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MBS ([00:00](#)):

You might know this fable, it's often ascribed to the Cherokee or the Lenape people. Inside us, two wolves fighting, two conflicting desires. And which one wins? The one you feed. Now I'm curious to know if you are attuned to your two wolves right now. Who or what is the battle between obedience or rebellion, self care or service, courage or safety, conflict or comfort? Well, I'm Michael Bungay Stanier, those are my wolves.

MBS ([00:39](#)):

So welcome to Two Pages With MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Now I've twice been on Eric Zimmer's wonderful podcast, The One You Feed. And he brings a stillness and a wise curiosity to work and to stories that are often rooted in this kind of inner conflict. Now I



generally start these interviews by asking, so who are you and what do you do? But with Eric, that's a bit of a challenge.

Eric ([01:11](#)):

Well, as a pretty focused Zen Buddhist practitioner, the question who am I is, I could answer on a lot of different levels.

MBS ([01:21](#)):

Eric was kind enough to also give me a more conventional answer, starting with his identity as a dad.

Eric ([01:27](#)):

I have a son who's 23, graduated from college and is just amazing. I love dogs. They're a huge part of my life. I'm a guitar player, for anybody who sees the video of this, I don't know, there's a guitar there in the corner. Music is foundational to me. It's one of the great joys of my life. Reading, I've always loved to read. So I have a job now that involves reading, which is just beautiful.

MBS ([01:54](#)):

Yeah. So you can guess I identify with that. I mean, this is a podcast called, Two Pages. Eric's work as the host of the podcast and also as a behavior coach, isn't just something he randomly selected. It was more of a calling. And the name of his podcast gives you a clue to why.

Eric ([02:13](#)):

Another foundational part when you think about me and my life is, at 24 I was a homeless heroin addict. I was looking at going to jail for a long time. I had hepatitis C. I was really sick.

MBS ([02:28](#)):

So what, I wonder, was the turning point here?



Eric ([02:32](#)):

The moment that sort of kicked off my attempt at recovery then, and I had tried multiple times before that, little things had happened. I'd tried sort of different things, but one night I was at work, I worked in a restaurant and saw a couple police officers walk in the front door and keep walking through the dining room, keep walking, keep walking, walk into the kitchen, say, "Are you Eric Zimmer?" And my response is like, "Well..."

MBS ([03:04](#)):

Maybe?

Eric ([03:06](#)):

I'm not sure. And I was handcuffed and taken away at that point, and was charged with a number of felonies. And that was problematic for a variety of reasons. I got out of jail. I mean, when you talk about privilege, I can talk about privilege that I was privileged in our law enforcement system to get the things I got, but I got out of jail. But I had a problem on my hands. And the problem was the job I'd had where I both made money and stole money was gone. The van that I happened to be living in, my being sort of homeless, was attached to the restaurant, that was gone. And I had about a \$350 a day heroin habit.

Eric ([03:56](#)):

So I did what many heroin addicts are known to do, which is like, well, I'm going to go to detox because I got no better idea. I mean, I'm going to be really sick here soon. I don't know what to do. And so I went to detox and while I was in detox, they said, "We're looking at your history. You've tried the couple different things. We think you need to go into long term treatment, like 30 days." And I was like, no way. And I went back to my room and I sat there and I had what we in recovery kind of call a moment of clarity, where I went, if you go back out, you're either going to end up going to jail for a long time or you're going to die.



Eric ([04:36](#)):

I had hepatitis C, I didn't know it. I weighed 100 pounds. I mean, I was dying. And so I just had that moment of clarity where I went and went to them and said, "Okay, I'll do it."

MBS ([04:51](#)):

Right.

Eric ([04:52](#)):

So that was sort of that... If you're going to make the movie, that's the moment. But of course, again, as I said, there are countless moments surrounding that, that all contribute. And so that was the beginning of recovery there.

MBS ([05:08](#)):

Yeah. That's a powerful story. You've called your podcast, The One You Feed because you set up with the parable of two wolves fighting within us, one dark, one light, and which one wins? And the answer is the one that you feed. Do you think we're wired to feed one or the other?

Eric ([05:33](#)):

No.

MBS ([05:34](#)):

Yeah. So it's always a choice?

