7_16_25 Talk*

*This is an automatically generated transcript, so there are errors.

[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** So I'm gonna start the talk with a story. Karen Ridd is a university professor. She's a mother and she's from Winnipeg, Canada. In one of life's many bizarre quirks, she's actually also now a coworker of mine, but she wasn't years ago when I first included this story in my book. So it's 1989 and human rights defenders in El Salvador are in grave danger. They ask internationals for help. So Karen volunteers to go join a group of internationals whose presence helps to keep local human rights defenders safe. At some point, these volunteers are proving too much of an annoyance for the regime and so the military come and they arrest Karen and some of her colleagues. She writes of the experience, I was blindfolded, handcuffed, interrogated, kept standing without food and water, and threatened with rape and mutilation. Karen has been taken to a torture center. Everyday Canadians hear about Karen's plight, and it's 1989, so they fax their members of parliament and the Salvadoran government, and the pressure begins to work. The president of El Salvador himself calls the jail twice. The guards start to feel that pressure and they say, okay, Karen, you can go. She refuses. Karen had been taken to the torture center together with another volunteer, Marcelo Rodriguez Diaz from Columbia. Karen writes afterward, The guards, their questions laced with sexual innuendo, challenged me. Do you miss us? They asked. Do you want us?

[00:02:00] Karen's next choice is remarkable. In this life or death situation where she's speaking with apparently ruthless torturers, she manages to put them in a bind. Karen says, no, of course I don't wanna be here. But you're soldiers, you know what solidarity is. You know that if a comrade is down or fallen in battle, you wouldn't leave them. And I can't leave my comrade. You understand. This is what Gandhi called a dilemma action. If the guards agree with Karen, it means acknowledging how similar they are to her, reducing the power and social distance between them. But disagreeing would be shameful, admitting that they don't care about their fellow guard and would just run away and save themselves. Karen later recalls, quote, "'The guards went silent. "'Then after a long while, one of them said, Yes, we know why you're here. I had found a connection, a shared space of humanity in which the threat of violence could be confronted without alienating those involved. The guards let both Karen and her colleague, Marcela, go.

[00:03:23] Karen Ridd with no guarantees of success and with her life on the line had found a way even to connect with torturers. This might sound incredible, but I started to get curious about this because I heard a bunch of stories like it in my job working for the National Peace and Social Justice Agency of Quakers in Canada. And so I came across all these stories of what's called active nonviolence. And I was curious to find out what's going on here and what different academic disciplines would have to say about it. So I spent years pouring over thousands of studies from fields as diverse as anthropology to neuroscience. The end result was a book that I wrote called Are We Done Fighting? Building understanding in a world of hate and division. Since the book came out I've been speaking, blogging for psychology today, and leading workshops.

[00:04:23] And I want to highlight first off that what we're talking about here isn't just being nice or polite or agreeing. It's also not withdrawing and doing nothing in the face of oppression. What we're talking about is sometimes summarized as the two hands of active non-violence. The one hand is oppose, that's a stop sign. This means using a range of creative methods to stop harms and oppose injustices. Remember that Karen was in El Salvador to support human rights defenders as an unarmed bodyguard to help keep them

safe. That's one of hundreds of creative ways to oppose injustices. The second hand is propose. This means offering a viable way forward. It means giving something, offering something positive by discovering what the other side needs. And it means sharing realistic options, ones that won't humiliate anyone or cause them to feel that they need to retaliate later. This requires seeing that the other side is just as human as you are. The rich philosophy and practical techniques of active non-violence have deep ties to spirituality.

[00:05:40] US civil rights movement leaders famously were inspired by their Christian faith. Many had learned a great deal from visits to India where they studied with famous figures like Gandhi. Gandhi himself was heavily influenced in particular by ideas about truthfulness and ahimsa, nonviolence or non-harm, that he learned from Jainism. There are so many other examples that exist such as Thich Nhat Hanh, who was particularly renowned for his engaged Buddhism, but I'm really just scratching the surface. You can see hundreds of case studies of active nonviolance, for example in Swarthmore College's Global Nonviolent Action Database, which is available for free online. A great many of the folks who are engaged in these active nonviolent practices are grounded by their spirituality. Unfortunately, most of us don't learn about active nonviolence. It's not taught in schools. It's easy to ignore or misrepresent if it's covered at all in news media. And we don't hear about the many people applying it right now in all kinds of dire situations. Often in very successful ways.

