

Accepting Yourself and Your Needs (Talk from 7/21/21)

Rick Hanson [00:00:00] So, I hope that was a good meditation for you. It was spacious and helpful for me. And in some ways it speaks to my topic tonight. So, to set the stage a bit, you may know that in this year, I'm focusing on the four noble truths. And this year will extend into 2022, I'm sure. And in particular, I'm applying that to the field of relationships. And in the context of relationships, I'm going to be moving through six great themes. The first of which is befriending yourself in terms of your relationship with yourself. And we'll move further along to other themes such as warming the heart, standing up for yourself, being at peace with others, asserting yourself, and loving the whole world. So, we'll be moving along here.

[00:00:57] So far, under the heading of befriending yourself, my previous two talks, and you can go take a look at the recordings of them, if you like, have been on: be loyal to you and then, previously, feel calm and strong. How to center and ground ourselves in the service of relationships, because as we center and ground ourselves and are loyal to ourselves and—my topic tonight—accept and honor our own needs, that's a very fundamental basis from which we can then enter into relationship. And it also teaches us a lot about accepting others and accepting their needs as well. So, that's a larger context here. And after I hold forth for a bit, I'll respond to questions and comments that have come into the chat and perhaps one or two people live.

[00:01:49] So, accepting yourself. There's kind of a fundamental metaphor that the mind is like a committee. And sometimes it feels like it's a zoo, right? It's definitely a raucous village, and there are all these voices, there are all these people at the table. Some of them won't stop talking. Some of them won't start talking. And there you are, kind of the core with a certain standing wave kind of dynamic kind of sort of stability. There you are, in some sense in the middle of it all, like the chair of a committee going, ah, take turns, please. So, you kind of feel that way. Right?

[00:02:30] So, right there we have sub-personalities. We have different parts of ourselves. We have rambunctious parts. We are scared, shy parts. We have critical, pushy parts. We have spacious parts. We have parts that just want to go get a drink or we have parts that want to yell at other people. We have parts, I admit it, that want to bump into the rear end of the car in front of us that's being a jerk and just cut us off. Oops. We have all these parts, right? Can we acknowledge that they're all there? Some of them need some regulation. OK. Much as sometimes if you have a puppy or a certain kind of a dog, whatever, a cat or some kind of a plant, it needs some regulation and still you can accept that it's there.

[00:03:25] So, I encourage you, and this will be a little experiential, this talk tonight, bring to mind what it feels like to accept something easy. All right? Can you accept that I'm holding up my water bottle? Can you accept that you might feel a little thirsty yourself right now, or you might be curious about what I'm going to talk about? Can you accept those qualities? Easy. Know what it's like to accept something. And then you can imagine, you know, and this can be a real practice for a while, you can imagine extending that field of acceptance to every one of the characters sitting around that big table of the committee of you. Because we're all committees. We're all made of parts connected together and continually changing. Can you, in the language of Tara Brach, say to yourself as you look at each one of these parts of yourself, particularly parts you may have pushed away or had others push away inside you, especially when you were young, can you look at each one of them? Can you look at the curious, interested, good-hearted part of you and say, you

belong, you're here, I accept that you're here? Can you look at a critical, angry part of yourself, a self-righteous, superior part of yourself, go, you too, you're here, this, too, belongs, going to keep an eye on you and I accept that you're here? Maybe another part, vulnerable, scared, maybe feels like a little girl, a little boy, maybe a little being that transcends gender distinctions, all distinctions. And can you look over there to that part? Maybe a needy part, maybe a part that has a runny nose that's a little maybe messy and say, you know, I see you. Yes. I bow your way. It's a bow of acknowledgment. You, too, are part of me. You, too. You, too, belong here at this table of the committee of me. It's a very beautiful, powerful practice. I'm giving you some suggestions that you might engage on your own.

