

## 9\_17\_25 Talk\*

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**Speaker 1** [00:00:01] We're going to talk about wise effort in relationships. And I wanted to open with this is out next week on Tuesday. But Rick Hanson wrote the foreword to my book, Wise Effort. And I want to open a little bit of Rick because we're all missing Rick tonight while he's gone. And what he had to say about wise effort because I think it's a really beautiful. Preface to this conversation about how do we engage in our relationships with wise effort. So he says. In the Buddhist tradition, wise effort is part of the eightfold path applied to thoughts, words, and deeds. It consists of beginning, sustaining, and increasing what is beneficial to others and oneself, as well as preventing, decreasing, and ending what is harmful to others, and oneself. The ancient texts describe this as a path of the noble ones. This is an inner nobility of character that has nothing to do with caste or class. What is already noble within you is drawn to wise effort and further ennobled by it. Efforts that are wise usually involved intersections of two or more qualities, as then meditator can be soft in the front and firm in the back, like our meditation we just did.

[00:01:33] Psychologist Daniel Ellenberg writes of strength with heart. Think globally while acting locally. Have fierce compassion. Use mind-body medicine. Stay in the present while taking the long view. Trust, but verify. The starship enterprise needs both Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy. So good examples of relationships and wise effort in relationships and this sort of yin and yang of relationships and how we give and receive. So tonight I wanna talk a bit about some of the qualities that you could bring to your relationships, what I call your genius qualities. And then we're also going to talk a little bit about what prevents you from doing that. You know, what gets in the way of you showing up as your wisest self in relationships.

[00:02:30] So we'll talk about how to be positive energizers. And I think that we need more positive energizes in the world right now. And we get to initiate that, we can initiate that. Through our relationships. If you are interested in connecting with me, I mentioned I have a podcast called Wise Effort. I also have a newsletter which I send out, not too much, but not too little. So you can sign up for all of that at [wiseeffort.com](http://wiseeffort.com) and you can also learn more about my book there. So we're gonna talk about sort of these three tasks over today and tomorrow.

[00:03:08] The first task of getting curious. And curiosity is the foundation of wise effort because curiosity, there's this type of curiosity in particular called interest curiosity, which is different from deprivation curiosity. Deprivation curiosity is you wanna get to the answer. Like who sang that song, you know, Angel from Montgomery, who was that? Oh, it was Bonnie Raitt, right? Interest curiosity is. Why did they sing that song? What was going on in their life? Who were they inspired by? How did it come about? And when you bring curiosity to yourself in your relationship, and you bring your curiosity to others in relationship, it's an unfolding, much like rosemary traumas, unfolding. It's an unfolding, and it can turn a boring conversation into something that's magical. I will tell you, I'm a clinical psychologist, so I see. Diverse and different people coming into my office. And I am so curious about humans because I don't care who you are. There is a story behind who you. There's a genius to who you, you've been through something and you have something about you that you can bring to this world that we need you to bring.

[00:04:21] We're gonna talk about what are your relationship values and what is pulling you off track. So that's our task for today. I like the word task. It's like we're going to

complete a task, but it's not the kind of tasks that you have on your to do list. It's a inner task. And then next week, we will explore more about how to engage in wise relationships by opening up and by focusing our energy. The way that I teach and the way I work is through consilience, which comes from the etymologist E.O. Wilson, who he studied ants, and he would use the study of ants to inform. His study of humans and his understanding of organizations, right? So the gathering of knowledge from lots of different places that come together as sort of a groundwork.

[00:05:09] So I draw a lot from nature, but I draw lot from research-based psychology. I draw from contemplative practice, from my own personal practice of meditation and doing many, many years of work in the field of clinical psychology with many hundreds of people. When you draw from nature in the study of biomimicry, which is the study, of how nature can tell us about how to solve human problems, because nature's been around. The Earth has been around a whole lot longer than we have. If you think about maybe if the Earth was around for one year, humans showed up 35 minutes before the hour, you know. The end of the year, 35 minutes, the rest of the year, we weren't here, you know, I caught this picture of a monastic at Plum Village, a couple of years ago, just standing there and looking at these plum trees, and taking a moment because there's a lot of we can learn about relationships, from how nature does relationships, of how they how nature has symbiotic relationships, how nature depends on each other. And depends on species that are different. So one of the questions that I'll often ask, and I love to ask this because it has a whole story and it comes from Anne Lamott. When I went to a talk of hers, when she's one of my favorite writers, and she said, a great creative writing prompt is just to ask the question or to start with a line, there was a tree. So if I were to finish that line, or you were to finished that line.