[00:06:57] Of course, active nonviolence doesn't always work. Nothing works all the time. But overall, various political scientists have now compiled really strong evidence that active nonviolance is the most successful way to seek lasting positive social change. So imagine for a moment what it would feel like to have these skills that Karen Ridd displayed in that She didn't get those out of thin air. And she didn't invent them. She studied and she practiced and she role played. Active nonviolence is often used to try to address very serious conflicts. But what causes those conflicts? Ones that are deep and entrenched and seem to go nowhere? Well the psychologist Peter Coleman did a literature review and he found a number of different experts each describing the one principal cause of entrenched conflict. When he added up all these causes... He found that these different experts were proposing that there were 57 principal causes. I think that that may actually be pointing to an important way of thinking about reality, not just conflicts.

[00:08:07] Things don't exist in isolation. Not people, not problems, not even your own inner life. Nothing is fully defined once and for all by one simple cause. Things are what they are because of their dependence on other things. On causes and conditions, what the Buddha called dependent origination. In his book, Helgoland, the physicist Carlo Rovelli argues that what quantum physics shows is quote, the impossibility of separating the properties of an object from the interactions in which those properties manifest themselves and the objects to which they are manifested. So he's saying that it's actually impossible to meaningfully separate properties and interactions. Rovelli gives the example of speed. Speed is, quote, relative to another object. If you walk along the deck of a ferry, you have a speed relative to the ferry, a different speed relative to the water in the river, a different one relative to earth, another relative to sun, another again relative to galaxy, and so on endlessly. Speed does not exist without being anchored implicitly or explicitly to something else.

[00:09:31] So what he's saying is that right now, if a physicist wanted to, they could figure out your speed in relation to any object, and that's all that it means for you to have a speed, is to have a speed in relationship to something. So speed is never absolute, it's

only ever a relation. What Rovelli is saying is quantum theory actually represents, quote, the discovery that all of the properties of all objects are relational, just as in the case of speech. Physical variables do not describe things. They describe the way in which things manifest themselves to each other. There is no sense in attributing a value to them if it is not in the course of an interaction. Rovelli cites the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna who helped him arrive at this interpretation.

[00:10:23] So what does this thinking have to do with conflicts? Well, I think that it could help you to see conflicts as less stuff. Someone posts a mean message on your social media and you feel anger building. In particular, when you start to feel intense negative emotions like that, evidence suggests that your focus will narrow. You will quite literally take in less of the scene before you. In that moment, it's easy to start seeing the person you're upset with in isolation. They're the problem. They are a horrible object that is the one cause of your But that view is incomplete. To be this person who expressed this idea that you dislike means that they got that idea from somewhere, there were prior causes. That view comes from a network of other people and factors like their upbringing, education, what information they're aware of. What seemed like one fixed point, a particle where the problem all originated, can, With a bit more thought, burst open. Can suddenly explode into this wave of moving relations.

[00:11:32] I'm metaphorically playing here with the image of a particle versus a wave that comes from some famous quantum physics experiments because I think that this image can help you when you're feeling stuck in a difficult conversation. I recall a pretty literal experience personally that felt like particles turning into waves. I was studying a heated entrenched conflict that I wrote about. The more I looked into the details and sat with all of the arguments and counter arguments, the more the simple ideas that I started with began to fall apart. The fixed nature of everything gave way until it melted into complexity. There were so many different perspectives and conditions each contributing. For a while, I could see all of these waves of shifting causes and how they were interacting. But for me, that was mentally tiring. Much easier to just collapse all of that into a firm particle. It's much easier to make simple judgments.

[00:12:33] So picture this. You're in a lab and a researcher gives you a long sequence of numbers and tells you keep these in mind. Don't forget them. Then they give you some stories and ask you to make moral judgments about the characters in each story. What did the researchers find? When our minds are taxed like this, when we're trying to think of other things. Were more likely to rate others as pure evil and to skip any nuance. This could have very serious implications. Political scientists examining speeches and debates found interesting correlations where politicians talk in less complex ways as they become more unyielding and more likely go to war. And the opposite is also true. Peace agreements coincided with increased complexity in speeches. One study looked at levels of support for war among the general public in the US. And I found the finding really surprising. So you might think that which political party people voted for or their age or level of religiousness or something else as a demographic factor might predict their support for War.

[00:13:44] But what was a far better predictor was their level of agreement with the statement, some people are just evil. That's a classic example of binary logic. Either you're good or you're evil. Either you are with us or you are against us. That kind of thinking can make it seem like destructive conflict is the only possibility. There are no alternatives. Simplifications and binary logic can be extremely useful in many cases. We don't have the time and energy to study everything in great depth, nor do we need to. Either the earth is

flat or it isn't. It isn't! I'm comfortable saying that without understanding astrophysics. But when applied to complex situations or to people, simple binary thinking can sometimes create very dangerous oversimplifications.

