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

I'm right at the very start of a new book. This one's going to be about how change happens. Its focus will be about how to make change happen in organizations and it will touch on both personal change and systemic change. And the real quest will be to try and discern the key signals about change the signals in amongst all the noise because there is a lot of noise about change, a bazillion different models, theories and anecdotes and so on. One thing I know will be foundational to the new book is the insight that we're all wired to add on as humans.

([00:41](#)):

In any situation, the default is typically what's required and how do I know more and do more and think more and be more. And this is the insight for change to happen. What's almost always a more effective approach is its opposite, subtraction. What needs to be stopped, what needs to be eliminated? My friend Scott Stratton has an unlearned tattoo on his forearm. That is a powerful and provocative call to action. So for me to be the next best version of who I am,



what do I need to unlearn about myself, about the way I show up in the world?
About the world?

[\(01:32\)](#):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS, the podcast with brilliant people. Read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Hilary Jacobs Hendel is a psychotherapist and an author and a speaker and in her own words at the heart of it, a nerd.

Hilary ([01:52](#)):

I am a nice Jewish girl from New York City, born and raised in Manhattan by a psychiatrist and a mother who was a guidance counselor, a very psychologically oriented family and was really a science nerd, which I say lovingly from the get go. I always joke, I don't know much, but I know a lot about science.

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

A first stab at being a professional turned around to pardon the pun, to bite her.

Hilary ([02:19](#)):

My first career was a dentist and ended up hating that, leaving it floundering for 10 years. And then at the age of 39, after 9/11, I sort of was able to reclaim something that I was always interested in, which was psychotherapy having been raised by a psychiatrist.

MBS ([02:38](#)):

And so Hilary's patients went from being in the dentist chair to being on the psychotherapist couch from dealing with toothache to dealing with soul ache.

Hilary ([02:48](#)):

We're all lousy about talking about emotions because nobody talks about them. So we don't have much practice. In fact, I always joke if I say I teach emotions, if I go to a party and people ask me what I do, half the people run for their lives.



MBS ([03:02](#)):

Now if I was at that party, well, I'd be torn. I mean one half of me is hungry to learn more and the other is slowly backing away, hoping she wouldn't notice me. But in fact, what led Hilary to her current career and expertise was a moment when she didn't run away. It was a twist of fate that transformed Hilary's professional and personal life forever. It was a moment where she somehow found herself in a conference that she didn't mean to attend.

Hilary ([03:30](#)):

So I stumbled into this conference on emotions and trauma and attachment and heard Diana Fosha speak, which is the book that I'm going to be reading from later. And I was blown away for two reasons. One, my mental health improved in one aha moment with that triangle that I then became so passionate about writing about. But also, I was also blown away by where was this information? I was a biochemistry major at a prestigious university in the United States. I went to dental school at Columbia and studied with the medical students. I'm a psychoanalyst by training. No one was talking about emotions. And I have to say to people listening out there that the whole point of understanding emotions really is to have empowering tools to decrease anxiety and depression and the symptoms that we all have as humans.

([04:33](#)):

So it's not just leaning into these painful experiences for the sake of it. It's really gets you to a better place in life where we can meet the challenges of life. So there's a method to the madness and a reason for all this. So that moment, getting back to your question was I was my first, after I learned about AEDP, which is this method that I began training in, it was the very first training and we broke out into experiential exercises where somebody would play the therapist and somebody would play the patient and I was the patient and the therapist asked me, the prompt was, what's it like to think about learning this method? And then we were supposed to notice how we felt inside.



(05:25):

And I said, "Well, I feel anxiety." And the next prompt was, can you turn into your body, scan your body from head to toe and toe to head, and notice where in your body you experience and sense that anxiety. And at that moment I was like, "Uh-oh, if I lean into this anxiety, I'm going to lose control. It's going to get worse." I was terrified, but I trusted. I went inside my body. I noticed the sensations of tension in my chest that told me that I was anxious and I breathed as I was instructed to do. And voila, the anxiety went down, not up. And it was a revelation because it was counterintuitive.

MBS (06:18):

What had happened to allow you to be open to that in that moment because if you've had 39 years of not doing that, there's a lot of non-practice you've had.

Hilary (06:33):

Yes. Yes.

