

8_13_25 Talk*

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

Lakiba Pittman [00:00:00] Every time I do that meditation. Yeah, I do it myself and there's a little bit of sensitivity in connecting, revisiting my child's and it contributes to a bit of tenderness that comes in. Sometimes it can make me emotional, sometimes just lighthearted. I kind of take on a childlike view of things, but continue to kind of work with it and think about it over the days and see what it offers. So gonna move into the formality of my talk. And before I begin my talk, I want to take a moment to dedicate this evening to someone who has deeply shaped my path in this field and whose spirit I believe and know is present with us. His name is Dr. James Doty. Jim was a renowned neurosurgeon and the founder of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford. But to many of us, he was more than all of his titles. He was a teacher, he was a mentor. He sponsored me, opened doors for me in so many ways. And he was heartfelt visionary who helped bridge science and soul, compassion and neuroscience. And Jim passed away last month. And I know I'm not the only one who felt his passing deeply. Excuse me, his belief in the power of compassion to transform our lives and our world was not just an idea, it was something that he lived. And I always thought of him as like kind of tag your it, like the next person and the next person to kind of keep this compassion. What I've started to call revolution alive. Jim believed that one person, one connection, one act of care could change the trajectory of a life. And so tonight or today or this afternoon, wherever you're listening from, I feel his presence in this field we're creating together. I just offer this reflection in his memory and in the spirit of his life's work.

[00:03:45] So there's a phrase that I love that says sometimes the most powerful medicine is the presence of someone who sees you, who really sees you. And I've been thinking about that a lot lately how One connection can... Change everything. And I know we live in a time of immense disconnection. We scroll, we swipe through life, often missing what's right in front of us, including ourselves. But healing, true healing begins in presence. And presence is what allows for connection. So sometimes we think healing requires this big intervention, years of therapy, the right diagnosis, the perfect spiritual retreat. And while those things can help, sometimes it can start with something. Much smaller. It can start in a moment. It can start with a word. It can start with a breath. It can start with a single compassionate glance that says you are not alone. And I have a bunch of stories and I was trying to think of one to share, but. I think I can get them both in if I share quick enough. So years ago, I was sitting in a room with a room of strangers. I go to a lot of workshops and retreats and compassion retreats, mindfulness retreats. And my friends, my close friends aren't into it. So when I'm going to these things, I often don't know anybody. I'm going by myself and so I was kind of tired, I was unsure. I wasn't even really sure why it was there because I was thinking, how many more retreats do I need to go to, right? How many more compassion retreats or mindful retreats?

[00:06:37] But it has kind of become a part of my lifestyle. And so during one of the breaks, A WOMEN- I had barely kind of noticed, to my knowledge, she hadn't noticed me, but she turned to me and she looked me right in the eye and she said, I see something in you. And that was it. It did like, I almost broke out and started crying. I mean, something kind of cracked open in me and I hadn't. Realized how long I've been waiting for someone to see me. I think that, if I think back to when I was a child, I was that child who was very excited about life. Like, yay, I can do this, and yes, I could be that. I was the kid, but I didn't see that, like it was like nobody saw my light, or that's how I felt at the time. Nobody sees I'm excited about my life. Nobody's seen that. Fortunately, I had a couple of good teachers

that saw me and kind of helped nurture who I was becoming. And, you know, when she said that, I was seen in that moment. It was like I was seen, I felt I was known. It didn't fix everything, right? But it kind of started something. Because when she did that, I kind of came up and out. I kind lit up. Just from that little simple, quick encounter, there was a connection that was made and it was like a new thread of possibility. And that's what connection does. It doesn't necessarily erase wounds. But it gives it air. It gives it light. It gives it a chance to heal. And if I look at my life, fortunately, every year, every few months, I have an encounter with a random stranger very often where we make that little connection. And I see them and they see me, and we exchange a few words and a laugh, and then we're on our way.