Eric ([05:36](#)):

I think so. It's interesting because if you look at... This is a deeply philosophical, you might even say religious question, are we good or bad? Christianity says you're bad, original sin. Certain forms of Buddhism say, you're good, you were



born good. It's just stuff obscuring it. I subscribe more to, I think there are seeds of both in us.

MBS ([06:05](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([06:06](#)):

I think it's both, I don't know how you look at the human race and don't see both. There are glaring examples of the most awful horrible things. And there are glaring examples of the most beautiful, wonderful, loving things and people. And I think for the vast majority of us, there's both.

MBS ([06:28](#)):

Yeah. When I was on your podcast recently, you asked me, how does this parable land with you? And you warned me beforehand that you're going to ask the question, so I'd been mulling over it for a day or two, because it's a great question. And I was really thinking about how you have two choices, not only what you do feed, but also what you don't feed. I'm wondering what you've learned about how to resist feeding the other wolf?

Eric ([07:01](#)):

Yeah. For me, it's been a process of... I think there's a few things that go into it. One is to see clearly that feeding that wolf leads to suffering for myself and for others, but to move away from a moralistic judgemental sense of it, and more of a true seeing, looking, going, "Oh yeah, all right, I see what happens when I do that. I see what happens when other people do that."

Eric ([07:38](#)):

So I think that's certainly part of it. And then the other is understanding. What is it? My addiction, you could say using drugs for me is certainly feeding my bad



wolf, right? There's no getting around that, it's a clear thing. But why was I so compelled to do it?

MBS ([07:56](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([07:58](#)):

Gabor Mate, a great addiction researcher and advocate for recovery in addiction, has a famous line where he says, "Don't ask why the addiction, ask why the pain."

Eric ([08:13](#)):

And so I don't think you have to apply that only to addiction. I think you can look at that with anything. Why am I compelled to do this thing that seems to be sort of feeding my bad wolf? And how do I work with that part of myself that needs something it's not getting?

MBS ([08:33](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([08:35](#)):

So I think it's a clear scene of the consequences, and then an understanding of what's going on there and how we can give ourselves better choices.

MBS ([08:51](#)):

It's so interesting. I mean, the conversation we had has been really resonating with me. In fact, this morning I was writing something about it, just kind of journaling about it. And I'm like, okay, so I feel like I feed my good wolf for a lot, but if I looked at my behavior now and went, it's the result of a wound of some sort. What does your current behavior tell you about a wound that you might have that you might not see? I was like, oh, that's hard. I shut my journal and



went, I might come back to that another time. It feels like it's pushing against a door that's a bit sticky and dark and tarry, but it's such an interesting place to stand and be able to watch yourself and go, what's going on here?

Eric ([09:35](#)):

Yeah. I think it's really interesting, in the behavior coaching work I do with people, people don't, let's just say behavior change, we'll just say broadly is either doing more of something you want to do or doing less of something you don't want to do. So I think I look at that in two broad categories. Category one is, I think we sometimes don't do the things we want to do, or we do things we don't want to do simply out of poor structure, setting up our environment to help us succeed, having a clear plan, breaking tasks down to be small enough, starting at the right level.

Eric ([10:15](#)):

I mean, there's a lot of tactical stuff there that can really help. And so I think that's an important part of it. And then there's the emotional part, right? It's the, I've got a very clear plan, I know it's Tuesday morning, it's 7:00 AM. I've said I'm going to work out. I know exactly what my workout is, my gym shorts are set out. All the things, right? Got it. And I still don't do it.

Eric ([10:39](#)):

So now we're more in the realm of emotional regulation. Tim Pynchyl, a researcher who we had on the podcast often says, "Procrastination is an emotional failure." Well, I partially agree. I don't think it always is. I actually think there are very structural and tactical reasons why, but it very much can be a failure of emotional regulation. So what's going on in that moment then if I'm not doing it? What are the stories I'm telling myself? What are the things I'm feeling? What's going on? And so I think if you want to really address behavior change, we want to capture both those elements, what I call the tactical and the emotional.



MBS ([11:23](#)):

Beautiful. Eric, you've talked a lot about your Buddhist practice already or alluded to it. It's a nice segue into actually telling us what you're going to read from today. So what have you chosen?

