, or seeing each other like that. When you, say, have a baby, you begin to actually understand the miracle of this because even if you birth the baby, you can’t really say that “I did it.” It did itself, with a lot of cooperation and help. But there’s some element of it that’s really beyond thinking.

To come back to the subject-object duality and so forth, and not getting caught in that, breathing is happening, just like the weather is just happening. There's nobody doing weathering, and there's nobody doing breathing. To come back to the definition, or we'll be here for six hours. My working definition, aside from pure awareness or relationality, which is what this whole thing was pointing to, is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. Now, I'll repeat that. It's awareness. That awareness that arises instrumentally from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

The non-judgmentally is the kicker because it doesn't mean to force yourself to not have any judgements, but more like scientists would attempt to suspend the judging as much as they can. So we're not biasing our perceptions, and just attending to whatever's unfolding. The first thing you'll notice is that you've got nothing but judgements. You like this, you don't like that. Your breath is boring. Meditation's stupid. The opposite, that "All my friends do it. Now, I'm going to be able to brag about it." Whatever it is, that's just noise in the system. It's called thinking. What the definition is pointing to is embracing whatever it is that arises when you attend.

You're a physician right? Physicians, when they get rounds in the hospital, are called attendings for a reason. It's really important to attend.

Elise: What's the relevance of, "I am me, and I have a body"? What's the relevance of unpacking that?

Jon Kabat-Zin: Let me just give you another encapsulation for. It's a pointer. That is, maybe the bottom line is simply this: to not take personally what's not personal. If you start to watch what the mind is doing, virtually 24/7, even during sleep – especially with people who have a hard time sleeping because they're so stressed or in pain or whatever – is that the mind is cascading like a

waterfall of thoughts, endlessly, and that we actually build narratives out of. The story of me. My favourite subject. The centre of the universe. It's fine to be the centre of the universe as long as you remember that everybody else is the centre of the universe too, so it doesn't, in that sense, make you special. Then the question is, is that narrative true?

The real purpose of mindfulness practice is liberation from all of the various ways that we actually shackle ourselves, imprison ourselves, disregard ourselves. The implicit violence that's included in that and the harm that actually can extend itself out for decades, where you never feel like you're really here. You're always trying to get here. Then meditation becomes, if you're not careful, one more attempt to get here and have a great experience. If you flip that and just realise, if you sit down, or lie down, or stand on your head, or whatever you want to do to meditate, instead of idealising a great experience, maybe you could just for a fraction of a second realise that you're eyes are seeing, they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, hopefully; your ears are hearing; your spine is holding you in the posture that you've adopted, however that is; your breath is moving freely and keeping you alive; your mind is doing whatever your mind is doing, but that's not all of what's going on in any given moment.

So you do not have to be carried away in the thought stream and narrative that we're talking about, the story of me. Therefore, right in this moment, the experience that you're having is actually quite remarkable. Nothing wrong with your eyes, nothing wrong with your ears, nothing wrong with your digestion. You're already whole. You're already complete in this moment. It doesn't mean, "If I only meditate for the next 40 or 50 years, then I'll get to..." whatever it is that you think 40 or 50 years or meditation will do. That one moment of insight and liberation will give you right here, right now.

Thousands of people will say after an MBSR course or something like that, they'll say things like, "You gave me back my life." I'll say – or all MBSR teachers will say – "No, we didn't. We didn't give you anything. You gave your life back to yourself by threading this needle. By letting go of trying to ratify some goal, some ideal, that you have to force yourself to be a Buddha, an enlightened... or whatever your mind will come up with that will 'gin up' the value of having to take this enormous amount of time and meditate, if you think of meditation that way. But if you think of meditation as like life itself, that the true meditative curriculum is life. It's not sitting on your arse and looking like a statue in the British Museum.

As we say to our patients when they come into the clinic with all sorts of medical diagnoses, unimaginable, "From our perspective, there's more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what's wrong with you. We're going to pour energy during these eight weeks into what's right with you in the form of awareness, and attention, and kindness towards yourself when you notice you're not being kind to yourself. Just see what happens." No idealised goal, although we'll ask people to set goals because then it's a lot of fun to ask them eight weeks later, "What would you say about this goal that you set for yourself eight weeks before?" A lot of times, people don't even remember it. The biggest goal that people said, if they have cancer or some horrible challenge in their life, their biggest goal is peace of mind. Peace of mind is right here.