[00:09:33] And for me, those are my fixes, right? From the more depression and pressure of things that are going on. And I'll say that if you're empathic at all, then sometimes you're not just picking up on your own troubles and traumas from life that we all experience, but you're picking up on it from your neighborhood, from your neighbors and from your friends and from the news media and social media and from what's going on in the United States or in whatever country. You're in and you're picking up from the world. So it's a lot on an energetic level. And so we have, these are, what would I call these? These are maintenance tips. These are ways that you can, these are encounters that you can create and have. That add a bit of a light and lift in your everyday. So, I think this is one of the reasons why compassion and self-compassion is so essential because it's hard to offer others what we haven't tasted ourselves. If we can't pause to see our own pain with kindness. Like we can acknowledge to ourself, yeah, that was tough. Or that hurt my feelings. Like I don't have to blast it out to anybody. I can have compassion for myself. I can notice when I'm the one that's suffering and I can offer myself some care. Not being over-indulgent, not get carried away. Point that it becomes, it's all about me all the time. That's not what I mean. I mean that when we learn how, when we practice how to hold compassion for ourselves, it becomes a pathway to being able to offer others compassion.

[00:12:24] And when we do, when soften toward ourselves, it expands and increases, what I think, our capacity to love, to serve and to show up for others. And that ripple from self to other, from inner to outer, is really what I believe to be the foundation of what I'll call collective healing. And it's become part of my life's work. Because I can see how it's working in my own life and I can the rippling out. And especially when I'm in environments like this, where people are coming together, you realize that you chose to come together with other people instead of go away from other people. And I'm sure we don't all agree on everything. And we don't have to. You have entered a space where people can connect and where healing can occur, where you can learn more about neuroscience and all of the different things that you are earning in these weekly sessions. Think about in Buddhist teaching, as you probably know, that it's often said that the next Buddha may not come as a person, right? But as the Sangha, as the beloved community. And I believe that. I don't know if I used to believe that, the more of these workshops and convenings.

[00:14:38] Opportunities to connect with other people, especially in community. It ignites a knowing within me that I, I don't know if I can scientifically prove, but that I feel is true. I believe it. And so I would say... It almost makes me not to get on religion per se, but it does confirm the thought that I have of the benefit that people experience in going to church. There's something in coming together with other people in community for a good cause. Right, you can kind of get your, resonate with others and learn something, hopefully, right, especially in this setting, you're learning, you are practicing, you witnessing, you discussing, and I just believe that every act of compassion, every moment of seeing and being seen helps us build that community right here together. Some people

who I may not have had an opportunity to get to know outside in the real world from day to day, I might connect with. In these chat rooms, that the breakout rooms. I've had the deepest connections and conversations with people in different countries who I don't know, but I have connected with them in the breakout room in a deep way. I've discussed things with people in these groups. That I haven't discussed with people in my life. So there's, you're onto something. Let me say it that way.

[00:17:18] The fact that you're here. That's the first step, showing up in these spaces. So, I... Also, a creative art is so a, and also a storyteller of a kind, because I have my notes and then I notice I kind of start telling the story around it. So I hope you're okay with that. But I titled this talk, The Power of One Connection. Because so often we think big change has to come through big gestures. And some change does occur with big gestures, but what I've noticed is that healing often comes from one conversation. Well, does it heal my whole life? Maybe not. But I mean, I experienced a... From one conversation, from one teacher, from one friend who listens, from one moment where someone sees your pain and doesn't look away. I teach workshops on compassion, coming out of Stanford Center for Compassion. And we purpose, well, compassion means witnessing suffering and feeling this internal desire to mitigate the suffering, right? And so I say a little kind of a joke. That if I called it the suffering workshop, nobody would probably sign up.

[00:19:37] But when we're talking about compassion, we are talking about suffering. We're talking about witnessing suffering. We notice in a mindful way that someone is suffering or that we're suffering. We feel this internal desire. We call it the moistening of the heart. The heart moistens. The heart gets engaged. So I notice, then I feel something. And I feel this internal desire to mitigate the suffering of whoever is suffering. And the thing is, sometimes I'm the one who's suffering. Maybe not the worst thing ever, but I suffer too. And so I want to, over my lifetime, cultivate the ability to recognize when I'm suffering and offer myself some care. Not excuse me if I've done something wrong. It's offering myself care in the moment. Human care. And how I do it takes on a variety of forms. So I could, if I'm stressed at work. And I realize I'm getting stressed at work, showing compassion for myself might be taking a break. Okay, I need a break, it could be going off camera if I'm in a day-long meetings of Zooms. It could mean taking a walk, it could mean petting my dog, it could be calling a friend. You get to decide what it means for you.