Eric ([11:37](#)):

I have chosen to read from a book by Thich Nhat Hanh, who has written countless books, and depending on when this interview airs, at the time of our recording it, we're in under a week of his passing.

MBS ([11:55](#)):

That's right. A venerable man, 95 when he died, I've got a whole bunch of his books up on my shelf. And it's probably just a small percentage of those books. How did you come to choose this book? Because it's always interesting to hear how people wrestle with what book do they choose to read?

Eric ([12:14](#)):

Yes. I chose it because I could have wrestled with this question, literally, I could have devoted two weeks to it. It's like asking me to show up and be like, "What's your favorite song?"

MBS ([12:28](#)):

Right.

Eric ([12:29](#)):

Okay, that's a tough one. Books mean as much to me as songs do. And so I kind of was bouncing a lot of things around and I had a book, I actually ordered a book before Thich Nhat Hanh died, another book of his about love, and it was sitting right next to me, and I went, oh, and then I thought, well, Thich Nhat Hanh, okay, he just passed, that makes my selection timely and I can do it. And



there's a particular passage in one of these books that I think summarizes... In Buddhism, we often talk about oneness, we talk about unity and it's a very esoteric concept, but I think Thich Nhat Hanh has a idea of inner being that he described that I think anybody can understand this and get a flavor of what we talk about when we say, we're all connected. How, what's that mean?

MBS ([13:32](#)):

How did you discover Buddhism?

Eric ([13:35](#)):

I was in high school and I had a high school teacher, and that high school teacher... My first two years of high school were a game of how little can I go to class. I was engaged in a deep battle of wits with the school system. How creative can I be in getting out of school? After my second year, my guidance counselor said, "Look, you've got two choices. You can go to our alternative program, it's about 150 kids. It's down the road there, you can go there, because I think you're a smart guy actually, I think you've got potential, or I can expel you, but I'm not spending another year of my life doing this."

MBS ([14:19](#)):

Chasing you, yeah.

Eric ([14:19](#)):

I was doing things like getting permission slips from the public health venereal disease clinic because I was like, they can't check on that. The public health department simply can't disclose whether I was there or not. It's the bulletproof excuse, so that was the level I was at.

MBS ([14:37](#)):

I can see your career as an entrepreneur is seeded here, which is like, how do I solve some problems?



Eric ([14:42](#)):

Oh, I was selling those permission slips. I mean, I think the poor school administration must have thought there was an awful venereal disease breakout in our high school. Anyway, I got sent to this alternative program and there was a teacher there who took me under his wing and really changed my life. He introduced me to Buddhism. He was really into Zen. He gave me a book, and I don't know how much of it I understood at that point really. But he loved it. So I became interested in it, and there was something about it that just called me.

Eric ([15:13](#)):

There was something... And so I sort of kept reading and learning a little bit about it. But when I got sober at 24, I got sober in AA. It's a spiritual program. And so that drove me kind of back into that world more deeply. And I'm going to tell you a little, I'm going to add on a little story to that because this just makes this a little bit more interesting.

Eric ([15:35](#)):

You said take the left turn, so I'm taking the left turn. That teacher who turned my life around, I went and spent a summer... He had a place off the coast of Seattle on Whidbey Island. I went and spent a summer with him. Really influential, changed my life. About two years ago, he's now passed, about two years ago, a number of students came forward and said that he had sexually abused them.

MBS ([16:01](#)):

Oh gosh.

Eric ([16:03](#)):

So talk about a weird internal feeling. I've got this man who was this unquestioned good in my life, who is also clearly, I mean, I'm believing the



people who said it, was also an unquestioned monster to some of these people. So it makes that whole thing a little bit more convoluted and complicated. I mean, I think it's an interesting story because it points to, talking about the wolf question again. Like, oh boy, okay. This guy clearly had his heart in the right place in a lot of ways and was also clearly really destructive in other ways. All right, that's how I got introduced to Buddhism.

MBS ([16:50](#)):

That's quite the story. And so from all of Thich Nhat Hanh's writing, which pages have you picked for us?

Eric ([16:59](#)):

I picked a section called Interbeing. It's from a book, called The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra.

MBS ([17:09](#)):

Perfect.

Eric ([17:10](#)):

Which is a Sutra that I love. It's central to zen, zen everywhere we read this heart Sutra. And so this is from a book he wrote on that and it's a commentary on it. And the section's called Interbeing.