[00:07:00] For me, there was a tree that stood outside. This was my little office that no longer is. This office was torn down. I had to tear it down. Cause if you don't believe in karma, buy a house that has unpermitted buildings on it. And you will learn things get torn down in permanence, karma, right? But there was this tree that that stood outside my office that would listen. All the stories of my clients and that I hung a hammock in to read to my kids in and then sometimes between breaks I'd go and lie in and just be silent for a while. And this tree taught me a lot about relationships, about making space, about shading each other, about holding the weight of each other about listening in silence and the power of presence. So there was a tree. And I imagine if you would write down there was tree for you, each and every person. In this group here had some tree at some point, or has a tree in their life now that they go to that they're in relationship with. I'd love to hear in the chat, if you finish this line, there was a tree, tell me about your tree. Might've been an apple tree or a palm tree or a apricot tree or old tree outside your school you used to visit. What did it tell you about relationship? I'm so curious, write a few things, give me a few thing in the chats. There was a tree.

[00:08:31] And so I mentioned that this building got torn down that I used to, if you've seen meditations that I've led for years and years, I had to tear it down. But when I tore it, when we tore it down to rebuild it, and this is the new building that's being built and I wanted the windows right in front of this particular tree, because this tree. Did not have a branch that went this way. It's all curled and gnarled up because it was making space for this little building where I was doing my therapy practice. And before me, a therapist was in it. And before that therapist, there was another therapist in this little space. And this tree had grown around and given us space. Teaches us about, even if it's very slow over time, how relationships we can mold to each other, we can support each other.

[00:09:20] Here are some of the things that you said in the chat. I just love this. There was a tree, it was a gnarly old tree. It obviously had been through hell, but it's hanging in there, right? Tells you a lot about relationships. There was tree, a group of redwoods that breathe with every day. I thank them for being there. There was the tree in my backyard that got chopped down and it grew back. A white pine that sways in the wind and shelters nature's creatures. Yes, an old sycamore. I love those sycamores trees that are so soft that told me to hold strong and grow even sideways. Just keep them on coming, you know? And if there's ever a reason to have our kids off of iPads and in the trees, it's because these memories are embedded in our nervous system about relationship with trees. And the oaks around here, They, and many trees do this, they perhaps something called crown shyness, which is leaving just a nice enough space at the edges so that light can reach others. Oaks genius lies not only in their strength, but their restraint, right? So there's genius that we can learn from nature. Peter Wallenberg writes in the hidden life of trees, there's a scientific observation that speaks to this. The blood pressure of forest visitors calms down and falls in the stands of Oaks. So that oak was also practicing some kind of form of what we humans practice of neuroception, right? Like our nervous system is picking up on the oak and its presence, or on the tree and its presents. And it helps calm us, right. There are people in your life who do this for you, who are oaks. Are people in your life who are sycamores or maybe the pine trees that you wrote down and you can also be one of those people to others.

[00:11:13] So when I mentioned my friend that I texted with my other thumb when I cut this thought that's it that's a source of that's a source support right and I I know that you have that too and you have it in your own unique way, just like the oak has in its unique way or the pine tree or the palm tree. Your unique genius in relationships. People are going to call you or contact you because you have something about you that's different than another friend, right? And you will contact certain friends because they have something different about them, right. I know which friend I'm gonna call for my cut finger and it's not the same friend that I would call when I'm feeling furious and I just need to like let some steam out, right, it's a different friend because their genius is different. So we can see with an Oakes genius, it's rooted and expansive and flexible and strong and independent and interdependent, adaptable and steady. It's all of these wise things.

[00:12:12] When we talk about with a biomimicry, we can look to trees, but we can also look to, for me as a psychologist, I also look to the research, you know, what is the research to psychological research tell us about relationships and relational energy? And there's actually an interesting field of research that looks at something called positive energizers. And in particular, they look at positive energizes in the workplace or in leadership settings. And Emma Sopala, who's a researcher at Stanford, has written a bit on this, where they have found that the best predictor of success for leaders is not sort of like how strong they are. Or how persuasive they are, it's their positive relational energy. Are they empathic? Do you trust them? When you are around them, do you feel energized? Do you wanna grow towards them like the light? Do they leave enough space between their branches for people to grow? And that when you look at top performing organizations, usually or even within organizations in subgroups, there's usually some positive energizers that are there. That are energizing the whole group. We also know that there's something that happens when two people's nervous systems resonate together. Our heart rate, our skin conductance, our breathing rhythms, they begin to be aligned when we interact. And especially when we're really close.