[00:21:51] And with another person, healing can come just from one conversation, one teacher, one friend who listens, you listening to yourself. And as I said, one moment where someone sees your pain and doesn't look away. I know it because I lived it and am living it as a teacher, as a mother, as a daughter, and as a survivor. I'm, I'm someone who is walking through my own healing. And I just say that sometimes you're the one who needs the compassion. So you might, when I say the power of one connection, if you need the compassion, hopefully you have a friend or a pet or someone who can connect with you. And sometimes you're the one who offers the compassion. And sometimes it's both. You need compassion and you're offering compassion. So I'm thinking for you.

[00:23:25] I wanna say a few more things and I wanna save just a little bit at maybe 10 minutes or so at the end of my talk to engage with you. I'm a professor. I'm used to calling on my students when I'm in these Zoom settings. So I don't wanna outright put pressure on anyone but at the end I would love for any of you who are open to it to just share what has come up for you as a consequence of either the meditation or this talk that I'm giving. And I want you to think about this. Where might One connection or one word or one act of presence, open a door. Today or tomorrow or the next day. Because one thing I realized, there's always an opportunity to connect. And sometimes you might think you're

connecting for yourself, but you're really giving the other person something by connecting with them.

[00:25:02] The other story I was going to share was, it was during Christmas holiday, I believe, and I was in Whole Foods Market, and I rushed in to get something really quick. And there was a woman who was in front of vegetables and the fruits that they have in front and she was rubbing, weeping right there. And so, yes, I could have walked by and. Gone open, because I wasn't there, okay, I was just a second. Bori, my dog is just going, going. I was in a hurry. And so I kind of wanted to run in there and run out, but I couldn't, I couldn't I went right up to it. So what did I notice? In a mindful way, mindfulness being present in the moment and noticing, I noticed her. So sometimes before you can show compassion, you have to notice something. So I saw her mindfully, I saw here, I read the sign, she's sobbing and compassion, my heart was moistened, I felt something at the heart level and I went right to her and I was, you know. At first, I didn't even say anything. I was really, I mean, she was like broke down. So I wasn't talking and I was kind of hugging and trying to comfort her. And then finally she told me that her husband had passed away and this was their favorite time of year. And they would come to the grocery store on Christmas Eve or whatever. It was a couple of days before Christmas and it just hit her. Right when she walked into the store. And so I stayed with her. I, to be honest, I didn't quite exactly know what to say, but I was present. I kind of held on as she sobbed and patted. And then her friend, who she had come in the store with, came and kind of took over. And you know she just thanked me, thanked me and then you know afterwards I was thinking no thank you, thank thank you because I was in a hurry and and you caused my heart to crack open and for me to share a human experience with a total stranger and I'm not saying that someone needs to be suffering in that way. For us to show them compassion.

[00:28:21] But I'm just saying we're definitely, it appears, living in times where people could use a smile or a pat. Where people could use compassion, yeah. So your homework, I'm known to assign homework, although I won't know if you comply, is to think about where might... You'd be able to offer compassion to yourself. Or to someone else. And I would also say... That if nothing else, you can let this moment be the moment. This space be the place that you remember. Maybe I won't see you in a grocery store, right? Or see you in the elevator going to the doctor's office. Made some great connections with people I'll never see again in elevators. In this space, I want you to remember, and I'm speaking to myself as well, that you matter. When she recognized me, I felt that I mattered because she saw me. You matter? You're not alone. And your presence is powerful medicine. Sometimes just your presence, especially with a friend or someone in need. You know those times, you don't even need to say a lot, just showing up. I think the thing I want to emphasize is that as you learn to cultivate compassion for yourself, it helps you have compassion for others. And as you learned to have compassion for others, it helps, you have compassionate for yourself. Makes sense? Let me look around at to see if you're still there. Yeah, thank you, Dan. Dan with the thumbs up. I appreciate it. So, I would love to get some shares if that's possible.