Elise: For the listeners, could you help the listeners right now, in this moment, locate awareness?

Jon Kabat-Zin: Sure. So far, we've been talking, and people have been listening, presumably, and also watching our faces. To one degree or another, they've been attending. Depending on how resonant you are with what's being pointed to in our conversing, you will have feelings inside your body, or a sense

of, “I’m confused,” or, “Yes, I agree,” or, “I want to learn more,” or whatever, which is, of course, your very purpose in having this kind of thing, is so that people will, in fact, resonate to some degree and continue with this adventure of a lifetime.

We can just also realise, because it’s already happening, that this conversation is a meditation in and of its own. It’s one that everybody’s listening into. It’s not just you and me. It’s not just about you and me because we’re aware that there are people who are going to be listening to this conversation all over the place. We’re doing it, very instrumentally, for that reason. At the same time, we’re doing it non-instrumentally because it’s just what it is. We haven’t scripted. We don’t have any ulterior motive for doing this other than it be of use. It’s an offering. It’s intrinsically, in some sense, generous because it’s assuming that people are going to be able to hear it in a way that is validating of their own experience and inspiring in some way. That’s why I do that. I would call that love.

We could invite people right now as they’re listening to my voice - you can shut your eyes, then you don’t need to look at me or you, just attend to the feeling of the body sitting here as you’re hearing what I’m saying. Feel. See if you can bring awareness to a sense of the carriage of the body. How you have chosen to position your body. You could be lying on a couch, or on your bed, or sitting in a chair. See if you can just envelop the entirety of your body with awareness, so that you can feel it from the bottoms of your feet, right through your entire torso, and from the tips of your fingers and thumbs right up through your armpits and shoulders, and the neck and head. The whole body, just sitting here, lying here, standing here, whatever it is. Breathing, because it’s doing it anyway. If I shut up, and we just went offline for the rest of your life and my lifetime, it would still be doing this.

There are an infinite number of moments in which you can drop into yourself. When you drop into the present moment, you're basically stepping outside of time, and you're just inhabiting what we could call the space or the field of your own awareness. You can actually practice this. You can practice accessing your own awareness. Because most of the time, we get hijacked by our thinking and our emotions. But our awareness is another form of intelligence that we're born with that's far more powerful than thinking because all you need to do is think the biggest thought that you can think, like the infinite, of not just the galaxy but the universe, or never mind the universe, the multi-dimensional multiverse, and you can be aware of how that feels. You can hold that whole thought in awareness. So, the space of awareness has to be bigger than the content of any thought.

There's nothing wrong with you in that sense. You are already a genius, a miraculous being, to be able to hold all of this in no time. With the beauty of a body that's not dead yet. Still breathing. Good. We're ahead of the curve here. You can rest in this awareness and let the body do its breathing, let the mind do its thinking, if it's going to think. We're not trying to stop where the mind is going to go, persevere or create narrative. We're just going to hold it all in awareness. If anxiety comes up, you can ask, "Is my awareness of the anxiety anxious?" If pain in the body comes up, you can ask, "Is the awareness of the discomfort," or the pain, or whatever you want to call it, "in pain, suffering?" Investigate for yourself. Be your own laboratory scientist. That's what it really means to be a meditator. You're investigating the nature of reality of your own being, of your own mind. Of all the stuff you tell yourself that in the darkest moments of the night, when you wake up, and you're a little anxious, you know isn't entirely true. Most of the time, you're caught up in it. That's where you can lose decades of your life caught up in thinking without nurturing access to this other element of being human that is so profound and liberating.

We started off saying that, in some sense, the real value of this is liberating us and the ways in which we imprison ourselves, and which conventional reality and thought forms toxic thoughts and so forth, trauma, and can be imprisoning. Then we're always looking for an escape, instead of realising we're really already free. There's no separation between that freedom except to wake up moment, by moment, by moment.

As we sit here in the final minutes of what could be thought of as a guided meditation, just feeling the breath moving in and out of your body. Bathing in the sounds of the voice that's given rise to all of these various thoughts.

Attending to whatever degree possible to how you've received what I've been saying. Whether it's in any kind of congruence of relationship with your own experience and if it is trusted. If it isn't, don't trust it. Find your own way.

That's really the ultimate invitation to ask yourself, "What is my way? Who is breathing? Who is meditating? Who is sitting? Who am I?" The most honest answer that I've ever come up with, really, when you drill right down to it, is, "Don't know."