[00:13:47] So if I walk into my house at the end of the day and my nervous system is super stressed, And you can see it because my shoulders are up to my ears and I'm holding my

breath. My son from across the room will synchronize to that. He will feel it in his body, even though I've said no words. This is neuroception in polyvagal theory. So there's relational energy in that. But it's not just my son, it's I'm up at the post office or I'm at the store, right? And I can feel the relational energy of others. And then we also know about values in relationships that when you have shared values, when you hold your values in relationship, it tends to support other people's values. So these aspects of relational energy come from both us using our strengths but also turning our energy towards our values. And I believe that when we are engaging in our wisest efforts in relationships, that is what is happening. Our best qualities, our strengths, like the oak tree or the palm tree are being used and directed towards our value in the relationship. And when we do that, our relationships can open up.

[00:15:09] So this first task of wise effort is getting to know that, like getting curious, like what could I bring to relationships? What are my values? How do I wanna show up in relationships and what pulls me off track? And that's what we're gonna explore today. And then the next step is, okay, given that, I need to open up to some uncomfortable things. I need relate to my mind differently. I need be in a Y's way of being and I need invest my energy in what's most important in connecting and adapting moment. So this concept of energy is something that I've been interested in for a very, very long time, mostly because I've always been sensitive to energy in the room. I mean, I was the kid at the Thanksgiving dinner that, sure I was eating dinner with everyone, but I was also aware of who was in the kitchen drinking and who was outside fighting and who is just sort of like under their skin feeling super nervous. I could pick up on relational energy. In the room and energy in in many different forms right is is could be called chi could be like the energy of chi is described in Chinese medicine prana the energy uh in our body if you think about yogic traditions sisu from Finland is another form of energy which is sort of like the grit and grit and grittiness of getting over hardship our life force you may want to call it in France, they call it your Alain Vital. In this symbol of energy or qi, in the Chinese symbol here, the sort of star-like figure that's underneath is rice. And then the two brushstrokes at the top is steam. And the form of energy, or ql, is when the steam is transforming the rice. So it's something that you can actually use, right?

[00:17:03] So energy is a source. It's the capacity to do work. It can be... Form of energy within ourselves and exchange within, but exchange with people. So just to kind of give an example of this, you can rub your hands together. And you can feel energy in the form of heat. This is thermic energy, right? And then you could hold your hands in front of your face. Feel just the energy of your hands with your face. You could cup your eyes. Put your hands over your eyes like cups. And just notice how your energy changes when you cover up your eyes, when you're closing out the world in this way. One of those hands over your belly and the other hand over your heart and take some slow breaths. And feel how that shifts your energy. You could, here's one, look at some of the images in the space, some of eyes and the people, and even just there's an image of a moon and some people have backgrounds, how your energy is impacted by the different people that are here with you. If you look at each little square, what do you notice about your energy as you look that square, right? So this is how energy is exchanged. We have thermic energy, we have potential energy, we have relational energy, and we can be positive energizers for other people. And we can use our energy to help protect us also when we're in challenging experiences and we start to become more aware of what drains our energy so that we don't feel so, success sampled me at Thanksgiving. So I don't feel like all my energy is being sucked into every single person that's having a hard time in the room, right? That's very useful and important for me as a practicing clinician to be able to have compassion, but not empathy, but fatigue.

[00:19:23] Here are my boys. Oh, wait, we can't hear them. Hold on. We gotta hear them, let's see if we can hear them Oh, they're not gonna play. Well, they are singing a song called the rub my hands together and take a deep breath. And you'll just. Ah, take a deep breath. Oh. There we go, children. The energy of children can shift us. Positive energizers. One of my sons is now, the bigger one there is now in high school, and he just started high school this year. And at his high school they have a guideline called five feet, 15 feet. And here's the guideline. When you are within five feet of somebody, you look up, look them in the eye, and you acknowledge them. Give them a nod. Give them a shoulder shrug, give them smile. And when you are within five feet of somebody, you say hi. And when I walked on his campus, I can't tell you how energized I felt because 15 feet away, someone would look at me and smile. And then five feet away strangers, complete strangers coming at me, 15 year old kids, 17 year old, kids. Hey, hi, how's it going? Right, this is relational energy. And actually we need to remind ourselves to do this because most of the time our relational energy is going into this. And we barely look up anymore, and we barely smile, we barely acknowledge. But do we know the impact of someone looking at the back of a phone versus someone looking at our eyes? How much is lost, right? Just those little muscles around your eyes that are sending signals to another person's brain through motor neurons that you are safe, that you're safe. So five feet, 15 feet, be a positive energizer. That's your first task. They're giving it to high school students. We can do it too, five feet, 15 feet. We can also be positive energizers by being illuminators.