MBS (06:34):

And what allowed that to happen in that moment?

Hilary (06:37):

Yes. I love how you say the non-practice. In fact, it was discouraged because I'm growing up with a New York City psychiatrist. We didn't talk about emotions that was like woo woo, California BS. The state of the art was going intellectualizing and having insight and insight is great and we're really talking about awareness. But what led up to that moment were two things. One, I had had a history of I knew I was anxious as a kid, and the way that I dealt with it was to work. I channeled a lot of energy into working hard in school and being busy, and that was great. I was lucky because that's an adaptive defense, as we call it. It's terrific. I did well in school and I had to get everything done. I was the kid who got their papers done a week in advance to get rid of my anxiety.



(07:31):

But the other thing, I had suffered two depressions in my twenties, major depressions where I went on Prozac for six months being prescribed by a psychiatrist and then my serotonin replenished. But going through those experiences, one, I learned that I couldn't just pile on stress. The first depression told me that, wow, I actually have to take care of myself. I can't just handle because I prided myself on. I can take it. I can handle whatever comes, but I still didn't know anything about emotion. So I thought that depression was sort of the end result, that this is just something that happened.

(08:19):

I didn't realize there was something beyond my anxiety, something deeper, something deeper than my depression. So it was that I had experienced these symptoms and being presented with information about emotions demystified them enough that I wasn't as frightened, they weren't as scary because there was something I learned about them, and that just gave me the courage to begin to tinker with what was going on in my body. Before that, I would swear there wasn't a connection between the mind and body. In New York, we're sort of ahead of the times, but we were also behind the times in this way.

MBS (09:00):

Right. You're kind of ahead of the times meaning in your head rather than-

Hilary (09:00):

Exactly.

MBS (09:04):

Yeah.

Hilary (09:05):

Very well, very well said.



MBS ([09:08](#)):

What have you had to unlearn as you've deepened your practice in this area?

Hilary ([09:16](#)):

These are such great questions, Michael.

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

Thank you.

Hilary ([09:19](#)):

Well, studying in this method, so now I am certified as a psychotherapist in accelerated experiential dynamic psychotherapy. And I also train and teach others in this method. So I also trained to become a psychoanalyst and what I had to unlearn was a way of listening to somebody's narrative and someone's story and trying to formulate interpretations. That's what you were supposed to do is come up with interpretations. In AEDP, it's very different. We track what a person and ourselves and the relationship. We track those three things moment to moment. And I'm really looking for how the body is speaking because somebody can be telling me a story and I can see that, let's say they're ringing their hands and I know that they're anxious as they're sharing or they're tearing up or they're breaking eye contact.

([10:29](#)):

And I'm now shifting my way from listening with my ears to really listening with my eyes. And when I see emotion and I'm tracking emotion all the time, that's my signal that I'm going to politely interrupt and say something like, I'm interested in everything that you're saying, and I'm just so aware that as you're sharing this sad story, you're smiling, can we get curious about that? If you tune into that smile on your face, what's it telling us? And people feel very seen when that happens. It registers as a calming experience to be noticed and seen, especially if you're adept at not helping someone not feel ashamed or judged or



looked at, which is part of creating a secure attachment with somebody. So it was unlearning how to do interpretations and learning how to track moment to moment. That was the most difficult part.

MBS ([11:35](#)):

I mean, in some ways we're so wired to interpret because we are pattern making creatures. So whether you're trained or not, there's a way that you are always finding the story in the stuff that you see, but I feel like you are pointing to the gaps between the different stimuli that you're seeing rather than trying to connect the stimuli that you're seeing.

Hilary ([12:06](#)):

That's interesting. I'm not sure ... Because it's all connected, but what happens is that the body and emotions and thinking can happen simultaneously and parallel on three different planes. So I can tell you, Michael, I'm fine today, but I may be experiencing depression at the moment or a lot of anger that I'm hiding and my body may be experiencing tightness and tension. And so it's all connected, but we're through this triangle, which is a diagram that kind of explains how the mind and body work when it comes to emotions that's universal, that's what brings it all together. It's connecting the way we block emotion with the way we inhibit emotion and making space for emotion so that people can feel relief.