A lot of people, when they start out practising mindfulness, they start out paying attention to an object of attention. The most widely used way to do it, the most widely used object of attention is, as I mentioned, our breathing. You can feel the breath. It's a really good thing to feel it in the body. I don't know how you could feel it not in the body. You'd feel it someplace, at the nose, or in the chest, or in the abdomen because the abdomen moves with the breath, the so-called diaphragmatic breathing. This is going on constantly.

If you're brand new to the practice, is really helpful to find a place in the body where your breath sensations are most vivid. Where for you, the belly's the place. First of all, it's pretty far away from the head. It's a good idea to get as far away from the head as possible because this is where we identify all of our

crazy thinking. Down the belly, or the chest, or the nostrils. Wherever it's most vivid for you. Then you ride on the waves of your own breathing. Almost like surfing. You feel. It's not thinking about breathing, it's feeling the breath moving in the body and recognising that you don't have to push it or pull it. But you being breathed in a certain way, so you let go and just surf or float on the waves of your own breath. It's full awareness.

Then you'll notice – especially for beginners, but everybody will notice – it doesn't take long. Even though you swore meditation's the most important thing in your life, that's why you're watching this, and you're going to be the greatest meditator ever. But within an embarrassingly short period of moments, not even minutes, your mind is going to be thinking of something else, including judging how stupid this all this, or how bad my mind is because I can't even follow one in-breath or one out-breath. All this chatter is going to come up. But that wasn't the assignment. The assignment was to just stay with the breath.

You need another instruction, and that is when the awareness function notices that you're not on your breath in that moment, notice what's on your mind because that's just as valid as the breath sensation. Notice what's on your mind, then come back to the breath. Then if the mind wanders a million times, notice what's on your mind a million times. Don't judge it. Or, as best you can, don't judge it. Don't pursue the ones that are really enticing and reject all the ones that are humiliating and embarrassing: "That's not me, but man, I'd love that." Just notice each one. Notice the tendency to self-identify all the time, and rest with the object of attention.

The thing I wanted to stay is, that's how most meditation is taught to begin with. There's one thing, if you're a beginner, that is really helpful to know within that framework. That is, although we use the breath as an object of

attention, it's not about the object. It's not about breathing. It's about awareness. About awareness itself. The focus could be anywhere. That's one which the real curriculum is life itself.

Elise: I often think about it, if we go and have brain surgery, you do some diligent research into what surgeon you're going to choose.

Jon Kabat-Zin: We actually do.

Elise: There's a lot of teachers out there that have varying levels of experience. Not just in mindfulness, but also in psychology, and trauma. I think it's a great message to make sure. People need to trust themselves, not just defer total responsibility to a teacher and betray their own sense of something.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Thanks for bringing that up because that's really a disaster when you give yourself over to the teacher. You have to be very careful about that because you're as much a Buddha – if we want to put it in that language – as the Dalai Lama. He'd be the first person to tell you that. He may have been meditating more, so it's really helpful to listen to what he has to say, or whoever is up there on the platform doing the teaching in any context. But you never surrender your own true nature because that is your signature beauty, your signature wholeness. Even if you've never felt whole in your life, well, there's always now.

Elise: I've heard you say that in terms of practice, you're a very disciplined person. You used to get up at 4:00, 5:00 in the morning and do an hour of meditation. The question I have for you is, how much should people be meditating? I know it's a "how long is a piece of string?" but I'd love to hear your perspective on that. Perhaps also, how your own practice might have adapted or changed.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Well, I can tell you that a lot of journalists ask me, “How long do you meditate? Because I understood what they meant, I used to say, “Well, I get up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. Because the kids would get up if they felt any energy now, I sometimes had to really push it back. But I get up early, and I do 45 minutes of mindful yoga, and then I sit for another 45 minutes.” That would be my answer. It was a true answer, and it went on for decades.

Now, when people ask me how long I meditate, somehow, I don’t want to say that. Even though it’s still true. Although my life is rearranged a little bit more. Instead of getting four or five hours of sleep, which I did for 40 years, I like to get more like seven or eight. The real thing is that I don’t want to respond that way because I’ve come to just feel that it’s not true. That the real meditation is life itself. When people ask me how long do I meditate, I can’t really answer that question. My aim is to be as present as I can be without being a caricature of being present.