[00:06:00] Sometimes it can be challenging to offer that bow of acknowledgment and acceptance, understanding that there can also be appropriate, sometimes, regulation of different parts of ourselves. Sometimes it can be challenging to offer that bow, because it stirs up things, or you can start to feel hijacked by that other part of you as soon as you start giving it voice. And therefore, it's important to resource yourself with being loyal to yourself and feeling calm and strong and through other forms of resourcing. The first part of my book, Neurodharma, really talks about resourcing yourself, especially in the beginning, so you feel centered and grounded, so then you can open to and hear these different parts of you, while remembering that, you know, there's still this core process of your fundamental choosing and regulating with reference to all of who you are. So, that's one.

[00:07:01] Another metaphor, one I particularly like, is the metaphor that the psyche is like a vast domain, vast land with beautiful mountain meadows, some dark and smelly swamps, deserts, jungles, everything. Right? And to realize that, you know, we start out that way as a kid, but as other people interact with us, sometimes critically, sometimes shamefully, different things happen. We can start pulling ourselves back from the various provinces of our vast land and start living entirely, as I did as a kid, up in our head in some kind of watchtower off in a corner, looking out and everything and feeling cut off from most of it all and then live our days out. When in fact, the opportunity through acceptance and acknowledgment, embodiment and inclusion is to gradually widen our sense of self and reclaim, reclaim all of ourselves and not just feel hunkered down and beleaguered and bunkered up with the drawbridge up inside this tiny little watchtower. And appreciating that many of those aspects of us in this metaphor of the lands are not verbal. They're not all logical and rational. They are sometimes mysterious, sometimes spooky. And we can include all of it.

[00:08:33] Another metaphor of acceptance—and by the way, in the last one, you might even play around with drawing that out. Do some visuals. You know, draw out the different parts of yourself, maybe create, you know, get one of these two-foot by three-foot poster boards. I make collages quite often for myself. And imagine it as the whole vastness of you, the whole territory of you all together. And what are the different parts of it? Can you include the whole thing even visually?

[00:09:04] Then the last metaphor is one of the mansion of the mind, a house with many, many rooms. And sure, there are the sunny parlors where all the furniture is in the right place and everyone's behaving politely. And then maybe there's some other rooms where some serious partying might have gone on and you're like, Oh, OK, that room I'm not going there are too many more with that big disco ball spinning around above it. And then over here, maybe down in the basement, there are these rooms where, whew, I've pushed away parts of myself that maybe I'm ashamed of or I feel guilty about, or I'm just afraid for

them to be revealed to others. Because when they were when I was in junior high school, I was hurt when I revealed certain parts of myself, including very sweet parts of myself. You know? So, there are all these various rooms, and then the question becomes, can we gradually resource ourselves, feel comfortable with steadiness of mind and stable mindfulness that's not swept away by what we might find as we unlock and open some of those doors? Can we do that gradually and allow, you know, the great medicines, traditionally, of light and air to move in to all the rooms, gradually, of the mansion of the mind?

[00:10:28] We may say, you know, what's in some of those rooms needs some regulation, some care. Some of those rooms, I know they're there and I don't choose to dwell there. It's not useful for me. There's just a lot of pain there and it never gets better. So, it's not that I'm trying to deny it. I'm simply not going to dwell there. All right. That's fine. Maybe there are other rooms where you go, you know, there's some pretty intense stuff there. Once in a while, it's useful to draw upon. But that's not kind of where I want to hang out every day. It's OK. While, still, opening up all these various rooms in, you know, the mansion of your mind.

[00:11:11] Here, too, you might reflect on what are some of those rooms and what would enable you, maybe by bringing in some allies, some companions to go with you into some of those rooms? All right? It all belongs. It's all you. It's all you, and you can acknowledge it and accept it as it is, even while being appropriate and honorable and virtuous in how you live.

