



**MIND & LIFE**  
I N S T I T U T E

**Adam Engle 35th Anniversary Transcript**  
**Building Bridges: A Mind & Life Origin Story with Adam Engle**  
**April 7, 2022**

Retrieved from [video recording](#)

**Susan Bauer-Wu** (00:00:10):

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Susan Bauer-Wu. I'm currently the president of the Mind & Life Institute, and it's really my pleasure to welcome you here today for this very special recording session. This is a session with our co-founder, Adam Engle, and it's part of our 35th anniversary celebration. So it's been 35 years since the very first Mind & Life program. It's a dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. And so here we are, amazingly, 35 years later. And this recording is going to be part of Mind & Life's digital archives, so it'll be there forever to capture these special reflections from Adam. I'd love to begin with formal introductions for Adam as well as for our interviewer and host, today's Wendy Hasenkamp. Begin with Adam.

(00:01:21):

So Adam Engle was educated at the University of Colorado, Harvard University and Stanford, where he received his BA, JD and MBA degrees respectively. And he divided his professional life as a lawyer and an entrepreneur in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. And he began working on what was then called the Mind & Life Project in 1983, and he worked continuously as a volunteer for Mind & Life until 2000 when he gave up his day job and started drawing a salary for Mind & Life. And he served dual roles as CEO and board chair of Mind & Life until 2011. Thank you, Adam.

(00:02:16):

And Wendy Hasenkamp, Wendy is our Science Director at Mind & Life, and also the amazing host of our acclaimed podcast called Mind & Life. And Wendy is a neuroscientist, was educated as a neuroscientist with her PhD from Emory University, and she's worked for Mind & Life for over 10 years now. So it's really great to turn it over to Wendy, and before I do that, I encourage you all to mute your video and your audio.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:03:01):

Thanks so much, Susan. It's wonderful to be here with you all. Great to see so many friends. Thank you all for being here, and Adam, it's so wonderful to be here with you. I'm really looking forward to this conversation. So to start, I think most people think about the beginning of Mind & Life, like Susan was just saying, as that first dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1987. But of course, there were many years prior to that where foundations were being laid. Can you

share your own history with the beginnings of Mind & Life and how the idea for these dialogues emerged and also what went into making these dialogues a reality?

**Adam Engle** (00:03:44):

Thank you. And thank you Mind & Life, and thank you Susan, and thank you all for coming. Really grateful for the opportunity to participate in this 35th... I get emotional. Mind & Life has been a very significant part of my life, so if I get emotional during this, please understand where it's coming from. It's hard to believe as I reflect.

(00:04:21):

So let me dive in. In 1983, I was living in Boulder Creek, California. I've been living there for about five years. I was making my living as an investment manager at the time, and I was part of the larger community, not living on the property, but living in the town. And I was invited by Lama Thubten Yeshe to participate in an organizational meeting of a new organization called the Universal Education Association.

(00:04:51):

And I was at that initial board meeting where we were trying to figure out what the mission was and what we were supposed to be doing, when someone mentioned that they understood that the Dalai Lama was interested in meeting with scientists and talking about Buddhism in science. And I had never heard that before and I thought to myself, "Wow, that's really interesting. I wonder if that's true." And then I thought about it and I said, "Well, if it is true and he really wants to do that, that's something that I could do. I'm an entrepreneur. I know how to put things together. How hard could that be?" And I thought, "Hmm".

(00:05:28):

And then when the meeting was over, there was another fellow there, Michael Sautman, who actually knew the Dalai Lama, and I went up to Michael and I said, "Michael, is this true that His Holiness is really interested in science?" And he said, "Oh yeah, everyone knows that." I said, "Hmm. Well, if that's true, I'd like to start working and see if I could satisfy that desire for him." And Michael said, "Well, that sounds cool. I'll work with you on it."