[00:14:37] So if I think anyone who believes the earth is flat is evil, that creates issues. Active nonviolence is all about relationships. So, what does that mean? It means that when you're thinking about relationships, you can discover that you have some power. It's not only the other person who makes a conflict happen. They contribute and you contribute. For the situation to frustrate you as much as it does, you have to relate to what they're saying in a certain way. You make particular associations, assumptions, interpretations, and science has shown that these are based on all sorts of factors. From your past learning to how long it's been since you had a snack. Some of the most fascinating research in this area is coming from the field of network science. Human social networks are amazingly complicated, so they're difficult to study, but some of the findings that have come out thanks to especially big data and the internet now are really worth knowing about. Researchers have discovered that if your friend becomes happier, It significantly increases the likelihood that you, who may think of yourself as a totally unique individual, will also become happier. And if a friend of your friend becomes happier, you become happier, and most amazingly, if a friends of a friend of your friends becomes happier that affects your happiness. The effect sizes here are small, but they're there.

[00:16:09] So think about that. Picture your closest friend, then think about who their friends are. Then imagine those friends, folks that you may never have heard of, know nothing about. The fact that their happiness has any influence on you is pretty remarkable. In this case, the data was also collected from the same people year over year. So it was possible to know that this wasn't just already happy people going out and befriending other already happy. People. This was happiness spreading between people, sort of like a virus. Of course, it's not only happiness that spreads that way. One research study discovered that certain forms of depression, where pessimism plays a major role, can hang around in university dorms year after year. So students were bringing these pessimistic thoughts into the dorms, then they were teaching the new students who came in as they graduated, and the new student were then passing that on to the next year and the next. The researchers said it was like a lingering flu. It's been shown that decisions and behaviors spread, too.

[00:17:14] So for instance, whether or not to become an organ donor, to take up smoking or drinking, aggression can spread. One study found that people playing violent video games were becoming more aggressive, and so were their friends who weren't playing those games. Professor Matthew Jackson shares in his excellent book, The Human Network, quote, "'Taking advantage of various forms of randomization, either by chance or by researchers. There are now many examples where we see people being influenced by the decisions and experiences of those around them. From whether Harvard Business School graduates choose to become entrepreneurs based on classmates' experiences, to which apps people adopt, to whether people enroll in a retirement plan, to whether they exercise, to which stocks people buy and sell.

[00:18:02] A major study on Facebook users found that, quote, Rainfall directly influences the emotional content of status messages, and it also affects the status messages of friends in other cities who are not experiencing rainfall. The researchers said that social media may magnify the intensity of global emotional synchrony. Studies into social change movements, as diverse as the reunification of Berlin and Black Lives Matter, so two movements in different decades with totally different populations in Europe and in the US find that the people who are most likely to protest in the streets aren't the angriest about

the issues. They aren't even the most personally impacted by the issues, the best predictor in both of these diverse cases of who would be taking part. In a social change activism campaign was what percentage of their family and friends was also taking part. What percentage of the people they interacted with were taking part?

[00:19:06] So all of this research is telling us that it matters greatly who we're connected to. They share information, they share beliefs, they share behaviors, they even share emotions with us. Most of us deeply value the groups that we're in. They keep us safe. So we tend to go along with them, which offers all sorts of benefits, and it also causes all sorts of problems in the world. I take from this that each of us is vulnerable because we're heavily impacted by what's normal and what's spreading in our social networks. We're impacted by folks that we don't even know. And at the same time, we're more powerful than we might imagine. We have a scientifically proven impact on people that we never meet. To me, the takeaway is this, be careful what you're taking in and what you are spreading. Be intentional about it as much as you can. Right now, in small ways, you can be a peace pattern, an example. You can help to spread a positive infection in your networks. In the book, I call this the peace virus.

[00:20:16] Okay, so you're in a tough conversation. How many people think that to change your mind on a contentious issue like gun control, the person you're talking to would have to present you with a really clear evidence. How many of you think that we humans make bad decisions because we just don't have good information? If we only knew more, we'd vote differently, for example. Well, unfortunately, research finds that when we're presented with information that counters beliefs that are important to our identities, very often new evidence makes little difference. Many of us show brain activity associated with rumination and reflection on who we are as people. And neuroscience studies found that the people who show the most of this kind of ruminating, threatened response when they received uncomfortable information were also the most likely to hold fast to their current beliefs in the face of strong evidence that they were wrong.

[00:21:16] As the researcher Jonas Kaplan put it, when we feel threatened, anxious or emotional, then we're less likely to change our minds. That may sound obvious, but we regularly ignore it when we're engaging on social media or talking to people that we don't agree with. We think that if we just hit them hard enough with enough good evidence, then we'll convert them because we know best. But multiple studies I found all suggested that information especially when presented in aggressive debate formats, is rarely influential on important issues, on the ones close to our identities. It's not that it never works, but it's not likely your best approach. That's because it turns out that most of why we believe strange things or behave unethically isn't because we're pure evil. It's because we are good storytellers. We humans are very skilled at rationalizing our behaviors, at stitching together some version of what's happening to tell ourselves that we're behaving well.