[00:11:40] Then, further, one of the most useful models of the personality of the psyche really, broadly, I'm going to share with you in a moment. And it kind of summarizes everything I've been saying with these three metaphors, you know, of kind of the committee, the vast land, the province, and then also the mansion of the mind. This is a model—I think you could see it. Yeah, here we go. Sorry about my visual display here. Basically, three circles, three circles. It's a very simple model. And the way I learned is the outer circle is the act. It's what we want to present to the world, what we want the world to see us as, what we want to see ourselves as. Then inside that, second circle, is who we're afraid we are, who we are afraid the world will see us as, parts of ourselves that we disown or push away or suppress, non-experienced experience shoved down there, often somatically, unconscious, pushed out of sight and yet very often wanting to bubble forward. So, there can be a kind of ongoing tension with the act, the persona, the presentation to the world. And then underneath it all, including perhaps extending into something that perhaps is transpersonal, underneath it all is who we really are. Who we really are both in terms of are just fundamental nature as basically wakeful and good and sweet and just different kind of underlying deep forms of temperament. That's in the being category. As well as maybe even deeper than that, a kind of a fundamental consciousness or awareness that feels sort of vast and somewhat impersonal. OK?

[00:13:40] Now, it's natural to have an act. You know? Certain situations it's not safe to bear your belly in that corporate board meeting or when the, perhaps, in-laws come to dinner. You know? It's OK. It's OK to be a kind of presentation, right, to be thoughtful and watchful, right? And then, you know, we shift styles in different settings. But they can feel fairly authentic. They're not terribly at odds with all of who we are, and they're appropriate. There's a place for that. But on the other hand, much of what lives in that scared self kind of wants to move forward, and then it creates a tension with the act and we're caught up in that tension. And a lot of what personal healing is about, and psychological growth, is resourcing one's self so that increasingly we start to create, if you will, sort of doorways or

portals through which the scared self or aspects of the scared self can be appropriately at a certain pace that's manageable. It's kind of titrated, if you will. Or as Peter Levine puts it, pendulated. We move into getting in touch with it, then we step back and kind of stabilize and then we move into it again. Anyway, over time, practice, a lot is becoming increasingly comfortable through resourcing yourself, which includes having a kind of growing faith in yourself and acceptance for yourself to allow what has been pushed down to come forward and to relax some of the armor in the act, some of the old ways of being that made sense of then back in high school or that first marriage, but, you know, are not really that necessary today. And then increasingly the natural radiance of the being deep down inside can shine through more fully.

[00:15:36] I find this is a very useful model, including using it for kind of a self-assessment. Where am I in this process and what might be helpful to me to take some chances on relaxing some of my act, whatever that might be for you, perhaps knowing or being sure or, you know, being angry or just in your head or whatever it might be, relaxing some of that and allowing your, you know, your full, authentic self to be more certainly known by yourself as well as known by other people, so that increasingly, you know, you're just your naturalness, your natural all rightness can shine through. So, that is a useful way to think about accepting yourself, allowing all of you to be, relaxing some of that armoring, some of that persona, becoming increasingly natural, increasingly confessed, disclosed, transparent. As Carl Rogers put it, congruent so that what's on the outside is congruent with what's on the inside and vice versa. As you do that, you just become more comfortable in your skin. Easier in the world and you leave a lighter footprint behind you, including on other people. OK. Acceptance in general.

[00:16:58] And then in particular, we can have an acceptance and of valuing even, even a validation, even an advocacy of our own needs. Particularly, I'm going to focus here on interpersonal needs. And some of what gets suppressed and shoved into the scared self are various needs or deep wants that feel unsafe to acknowledge. Maybe back when you were a child or earlier on, or maybe structurally because of systemic, structural, societal forms of prejudice and oppression, suppression, putting people down, maybe understandably it wasn't safe. We developed the structure for good reasons much of the time. Good reason certainly then, maybe not reasons that continue to be relevant or so relevant today. A lot of what's in here have to do with our needs, including experiences of unmet needs or decisions that we made about not getting our needs met then, which we transfer into the present. A lot of that lives in that second circle, very loosely described as the scared self. It's important to not get caught up in the terminology. Feel free to switch around. This is just how I how I learned it.

[00:18:24] So, needs. I want to speak to several fundamental relational needs and try to preserve time for your questions and discussion. And I invite you right now to kind of feel into this experientially. And also realize that sometimes when we get in touch with really deep needs that are in play in really important and sometimes upsetting relationships, that can stir up a lot of material. So, take care of yourself and, you know, make sure that you can, you know, kind of come back from perhaps the deep end of the pool.