MBS ([17:27](#)):

I'm excited to hear it. So Eric, over to you.

Eric ([17:34](#)):

If you were a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain, without rain the trees cannot grow, and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either.



So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter are. Interbeing is a word that is not in the dictionary yet. But if we combine the prefix, enter with the verb to be, we have a new verb, interbe. If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so we know that the sunshine is also in the sheet of paper, the paper and the sunshine inter are, and if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed in the paper.

Eric ([18:35](#)):

And we see the wheat, we know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread. And therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, the sheet of paper cannot exist. Looking even more deeply we can see that we are in it too. This is not difficult to see because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here in this sheet of paper. You cannot point out that one thing is not here. Time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat, everything coexists with this sheet of paper.

Eric ([19:25](#)):

That is why I think the word interbe should be in the dictionary. To be is to interbe. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to interbe with every other thing. The sheet of paper is because everything else is. Suppose we try to return one of these elements to its source. Suppose we return the sunshine to the sun. Do you think that this sheet of paper would be possible? No. Without sunshine nothing can be. And if we return the logger to his mother, then we have no sheet of paper either. The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up only of non-paper elements. And if we return these non-paper elements to



their sources, then there can be no paper at all. Without non-paper elements like mine, logger, sunshine, and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it.

MBS ([20:24](#)):

Wow. Gosh, that's an amazing passage. I mean, I immediately think of William Blake and a quote, something like, "An entire universe within a grain of sand." But I actually feel a little overwhelmed by that. What's the truth at the heart of this for you, Eric?

Eric ([20:51](#)):

Just truly the deep interconnection of all things. We tend to separate things out. And the main separation we do is ourself. We are this separate thing that needs to be protected and it needs to be built up and it needs to have all... It's just, our life is largely this focus on me. One of the things that happened early in sobriety to me, I remember it. My memory is not good, but I remember the moment that I read this. I remember where I was and I remember it hitting me like a train. And in the AA big book, it says, "Selfishness, self-centeredness, that we think is the root of our problem."

Eric ([21:40](#)):

And you could say that wording's a little harsh, right? So maybe we don't want to use that word, but what I got... And it goes on to elaborate this in a little bit more detail. What I got was the fact that I spent all of my time thinking about, worried about me, how am I doing, how am I feeling, just this constant, was what caused me to suffer so much.

Eric ([22:04](#)):

And so my life in some way from that moment on has been, how do I release myself from the bondage of self? I think that's a phrase that's used there also, the bondage of self. I don't want to not be selfish because, again, back to it's



moralistic, it's because it really hurts. It's an awful way to live. And so what Thich Nhat Hanh is pointing to is, he's quoting the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra, and at the heart of the Sutra is this idea of emptiness in Buddhism. And emptiness is not what it sounds like. To us in the west emptiness sounds like, well, there's nothing there. Emptiness is better said, and in my mind is better described, as everything all at once.

MBS ([22:54](#)):

Right. The paper is entirely made up of non paper and it's made up of the universe.

Eric ([22:58](#)):

That's right. And so I am that way too. So there is a view of me and there's a way of experiencing reality that is much broader and more expansive, that still doesn't mean I'm not here, of course I'm here. In Buddhism, we talk about nonself as if we don't exist. Of course we exist. We just don't exist independent of everything else. And I think Thich Nhat Hanh in that section, elaborates that truth in as clear and beautiful way as I've heard it ever laid out.

MBS ([23:35](#)):

How this understanding of non-self, that paper is made up from non paper, how does that show up in terms of who you are, the being and the doing of your life?

Eric ([23:54](#)):

Well, one answer is it doesn't show up as much as I would like. It isn't as... This is something that you can know intellectually and still not really know what to do with it. But the more I see it, in a lot of ways, the less afraid I am. The more I can practice seeing everything as being related to me and that we are all sort of in it together. So I think the primary way it shows up for me is in less fear.



Eric ([24:44](#)):

Now, the other thing that's happened though, is by having this view of the world, cultivating that view, and then engaging in practices, primarily meditation practices, I've had moments, or even days where I've had this sort of classic, mystical experience. Where it truly, I'm not reading that and thinking it, I am experiencing it. I'm looking at the world and there is no... I literally feel no difference between me and the tree over there. Now I know I'm not the tree. It's not like a hallucination. It's just that the way of viewing the world is totally different and the freedom inherent there is stunning.