MBS ([13:04](#)):

Sure. What freedom has this work given you?

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

Oh, my goodness. Well, personally, it's transformed my mental health that counterintuitive, where when I work with someone new and I ask them a question, I can see they go up in their head to think. And so retraining from practicing this for 20 years and walking the walk, I'm in my body as I'm in my



head simultaneously most of the day. And what that has done is, and I'm working with my emotions, a good therapy will treat the symptoms and then give people tools so that they can use these on their own and translate what's happening. And so I can process my emotions now and get back to a good place. And when I can't process them because I'm overwhelmed by something and there's been something that's been traumatic, I understand what's going on. And I never had another depression after doing this work, and my anxiety has gone down considerably and I'm in a great relationship and my relationship with my children improved. Everything has gotten better.

MBS ([14:18](#)):

But apart from that.

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

Yeah. And with the freedom of the work, it's just such a beautiful way to connect with people. I get people that have been in years of CBT or psychoanalysis and they just got jammed up in their heads. And I'm not disparaging other ways of working, but therapists really need to know how to work with thoughts and insights and the body. It's got to be the whole system because it's a whole system.

MBS ([14:49](#)):

Yeah. Hilary, tell me about the book you've chosen to read from.

Hilary ([14:53](#)):

Well, I've chosen to read from Diana Fosha's seminal text on Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy, AEDP. So this is the book that first came out on AEDP that I read right after I saw her speak and I picked a past-

MBS ([15:12](#)):

This is truly a book that has shaped you and changed you.



Hilary ([15:15](#)):

This is the book that has shaped and changed. And since then she's written other books and edited other books. But I wanted to pick this was for the people out there that are science-minded or cynical about there's so much content out there that you don't know if something is real and if it's grounded in science and if it works or if it doesn't. And now there's research on AEDP now years later, and it's empirically validated, but I just wanted to read the primary source on, I picked a passage on core emotions, which are the fundamental, may I say a little bit just about-

MBS ([15:15](#)):

Yeah, of course.

Hilary ([15:55](#)):

Core emotions in the book when I read it's the word affect and emotion are used interchangeably, especially out in the lay public world. But core emotion and core affect when I read about it are the same thing. So you can substitute the word emotion, and these are wired in programs. The core emotions are sadness, anger, fear, disgust, joy, excitement, and sexual excitement. Those are the emotions that we could call them the selfish emotions because they're all about what's good for us. And we had these, we evolved over hundreds of thousands of years to have emotions because it gave us an edge as an animal and survival. Meaning that they're fast. Basically the definition of a core emotion is a physical, a body-based program for action. And that action is meant to be adaptive, like running when you're afraid or fighting when you're attacked. And so we all have these emotions, people listening, if they take one thing from this episode today, don't judge your emotions because it makes no sense.

MBS ([17:13](#)):

Right.



Hilary ([17:13](#)):

You can't stop emotions from happening. All you can do is be aware when they happen and change your response to them. But you cannot stop a core emotion from going off in the middle of your brain activating your body because you don't know you've had it until all that's happened.

MBS ([17:30](#)):

Got it. This is a great setup. I'm really curious to hear the passage and the pages you're reading for us. So Hilary, over to you.

Hilary ([17:37](#)):

Okay. This is from the book, the Transforming Power of Affect, otherwise Known as Emotion, the section called core Affect.

[\(17:49\)](#):

All major works on emotion emphasize the way in which emotions serve an individual's adaptation. While their focus may be more on cognition or communication or development or physiology, it is clear that however construed, emotion is fundamental to a person's optimal being. Equally, noteworthy from the perspective of a clinical psychotherapy practice are the myriad efforts people make to mute, sabotage and reduce the impact the powerful transforming impact of emotions in their lives. Clearly, emotions can transform for good and bad, and psychic maneuvers designed to block access to their experience and expression are also powerful forces to contend with. Day-to-Day clinical work reveals many ways in which people cut themselves off from the wellspring of adaptation. The therapeutic work consists of helping them be nourished once again by emotional experiences and includes understanding precisely why emotions had to go underground, be shunted off to the side, or consigned to oblivion in the first place.