(00:05:56):

And so for the next year, as people came through and I traveled around, I was part of the Tibetan movement, if you will, political movement. I asked people who knew the Dalai Lama and everyone said yes, he really wants to do that. And then fall of '84, I started my Stanford MBA program and His Holiness was scheduled to come to Los Angeles to give a teaching in October, November, or something like that, and so I booked into that teaching. And Michael, who knew His Holiness and knew the people in the private office, said, "Well, I'll go down a couple of days early and figure out how we can get a meeting with the entourage and talk about this idea that we've got to produce this science meeting for the Dalai Lama."

(00:06:44):

And so I got down there and Michael said, "I haven't been able to get through." And I don't remember the details. And we just shrugged our shoulders and he said, "Well, I'll keep on trying." And then we were in the foyer of the Shrine Auditorium where the teachings were going

to happen, waiting to get in. And someone came up to me and he was bringing someone around to introduce and introduced me to Tenzin Choegyal, also known as Ngari Rinpoche, His Holiness' youngest brother, and introduced me to him and I shook hands. And it was one of those things that are so embarrassing when you see in the political arena where someone's shaking hands and they won't let go.

**Adam Engle (00:07:37):**

And I grabbed his hand, and I held it with two hands and I started spouting off, "We've got this idea. I understand His Holiness wants to meet with scientists. We want to produce that." And he just looked at me and then he put up his hands and he says, "Not now, not now. Meet me this evening, 6:00 in the bar of the Century Plaza Hotel." Where they were staying. And so I said, "Great." And so at 6:00, Michael and I showed up at the appointed time. He was there, I think alone, maybe with someone else. And we laid out the idea. And one of the concerns that I had had was, I only really wanted to do this if His Holiness was really interested. But how do you ask that?

**(00:08:24):**

So what I said to him was, "When you ask His Holiness whether he wants to do this, ask him two specific questions. One, will he agree to be in the room 100% of the time while the dialogues are going on? Because I don't want him to pop in and give a cameo and then leave. And two, would he allow his name to be used in fundraising?" And I figured if he was on board with those two things, he was probably on board with the program. So we had that very, very nice meeting and went away and I don't know whether it was the next day or the day after, and he came back to me and he said, "Spoke with His Holiness. He really wants to go forward with this idea. He's enthusiastic about it." And then he took me to meet His Holiness's private secretary at the time, a man named Tempa Tsering. And he said, "Work with Tempa Tsering. He'll be your contact. And also Tenzin Takla, Tenzin Namgyal Takla... No, I'm sorry. Tenzin Tethong. Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, the brother of Tenzin Geyche, who was His Holiness' representative in New York.

**(00:09:43):**

And so Michael and I had gotten authorization. And so the next thing we did was we tried to... We both had the idea that... We'd read the Tao of Physics. And Fritjof Capra was living in the Bay Area. And so we arranged a meeting with him and proposed that he be the academic coordinator of a science meeting with the Dalai Lama. And he was, let's say, lukewarm at the idea at best. He said, "Look, I've been into a lot of these New Age things lately and they don't change anyone's mind and I'm not really that interested in this kind of stuff anymore." And so I said to him, "Well, what would you be interested in? I get that. Is there a meeting that you could envision that you might be interested in?"

**(00:10:34):**

And he said, "Hmm. I'd be in putting together a science tutorial for the Dalai Lama." And I said, "Oh, okay. Well, that's interesting, but maybe that's not what we had in mind." But we thought about it and scratching our heads, Michael and I. And we may have had another follow-up meeting with him. And this was in the fall of 1984 in the winter, the beginning of 1985. And then

one day I was in my room at Stanford studying, and the phone rang and a fellow introduced himself as Francisco Varela, calling from Paris. And he said that he had heard that I was trying to put together a science meeting for the Dalai Lama and he wondered if that was true, and if so, what I was doing. And so I told him that, "Yes, it was true. Michael and I were working on it."

**Adam Engle** (00:11:33):

And I had met with Fritjof Capra and we were thinking about... And we had spoken with the private office about doing it in physics. And Francisco says to me, he said, "Adam, don't do it in physics. Physics is a dead science. Do it in biology. Do it in contemplative science." And I thought to myself, "Hmm. Well that's new." But here's a card-carrying scientist who's really enthusiastic for the project, rather than Fritjof who is lukewarm, and I said to him, "Okay well, keep talking. Convince me. Let's talk about it and so I understand what you're proposing." And we had a number of conversations over the next few weeks or months. And I was planning to go that summer, during the summer break, to Switzerland, to Rikon, where His Holiness was doing a Kalachakra event.