[00:21:45] And this is another, I give you so many resources, you're gonna have so many books to read. This is another great one, David Brooks, I always like his books, had no a person. And in it he talks about illuminators versus diminishers. And diminishers are people who are really kind of, he talks about the qualities of diminishers, things like egotism. The number one reason people don't see each other is that they are too self-centered to try. He talks about, the lesser minds problem, where we have just access to a tiny portion of people's minds that they speak out loud. But then we have this perception that I am much more complicated than you. I am deeper, more interesting, more subtle and more high-minded, right? So. We have a tendency to create stories about other people and not really get to know them, get to understand them. In contrast, illuminators are people who have qualities like generosity and a holistic attitude. People who offer affection, who offer compassion and care. And ultimately, to be a positive energizer is to see the wisdom within yourself that it does not come from you. It is all around you. And it is wisdom that we are co-creating and we are sharing. And that every person that you are engaging with has a wisdom within them too. In our meditation today, we did that.

[00:23:22] We acknowledged all the wisdom that we had received from all these different sources, but then we also acknowledged that the people that we were interacting with have wisdom within them and that is a great gift to not assume that people aren't wise. One after, one after, oh, one down. So one of my favorite things about going to Plum Village is that the monastics play with the children all sorts of sports. We have videos of them playing soccer and volleyball and basketball in their full on robes. And they, when I asked them about why they do this, they talk about how much energy they receive from the children, how much they receive from play and that they need that energy to rejuvenate because of how much they are giving in their compassion. And so the way that I look at wise effort in relationship is that wise effort and relationship is regenerative like that. Where you are showing up with your unique strengths and genius, you're using it in wise ways, you're giving of it, but you're also receiving from others. Fun thing is that just like I said there's different types of trees, there's oak trees and there's palm trees. Every tree is unique, every human is unique.

[00:24:48] And so every human has unique things about them that I describe in wise effort as your genius qualities. And by genius I don't mean like Stanford-Binet, you're special, you are smart, you better than everyone. I'm more referring to what the Romans described as sort of these protectors that were spirits that floated from house to house to house to, you know, protect people. And that was the original word where it came from genius, but they're the unique aspects of, of you that you bring to your relationship. Excuse me. So in psychology, many of these unique aspects have been worked out through research, things like your emotional intelligence, your character strengths, your talents, your interests, your personality. And there's. Psychological tests that you can take for each of these different aspects that make you you. Much like if you were to paint a rose, you would put all these different colors on a palette and you would mix them in a certain way to paint the rose that would be a unique rose to you, right? So there even this whole concept of like putting people in boxes of like there's nine enneagram types or there's five ocean personality types. Those are arbitrary because none of us really fit. Any of those boxes perfectly. We're much more mixtures and unique expressions of ourselves.

[00:26:12] So in the Wise Effort book, I walk you through how to work through each one of these to identify some of your unique genius qualities. But I always think it's fun just to ask questions if you were in my office. This is what I would do. I wouldn't be using necessarily a psychological assessment every time. I'd just be talking to you. And some of the questions I might ask of you to identify what you can bring to relationships, what makes you, you at your best in relationships, is this first question and think about this for yourself. What do others seem to receive from you in relationship that feels effortless for you to give? So what's easy for you to give in relationships? That's part of your genius. And it may be something like, I'm great. And if you call me and you need that ride to the airport at 5 a.m. And you know that I'll be there and I'll be happy to show up and take you to the airport at 5 a.m. Maybe you're super reliable. You're super capable at certain things. Maybe you are the person, I have a good friend who when we moved, I called her, she's a fitness instructor. And she came over and we were moving just a few houses down on this little lane. We have a shared piece of land and we have these house on the lane. So we were just moving like four houses down and she came and she was like the most energetic, positive force picking up boxes. Running them down the lane. I'm like, that is her ability that she brings to relationships, motivation. What do you bring that's easy for you? And that for someone else might be kind of effortful. That's part of the abilities that you can offer in relationship and don't discount them because often we discount what is easy for us. I also would ask you, and to get curious about your interests, what puts you in flow? What are you curious that you want to grow into? When do you feel most alive and in sync with others? Maybe it's when you're playing pickleball, or maybe it's you're working on a puzzle, or maybe is when you are sharing a musical instrument. What are your interests? And also, how could you expand your interests through relationships? Or how could you offer your interest to somebody else? Because somebody else wants to learn Spanish and you're a whiz at it, right? Or somebody else want to learn how to sew and you can share that with your grandchild or you can that with you friend. So your interest can be a source of your genius.