[00:31:37] First, I wanna thank you for being here. I wanna thank for listening. I wanna Thank you for allowing me to share in this space. I always wanna come myself, but during the regular school year, I teach on Wednesday nights. So it's in the summer that I beg Rick, can I come back? Can I come and he was nice enough to invite me before I head back to school. So I wanna thank Rick and all of the helpers of Rick and the community for this gift of presence. You have something special, I got goosebumps. You have something special here week after week. And may these connections we create here ripple outward in ways we may never fully see. I feel that they matter, and... Part of your homework. I

made a note, so I wanna make sure I name it since I just started doing my own thing and stop looking at my notes. I kind of said this, but let me go through them again. I'll leave you with a few gentle questions. What would it mean to let yourself be seen with loving eyes? So think about that. What would it mean to let yourself be seen with loving eyes? Probably kind of in the way that you had loving eyes looking at your child self. And how might compassion, even in small ways, ripple out from your life, someone else's? You know, at this time of day, everybody's walking their dog and dog's very protective. So I don't know if you can hear her, but she's letting people know that we live here. So going back, how might compassion ripple out from your life to someone else's? And I just want you to consider the power that you hold in not only offering compassion to others, but offering it to yourself. May it be safe, may it be seen. May you be held. May compassion meet you exactly where you are. So thank you. That's my talk, Doc. I would love to hear how you're doing. What do you think about this notion of cultivating compassion over a lifetime? Viotí.

Speaker 2 [00:35:23] Can't. There you go. Okay. I love what you said about, it can just be a small thing. We think of healing as having to be some, just exactly as you said, some big eye-opening you're standing on a waterfall, if that's possible. But it can be just a moment. And something you can offer to others. Exactly. I like having compassion. How it's reciprocal. You have compassion for yourself and you can have more compassion for others and vice versa. So thank you for those wonderful points.

Lakiba Pittman [00:36:01] Thank you, thank you so much. Because it's kind of a simple thing, but it's not something we do all the time, you know. Thanks, Leo. Okay, where'd Anita? There you are.

Speaker 3 [00:36:18] Anita. Hi. So I just want to say like, I'm finding this very practical, you know, you know, if it's very grounded in like living your life and kind of daily encounters and how you heal and, and I've been thinking a lot recently about kind of what I was like when I was, like, 12, like what my life looked like, and how did I kind of, you're just so I've been wanting to do something like this is kind of really right or sit down and You know what I mean? Kind of. And the way that you described it enabled me to say, oh, okay, that was this building block, this building, block, do you know what I mean? And so, and the way that you're talking about being seen, I do like conversation and connection and stuff, you know, all around that. So I'm like all about that. I mean, that is just inherently connection in every kind of sense. So being able to apply it in this way is really, really all in kind of is having me a whole different way of kind of thinking about how do I move through this and get to stop thinking about that? Then. Do you know what it is?

Lakiba Pittman [00:37:16] Yes. Yes, exactly. Bingo. You got it, Anita.

Speaker 3 [00:37:23] Yeah, well, thank you. I'm glad this is being recorded so I can go back and listen to it. And I also took notes. I was going back and forth on a Google doc while you were talking.

Lakiba Pittman [00:37:33] Great. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Speaker 3 [00:37:36] Thank you so much. Thanks, Anita.

Lakiba Pittman [00:37:39] And Liz and I see people in the chat I'm gonna uh try to note everything in there because it looks so good okay Liz let me see there we go

Speaker 4 [00:37:51] Hi, good to see you. Good to meet you. Tremendously important topic. And one of the things, I was in a class where a teacher said that he wanted to practice invulnerability. And I said, what? I said I want to practice vulnerability. And I want to have all my feelings. I don't want to be able to tolerate them. Yeah, I don't want to be invulnerable. I just found this quote from not my favorite teacher, but a very wonderful quote from Deepak Chopra saying, embracing your vulnerability is the ultimate strength. And I just love that. I want to have all my feelings. I want you to feel grief. I want to feel anger. I want it to feel tenderness. It's part of my inheritance and I don't want to be a stone, an unfeeling stone. But therefore I need self-compassion. I need to forgive myself. I need to be present with everything and love myself. And that's a wonderful thing. And I didn't come to it until very late in life. I'm 86 years old. I didn't start studying self-compassion until about three years ago. It's never too late, Liz. Never too late. It changed my life radically. Self-compassions are enormously important and I very much appreciate your talking about it and sharing it with others.