[00:22:19] Research into the psychology even of torturers and mass murderers suggests that almost none of them simply delight in harming others for no reason. We see that idea of the purely evil sadistic killer in movies all the time, but it's actually not what tends to happen. Instead, the evidence suggests that nearly everyone tells a story that says, what I'm doing is fair because I had no choice. Because other people do it too, because that person deserves it. It may not be a good story, but what's important is that we believe it. Studies find that the vast majority of us think we're more moral than the average person. A particularly powerful version of this story starts with what I'm doing is fair because I'm a victim. Extremist and hate group members I read about for the book all seem to think of themselves as righteous victims of a society that was stopping them from standing up for

the truth. Especially if we think of our cause as being moral and ourselves as being victims, it becomes easy to justify doing whatever we want.

[00:23:34] Evidence from experiments and real world shows that when people feel victimized, they dwell on negative emotions for longer, they're more self-absorbed and less open to others' experiences, they are less ready to assume responsibility for harms that they cause, and they're quicker to seek revenge. You may be thinking that some of the biases we're discussing explain other people's behaviors, but that you're too well-educated for them. Unfortunately, people with more formal education tend to show more of these types of biases and not fewer. This seems to largely be because they've got more material to draw from. So whatever story I want to tell myself, whatever course of action I want take, if I'm clever enough, I can find some evidence that appears to support it. And I can find ways to poke holes in evidence that I don't want to believe in. So that helps explain why more information doesn't usually change my mind. In fact, and this was really interesting to me, studies that find that regardless of political ideology, people tend to reject inconvenient evidence in strikingly similar ways. So how can we use this information?

[00:24:53] One thing is to know that the more certain you are that you're being moral, the more firmly convinced you feel, the more likely you are to rationalize behaving immorally to get your way. Researchers call this the dark side of moral conviction. I think we all need to take note of it. Whatever our views, many of us are quite certain about them. At times maybe more certain than we're justified in being if we're being honest. So if you find yourself slipping into harsh negativity towards your opponents, you might have a valid point. But try to remember that the function of what you're doing with your judgments is just to create more distance from the other person. And then recall the lesson from Karen Ridd's story at the beginning, active nonviolence is about relationships. And that requires having a positive influence on someone. That means being closer to them, not farther.

[00:25:52] So try curiosity. You don't have to agree with the other side. This is not about agreement. Listening to them doesn't mean conceding that they're right. Just ask yourself, how did they get here? What's their story? So that's all I wanted to touch on. Um, for anyone who's interested, my email is Matt at Quaker service.ca. I'll put that in the chat and I'm, don't hesitate to reach out. I'm happy to chat. Um, you can also get a free chapter of the book at are we done fighting.com. We offer free online workshops, um, so that you can chat with other people and practice your skills. And we have a free series called weekly tips for better conflicts that you can find on our website and social media, if you look for at CFSC Quakers. So now I'd love to hear if there are any questions or reactions.

[00:26:42] **Speaker 2** Yes, thank you so much Matt. That was a wonderful meditation and also so important for what's going on in the world right now. And kind of referring to the meditation, I'm kind of curious because you're back, and I don't know very much about Quakers, but your background is with Quakers. And my understanding is part of what you do, at least in meeting, is that you just sit. And listen to be inspired. And I apologize if I'm getting that totally wrong. But the reason I'm asking this question is it seems like if that's the case that you would have practice with people in Quaker meeting, have this practice of sitting and being quiet. That almost seems like something we would be searching for in meditation. To get to a point of that where we're not bothered or troubled by thoughts. So could you speak a little bit about how your background as a Quaker informs that kind of meditation and is it easier then because you have that experience to have your mind be quiet.

[00:28:01] **Speaker 1** I wish it was easy. I'm not a Quaker, but I do attend a lot of Quaker events. So I've been in meeting for worship a lot times. You're correct that it starts in silence. There is a difference that many Quakers are theists or believe in God. Many also are not and believe in God, so that's a point of controversy within Canadian Quakers at least. And so, but there is some convergence between Quaker worship and meditation. But the difference is that in Quaker Worship, you're listening for an inner voice. And in meditation, typically the type of meditations that we did called shamatha or calm abiding or stability meditations at least, you're looking to develop or discover uh, voluntary clarity and stability of mind. So that's a little bit different. But I think that a lot of Quakers probably use different language for a similar thing. So they would talk about sinking down to the seed or dropping the kind of self or the ego and looking for something bigger. And when that comes to a meeting for worship where they're making a decision, a business meeting, then there is an attempt or there should be an attempt to let your personal agenda drop and listen for what each participant is sharing and then the idea is that somehow the spirit of the meeting or the sense of the meeting will kind of arise and everyone will see it or experience it even if they don't necessarily agree with it they'll know that that's what everyone there is in unity on and that will be the decision. It's similar to a process described by David Bohm who was a quantum physicist as well He described a process of going for what he called coherence. And this is again, trying to drop preconceptions and get to a deeper sense of unity with people together in a group. And he has descriptions of how to do that. It's in a chapter in my book on communication, but yeah, did that answer your question?