[00:19:06] So, a first need I invite you into, regarding in your relationships, is about safety. This is one of our most fundamental needs as a vulnerable, frail, and mortal animal. As all animals, the need for safety, to live to see the sunrise, to keep on going, to be able to take the next breath. And safety includes both physical safety and certainly emotional safety. And absolutely, if physical safety is at all in question, it's extremely important to talk to

other people about that who are safe to talk with and kind of clarify what you're going to do about that. For here, say that and then move on to more emotional forms of safety.

[00:20:01] So, if you like imagine someone that is a friend of yours, you know, an ally, a benefactor, a friend. Could be a close friend, like even a mate. And try on a little thought experiment. Imagine in your own mind, if you like, could write it out, even, saying the name of this friend and then saying, I need to feel safe around you. So, I request something. Now it could be something you're already getting. Right? Or maybe your intuition will bubble up with a request. So, I might say something right now, thinking here about someone who's close to me, and I'll spare the individual, and I might say, Mary, I need to feel safe. I need to feel safe around you. So, I request that when I'm talking, you not interrupt me. If I rattle on, you now, for more than 40 seconds in a row. OK. But, you know, it helps me feel safer if there's not the jarringness of being interrupted, for example. So, I'll be quiet for a moment while you play with this yourself. See what it feels like to imagine someone who's supportive of you in general and say their name. Say, I need to feel safe. So, I request something. I'll be quiet for a couple of dozen seconds when you try this.

[00:22:19] It's interesting, isn't it, to experience it, to declare yourself out loud, I need to be safe. I need to feel safe. I need to be safe and feel safe. Then you might imagine a more contentious relationship in your life today. It's a little more direct if this is a person in your life today, so it's more concrete and real. And remember that, to Elaine's point that just came in, this is really about you. They're going to do what they do. I mean, later on in this year, I'm definitely going to get into what to do when they're not so great about what you do. Right? In other words, if they're normal, you know, like many normal people or average people, let's say, people in general. But right now, I'm going to focus on just declaring yourself initially. Validating for yourself, your own need. So, try it with a kind of a contentious, difficult, challenging person. Say their name, you know, I need to feel safe. I need to feel safe around you, as Esther says here. So, I request something. What's that feel like? Try that.

[00:24:07] OK. And as Deb just puts in, if truly you're not safe around someone and there's no possibility of it, don't pick them for this exercise. You know? Pick someone, at least in your mind, it would be safe to say that you need to feel safe around them. And obviously, if it's not safe to tell someone the simple fact that we all need to feel safe around each other and make a request, not a demand, if it's not safe to do that, that's kind of the entry level for a relationship of any importance or impact on you. And then we can have other conversations about what to do when in the real world it's sometimes the case that, yeah, that would be great, but it's not possible. And then we'll maybe in future sessions talk more about that. But here I'm talking about the fundamental process of you, your relationship with your own needs. Inside your own mind at a minimum, can you normalize your needs and stand up for them? Can you validate them as normal? We are social mammals. We are animals in general. We need to be safe and we need to feel safe, including emotionally safe with important people.

[00:25:31] Let's try a different one. As social mammals, social primates with important relationships, we need to feel understood or at least someone's trying to understand. We need to feel received, like they're paying attention. They're emotionally available to us. These are needs. Yeah, they're not needs like water and air, but in important relationships they are normal, biologically grounded, evolutionarily shaped needs, interpersonally, the need to feel understood that key people are available, they're paying attention, they receive you. It's OK to want these things. It doesn't make you needy or embarrassing or overwhelming or a human vampire. It doesn't. It makes you normal, like me. I'm normal. I

need these things in important relationships. So, imagine picking someone in your life that's significant to you and saying to that person their name and I need to feel understood—and you can adapt to your own purposes—by people who are important to me. You're important to me. I need to feel understood by you. So, I request from now on that you pause for a moment after I talk about something important. And you take a moment to really kind of imagine how it is for me. Take a moment to kind of sort of slow down and maybe feel how it is for me. In other words, bring ordinary empathy to me. Doesn't mean agreement. Doesn't mean you like what I'm saying or that you're submitting to it. Simple empathy and understanding. So, that's my request because you're important to me and I need to feel understood, in basic ways at least, by people who are important to me. So, that's my version. I'll be quiet here. I'll be quiet. Try this in your own mind. How would you say it? Can you stand up for your need to feel understood by people who are important to you?