[00:28:52] And then another aspect of your genius are your character strengths. If someone were to describe you at your best in a relationship, What words would they use? Would they say you're something like a leader? Or maybe you're very generous, or maybe you are really honest, reliable, your character strengths. And there's actually an assessment called the VIA, the V-I-A, VIA.org that you can take that has 24 character strengths that's been validated. It's at the University of Pennsylvania. And that's kind of a

useful tool to just get to know your strengths because We don't always, again, see our own genius. You know, I don't think that rose sees itself, how genius it is. It's so beautiful, it smells so good, and it has those little thorns on the side to protect it. And then what is your personality like when you are with others? Again, that is your genius. We always need, you know, in every group, we need someone to be the chatty one that opens people up, but also the reserved one that kind of. Settles people down. We always need someone that's a go with the flow person, and then we need someone that's like a little bit more like, okay, let's stay on time, stay ordered here, and you bring that. Are you ready for an emergency? Are you conscientious? Are you the go with a flow or the steady person? What's your personality like? And there's no need to change your personality, but rather to use that personality within your relationships and really honor it.

[00:30:27] For most of us, all of these geniuses developed, both because of what we were born into, our temperament, the bodies and physiology and genetics that we all have, what we are passed on from our ancestors, our epigenetics, but also from our life experience and many of us, the hardships that we encountered. Emotional intelligence is also another area of genius. When people, you're with people you care about, what helps you feel emotionally connected? What's your emotional intelligence? How do you manage your own emotions so that you can stay present? That is also part of your genius. So all of these, I'm gonna go back to this picture, all of this together is your genius energy and relationships, and you can explore that further in the wise effort method, but I want you to get just a little bit of a sense of what makes you, you. Those are the things that I want you to bring to relationship and to remember. That you have all of of these and they're uniquely you, like a star or a tree. But sometimes we have these things that are uniquely us and those very things become our problem in relationships.

[00:31:47] So for example, if you are very empathic, when you are using your genius wisely and it's balanced, you can be super in tune. But when it's overused, like I described at Thanksgiving dinner, you're absorbing too much. And then if you shut down your empathy, if you underuse it, if you don't allow that genius to come out, Or maybe you don't use that genius for yourself. You can feel distant. Another one in a genius, a very playful person. Maybe you have a genius of bringing the party, being playful. You're the person that they want to come and liven things up. So when you're balanced, you're very joyful. You bring joy. But when it's overused, you are always playing, and you use it to avoid depth. And when it is underused, you're not bringing the playfulness to situations that really you could use it. So this chart of thinking about, wow, my genius can become my problem, is one way to look at how our genius gets misdirected, how our efforts can get misdirecting. In Buddhism, they call these near enemies. So it's like a quality that's a near enemy. So the near enemy of something like support or being loving is smothering. The near enemy and independence is detached.

[00:33:08] So we want to get to the truth of your genius and pay attention to when it's getting off track. We can all think about people that we have in our life or other relationships where their genius has become a problem. You can think about a boss of yours or a family member of yours when their genius becomes a problem when I was recording the book, the audio book, Wise Effort, I was in this recording studio and beautiful recording studio for sounds true and there was two sound editors there and these people were like Like the lice lady at school. You know how the liced lady would put on I don't know. I was always a lice. Lady could have been a liced man a laced person They put on their glasses and they pick at your hair one by one to try and find those little knits Well, these were sound editors that were doing the same thing for my voice. So I would read a sentence like a random sentence of the book Everybody all sizes colors abilities gender