[00:30:18] **Speaker 2** Yes. Thank you. Thank you so much.

[00:30:21] **Speaker 1** Okay, if people are interested in studying active nonviolence, there's a couple of great groups, East Point Peace Academy and the Meta Center for Nonviolence METTA Center for Nonviolance offer trainings in the U.S. But online. I see Andrew, go ahead.

[00:30:45] **Speaker 3** I'm pretty impressed, Matt, with your presentation and for the, you know, in-depth and broad scope of your description of conflict, because at least in my family and in my growing up, There weren't many tools on offer. And and and so so it was kind of it was kind of like just don't go there, you know. And what's really, you know, the whole thrust of what you're talking about is that we need to engage and and but, you know, a lot of the reference that you're that you are bringing into this. All the relevant stuff is about how to. How to manage your own feelings at the same time you're trying to engage and still keeping the north star of a positive outcome. And that's pretty wonderful. And I just want to thank you for the scope and depth of your description about. How to engage in disagreement and how once it becomes kind of a formalized argument, like in a debate, it loses its effectiveness. That's just so amazing to me, you know, because it seems to make a lot of sense because, you know, in the classical debate situation, it's a binary. You're choosing one side or the other. And what you're driving at is, is dissolving that. Concept as it applies to how people relate to each other and learn from each other.

[00:32:51] **Speaker 1** Thank you. Thank you, yeah, I'll give an interesting example about learning from each other in polarized situations. So there was a research study done on Wikipedia articles, and if you think about Wikipedia, it's a pretty incredible platform because you have to volunteer your time to edit articles, potentially on really controversial topics, you know, Israel, Palestine, or whatever it is, and with people that you don't know. And how to, how can you possibly make that work? Well, the way they make that work is they have strong community guidelines. And so everybody has to work within those

guidelines. So it's really important to set a container for that conversation. And that container is in place. Um, what they actually find is that articles that were edited by people who were ideologically opposed, who had the strongest opposing views were of the highest quality. Those were the high articles. So why is that? Well, it makes sense. If I'm going to only talk to people who agree with me, I'm just not gonna put in as much mental effort into coming up with good ideas because they already agree with my. So I can say whatever thing I want, it can be fully defined and so on.

[00:33:56] **Speaker 3** It's preaching to the choir.

[00:34:00] **Speaker 1** Yeah. So talking to people with diversity of viewpoints actually forces me to sharpen my ideas. So some amount of debate or disagreement is good, but only in a container that's useful and that's not going to kind of crush somebody.

[00:34:15] **Speaker 3** Right, right. You know, what you're suggesting is how the container is defined, what the goals that that container ultimately promotes is really important. And once again, I used to think that being a good debater would empower me. And you're pointing out to some extent it can, but that that's kind of a small goal.

[00:34:51] **Speaker 1** Thank you.

[00:34:53] **Speaker 3** That the large goal is building coalitions, is building areas of agreement so that, for instance, what's pretty much true in Europe, which is that the death penalty really doesn't exist could actually happen here at some point. Here in the United States, I mean.

[00:35:20] **Speaker 4** Thank you, Andrew. Linda.

[00:35:25] **Speaker 5** So that was a really thought provoking and interesting talk and meditation. I really appreciate it, and I think I'll be reflecting on it for a while. But the question is that I'm very familiar with the Polyvagal theory that was developed and researched by Stephen Porges. And it has a lot to do with of safety that allow us to be in a state of open engagement rather than girded and protected or shut down, which I'm talking about is so relevant because right now it seems that not just the United States but the world is engaged in kind of weaponizing fear to dominate opponents or those with different opinions or thoughts or those who are vulnerable in order to consolidate power. And I'm wondering how those things you talked about where does feeling of safety come into that space so that one can actually listen with curiosity and openness because when safety begins to decrease, then some defensiveness come up and then curiosity is out the door because that doesn't serve our survival instincts. So I'm just wondering how those pieces might fit together so that, you know, I would love to see these things brought into the public discourse because we need it so desperately and we're really heading down the wrong path.