Lakiba Pittman [00:39:37] Thank you Stephanie so much. Thank you so much You're very welcome Okay, and it looks like Roberta Let's see

Speaker 5 [00:39:51] Hi, can you hear me? Um... I really appreciated the across the ages from the child to the present to the future. Yes. I've been working on shame and self-compassion and kind of been working on this childhood experience. But as I am able to give myself some compassion, I was unable to Reframed the way I saw the experience with my with my mother when I was a child Okay, and so it kind of it's shifted my relationship with her In my mind. Mm-hmm. I get it. That was really powerful I get that and also and just doing that it gave me more space to create a future

Lakiba Pittman [00:40:53] I lost the last part. It made more space. For the future. For the, all right. Future me. Yes, I love it. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Roberta. Thank you

Speaker 5 [00:41:08] I don't know why we're flat going off now.

Lakiba Pittman [00:41:12] Okay, I'm sorting through here. Okay, let's see here. Who's typed? Asholo.

Speaker 6 [00:41:27] Yeah, good job, Ashley Pilsen. Okay, okay. I know, this is a new name for me and every time after this on Wednesdays, my new peers, you know, they're like. But anyways, that's a long story. But I'm doing a good job saying my name and I appreciate that. Well, I know you mentioned like something, sorry, it can't be on camera. I'm walking the dogs. I'm having connection with them here at the park and taking them out of the house. Okay. But I know you mentioned like moments where I felt like hurt or that somebody expressed a lot of compassion. Yes. And I will never forget this moment and it was in front of Jack Kornfield. Yes. And I was going through, before I got into like meditation and going to Sun and retreats, I met him and I expressed to him something that was happening in my life that was very, very painful. And I remember him putting his hand on his heart, I was like, wow, like he heard me. I could feel it. I could see that he heard, me he could feel my pain and just by putting the hand on the heart and being present in a non-judgmental way. It just got me into mindfulness because I was just like, I just want some of what he has. Whatever he has, I want it.

Lakiba Pittman [00:42:56] Exactly.

Speaker 6 [00:42:57] And I do that sometimes when people are going through a hard time. I put my hand on my heart.

Lakiba Pittman [00:43:04] Yes, I kind of do that too, almost not so much consciously anymore. Sometimes you can just do that and not even say anything and the person still feels a connection.

Speaker 6 [00:43:27] Thank you for being a messenger and bringing this topic.

Lakiba Pittman [00:43:33] Thank you, thank you so much. Okay, Janet, hi Janet.

Speaker 7 [00:43:40] Okay, there we go. I was trying to unmute. Thank you. The talk was really very inspiring. And I really appreciate all you've given us this evening. Thank you for making the effort to tell Rick he wanted to come back in the summer. I also have taught college, so I understand the summer thing, but I'm retired now.

Lakiba Pittman [00:44:04] Yeah.

Speaker 7 [00:44:05] And I wanted to just tell Liz, who spoke earlier, that what I heard her say is, if you really want to embrace all of life, like Buddha said, the 10,000 joys and the 10 thousand sorrows, then you must have compassion for yourself. And Liz helped me kind of see that clearly and I wanted to thank her. That's all I wanted to say.

Lakiba Pittman [00:44:39] All right, Game of Goosebumps, thank you, thank you. Yes. Okay, Dorian, is that it? I know you're not iPad, so you must be Dorian.

Speaker 8 [00:44:55] Great, oh thank you for calling on me. Of course. I kind of came, well I have a very tumultuous childhood. My best memories and there aren't a lot of positive memories of my childhood was my mother soothing me. Okay. So I, my father was very stern. I would run from the dining table up to my bedroom crying. And my mother would come in and soothe me and she would just stroke my forehead And, and. And just say everything's gonna be okay. Yes. And that's the image. I'm gonna start crying here. That came, huh? That's the image that I bring up that I am a good person. Yes, you are. Because the messages I got from my father who ignored me was that I was worthless. So, that's the image. That I bring up. For self-compassion when I need soothing.

Lakiba Pittman [00:46:16] Yes.