(00:12:40):

And I said to Francisco, "Let me go to Switzerland, I'll meet with the Dalai Lama's people. I'll propose the idea that we switch it from physics to biology. If they agree, then we'll work together on it." And so I did that. Michael and I went to Switzerland. It was a great time there. I met Joan Halifax and I met with Tempa Tsering and some of the other confidants of His Holiness and they thought, "Great. Yeah, that's fine. You can switch that." And then Joan, who was very, very close to Francisco, had, I believe, invited him to come to the Ojai Foundation the following fall, September, October, for a Thich Nhat Hanh retreat. And so she said, "Why don't you plan to come down during that and meet Francisco face-to-face?" And we did that. Michael and I went down there over a weekend or a time. I took off from Stanford and it was really memorable because Thich Nhat Hanh was there and there was a fire in the area and there were helicopters all over the... and it looked just like you would imagine the war zone in Vietnam.

(00:13:55):

But I met Francisco and we got along really well and we agreed to work together and we kind of mapped out a sketch, a sketched out a plan to... We were aware that His Holiness was planning to visit the United States. I believe it was in December of '86. And so we thought we would propose that we do something during that visit at Stanford University on the West Coast. Francisco had connections there that he thought we could get a venue. And so I started communicating with Tenzin Tethong in New York about that date and those possibilities that we were fleshing out the ideas around what we were going to do. And then we learned that the Pope had invited His Holiness to Assisi in December of '86. And so that North American visit was canceled. So we were back to square one. And at the same time, we learned that Tempa Tsering had been replaced as His Holiness's secretary by Tenzin Geyche. And so we were really back to square one. We didn't really have anything.

(00:15:23):

So I had a spring break coming up from Stanford and I figured, "Well, let me go to Dharamsala and see if I can get this thing back on track." And so I arranged a very quick trip to fly to India,

and my friends at FPMT helped me get up to Dharamsala, and I got to Dharamsala, and I was planning to look up Ngari Rinpoche at the Kashmir Cottage and to stay there. But first thing I did was I went to the private office and I got myself an interview with Tenzin Geyche, and I had my file with all the correspondence and told him what we had planned. And he looked at me and he said, "I haven't heard a thing about this. This is totally new to me. No one's told me anything about it." So I said, "Okay well, speak with Ngari Rinpoche." I was thinking hopefully he remembers me. And he said that he'd do that. And then I went searching for the Kashmir Cottage, which I found, and I went up there and Ngari Rinpoche remembered me. And we had a really good remeeting. Over the next few days, I had an audience with His Holiness. And so I went into His Holiness, very, very nervous, tape recorder didn't work, and I proposed the whole thing. And he said he was very, very enthusiastic. And I asked him, "Why do you want to do this?" And he said, "Well, I've always been interested in science, but also, I would like science to be taught in the Tibetan monasteries." And I was really blown away by that. And then we ended that, but in that conversation and speaking with Tenzin Geyche, I became aware of the fact that they were planning a visit to Paris, and Europe later on that year. This was March, April, and they were planning May, June.

**Adam Engle** (00:17:33):

And so I arranged for them to meet with Francisco because he was living in Paris. And I got a hold of Francisco and I said, "His Holiness is coming and these are the people you got to be in touch with and see if you can arrange this conversation with His Holiness." And in fact, that happened and then Francisco called me up and he said, "We had a great meeting. They almost had to drag His Holiness out of the room. He was so engaged. And it's a good thing that we didn't do what we were planning to do at Stanford because His Holiness doesn't really understand English as well as I thought he did. And anyway, he invited me to come to Dharamsala to continue the conversation." And I said, "Oh wow, that's fantastic. Do you need to do that alone? Or how about inviting a few other people? A few other scientists? And we'll just do the science meeting in Dharamsala. A small meeting, satisfying his curiosity." You know about all this.