[00:37:29] **Speaker 1** Okay, that's great. I think polyvagal theory is a really interesting and important way to look at conflict and it can help you to understand your own reactions and thinking about them from a somatic sense of what's happening in my body right now can be really powerful. Safety, you're absolutely right, is huge. I think that successful dialog processes at any scale, whether it be international or even just within your family. I was just commenting to someone's question in the chat too, it really requires safety and safety starts from when people feel heard. All of us want some basic things, we want to feel heard, we wanna feel respected. And so it's amazing how often we'll respond with yeah

but and then come in with our own opinion and just the first thing is just even slowing down and that's where meditation is really, really helpful. Just creating some spaciousness. And non-reactivity, and then when someone has spoken, simply reflecting back what they said. Just showing that you heard them. That's it. So you're saying, and I reflect back what I think I heard you say. And then if you say, yes, that's exactly what I said, then you feel heard, you feel a little safer, and that's a great spot to start from. So a lot more listening, a lot of slowing down. And then the psychologist, Marshall Rosenberg, has some wonderful work in nonviolent communication on something that I think is really simple, which is identifying feelings and identifying needs. Just because it's simple doesn't mean it's easy. It's not easy for a lot of people to say what they feel and say what need. They'll talk around it endlessly and give you all kinds of other stuff, but they won't go there. But once you can say what you feel and what you need, and you know exactly what the other person feels and needs to the point where you say it, and they say, yes, that's exactly right. Then that's a really strong relationship, relational basis for understanding. And understanding doesn't mean agreement, but it means understanding and that can go a long way.

[00:39:32] **Speaker 5** Right, I guess what I also think fits in with the safety piece is the sense of vulnerability. Of course, everybody is different depending on their past and their experience and their wiring. You know, highly sensitive people might be much more likely to be vulnerable because what comes back will be felt with great intensity, depending our ways on that spectrum of acceptance to non-acceptance. And, you know, just thinking about our wood right now and our children, I'm wondering if, because these processes you're talking about are really the foundation for being able to access our basic need to connect with one another, but when we get guarded, then we and we seek those that are like our tribe and it's very hard. Cross into territory that feels unfamiliar or threatening. And I think teaching children at a young age in school how to listen and what to do to create safety would be a huge direction just to be able to open dialog so that people can be vulnerable and say what they need and not feel that they're gonna be shut down receive a reaction that's threatening to their sense of self or whatever their identity.

[00:41:12] **Speaker 4** Thank you for that. Thank you. Thank you, Atlanta. And Diana.

[00:41:19] **Speaker 6** Thank you, Matt. And thanks everybody on this meditation. It seems very serendipitous. The 4th of July, I had two signs stolen out of my yard, including somebody trespassing all the way up to the house to steal a sign. And I was distressed. And a neighbor came and told me who had done that. And offered to gather with me and other neighbors to see if we can create a sense of safety or a sense support for each other. This is a pretty politically diverse neighborhood and there's a whole lot of folks with Trump banners and signs in their yards, those were not my signs. And I want to invite neighbors to find a place is common where we can agree how we can support and protect each other in the context of this substantial political diversity and a variety of other differences of perspective. And the wonderful things that I heard you say were about reflecting what others say, increasing our listening, everyone identifying their feelings and needs, which is a huge challenge. And not to expect necessarily agreement, but at least to be able to come to understanding. I have a little bit of NBC training, but the comment in the chat about how that usually is most effective with folks that are committed to those ideas and have studied and practiced and the thing that you brought out about Karen being a person who had studied and practice and role played. So do you have any other? And cliff notes that I might use to create that cauldron. Willingness to dialog and to come to some sense of what our commonalities are and what we can, how we can support one another. Is that clear? Thank you. There's another.

[00:43:44] **Speaker 1** For sure. There's another thing that I like to use, which is, um, it's a 10 common human values model developed by the social psychologist Shalom Schwartz. One thing that i like about this is there's only 10. Okay. So it's not like unbelievable numbers of values, but the thing that's cool with 10 values is like all of us value these. Um, he studied it and other people have studied it in 82 countries and they found a lot of support for it. So basically this is the closest thing we have to a map of stuff people care about. So, um, but what happens is each of us prioritize them very differently. And then we kind of talk past each other. We say like, no, this is one important value, but it's like, no, the other value matters too. It's just like, not as much to me as it matters to you. We don't prioritize it the same. So one thing that I think can be helpful when you're talking to people with diverse views, political views, whatever it is, is to just try to listen for like, what are they talking about that they value? Like, do they value tradition a lot? Is that coming up a lot. If it is then maybe you can frame the conversation in terms of whatever value it is that they're talking about and still find some common ground. You know, for me, tradition is not one of my number one values at all. Doesn't mean I have no traditions that I like. There's lots of you know family traditions that i really value that I enjoy a lot. So I can kind of understand why some people really really care about tradition. It's just not how I think that much you know. But just even understanding that those values that frame exists I think can be helpful for these kind of difficult conversations. So that's another one. But really a lot of listening and reflecting back just to make sure that people even know what you're saying. You don't have to go to feelings and right away feelings and needs might be like to... Wishy-washy for some people or something. I don't know. So that's true. Maybe nonviolent communication, it can sound a little cheesy to some people, or whatever, but even just reflecting back so that like you're accurate in what you're saying and you didn't, it's so easy when people are talking to add words, put words in their mouth, or caricature what they're saying, and make it a little dumber than it actually was trying to be. Or people say something wrong because they're just talking and it's not what they intended to say. So the reflecting back is really, really a great basis for people to feel heard. And when they feel heard, then they start to ease up. And you can almost see it in their body. Like they're like more.