[\(19:12\)](#):

The view of affect proposed here is from a distinctly clinical perspective, the term core affect has been chosen simply to refer to that which is vital, and spontaneous, and comes to the fore when efforts to inhibit spontaneity are not in operation. The aim of this work is to help clinicians effectively counteract the forces against experience, which are defenses and allay fears that fuel those forces like anxiety, helplessness, and shame, and harness the power of core effective experience so that it can enrich and improve the individual's life. The facilitation of core affect enhances the patient's adaptation and helps him, her, or they gain access to inner resources necessary to meet his, her, or they unique needs, specifications and life agenda. Core affect or more precisely core effective experience refers to our emotional responses when we do not try to mask, block, distort or severely mute them.

[\(20:29\)](#):

Defining aspects of the experience of core affect include a subjective, personally elaborated experience, some change in bodily state, and the release of an adaptive tendency towards some expressive action known as an adaptive action tendency here defined by Goldman in 1995. Broadly and psychologically, and I quote, "Each emotion offers a distinctive readiness to act. Each points us in a direction that has worked well to handle the recurrent challenges of human life." Core affect certainly includes categorical emotions such as fear, sadness, joy, and anger, but it also includes self and relational effective experiences. Categorical emotions are the self's reactions to events.

[\(21:30\)](#):

Self affective experiences are the self's reading of the self and relational affective experiences are the self's reading of the emotional status of the relationship. When accessed, the core effective phenomena activate deep transformational processes. Defining feature of core affect is that it has the power to engender a potentially healing state transformation when expressed in the absence of defenses and such blocking emotions as anxiety and shame.



As James, William James in 1902 said, "Intense emotions seldom leave things as they found them. And this applies to the body, the self and the relationship. They are all transformed in the wake of core effective experience."

MBS ([22:32](#)):

Hilary, that was wonderful.

Hilary ([22:36](#)):

I hope it was understandable.

MBS ([22:39](#)):

Mostly, and that's what I'm going to be curious about what you've read for us.

Hilary ([22:43](#)):

Yes.

MBS ([22:43](#)):

But first of all, I'm curious to know what's the deep truth that you see in these pages?

Hilary ([22:51](#)):

The deep truth is that we live in an emotion-phobic society that gives us the impression that emotions are something we can overcome, be bigger than, that we're weak for having them, that they're lesser, and this turns that on its head. And the science is unreputable because now that with the invention of the MRI and the FMRI, we've been able to image healthy brains. It used to be that you couldn't do that because X-rays, you didn't want to x-ray healthy people. And it turns out when you help people experience their emotions, they heal. So that when I learned this method and became proficient at it, after practicing for about 10 years, for the first time in my life, I felt like I had something to say. And my pet peeve that I didn't get any of this information when I was younger,



turned into a moral outrage that our society does not start educating teenagers on emotions in high school

MBS ([24:02](#)):

Because

Hilary ([24:03](#)):

When you understand emotions, you feel so much less crazy. Everything starts to make sense. Anxiety and depression makes sense, and there's a path to healing. And so what happened after I had been treating people that came for diagnosis, like treatment resistant depression, meaning that they had tried many other modalities, had tried many, many medications, had tried even electroshock therapy. And I wrote about one particular person, Brian, that the New York Times ended up publishing. Because what happened is I wrote an op-ed to share this type of work, and it ended up getting published. It was the first thing that I ever really wrote seriously, and it went viral. And that's how I got a book deal.

MBS ([24:54](#)):

That's a high bar.

Hilary ([24:56](#)):

Yeah, I was very, very lucky. But the bottom line is that when this person came to see me and told me that they had been to many psychiatrists, many therapists tried many methods, I didn't want to reinvent the wheel and accept the diagnosis of depression. I thought, let me reimagine this person as someone who had trauma. Because all these symptoms are really, that we all suffer are symptoms of trauma and the definition we are changing from these catastrophic events like war-



MBS ([25:27](#)):

Like war or something, yeah.

Hilary ([25:29](#)):

And being the victim of a terrible crime. In AEDP, we define trauma as experiencing overwhelming emotions in the face of utter aloneness. So they cannot be moved through. And we need then defenses, which are these brilliant protective maneuvers that thank goodness our mind and body can create to spare us the emotional pain that sometimes is just unbearable. So we can go on with life, but turns out we can identify these defenses, move them aside when we respect them and honor them for the job they've done and work our way down that triangle, which again came from the academic literature. I didn't invent anything new. I seem to have a knack for taking complex jargony material I just read and making it so that a 15-year old can understand it but not dumb it down. So that's my ... Who knew. And that's seems to be my talent.