expressions and ages deserves to rest Okay, I'd read that sentence and then they would make me say the words again Certain words because they're so tuned into every single word I said and we were taking a break with these sound editors and I asked them I Said for so I said you all are geniuses your ears your ability to pay attention your capacity to like Listen to the my most minute details. I love it. Thank you Thank you, thank you, you're gonna make my audio book so awesome. And does this genius ever become a problem for you in your relationships? Where you are listening to every single word, every single detail, does it ever become a problem? For you? These were two men. They both looked at me and they're like, uh-huh, I have a teenager, it becomes a problem or uh-uh, it comes a problem from my partner. So our genius can become our problem. We have to figure out, okay, when is that happening? When do we get into unwise efforts in our relationship? And what is it that pulls it? So I believe that, and this comes from both psychology, I'll give you the psychological term, but then I'll also give you the term from contemplative practice, that there are three primary things that pull us off track.

[00:35:29] And when we are off track, you remember how I said your genius energy, when it's open and it's moving towards your values, and you feel that energetic, positive energizer, relational energizer how it looked like a spiral. That opened up, when you get entangled in yourself and in your inner world and in a relationship, this is what it can feel like inside. It can feel all tangled up. And then you're acting in ways that are out of alignment with your values. So that sound editor, that's Genius Energy was beautifully aligned with working with me on my book, may go home and start critiquing every single word their teenager says, and now it's getting all tangled that, right? So what is it? That tangles up our energy. What is it that gets us off track? And I will talk to us a little bit about. I wanna make sure we have time for questions.

[00:36:26] So the three primary things that I see is getting our genius energy off track is number one, we get stuck in stories. In act or in psychology, we call this fusion, like two pieces of muddle that are stuck together. And when we're fused with our story, we cannot see clearly the person that's in front of us. We're in a story about them, we're in story about us. In Buddhism, we call it delusion, right? Because our mind is making up stories all the time. If you think about a relationship where you feel stuck in your life, there's a story going on there. There's a fact, but there's story going. If you have an estrangement with a family member, you haven't seen them in a while, that story's built. And now it's like stories with chapters and maybe multiple novels at this point. So we need to ask ourselves if we're feeling stuck and we feel like we're not showing up in our strengths, our genius energy is off track, what story am I believing here? And we don't really have to fight with the story. Next week, I'll talk a little bit about ways to work with stories, how to open up our minds. But just the act of asking yourself, am I in a story, is an intervention in itself. To be able to recognize what your mind is adding on, What is it adding on that's not helpful?

[00:37:54] The second thing that can keep us stuck in relationships and really lead us into unwise efforts. In Buddhism, it's aversion. In psychology, we call it experiential avoidance. We run from the discomfort of relationships, which is just by their very nature, relationships are gonna have discomfort to them. And the ways in which we run from it, or we avoid. In our relationships are things like we distract ourselves, you know, we numb out, people come home, they get on the TV, they go on their phone, they use substances. We try and do this Pollyanna thing where we don't really hear someone's hurt, but instead we say, well, at least we try and like make it better without hearing and feeling and empathizing with the hurt. At least you, you know someone's going through a divorce, Well, at least you still have a house. At least, and then we try and fix it. We run from discomfort by fixing. And the way that we fix is we offer unsolicited advice. You know, so I tell you, oh, I cut my



thumb and someone says, well, have you tried, you know, Trauma Meal? Have you tried the new Band-Aid that's out? Have you try? Have you, have tried? And it's like, well I just wanted you to hear that I cut thumb and feel with me. That sucks. You know so. We avoid our own discomfort by trying to fix somebody else's. We don't contact people when we have discomfort. We keep our hurts to ourselves. We get into our heads and we people please. So you can think about for yourself what type of experiential avoidance or what type aversion do you engage in? And when you do that, what happens to your strengths? They get lost. And all of a sudden you're engaging in unwise effort because it takes a lot of effort to do all of these things. Takes a lot of effort to distract yourself and to numb out and to try and fix other people and avoid.