[00:46:09] **Speaker 6** Thank you so very much.

[00:46:12] **Speaker 7** I'm mad, thank you. Thank you, Andy. You know, I'm not familiar with some of what you said, but I am familiar. And we've been, we've been going through this for years and years. We've been going through this and this is nice. This is very nice, but I'm really angry. I feel it somatically as you're talking, very hard to hear what some people are saying it or for what you're saying in very academic ways. But 2 million people beyond have voted Trump in. I don't know how we're going to get through this. I'm very, very upset. When we used to, I grew up feeling, we believe that we were number one and our country is not number one anymore. And we are really going down the tubes. And what's going on? My tribe is right. The Trump tribe is wrong. And that's where I'm at. And I travel in circles with that. And on a one-to-one and with my neighbors, I can listen and all that. But the fact... That the country is being overrun. By these political forces, which as the lady before me described as happening all over the world, I guess I have to come to a realization that I'm a part of history. And this has gone on for centuries and centuries in Europe. But I feel like I've been one of the privileged ones growing up in the 60s and the 70s. And now I'm part of History. And our country's just gone to hell. And we're living in a police state. And I just... Cannot get over it. I cannot get over. It having worked so hard on the other side, and I know people on here varying Work so hard for in the carrot Harris campaign There's nothing else I can do except in my own little circle. And you know what it's not enough anymore It's just not enough It's not enough. We have been overtaken. My

tribe is right. Trump tried. Tribe is wrong. That's where I'm at. I'm tired. I am scared. I am furious. My country has gone to shit. Thank you for listening.

[00:48:46] **Speaker 1** Sounds like a lot of, I mean, I can't, it's not my country. I can comment on the political situation. I can certainly empathize with it. I can definitely understand it, understand everything you're expressing. I think the only thing that I would point out is to try to think about what are the effects of that way of thinking versus other ways of thinking. My experience and my understanding is that it can be very disempowering. To feel this way. I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm just saying, think about, you know, practically speaking, how is it impacting you? How is it affecting the other tribe? Maybe it's not at all. Maybe it is mostly impacting you. I don't know. And, you now, what is it that the end result of kind of steeping yourself in those feelings is having for you?

[00:49:44] **Speaker 7** Good points. I try to keep it at bay. I keep it an arms length because I've done so much work in November. But what I do is but I think this being on this and listening to people's really stirred me up, I can get stirred up. But ordinarily, I don't listen too much news anymore. But I know what's happening. And you're right, it's You're right, the impact it's having on me.

[00:50:17] **Speaker 1** This is what active nonviolence is really looking for ways to feel empowered, right? It's not about doing nothing and it's not being idealistic or pie in the sky and saying for sure we're going to fix the world. It's more about what can I do? And sometimes you can do a lot and sometimes you cannot do that much. It depends on the situation, but probably everybody can do something. Um, if you think about it, at least at a very local level, you can probably do something within, you know, the people that are in your network, because for sure you're having an influence on them. That's, that's just a fact of network science.

[00:50:52] **Speaker 7** Thank you, thank you, ma'am.

[00:50:57] **Speaker 4** So let's go to Andrew.

[00:51:01] **Speaker 3** First of all, I want to just thank Maureen for all the commitment and work that she has done. It's not in vain, absolutely not in vein, no matter what's in the headlines this week or next week. It's in vain. And so know that at a deep level, that the work that you're doing and all of us with similar feelings. Is not in vain. Please know that. And the other thing that I just want to mention quickly is that something that we can always do is compassion for ourselves, is compassion, for our own feelings and our own distress. That's a vast opportunity if we're willing to. Go towards it. That self-compassion is a very powerful tool. And you know, just one of the ways that I deploy it is I skip some of this, you know this headline, these painful headlines about all the really horrible things that are happening. And that is one iteration of my compassion. So thank you, Maureen. Thank you for sharing. Thank you. Thank you, Matt. This has been a wonderful, wonderful program. Could you just tell us, you have a direct website.

[00:52:44] **Speaker 1** So I just put it in the chat. It's rredonefighting.com for the book and I'll put the tips again in the Chat as well. This is our main website and those are the tips for difficult conversations that we've developed.

[00:53:02] **Speaker 4** Thanks, Andrew. And Linda, try to be concise.