MBS ([26:42](#)):

It's a good gift. I feel I have a similar gift, so perhaps we're connected like that.

Hilary ([26:42](#)):

Oh, yeah.

MBS ([26:42](#)):

Hilary, I'm going to just pick up on that piece around trauma, that sense of overwhelming sense of aloneness. What's the role in others in helping us hear the whisper of our emotions?

Hilary ([26:55](#)):

Such an important question. When we are little, the role of others is vital and necessary to the point that, again, a moral outrage that parents aren't educated in emotions. I'm actually submitting a book proposal to teach parents about



emotions so they don't unwittingly create anxiety, and shame, and guilt, depression in their children. So when we are born, we come out of the womb and our emotions are all there pre-wired ready to go. And for you, and for those of you listening who have seen a baby who does not yet have inhibition, they let it rip. You know when they are sad, you know when they're angry, you know when they're-

MBS ([27:46](#)):

I was next to one of them on a plane yesterday. I saw the whole gamut of ... Well, not the whole gamut, but most of the gamut of the core emotions that you listed for us.

Hilary ([27:54](#)):

Exactly. And we are wired evolutionarily that the caregivers act as the soothers for the infant until the infant grows into a child and a teenager and can regulate their own emotions. So when things go well, good enough parents will help their children identify their emotions, not by saying, "Oh, you're feeling sad," but in these ways, that happened intuitively to most of us. Meaning, you see your baby very angry, let's say, because you took a toy away and the parent kind of changes their tone of voice automatically to say, "Oh, you are so angry." Not mimicking the anger because that would scare the kid. And through a repetitive process of soothing and being held and naming emotions and being reassuring, children can move through emotions when they're very young. It's through physical touch and holding and soothing and nursing and then older through all different ways.

([29:07](#)):

So parents and caregivers are vital to the regulation. We're talking about the body being regulated in a balanced state of arousal. So when we get into the science, it becomes all about temperature regulation and how the body functions optimally. But then when we get older, we can mostly regulate our



emotions on our own until we have catastrophic events that happen to us like the death of a loved one, something where we've exceeded our capacity to manage alone, and then we need the support of other people to help us through it. So as we say in AEDP, it's not what happens like a trauma, it's what happens next that matters. Am I alone in that trauma or am I supported and made space to grieve as long as I need? And as there's therapeutic help when I get stuck or when I don't have the support I need.

MBS ([30:12](#)):

What's the nuance? What's the difference between regulating emotion and suppressing emotion? Because to a lay person like me, that kind of feels like the same. Regulation means I've got it under control. And when I think of my own relationship with my own emotions, it's quite a controlled relationship. And I'm like, "Am I well-regulated or have I just boxed my feelings away and I'm ahead being carted around by a body?"

Hilary ([30:49](#)):

Yes. And it's very good question. It's sort of not a simple answer. The people that come into my office, people come to therapy when they have symptoms. They don't come when their defenses are working. Right? So you may be walking around in a defensive state and as you would say, boxing your emotions, but you're not having symptoms. Your partners and friends are not complaining about your habits. Or for example, one can box their feelings and be alcoholic, and they're not regulated. They're using a defense, right? A defense that works very well, which is alcohol.

MBS ([31:43](#)):

Yeah, like numbing. Yeah.



Hilary ([31:43](#)):

Exactly. A numbing. But there's a huge difference between suppressing and regulating that actually when there's research under stress, if you are not feeling anything but you're boxed your emotions, your body will respond as though you are in a hyper aroused state. If you're legitimately calm in your body and you feel calm in your mind, it will be reflected. And it's not always easy to tell. It is as a psychotherapist, because nobody comes in to see me unless something is the matter.

MBS ([32:27](#)):

Let's put aside the lucky few who've had somehow an upbringing that allows them to be fluent and connected and engaged in their emotional range. So putting aside that 1.3% of the population for the remaining chunk of us, does the door only open for us to reconnect to emotion through trauma or hard times?