[00:28:36] Notice difficulties with this. Difficulties are being named in the chat, which I'll speak to. All right? So, I want to clarify things. First, this is just an exercise. It's an inquiry. It's also a training. It's a training in becoming more comfortable and self-respecting and validating of normal human needs that we have in our relationships. And the details of it, the words used, the applications, that's really up to you. OK? So, for example, you don't have to include some of the language I use like I need to feel safe around you.

[00:29:22] Second, I want to say that, to repeat, there are certain people that it's not appropriate to do this exercise with even in your mind, although you could do it in your mind to kind of clarify why you don't feel good about being around them because you don't feel safe and you're never going to feel safe, most likely. And it's not even safe to tell them you don't feel safe, right? Well, that's a valuable result from doing an exercise like this, but it doesn't mean you have to do it with those people.

[00:29:51] Another key point, it's that there's some comments that came in on the order of, well, what if they don't like the fact that you want to feel safe or if they don't like the—and safe—I want to say, actually, this first. Safe might sound lofty. Somebody said safe. But safe just means I'm not going to be hurt in the next moment. I'm not going to be attacked. It doesn't feel dangerous around you. Doesn't feel threatening around you. I don't feel anxious about normal, situationally appropriate self-disclosure or openness, or even asking for things that are in the normal range. Certainly, if you're asking them of me that maybe I can ask them of you to. You know? If they don't like that, all right. That's something to take into account. But the fact that they don't like it doesn't mean that it's invalid. It doesn't mean that you have to be, frankly, dominated by what they like or dislike about your inner world. It's a normal need to feel safe.

[00:31:08] Cindy writes, and it's a great question, my first thought is they'll take offense at me suggesting they are unsafe. Excellent point, Cindy. In just that, first, if someone makes up that you're accusing them of being unsafe by simply you saying you need to feel safe and you're asking for something, that's something they made up. That's not your inherent meaning. And second, if they think, oh well, you wouldn't be asking for this if you didn't feel a little unsafe, OK. So what? Maybe you don't feel that safe. And if they can't handle the truth that you don't feel that safe, that's really a commentary about them. And if they take offense at you saying you don't feel safe or there's something they could do to help you feel safer, that's a lot on them. And to be really clear, too, you're talking about your own experience in the exercise. And often in real life when we communicate with other people, we're not saying they're dangerous. But we're definitely saying, you know, I find it's really hard for me to let down my guard around you. And I can explain why, and I'm working on

that myself. And meanwhile, yeah, I request that when I share my feelings, you don't immediately jump to explaining to me why I'm neurotic and need to do more therapy and change my behaviors. Yeah, I don't feel safe to be exposed emotionally when people do that. No apologies for feeling that way. And I'm probably, here, modeling a kind of validation of your own needs. OK.

[00:32:56] So, moving down a little bit. Now—and again, to be clear, this is an exercise. You don't have to talk this way with other people, including 20-year-olds. You know? Might seem a little too heavy for them. The point is, can you feel comfortable in your own skin in principle with acknowledging and validating fundamental needs that you have in relationships? First and foremost, can you feel that? And then on the basis of that acceptance and validation of your needs in relationships, can you find skillful ways that depend on situations and people and times and all the rest of that, can you find skillful ways to, over time, express those needs?

[00:33:49] Later on this year, I'll be talking about different ways of expressing ourselves skillfully, et cetera, et cetera, including around kind of high intensity topics. But minimally can we feel accepting and validating inside ourselves? And my experience so many people in my observation as I read some of the chats, is that a lot of people have been trained to invalidate their own needs, including through culturally structured and systemically oppressive ways. And that can take lots and lots of forms. In the face of all that, can you validate your own needs, and through extension over time, validate the normal, appropriate needs of others?