(00:18:44):

And Francisco said, "That's a great idea." And so I started communicating with Tenzin Geyche directly and Tenzin Choegyal directly about this idea. And they agreed in principle that it was a really good idea. And then I graduated from Stanford. I was figuring out my next steps. In the spring of '87, I went back to Dharamsala. I found, over that time, that the only way to really get anything done with these guys was to actually get face-to-face with them. So I went to Dharamsala, Tenzin Geyche greeted me, and I said, "Okay, we've agreed in principle, we want to do this meeting. And I'm here for dates. I want to get dates that we can all come to Dharamsala." And he said, "Well okay, what are you interested in? And how long?" And I figured, well, whatever I asked for, he's going to bargain me down.

(00:19:43):

So I'll ask for more than I want. And I said, "I'd like seven days because these people are traveling from other places in the world. We want to make it worthwhile. Seven days, and in October, which is the best month to be in India." And he looked at me and he laughed. He said,

"That's impossible. I mean, in the first place, His Holiness doesn't do anything for seven days, except teach Buddhism. And in the second place, we're only going to be here for two weeks in October. So that's just not going to work," he said, "but I'll ask." And that was a really, really cool thing about Tenzin Geyche, is he was so loyal to His Holiness, regardless of what he thought. He always took things to His Holiness. So I left that meeting, walking down the hill to Kashmir Cottage figuring, "Oh god, now what?"

**Adam Engle** (00:20:39):

And then two days later, something like that, I get this letter from Tenzin Geyche, agreeing to exactly the dates that we had proposed for the full seven days. Gives me goosebumps to think of it. It was amazing. And all of a sudden, everyone was really impressed. They thought that I actually was important somehow. And then we started figuring it out. They told me about Middle Path, Tibetan travel agency in Delhi to contact, to help with the ground arrangements of the trip. I actually, on that trip, I went on to Nepal, but I got back and I called up Francisco and I said, "Okay, we're on for these dates. Now we got to put something together. What are we going to do?" And so we agreed to meet in Geneva, outside of Geneva later that summer.

(00:21:40):

He came down from Paris. I was doing some business in Geneva. We went out to the shores of Lake Geneva and stayed in a guest house for a while and put together a seven day program. And Francisco was inviting people that he knew. One thing that His Holiness had said when I met with him on the previous trip to Dharamsala, was that he was interested in the gestation of human from conception to birth, and so we pulled in Bob Livingston. Anyway, we put together an agenda. I went back to the United States, started doing all of the arrangements for flights, working with Middle Path. Michael and I had agreed to split the cost. I think the budget was around fifteen grand. A month or two before, Luigi Luisi had come up with a donor Branco Weiss, for ten grand, so that was good. And it was all set for October.

(00:22:52):

And just prior to leaving for India, His Holiness just did a visit to the United States in October of '87. And part of that visit was in New York city and around Washington, New Jersey. And so I went to New York, I wanted to meet with His Holiness, I got a short audience with His Holiness for Washington, New Jersey. I was attending the launch of the Tibet House at the Carlyle Hotel, and I ran into Dan Goleman there. Later on, he became one of the academic coordinators and board members. And then I had this audience with His Holiness a day or two later in Washington, New Jersey. And I called up Barry Hershey, who I went to law school with and who we had remained friends for all these years. And of all of the people in my life, including my family, whenever I mentioned that I was working on this project with the Dalai... to do this science meeting with Dalai Lama, they thought I was nuts.

(00:24:07):

I mean there are a lot of other things I was doing that they thought I was nuts about, but Barry didn't. He thought it was really, really interesting. So I called up Barry and I said, "Hey, I've got this audience with the Dalai Lama. It's only going to be about 15 minutes. You want to come down and we go together?" And he said, "Sure." So he flew down and we went out to

Washington, New Jersey, and he rented this big limousine and everyone thought we were important, and had this 15 minute audience with His Holiness, wanted to work on some details. I don't remember what they were. Barry came in, didn't say a word. And then we left and he went home and I went to Dharamsala and that was a trip in itself. I mean this was 1987.