[00:39:56] So in order to move into wise effort, we have to be willing to open up to feelings. What feelings are you willing to open up in order be in this relationship? And next week we'll talk a little bit more about that. The third way in which we engage in unwise efforts in relationship is we hold on too tight. And this is when we get stuck in our ways. We hold on to tight by doing it our way, being right. My parents who have been married for over 50 years, I asked my mom the secret to staying married that long. And she said, when we're in a fight, as soon as someone drops it, they win. And then if they think that they won, they've lost. So it's just dropping it, just dropping in the service of love. I love you too much to fight about this. Holding on too tight is trying to be right. We try and chase likes, right? We try and promote ourselves. Boost up ourselves, right? We are unwilling to change and we reject feedback. We become defensive. All of these are unwise efforts because they close you off. They close you up to the interplay and the exchange of genius energy. To be in relationship, we must be humble. We must be flexible. We must willing. We must open. So these are the three aspects of unwise effort that I believe and I write about that pull you off track from that genius energy, that pull your off track, so that your genius might just become your problem if you engage in these. Running from discomfort, being stuck in a story, then holding on too tight. And in Buddhism we call that aversion, delusion, and attachment. In psychology, running from discomfort is experiential avoidance. Stuck in a story is fusion and holding on to holding on too tight is called experiential attachment.

[00:41:58] So I am going to stop there, but what I want to say is that what we're working on today with this first part of wise effort is noticing that we got all tangled up and that there's a choice point where we can become untangled. And the first choice point is to recognize our strengths. Hey, I have something to offer here. Recognize the strengths in the other person and notice what's pulling me off track. Am I stuck in a story? Am I avoiding some kind of discomfort? Or am I holding on too tight? And then next week we'll talk about how to open up into this spiral of pointing your energy towards your values. And that requires opening up to all sorts of things, opening your mind and your heart and opening up your wise self like we did at the beginning of today's talk. So I'd love to stay connected. And you can check out more at [wiseeffort.com](http://wiseeffort.com). Do you think our Western culture conditions us as children to believe in the dichotomy of black and white thinking that we carry into our adult lives, 725? Yeah, absolutely. I think it's always, as I said, college, I always say it's everything. It's culture. It's like a rush to the way I think about it as a Russian doll. At the center of the Russian doll is our biology. Our brains actually want to think black and white because it's metabolically expensive to hold both truths to be true. We wanna, our brains wanna simplify things. It's a lot, it takes a lot less energy for our brains. And then we can think about our early childhood experiences, our learning experiences where we were taught, this is right, this is wrong, you know, a math problem or a history essay. Even though most of the history that many of us were taught was wrong, right? And then we can layer on our culture, and it's just as many layers of interacting parts. But yes, absolutely, I think that can play a role in the black and white thinking.

**Speaker 2** [00:44:00] At 728, Roseanne asked, can you talk about getting partners to recognize avoidance by always being busy?

**Speaker 1** [00:44:08] Oh, okay. Well, um, Unwise effort number one is trying to get partners to do anything. Because as soon as we're trying to pull somebody on board, they might push back. And what I would recommend is if you do have a partner who is avoiding through staying busy, which many of us have partners of, I would start by looking at your own avoidance strategies. What do you do to avoid? And then share that with your partner, share your wisdom. What I'm learning about myself is that when I am feeling something uncomfortable. I have a tendency to want to get in bed at 8 p.m. And not stay up, or have a tendency to distract myself and start being present for your partner, be the change you want to see in the world, right? So we have the best chance of changing someone by demonstrating the change in ourselves, but we have no guarantee that we can change anyone.

**Speaker 2** [00:45:17] How about one more from Melinda at 729. She says, one story, quote unquote, how after so many decades is an event still so traumatizing, excuse me, when I think of it. For example, lice that you mentioned and which I had in fifth grade, decades ago, and the condition and treatment was so frightening and kept me quarantined from school for four weeks. I've discussed it briefly in past therapy, but it still haunts me.

**Speaker 1** [00:45:45] Yeah, why do our traumas stick like that? Traumas stick in your nervous system and in part because our brain remembers the negative, our brain remember the dangerous. And one of the most dangerous things that can happen when you are a child is being shamed or disconnected in some way from your peers or from your community because we're such social creatures and that's such an important developmental time to be around other kids. So I imagine there was a confluence of things. We're happening there. Our body keeps the score, our brain keeps the score, and it stores it. And that's why I really love a lot of what Rick does, because he doesn't say that we can erase any of that, but that we need to create other neural pathways. Other neural pathways of connection and belonging and safety that can strengthen over time with practice as well. And, that's what we were doing in our meditation today, is we were creating those neural pathways groundedness and love and support and wisdom Because all of that was happening too, but unfortunately our brains don't store that quite as strongly as it does the negative So I feel for you that you have that memory and it got activated so quickly