[00:34:42] The way people go about meeting their needs might be problematic. We can negotiate. Right? Boundaries and turn taking and, you know, deals with other people around the ways we go about meeting deep needs, meeting deep wants. But the wants themselves are normal. They're OK. They're part of the human committee. Can you stand up for them inside yourself?

[00:35:09] I want to do one more. I've done needs for safety. Then I've talked about needs for empathy, needs for understanding. How about our normal need to feel valued by important others? Versions of that include feeling cherished or prized, selected, wanted, appropriately pursued, the sense of, you know, leave no person behind on the battlefield, leave no child behind, you know, the Runaway Bunny, the mama bunny will always come for her baby bunny. So, valued. Valued, especially in important relationships, maybe in part, and I can certainly relate to this, in ways that are kind of turbocharged by history of not feeling so valued in your own background. So, can you imagine in your own mind and, you know, it can kind of stir things up, which is good and a lot of what's come in in the chat has been wonderfully useful because it's what gets stirred up when you do this inquiry in yourself. Imagine someone important to you. Can you look them in the eye and say so-and-so, I need to feel valued. You know? Find your own words. I'll offer some here. I need to feel important to you. Depending on the relationship, I need to feel respected. I need to feel wanted. I need to feel prized, like you do think I'm special in some important ways. I need these things. Notice if you squirm. The ones you squirm on are the ones that are probably the most valuable to explore. You know? This is not about feeding your vanity or pulling for inappropriate narcissistic supplies. It's not about being better than others. This is about that human, deeply grounded in the evolution of hunter gatherer bands, need to feel like we are a wanted and valued member of a community, a group, or a relationship. Normal. Normal. Can you stand up for that? And can you even maybe turn it into something concrete? In your imagination, maybe not appropriate to say out loud, but at least in your imagination. So, I request, for example, that—thinking of someone I know

quite well—that you start out after I say something kind of important, it would help me if you would start out with kind of what you, you know, like about what I said or agree with or, you know, appreciate the value of before you jump into your critique. I can handle that critique, but it would help me if you started with what you can agree with or what makes sense to you or what you think is even pretty cool, maybe. Could see some improvement, perhaps, but a pretty good start. And then take it from there. That would be helpful to me, for example. All right? OK.

[00:38:35] So, we have needs. There are more needs than these. I think these three are good. And like I said, if you start finding yourself getting kind of charged up about this, that's a good sign that you're surfacing some very useful things. And the needs that we find that were most kind of squeamish about or maybe were most shamed or denied or just not talked about in polite society in how we grew up, you know, those are maybe the ones that are particularly important to pursue. OK.

[00:39:05] So—and I'll try to end still pretty close to 30 minutes past the hour. I see a couple of hands coming up. And I see a number of comments. And I just want to point out to Deb Z's comment at 7:19 p.m., it's great comment. Telling someone, oh, I have a need for something. I have a need to feel safe. I have a need to feel empathized with. I have a need to feel, you know, prized, let's say, or valued. Implicitly, it does say to the other person, you know, I'm telling you this because it's a little something to work on here. But it doesn't have to be—if they interpret it as a sweeping criticism of them, that's on them. That's their doing. You're just being human. And you're valuing the relationship enough to, from your perspective, want it to be better. And if another person can't handle—we'll be getting to skillful wise speech—but if another person really can't handle, especially in a important, consequential relationship, a simple expression of need and request, hmm, that's a yellow flag about that relationship.

[00:40:22] OK, so a couple of people, I'm going to try to respond to both of you, Leah and Fara. And I'm going to be kind of quick here. So, Lee—or Lee? Leah? How do you pronounce that? I'm asking you to unmute. And then we'll get to Fara.

Leah [00:40:37] Yes Rick, it's Leah.

Rick Hanson [00:40:39] Leah, great.

Leah [00:40:40] I appreciate the topic so much. It speaks to where I am today. I have a good friend, not a romantic relationship, but a friend that I've been very close to for a number of years. And we met in recovery and I've continued the relationship kind of as a service to her. And I'm realizing that that doesn't serve my needs.

Rick Hanson [00:41:16] Hmm. Yeah.