Elise: How could being with your grandkids be meditation versus not meditation? When you’re saying that, for the listeners. If someone’s swimming, it could be swimming.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Well, very simple. Are you present, or are you lost in thought? It’s as simple as that. If you’re lost in thought, you’re missing whatever it is that’s happening, whether it’s grandkids, whether it’s the arm stroking through the water. Swimming is a fabulous form of meditation. When I’m swimming, that’s swimming mindfully because the conditions call it out of you, in a way. It’s just automatic. You’re going to swim your laps, and then you check that off your to-do list. What we really need is a to-be list, not a to-do list.

From that point of view, the only thing that I’ll say is that formal meditation practice and stillness, whether it’s lying down, or sitting, or standing, or even

very, very slow walking, which is another form – all of those we use in MBSR – any one of them is good enough. Any one of them.

Elise: Brings a memory back of when you came to Australia, and you did the training that I attended.

Jon Kabat-Zin: The Collaroy Centre.

Elise: What you did in that retreat was probably one of the most powerful things. It was a five-day retreat, and you put us into silence for two days or so. We didn't know that was going to happen. What was really interesting is, I think a few people left because that was really intimidating for them. For me, personally, the resistance to be in silence was also strong. I'd always wanted to go on a meditation retreat, but I was scared. There was resistance. Surprising us with that was such a powerful thing. I just wanted to raise that because I think the listeners that may be thinking about going on a retreat or something like that, might feel resistance.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Traditionally, retreats are pretty silent. The teachers talk and guide meditation. The invitation is to actually befriend yourself. That's best done in silence and in nature. The idea of meditation retreat is to create ideal conditions for being comfortable enough to be in your own good company. Then drop into silence. Your mind won't let you alone. That's part of the problem is that people say, "I don't like the silence," but what they don't like is sitting on the cushion, and their mind will not stop driving them crazy. But if you stay with it for three, four, or five days – which is, of course, asking a lot, but we don't push people to go on retreat, we just ask you to stay with it and watch what happens. The mind gets tired of chattering like that, and the awareness function, it's almost like the clouds evaporate, and there it is, the sun. The awareness function's never not here, but it gets occluded by the clouds and

the storms in the mind. Then when you say that, you never forget it. You never forget it.

The value of going on retreat is not to have that experience, but to give yourself over to befriending the unfolding of your day, your moments, the present moment, which is timeless, for a long enough stretch of days where all of the resistance, and chatter, and agendas and everything drops away. Then all of a sudden, that fundamental question, “Who am I?” actually arises. It’s just pure awareness. Sitting on the cushion. Walking. Apprehending this tree, this bush, this flower, this bird. I’ve seen that bird. My whole life, I’ve never seen it before. I’ve never apprehended it.

It’s not building a story, a narrative around it. Because you can go on retreat and then build a narrative of how great your retreat is. You know what that does? It kills the actual outcome of the retreat, because then you’re going to live inside your narrative of how great your retreat was, or how horrible, and painful, and stressful, and boring it was. That’s where we started, was with a narrative that becomes a prison. It’s imprisoning. That’s, again, where the liberation comes in. You put yourself in the cage, but the door is open.

Elise: For people that start off, and they wonder, “Hang on. Meditation, it’s all about being in the present,” how does that fit with making plans for the future? “I have a family. I’ve got to work.” Is this in contradiction? How does this work together?

Jon Kabat-Zin: Well, the challenge is to let our doing come out of our being. We’re called human beings, but we act as if we’re just automatons, human doings, and drop into bed exhausted at the end of the day, and wonder what happened, and then get up the next day and do the same thing.

Let’s say we want to change the future, we want the future to be different, which I think everybody does. We want to have the best outcomes. We want to

have the least harm and the maximum good. At least for us, our family. If you're thinking bigger, for everybody, not just humans, but all species, because if all the animals are gone, we'd be gone too. All the plants. It's a completely inter-connected universe.

If that's the case, then when we're true to ourselves and awake in the present moment, you could say the crystal lattice of the interrelated universe is already different because you have been a commitment to show up, and wake up, and not be caught in your self-centred narrative. Then in some tiny but not insignificant way, the world is already different. People will notice it in you, and they'll ask, "What's going on with you?" and so forth. If thousands of people do that, we are, in a sense, the cells of the one body of the planet. When we align ourselves with what's what deepest, and best, and most beautiful in ourselves, and let the doing come out of that instead of out of greed, hatred, and delusion, which is what usually drives, is, "More for me..... I hate that.... I'm not going anywhere near those people" or whatever it is." Then delusional, just like, really, not knowing up from down, and being seriously lost and terminally confused. That's where the healing goes on, is that you recognise that we're all caught in that to some degree, but we can tilt things in the direction of greater well-being just by attending, just by dropping in, just by reconnecting with the domain of being and then letting the "do" flow out of being.