MBS ([25:37](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([25:38](#)):

And so for me, the spiritual teacher, Adyashanti, once said to me, because I was talking about I've had these experiences that have radically reshaped me, but then normal life sort of reasserts itself. And then normal view reasserts itself. And he said, "Devote yourself to whatever remains of it." And that I thought was beautiful, and that points to how this helps me. If I believe this is the true view of reality, or even a view of reality, a valid view of reality. How would I act if I believed that was true? And okay, now let me try and act that way, because another fundamental thing that I believe in a lot, I talk about on the podcast a lot, and I think you're familiar with these ideas, is that sometimes mood drives action, but action can often drive mood.

Eric ([26:38](#)):

Another way of saying it, in AA we used to say, "Sometimes you can't think your way into right action, you have to act your way into right thinking." So sometimes I may not feel this view of the world, but what would I act like if I did?



MBS ([26:54](#)):

I love that question.

Eric ([26:57](#)):

And then by acting that way, I make it more likely that I'm going to see the world that way, I'm going to feel the world that way. And so it becomes a little bit of an upward spiral. I feel a little bit more that way so I act a little bit more that way. I act a little bit more that way, I feel a little bit more that way. And again, I don't want to make it sound like I'm on this upward constant ascent towards heaven. Life is life, and our habits of self-preservation are wired deep into us. They're deep in every creature, you can't deny that. So it's a both and, I guess with that stuff.

MBS ([27:40](#)):

Eric, how do you dance with ambition? Because you have an amazing podcast that's successful and been listened to by millions of people. You have ways of earning money through your coaching and through programs and courses that you run. And those things often require a degree of rolling up your sleeves, I'm going to try and hit this target, I'm going to do this thing. And one of the ways of hearing non being and kind of ego, is to step away from, or think you have to step away from ambition. So I'm wondering how that dance plays out for you.

Eric ([28:24](#)):

That is a great question. I have asked a version of this question a lot of times, but I've never asked it as eloquently as how do I dance with ambition? So very well done.

MBS ([28:33](#)):

Thank you.



Eric ([28:36](#)):

As I said, I've asked a lot of guests about this and I've thought about it a lot. And I'll say a few things. My experiences of oneness, particularly there was one where it wasn't like a flash, it was like 72 hours of a completely different... I emerged from that a different person. And one of the things that happened was my ego was radically diminished. I came out of it not knowing if I was even going to keep doing the podcast.

MBS ([29:10](#)):

Right.

Eric ([29:11](#)):

I had been talking with a publisher before that about a book deal. And I came out and said, I'm not going to do it, because I realized the reason I wanted to do it was because I wanted to see myself as an author, and that was gone. And so that has been interesting because, yeah, I think before that, I mean, I had both healthy and unhealthy ambition. And I'm not saying, I still have some of both, but I really have found myself. And I've talked about this with people close to me over the last several years, that sometimes I feel a little caught in the middle.

MBS ([29:55](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([29:56](#)):

Where I've seen enough and I've had enough ego diminishment that I'm not being pushed from that side. And I haven't had quite enough that totally destroys it, to pull me entirely by love. So it's been interesting. Some of it I think is probably age too. I'm 51-years-old. You start to see the world a little differently. I picked a word this year, love.



Eric ([30:25](#)):

I just sometimes think picking a word for the year is an interesting way of orienting. I picked love, which is why I had a book by Thich Nhat Hanh about love sitting right next to me today. So it's how I connected. But I picked love for a main reason. And the main reason was... And I can't remember whether you and I chatted about this when I had you on the show. I know I've talked recently about this with someone. But I picked love because what I've realized is that, when I am being driven by fear in my work, and I don't even mean deep fear, but even just the fear of, I want more listeners, I need to make more money. I mean, all the things that happen when I combine something that matters to me and I love, with needing to make a living, it's complicated.

MBS ([31:17](#)):

Yeah.