Leah [00:41:17] So, I am trying to work—and some of your exercises have been really helpful in formulating, because I've been talking to other people in recovery about boundaries. How do I set difficult boundaries with someone that is not at the same level of consciousness that I am? Doesn't meditate, doesn't go to recovery anymore. So, that's it in a nutshell, Rick. Just one last point. I think that I've gotten codependent with this relationship, and it's real hard to break the habit of not picking up the phone and discussing what was discussed on the news tonight.

Rick Hanson [00:42:05] Yeah, yeah, I hear you. I'm trying to break the habit of being the guy who calls people. But anyway. OK. You know? Yeah, that's really—I appreciate that. And I'll just add that to be really clear, in the real world, it's often unsafe to express our needs and to offer a vulnerable request. You know, there'll be consequences. Sometimes we can do little probes to sort of get a feeling for it. But it's really important to not internalize the world and turn the world against ourselves. Bad enough that the world is doing that and bad enough that we've got the challenge and the difficulty and the situations to navigate our way in the world. Why add insult to injury by, you know, doing a world to ourselves, too? Minimally.

[00:42:59] Also, this territory, I think, does help us do little experiments with safe people around the language of needs or deep wants, if you have something, different language, or something is really important to me, you can use different languaging, and kind of push back or expand the space, the window of tolerance it might be called, the window of what we can actually talk about, right? I think relationships are bounded by what we can't talk about. Right? But expanding that space of the relationship in little tests, and hopefully it goes well. And then last, as we focus on this, we can become more attentive to vulnerable requests from other people, including implicit vulnerable requests. That little expression across their face, we could slow it down. We might even ask them, we might say, hey, you know, I don't know, I'm just sort of guessing, I mean, I know me, I kind of need such and such, and I just kind of wondered if something landed for you a moment ago where you know, it wasn't quite right for you, right? Or if somebody starts to say something, but they're fumbling, we can be spacious ourselves, like in the meditation and allow their need, their want, their request, you know, their vulnerability to be there with us and we can be undisturbed, at least in our heart, deep down, while they're there. You know, knowing more about offering vulnerable requests about meeting our own needs ourselves helps us do that more and more skillfully for other people. Yeah.

Leah [00:44:34] Thank you, Rick. That's been most helpful. I do want you to know that I am studying Neurodharma and getting a lot out of that. So, generally—

Rick Hanson [00:44:43] Oh, I'm happy. Good for you.

Leah [00:44:47] Generally, in acceptance and resourcing today.

Rick Hanson [00:44:51] Yeah, I really appreciate that. You know, I'll confess that books are like children. You know, I've written six of them at this point and, you know, I love all my children the same, but I do like this one the best. OK, thank you, Leah. I'm going to mute you just for simplicity. And then, Fara, I think we do have time, especially if you're succinct. And then those of you want to stick around we'll break into a small discussion groups. OK. So, you're muted, Fara. Ask to unmute. Great.

Fara [00:45:23] Hi there, Rick. I really want to appreciate all your teaching all the time that you spend for free for all of us, I really want to say how much deeply I appreciate. Very quickly I want to go to my point. So, I have been practicing vipassana and I also have been students for Tara and also Jack Kornfield. And I've completed those courses for Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program. All I heard in the Buddhism—and that's my confusion. I'm also a psychotherapist, so I am 100 percent with you, with how we need to change to get to that place. But for myself, I'm kind of confused that in one way in vipassana and also Jack Kornfield teach me, don't take those thoughts seriously. Vipassana suggests look at the body sensation and feel that and let it go. Don't let the thought comes. Don't feel what you feel, just bodily sensation. In that teaching I also

learned that the thought comes, thought goes, feeling comes, feeling goes. Don't take it too seriously. But as a psychotherapist, I know that everything is so important

Rick Hanson [00:46:46] Right.

Fara [00:46:46] And people need to bring the change gradually and by—so, how do you combine these two together?