We teach that to world-class Olympic athletes because they all are incredibly competitive, and they want to win, win, win. Of course, Australia is very big into world-class athletes. It's the mind that usually defeats you in competition because your mind gets in your way. Everybody's finely conditioned, physically, but you have to train the mind to not get in the way of the body, or your performance will suffer.

The more people begin to actually practise in that way, just as what we've learned in medicine about meditation over the past 40 years for individual health and well-being, the curriculum now is to learn that on a planetary level for all seven billion of us. It doesn't mean that everybody's going to sit in full lotus posture and watch their breath for 50 minutes or something like that and bring it back when the mind wanders. But, in one way or another, align themselves with awareness and with the deepest and best in oneself so that you parent and see your children and be present for them. Because 20 years go by and that's easily missed. There's a lot of hurt and a lot of trauma just around parenting and children.

Elise: I'm very grateful for the time.

Jon Kabat-Zin: I know. I can't explain it either. If there's some way that our conversation could be helpful to other people, then may it be so. That's the only reason to have done it. Also, it's nice to connect with somebody who cares and who understands what the real work is. I feel that from you. I feel honoured to be part of your Mindful in May initiative, I guess you'd call it.

Elise: Thank you. I appreciate your words. I want to just round it up. There's was a phrase that you used on the retreat, that you used frequently, that really has stayed with me. That is, "Put out the welcome mat." You put out the welcome mat. For me, that's been so helpful because it's in those moments where I feel an aversion. Something's happening. There's a person, or a feeling, or an anxiety and I feel myself turning away. I just don't want it. Then I hear that phrase that stayed with me, "Put out the welcome mat. Open to this." I really want to share that because I really want the listeners to understand that.

Jon Kabat-Zin: How has it made a difference in your life?

Elise: Rather than turning away from things that are fearful or unpleasant, I've turned towards them. Through that, I've learnt a lot about myself, and I've gained more courage, and things have opened up that wouldn't have opened up.

Jon Kabat-Zin: I would refer to what you just said as you metabolised it. When you swallow and digest what you most want to turn away from by just putting out the welcome mat for it. It's not like you have to embrace it, but you just attend to it. Just let it be here and watch its energies in relationship to your awareness. You couldn't pay a university enough to give you that kind of an education. It's profound. But that does require a certain kind of bravery, or resolve, or willingness to not just go with what the personal pronouns prefer, what I like, and then turn away from what I don't like. You used the word aversion. That's what aversion is.

Greed is more "for me." Again, the personal pronoun. "I want this. I won't be complete until I get this." Everybody who's listening knows that. You've gotten that, and you're still not complete because you need the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing. You'll never be complete by trying to complete yourself with stuff that's outside of you. Maybe you could, again, flip that. Do Aikido on it. You're already complete. That's what the word whole means. That's what the word health means. The only thing you are going to get by time going by, whether you're meditating or not, is older. This is it.

In a certain way, you've got everything going for you if you can, in some sense, flip things and just say, "Okay. I'm going to start seeing how much need arises in my life. How much of my life is driven by, 'I've got to have this'?" Even for a latte, or a cappuccino. How much attachment is there to it? How much attachment is there to it? "I've got to have that, or this, or that." Somebody panhandling on the street, and you turn away, and self-righteousness arises, you give a small amount when you could give a bigger amount. These are tricky

issues. I'm not saying people should be one way or another. But when you start to attend to how the mind doesn't like stuff and pushes it away, and then on the other hand, what it wants, and craves, and is pulling itself towards. If I was standing up, I'd be really off-balance because I'd be running towards what I don't have, pushing away what I don't want. I'm completely off balance all the time. When you integrate yourself, and you put the welcome mat out, not just for all the wonderful stuff, but the greed, the hatred and delusion that's arising inside me, myself, then you realise that's not you, yourself, that's just a weather pattern or a habit that we've all developed.

Elise: Thank you so much for your teaching and time. Wishing you well, and wishing you flourishing, and wishing you time to continue.

Jon Kabat-Zin: Thank you very much. Keep up the really great work. *