**Adam Engle** (00:24:58):

I think the meeting started on Friday. People got there a few days early to New Delhi. The planes got there in the middle of the night. We stayed at the Imperial hotel, which in those days, was quite rundown. But great location. People recovered. On the day before, we went to Old Delhi. We viewed some sites there, and then left from the Old Delhi train station for an overnight train trip to Pathankot. And then from Pathankot, we had three or four hour car ride up to Dharamsala and arrived at the Kashmir Cottage.

(00:25:46):

They only had four rooms there and we were close to a dozen people with... the people who were there and Francisco had Leonor. Anyway, we made it all work. We all bunked in there. We ate on the veranda. It was fabulous. And we had this really incredible meeting with His Holiness. It was so intense that I think we took a day off in the middle of it, and it was a great meeting. And you can read about it and see the tapes. Oh, The Meridian Trust agreed to film it. And then when it was all over, I looked at His Holiness, see that he had a great time, and I said, "Would you like to do it again?" And he said, "Yes." And so here we are. 35 years later.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:26:39):

The rest is history. Wow. That's fantastic to hear those stories. I'm curious, you had said that... Oh, I don't know what happened to my video. Well, that's strange. I guess I'll just keep talking.

**Adam Engle** (00:27:01):

There you are. Nice picture at least.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:27:03):

Let me see. Unable to start video. There we are. Okay. I'm curious, was that first meeting you had said there was an idea to do it more like as a tutorial for His Holiness. So how much of it was that, and how much of it was... what it became like this dialogue between traditions? I'm just curious.

**Adam Engle** (00:27:26):

No, no, no. Thanks for clarifying that. The tutorial ideas was Fritjof Capra's. That was not Francisco's idea. And that was not my idea. What we were interested in, and Francisco was the perfect partner for this because, I mean, everyone knows Francisco's history better than I do. But he really embodied the synthesis of science and Buddhism. I believe the story is that he actually came to science, or maybe came to Buddhism because of the limitations of science, in understanding the nature of the mind. And what he understood, and he kind of educated me into, is that science and Buddhism are actually two competing paradigms. They are two alternate paradigms that have the same goal, which is to understand the nature of reality and to

use that understanding to create a knowledge base and practices to help people navigate and to expand.

**Adam Engle** (00:28:49):

And that Buddhism used, as its instrumentality, the human nervous system refined through meditation, and Western science used the "objective method" of using technology in the scientific method to investigate reality. But what Francisco really understood was that, as he always put it, the investigative instrument of a scientist is their mind. And in the same way that scientists calibrate their external technological tools and instruments, it was necessary to calibrate the internal, the mind, and through meditation. So the meeting was definitely not a tutorial. It was set up so that we had a two and a half hour session in the morning where one of the scientists gave a presentation on their realm of science.

(00:30:03):

that was geared toward informing His Holiness with enough information so that the two and a half hour session in the afternoon could be a very fruitful dialogue. And so it was very, very much a give and take, which became the format for everything that Mind & Life did subsequently.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:30:28):

Right. That's making me think, too. I think the story and the way that this field is framed is it's these two traditions that came together, academic science or Western science, philosophy and Buddhism and contemplative theory, but you also brought this experience of entrepreneurship. And so I'm curious how that fed into the secret sauce. And could you say a little more about the qualities there that-

**Adam Engle** (00:31:00):

Yeah, that's a great question. Thanks for remembering that. What has become clear to me over the years, and I'm sure that it's underappreciated, is that the tremendous success that Mind & Life has experienced has been the result of a very, very fruitful and successful collaboration among three disciplines. Entrepreneurship represented by me, the contemplative world represented by His Holiness and the academic world represented by Francisco. It's a three corner stool that without all three, it doesn't stand up. Take this meeting for instance. The idea that His Holiness wanted to meet with scientists was not a secret. A lot of people knew that before me, but no one would really manifest it. It took that entrepreneurial naivete or stupidity that basically said, "Oh, that's a great idea. I don't know anything about how to do that, but let's do it." And that is a piece of the puzzle. And I think it's underappreciated. And that's why I wanted to give a lot of the details of how much effort it took to get that first meeting going, because that's what entrepreneurs do.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:32:41):

We're all so glad you did. I guess it's also maybe an opportunity. You've had the good fortune to spend a lot of time with His Holiness over the years and also Francisco. So I'm just wondering if you have reflections about how it is interacting with them or qualities that stand out for you about each of them, be nice to share.