Rick Hanson [00:46:56] Hugely important question for everyone and also for anyone who's ever watched Oprah, who I think has done more for mental health in America in the last 30 years, probably than any single individual. Yeah. So, briefly, first point, what is a really useful procedure in some settings is not necessarily a way of life for all settings. So, for example, as you well know, as a therapist, a certain style or kind of inquiry or a way of responding to others that's very appropriate if you're a client or a therapist is not a good way to interact with your children or your wife. I can speak from personal experience there. And so, in the same way, that kind of austere, almost, disengaged, witnessing, presence that's really in a moment, that's quite radical in deep vipassana where you're—it's a word for insight—you're recognizing your experiences coming and going, and over time, you more and more penetrate into the nature of all experiences as made of parts that are connected and continually changing and therefore empty of absolute substance, in a nutshell. That's wonderful. And that's not the entirety of practice. The Buddha, for example, offered many other forms of practice, and we can realize that, yes, along with that insight, it's very useful to cultivate certain helpful skillful qualities such as emotional intelligence, grit, gratitude, compassion, and self-compassion. And it's very helpful to release certain tendencies or afflictions or thoughts or feelings that create suffering and harm for ourselves and others. You know? Both are really, really, really true.

[00:48:49] As practice matures, increasingly, people have done a lot of healing work. They've cultivated a lot of things. They're more and more at ease, rested in the present. There are fewer dynamics that were originally embedded in the biology, the physical substrate of their own brain and body. Those gradually clear out. You know? And therefore then they're more and more hanging out in the present, spaciously, just allowing it all to unfold, kind of rested in the ground of being. And they're there because they did a lot of practice for the last 30 years. And we, too, need to do that kind of practice. So, to me, they both come together.

[00:49:34] Maybe I'll leave you with something that I think is really quite sweet around self-acceptance. I've used this metaphor before. It's a traditional metaphor for that awakening is like a wagon with two wheels, follows two tracks. You know, one track is the process of developmental change, and we work it. You know? We release. We heal ourselves. We cultivate qualities. We get more skillful. We cultivate wise view, wise intention, you know, right speech, and all the rest of it. Very, very important track. Very, very important track. Then there's this other track, the other wheel of the wagon of awakening, that's about recognizing our original nature, the original true nature of the Buddha nature, the underlying all rightness of every moment already without any need for change or development. Original nature can't be changed. It can't be developed. We can cultivate the recognition of it in our feeling, but it itself is what it is. And so, you know, both are true. And with regard to ourselves, we can accept all the things we're dealing with in the first wheel of the wagon of awakening. And we can accept that we're a work in progress, we're cultivating skills, we're developing ourselves in various ways. We can accept that while also bowing to, acknowledging, and recognizing this quality in ourselves that even infuses

the things that we're addressing with the first wheel of the wagon of awakening, these qualities in ourselves that are utterly all right already. Just fine already.

Fara [00:51:17] Because I said also these two parts, two wheels in myself as well. Sometimes I'm just feeling, oh my god, a lot of insight flowing and of all the other wonderful things. Right? And recognition that this is not who I am. And the other time I feel those aspects that you mention, I feel so much in need. And I think as I go deeper, those needs become more stronger. Needs that have been ignored, have not been paid attention. So, what I hear from you, which I love it, is you have to go both sides at the same.

Rick Hanson [00:52:01] Oh yeah, exactly. I myself—and I'll finish on this point—I myself have developed the first wheel, the first track, quite a lot, quite a lot. And it's been great. All along, I had an intuition of the second wheel and in the last few years, I'm really focusing much more on the real time permeability, or accessibility, transparency to the truth of the of the second track, the second wheel. OK, very good, Fara. Thank you. Yeah, super. All right. Thank you.

[00:52:34] All right. We are finishing now, definitely. I apologize for going 8 minutes over. Hope you'll forgive me. Not too horrible. I'll go back and I'll read the chats that have come in. And now, if it's OK, I really encourage you just to take three breaths as we finish formally here. And in these three breaths, even if you like, you know, it's OK to want to feel safe. It's OK to want to feel understood. It's OK to want to feel valued and to feel it when you say it. Thank you very much and come on back next week. Maybe bring a friend if you like. I'm going to keep talking about fundamental aspects of relationships. Take care til then.