Eric ([31:17](#)):

If fear or lack is the thing that is overriding that, I suddenly feel really worn out. I don't like what I do as much, just across the board. And so I went, conversely, when I act out of love to the best of my ability, which is to say, I know this podcast that I do helps people, I've had enough people over the years come to me and say that, that I know that to be true. I know the coaching work helps people. I know the spiritual habits program. When I orient that way towards, I want to do this out of love and giving and service, my ambition feels like it's a healthy kind of fuel in that case. And so this is a, I dance with it and I think I'm learning to dance with it a little bit better, but I am not naturally a great dancer. And so I have to keep an eye on it.

MBS ([32:16](#)):

Yeah. It's a wonderful answer. Thank you. And I ask, because I really am trying to wrestle with this same thing myself, and this idea of... In the How To Begin



Book, I talk about how do you claim ambition for yourself and for the world. And just wanting to find ways of working that entwine an act of service, which is an act of love, with a way that it also kind of nourishes you in a way as well. And then just trying to find the line between not self-emulating in your act of service so that you're just depleted and exhausted, and used. And on the other side, not kind of talking yourself into how this thing is actually really good for the world, because I've made a gazillion dollars and I believe in trickle down economics. So I'm sure some poor people somewhere are getting a benefit of my wealth. I'm like, eh, not sure about that.

Eric ([33:17](#)):

I have become recently more interested in Web 3 and cryptocurrency, and boy, do I see a lot of that in this world. People who are insisting that this is so great, it's such a beautiful thing, when I'm like, would you still be here if you didn't think there was a ton of money to be made?

Eric ([33:35](#)):

And I think you write about it well in the book, you talk about finding a worthy goal, and a worthy goal, it's important to you and it's useful in the world. And I think we need both those things. I do think it has to interest us. We have to want to do it, and as I've worked with this over the years, what I've just tried to do, and I think I've gotten a little bit better, is when I find myself and my focus drifting too far to the, my side, the measuring, the fear side, reorienting. For years with the podcast I would just go, I'd be looking and be like, podcast, we're not really growing, here comes the fear, and I would just try and stop and really go, what was my intention?

MBS ([34:37](#)):

Right.



Eric ([34:39](#)):

Why did I do this to start with? And I would be like, well, I did it because I thought it would be fun. Check. I still like doing it. I did it because I needed to immerse myself in these ideas. Check, still working. I did it because I wanted to do it with my friend, Chris, who's the audio editor, and so we'd spend more time together. Check, still going. And so for me, it's just sort of a reorientation process, back to what about this really matters.

MBS ([35:10](#)):

Nice. Eric, who are your teachers? Where do you draw wisdom and support from?

Eric ([35:25](#)):

Well, geez, I could answer that on a few different levels. I mean, I interview two people a week for the podcast and I try and think of all those as being my teachers. So in a sense, everything. There's a great phrase in Zen, we recite the four Bodhisattva Vows, and there's a lot of different translations of them, but one of the vows goes something like this, "Dharma gates are countless, I vow to awake to them all." A Dharma gate just means a path, a way into awakening. They're countless. My rephrasing of that is, everything is a Dharma gate, if I choose to see it that way. So on that level, everything.

MBS ([36:11](#)):

Right. [crosstalk 00:36:14] on paper.

Eric ([36:14](#)):

However, I actually then do have, what I would consider teachers at points. I mentioned Adyashanti earlier, even though he is not a formal teacher, is somebody who has been hugely influential to me and I would consider a teacher. Thich Nhat Hanh I would consider a teacher. So there are some



people... Jack Cornfield. There are some people that I have gone to their work, so many times. And then I have a spiritual director that I work with.

Eric ([36:47](#)):

I'm not in it right now, but very recently and probably again, I worked very closely with the Zen teacher. So yeah, those are kind... I mean, I've got a business coach, which I would also say is sort of a life coach because my business and my life are merged, and I consider him a teacher. So they're everywhere, but I do find the need sometimes to find somebody to be like, all right, let me really just sort of hitch myself to this person or this set of ideas more closely for a while.

MBS ([37:27](#)):

And part of why it's lovely for me talking to you is, I feel like there's a lot of parallel in the lives that we live. And the reason I do this podcast is to nourish me. It's a Dharma gate, absolutely. I'm just trying to sit with interesting people and learn from them. So I appreciate that.