[00:53:12] **Speaker 5** Okay, thank you. I'll keep it brief. I just just in response to the comments and the pain and distress that is being expressed totally understand it and I feel it myself. One thing that I have tried to do from the Action for Happiness website and app is to Step back from the information that's coming at me like a tsunami and is designed to capture my attention and generate emotion and turn it off and every day I try to connect with at least preferably three different people in the room. And a phone call in my community. Clerk at the grocery store and have a little conversation, just like human to human, about whatever. Don't look at the bank's. And to connect with the goodness that really is around us at the time and start to feel like all this kind of heavy-molent, kind of badly-intentioned stuff is just drowning us. But when I put it in my neighborhood, in my community, it's like it doesn't exist. I don't want to it. Someone in my committee was taken away and detained. And the entire committee started to go find me to support the family. And we have a lot of diversity in the community, a lot refugee and immigrant families in our community. And that's all. With kind of counteracting it. So I feel like there's always one little step we can take, even if it's letting some bad traffic, and that is a way to bring goodness to kind of push back against the feeling of malignancy that's coming at us all the time, especially from social media. So I just wanted to share that and compassionately hope that Everyone can maintain a bit of equilibrium. It's very hard, but every day is a new day to try.

[00:55:47] **Speaker 4** Thank you. Thanks, Linda. OK, let's go with last question here for Julia.

[00:55:54] **Speaker 8** Okay, yeah, so I'm from Canada and it's kind of what's going on here. Yeah, so I really struggle with all of this, what's going on with the politics and it feels like nobody's really, it's not enough discussion about it. But I was going to ask Matt, so what do I do with, I have feelings like I want to kill this particular person, you know, if I could, and just get rid of the problem, just so. How do I find my way around there?

[00:56:37] **Speaker 1** Well, again, I would just be very practical and look at what is this feeling doing. And I think that if you really look at that feeling as it arises, see how it interacts with your body, see where it sits, see what it does, I expect that you will find that it is detrimental to you. I expect that you will find that it is not detrimental to the person that you are wishing ill upon because they don't care.

[00:57:09] **Speaker 8** Immune. He's immune.

[00:57:13] **Speaker 1** So in such a case, the practical thing to do if you're able is to try to do a kindness meditation, try to some type of meditation, not maybe starting with that person, but starting with people who you do feel love for and generating a positive emotion instead and savoring that emotion or sense in your body. There's a wonderful kindness meditation that you can find from the psychologist Barbara Fredrickson. I really recommend it. I like it a lot. It's in the book. It's been studied and it's been found to have a lot of benefits for people. But really the point is to savor positive experience and positive emotion and then you're training your nervous system to generate some more of that. And it's not too... Say good vibes only, like never have a negative feeling, that's not the point. You still have a rich emotional life, but the point is to be actually practical and look at what is this negative emotion doing. And when you notice the things that it's doing, you will probably want to pay more attention to the positive emotions and be more balanced kind of naturally. So, and then when you noticed anger, anger tells you that you think something is wrong. So when you think something is wrong, practically speaking, what can you do about it? If you can do something about it, do something by all means. If you cant do

something, don't keep steeping your mind in that cause that is making you angry just to kind of rev your engine while you're parked. It's not doing anything. It's positive, it's not constructive. So that's my feeling, I totally understand the anger and where it comes from from all kinds of people. All kinds of different scenarios actually because we live in a very imperfect world that can make lots of people angry for lots of reasons. But anger is a very corrosive emotion to you. It has costs on your nervous system and on those around you. So that's where it needs to be dealt with skillfully and in a balanced way. And personally, I think, you know, So there's some wonderful work. By the Dalai Lama describing patients and things like this, that's very practical. And I personally find that really motivating, but it's not easy. It's not easier at all.

[00:59:47] **Speaker 8** Well, that's the one good thing out of it all is he's making me have to work harder.

[00:59:52] **Speaker 1** Well, this is what has been said. I mean, Shanti Deva, you know, hundreds of years ago said that your enemy is your best friend Because they actually really help you to develop the skills that you need in life. So there is a way to look at it like that. And there are a lot of incredible examples of, you know, Tibetan monks being tortured by Chinese people and so on that they didn't develop any hatred and they didn't show any symptoms of PTSD when they were studied by a Norwegian team afterwards, basically because they were doing these kinds of loving kindness meditation. So for themselves, it was a really incredible, powerful inner protection.

[01:00:31] **Speaker 8** Thank you very much. I very much appreciated your talk.

[01:00:39] **Speaker 1** Somebody put in the chat that they wanted me to say the websites because they couldn't read it in the chat. So the websites are arewedonefighting.com and quakerservice.ca is our main website. My email is matt at quakersservice.ca. If anybody wants to reach out to me on anything at all, don't hesitate. I'm happy to chat.