Hilary ([32:58](#)):

No, not at all. In fact, part of my sort of mission, if I was to call it that, is to give everybody access to a basic education and emotions and exercises and tools to connect with them and work with them during hard times and during moments of stress. So it is true that people when they come in crisis are highly motivated to do the work that they might not have been motivated to do before. And I think I'm an example of that. Had I not had two major depressions and have to go on medication and really be like, "Whoa, why did that happen?"

([33:42](#)):

And I think there's a path forward where there is no downside to understanding your emotions. Just like we all in high school, if you take basic biology, you learn you have a heart and an esophagus and a stomach and a brain, and emotions happen to everybody, usually every day for the rest of their life. And it ebbs and flows that there's no one that has a stress-free life. If you're in a relationship,



you're going to have emotions because you're going to bump up against each other and have conflict.

MBS ([33:42](#)):

Yeah.

Hilary ([34:12](#)):

The conflict brings up emotions. So I think everybody on the planet would benefit. I know everyone on the planet would benefit from a basic education and emotions as I show in the book. And I do think that's the path to a more peaceful world because so much of the aggression, aggression is really a defense against somebody experiencing an emotion. Unless they're in a moment where their life is threatened, there seems to me to be no real reason that we should have war anymore when everybody can eat and we can help each other out. So why do people fight? Why when I go on the subway and somebody bumps into someone, does the other person want to pounce on the other person and people start being mean to each other?

([34:57](#)):

This is all emotions at work. So much of what we see in our society that is obviously sick and ill psychologically has to do with emotions and that people aren't working with them the way that they should to stay calmer and to have insight and to have good behavior. One of the biggest myths about emotions, and I think the reason people fear them is because they don't understand that ... Let's use anger because it's an emotion I love teaching people about because it's sort of the most people struggle with it. People think anger is about the release of the anger in terms of some destructive action, whether it's hitting somebody or calling someone a jerk, calling people names. And when you learn to experience an emotion, that's a completely internal process.



([35:53](#)):

So I teach people step-by-step, how to experience an emotion in the body. No action has happened at all. And then once someone is very familiar with what's happening to them, the last step is to think through using logic and common sense, what to do with this emotion, whether there's a conversation that needs to be happening, whether there's a boundary that needs to be set, whether you need to leave a relationship. And that's where you use a combination of your emotions and your intellect to pop out the best solutions so that you can meet the challenges of life with as much empowerment and knowledge as possible and thrive.

MBS ([36:37](#)):

It's the Viktor Frankl quote around between stimulus and response lies, freedom.

Hilary ([36:45](#)):

Exactly. Exactly. It's all about that pause. When you notice an emotion to go down in the body, not up and ruminate in your head and gnash your teeth and obsess and things like that.

MBS ([36:57](#)):

Can you give us a sense of how we start to notice our emotions in our body? Because for me, emotions feel fleeting. I'm really curious as to ... And it's a part of the journey I'm on to be able to hear or understand or be better connected to the emotions I have. And I find it very hard to notice them and name them. So when you told that story in that transformative workshop, which is like, how are you feeling about this teaching? I'm feeling anxious, I would've said, I'm feeling fine, I think.

Hilary ([37:40](#)):



Okay. And then if you were in my office and you said that, I might say something like, "That's terrific, Michael, I'm so glad you're feeling fine. I heard a little bit tentativeness that I think, would it be okay if we slowed way down together? And you just with a compassionate, curious stance in yourself, just gently noticed what was happening in your chest, gently noticed what was happening in your stomach area, gently noticed your arms and your legs, your back, up through your head, and we tried to put maybe one or two words, sensation words on what you notice."

MBS ([38:30](#)):

And by sensational words, can you give me an example of what those are?

Hilary ([38:35](#)):

Yes. I feel tight. I feel jittery. I feel expansive and light. I feel heavy. I feel something behind my eyes that makes me think I want to cry. I feel energy in my arms. I feel something in my feet.

MBS ([38:57](#)):

Right. So it's noticing bodily sensation as the first clue to an emotion that might be there.