Speaker 8 [00:46:17] And I married someone who also had a traumatic childhood. He is wired totally differently. Touch is not something he got during his childhood. And so I crave this physical affection and he doesn't know how to do it. See, I know that he has empathy and compassion for me. Right. But he does it service, you know, bringing me these great meals and checking on me and making sure I get my medicine and offering to take me for a drive and stuff. But as far as a hug, or, you know any kind of physical affection, that's kind of foreign to him. Good. So. I just learned to hug myself or I will stroke my arm. This is my mom, I will do this. But the one thing that I, the big thing that learned in the meditation that's really helped me fight my inner critic. I have a very complex disease that's a 24 seven job. And every day is a struggle. And I want to give up lots of times. You extended that to now imagine yourself as an older person. Now I'm 67 and with this disease I thought I'd be dead already, but um. I'm thinking if I make it to 77 or 80, what will I think of myself looking back? Yes. And what that did was made me recognize, pretending that I

was 77 or eighty, that didn't give up. Yeah. That. Um, I had the courage and the faith and those little bits of joy that I look for.

Speaker 2 [00:49:05] Yes.

Speaker 8 [00:49:05] I don't have the big joys of going for a hike for eight hours, but I have birds in my backyard and all I have to hear is a goldfinch cry. And I get this huge smile that just fills my whole body. Those little joys and the peace that I got. When I do connect with someone else. Like it could be the cashier at a shopping center. I can see that they're stressed to the max. And I would just say, hey, how are you doing today? And they would smile or they would share with me that they were worried because they won't get to pick up their daughter at school or something. I mean, just that little connection will make my entire day. I get it. And so... I just want to thank you for reinforcing little things that I picked up here and there and giving me the courage to not give up.

Lakiba Pittman [00:50:28] Yes, don't give up, Dorian. Thank you. Don't give. Thank you, Dorian.

Speaker 8 [00:50:36] Well, thank you. Thank you, I really appreciate it.

Lakiba Pittman [00:50:40] Thank you. So, you see all the little hearts and everything you're getting through, and I hope you're receiving that too. Okay. Thank you And I guess I want to respect everybody's time. We'll guess Linda. We have next before we conclude. And I think you go into breakouts after that. I'm not sure, but thank you Dorian and Linda. We want to hear from you. There we go.

Speaker 9 [00:51:16] It's waiting for-

Speaker 10 [00:51:17] permission. Thank everyone for what they shared and especially what Dorian just shared, of course, with most recent. So my name is on my heart for you. And I'm very much moved by everyone's, what people give in this group. And I just wanted to share that. When you were talking about connections and, you know, just random connections, I know there's a phrase in the neuroscience called weak ties about the people that you just encounter in your everyday life. It could be a phone call to a comcast that you talk to somebody or, like you said, someone you see in a clerk and store and the people who have more broader network of weak ties. Tend to be happier and healthier, and I wanted to share that I was on a global compassion network online program with Reggie Hubbard, and they put in the chat my name, a greeting, and where I was from, which is Skokie, Illinois, and we got a message back from someone that And apparently, this is someone who's about 15 minutes from me. Said, let's meet. I think we have a lot in common. Just because we had both registered for the School of Compassion Network talk with Reggie Humbert, and we did end up meeting, and we've become such good friends in such a short time. She said the names were scrolling so fast. Through the, you know, the chat. And she said, they're just so skokie. And then I was searching, and so she sent me a message. And that was like Soul Sisters. It's the craziest thing. And how random was that? There were people on there from all over the world. And it just so happened that we were 15 minutes apart. And maybe there's some magic of what you were talking about, at least to me, that that's what I thought of, that, that and I call those glimmers, you know, those moments, like Dorian said with Tanya Virb singing her yard, I think that I'm learning over time how to pause and make those letters like imprinted in my soul so that even though there was a moment They're profound and lasting, so I wanted to share that.

Lakiba Pittman [00:54:16] Thank you so much, thank you. And I just want to thank everybody who shared. I don't know if I can get a copy of that chat, but if that's possible, I would love it because people were really sharing from your heart, really. I feel you, I receive it, I'm so encouraged. When I encounter people who can open their hearts, right? And let the other person know. So I wanna thank you for having me. I know I'm not Rick. He's like, you know, he's Rick, right. So knowledgeable and my teacher and mentor as well. And so I feel pretty humbled that he. Allows me to come in and share during the summers when I'm not teaching on Wednesday nights. I hope to see you again. If you see me out anywhere, please connect with me on any of the media formats, and I hope to see you at least next summer, if not before. Okay? Thank you so much. Thank you.