Eric ([37:46](#)):

What I think is interesting about that, and I'll share this and get your reaction to it is, several years ago, I decided to go deep into Zen practice. And the reason I did it was because I was getting a little bit of vertigo, and I don't mean physically. I was interviewing all these people for the show, and they've all got brilliant ideas and great things to do. And the ones like, I do this kind of meditation, and the other's like, I do this kind of meditation, and the other one's like, no, shouldn't really do meditation, I think it's breath work. And another's like, Tai Chi is the thing. And what I found was I was just, I don't know what to do. I would sit down to meditate and I'd be like, I don't know what I'm doing.



Eric ([38:26](#)):

Not that I don't know how to meditate. I know too many ways to meditate. So what I found for me was that for a period of time, and I will go back to this soon, because I let myself out of the stricture a little bit. I was like, my spiritual development, I feel like I need to pick a path and stay deep in it because otherwise the nature of my work can cause me to wander in all sorts of beautiful fields. But I also need some clarity. And so I find that an occupational hazard.

MBS ([39:05](#)):

That's really helpful to hear. I mean, I'm still sitting with your Dharma gates are everywhere. They are, sometimes it's good to pick one, just keep walking through that for a bit.

Eric ([39:15](#)):

Yeah. It's a classic dilemma in spiritual circles, particularly in the modern world, is, are you just grazing at the spiritual buffet? The classic one is, are you digging 20 different wells that go down a foot, versus digging one well that goes down 20 feet and hits gold, and then there are many other metaphors. Anyway, but it's an ongoing question in a lot of people's life.

MBS ([39:49](#)):

Eric, as a final question, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

Eric ([40:00](#)):

Wow. That's another really good question. The fact that it's taking me so long to answer means there's no obvious like, we missed this.



MBS ([40:14](#)):

That might be the answer, which is like, I'm complete. I just didn't want to miss something that you felt needed to be said.

Eric ([40:23](#)):

There's certainly lots of things that could be said, but I don't know that I feel... Maybe take that silence I just went into as my answer, silence is a great teacher.

MBS ([40:36](#)):

It feels like a lovely way actually to honor Thich Nhat Hanh as well. So it might be the perfect way to have finished. So Eric Zimmer, thank you so much for your time. It's been wonderful.

Eric ([40:46](#)):

Thank you, Michael. I've really enjoyed this.

MBS ([40:53](#)):

Listening to Eric's reading, which I loved, I started to realize my own, I'm going to call it discomfort with the two wolves story. I mean, it's a powerful way of framing it, which is the wolf that you feed? And it's useful like that. But it does posit that the world is split in two, and it's this or that, it's one choice or the other, it's turn left towards the light or turn right towards the dark.

MBS ([41:20](#)):

I just find most of my choices these days aren't quite as simple as that. In fact, it's the dance between them that's often the interesting thing. The tension, these things coexist, how will they coexist? And this is for me, how for me does conflict stem from comfort and from comfort conflict? Obedience from rebellion, rebellion from obedience. There's a way that they are a source for each other and a force against each other at the same time.



MBS ([41:51](#)):

I think Eric said it, the deep interconnectedness of it all. If you liked my conversation with Eric, I loved it. Two other podcasts I might suggest for you, there's Muriel Wilkins. That interview is called How to Hold a Flower. She's a coach and a podcaster. And also Mason Currey's interview. That interview is called Fragile and Fleeting. Mason talks about the routines, patterns of what it means to be an artist and a creative.

MBS ([42:22](#)):

If you'd like more of Eric, his podcast is wonderful, The One You Feed, and you can find out more about the podcast and about Eric as well at theoneyoufeed.net, not dotcom, dotnet, theoneyoufeed.net. Hey, thank you for listening. Thank you for rating the podcast if you've done that, writing a review. Perhaps the greatest favor you can do for me is, think who might enjoy this episode and send it to them. Tell them about it. This podcast is growing, slowly but surely, and it grows best through word of mouth, so appreciate that if you've got the time. If you'd like a little bit more, we do have a membership site, called Duke Humfrey's, named after a favorite library of mine in Oxford.

MBS ([43:05](#)):

And it's where you can find additional interviews, additional downloads, other bits and pieces that might be of interest to you. I think that may be it, so allow me to say you're awesome and you're doing great.