Hilary ([39:07](#)):

Exactly. That is the shortcut because the body doesn't lie. It tells the truth. Our thoughts lie to us all the time telling us that we're not good enough and we're not worthy, and those type of things. We should have another conversation after you read the book because everything you just said you're interested in. It's a step-by-step. And for people listening, I hope you Google the change triangle. That's the two-dimensional representation that you can almost superimpose. It's an upside down triangle, and you put the point of the triangle in your body where core emotions are. And when we inhibit our emotions, which we do with inhibitory emotions like anxiety and guilt and shame, those are the emotions



that we also need to keep us civilized in favor of the group because we need to be bound together as groups to also survive.

[\(40:05\)](#):

And so there's this constant kind of tension and conflict between what's good for me, what do I need, what do I want, and what's good for you, my mom and dad, my family, my peers, so that I am not banished so that people like me and that tension, if we don't understand that conflict and we don't make space for multiple feelings, All those emotions swirling around in the body are uncomfortable. And that's why we moved from the top of the triangle on the right side to the top, on the left side to defenses, which again, we're defining, not pejoratively, but is really having helped us. And we are not in the business of getting rid of defenses. We just want flexibility and defenses are just anything we do to avoid feeling emotionally uncomfortable. And there's a myriad of them. On my website, I have a huge list because people love to notice their defenses, but mostly their partners and their family's defenses.

MBS [\(41:05\)](#):

Exactly. This is the ammunition you've been looking for to finally explain to your partner why they're broken.

Hilary [\(41:11\)](#):

Exactly. Right. Your judgmentalness, it means you're having a feeling underneath and it does.

MBS [\(41:18\)](#):

Hilary, this has been a wonderful conversation and it feels like we've just got it started, but I'm curious to know as a final question, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said between us?

Hilary [\(41:33\)](#):



Oh, my goodness. So much. I guess just back to that idea that just a reinforcing not to judge emotions. It makes no sense to understand that emotions are physical experiences, that they're there for a good reason, and that if we avoid them, we really lose a connection to our authentic self and to really others. And for really deep and fulfilling connection, we have to be connected to our emotions and we have to understand emotions so that when the people we love behave badly, we can look beyond the behavior, not accepting bad behavior. And with our children too, for parents, we want to corral proper behavior as we validate and make space for emotional experience, which just means when somebody says, "I feel sad," you don't say, "Oh, get over it. Pick yourself up by your bootstraps. There's nothing to feel sad about." You say, instead, "I hear you. That was a loss and I'm here for you. There's nothing to fix, there's nothing to do. It's all okay."

MBS ([43:01](#)):

I liked how we finished by talking about learning to notice your defenses to emotions. That was helpful for me because rather than trying to sense emotions directly, something that I'm not always good at, noticing the ripple effects around the emotion feels like a helpful tactic. I think it's kind of like how astrologists look for black holes. You can't see a black hole, so you have to notice the gravitational waves around it the way that light moves around it to actually give you a clue as to where and what the black hole actually is. So I might not be that nuanced at picking up, say, sadness, but what if I started to get better at noticing what I tend to do in moments of sadness to distract me from the sadness, how I turn my attention away from what I might be noticing or being present to in my body, which that physical manifestation is a clue to or a hint of, or a way of sadness actually showing up.

([44:04](#)):

I love this conversation because I have come to realize that for me, one of the ways that I need to keep learning, and growing, and evolving is to get better at



this stuff. And that's why I'd be revisiting a couple of interviews that this conversation reminded me of Laura Brakeman, who I love, she's a wonderful writer, a relatively new book out in the world, that book called How Loss Can Lead to Love. And then Steven Jenkinson, who has written wonderfully and thoughtfully about being an elder and about death, as he says, his roots are in the death trade. That interview is called How to Hold Gifts of Responsibility and Grief.

[\(44:46\)](#):

And if you'd like to learn more about Hilary and her work and her books, her website is her name, so hilaryjacobshendel, H-E-N-D-E-L.com. All of that, of course, is in the show notes. Thank you for listening. I appreciate it. I appreciate having an audience. I appreciate that you love these interviews as much as I do. Of course, when you can give them a review or give them some stars or just suggest them to somebody else to listen to, that helps us grow our audience, person by person, listener by listener, and that is the goal. So thank you. You're awesome and you're doing great.