**Adam Engle** (00:33:08):

Well, thanks for asking that. Everyone knows or who has been around His Holiness knows how incredibly extraordinary he is in terms of his presence, in terms of his vision and his curiosity. And working in close contact with him also over the years, we were doing this for 25 years and meeting regularly, not only in the meeting room, but also outside of the meeting room in various venues. He really appreciated the practicalities of what was involved. He really appreciated the difficulties of and the fundraising challenges. And it was really, really an incredibly rewarding relationship and also challenging because it's not very often, but occasionally he gets miffed. And when you're the subject of his displeasure, it feels really, really bad.

(00:34:35):

But as the Buddhists say, these are all opportunities for practice. And the thing about it is that he gets over it so quickly, so much more quickly. I'll carry it around for weeks or months and he will have forgotten it by the time he leaves the room. Francisco was truly, truly an extraordinary individual, more than anyone that I have ever met other than perhaps His Holiness. He really embodied the synthesis of science and Buddhism. And it was that vision and his insistence that this be an equal partnership, that when we started off talking about research that it be a real collaborative effort and that the Western scientists not take the position that the Buddhists are just subjects. And he was just so incredibly talented. I remember he could move from English to Spanish to French to German flawlessly. And what people know about, he was born in, I think in Monte Grande, Chile. He worked his way all the way up from Chile through Harvard to... So really incredible. I feel really, really blessed, and actually Francisco introduced me to some of my lifelong Buddhist teachers, Tulku Rinpoche and his sons, Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Mingyur Rinpoche.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (00:36:30):

Thank you. So I'm sure there's lots that could be said about all the ensuing dialogues that happened after that and many great stories, and maybe we'll have time for that in some of the Q&A. We want to make sure we have time to talk about this pretty significant shift that happened in the early '00s, in terms of the model of Mind & Life and what Mind & Life was doing, moving from these dialogues into much more public spaces and beginning to see the field of academic research. So can you share how that evolved and what was the thinking behind that and what were the goals?

**Adam Engle** (00:37:09):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thanks for asking that question. We started doing the meetings in 1987. I always think about it as my avocation. And every other year, more or less, we were doing these. And then long about, I guess it was 1997, we were doing, I guess, the seventh dialogue in Innsbrook. And I was in between companies. And I had to figure out what I was going to do next. And I had been growing dissatisfied. My whole background, my emotional makeup is toward social activism. During the Vietnam war, I was a lawyer on the front lines, anti-war kinds of stuff. And so that's the thing that really jazzed me. And I was concerned when we started Mind & Life, I thought it was going to be one off. Then we started doing others and it was kind of a cool thing to do. Now His Holiness was really involved and I wasn't seeing the kind of societal benefit that I wanted, that I thought was potential. And so I invited the scientific advisory board

that we'd put together by then to the first ever face-to-face meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1998, the fall of 1998. And I asked the question, let's assume that His Holiness stays with this for another couple of decades. Are we maximizing the societal benefit of this interchange? Because I'm not seeing it. We're doing these meetings, everyone's having a great time. And we publish a book with a time lag of a number of years, maybe 25,000 people read the book, but I don't want to be in a situation where 20 years from now, someone's looking and saying, "Guys, you really blew this opportunity. You should have been something."

**Adam Engle** (00:39:39):

So we batted that around for a few, I think it was a day and a half that we were together, and essentially what they said, what I remember them saying, the takeaway was, "It's an excellent question. In the world of science you can hold all the meetings in the world and publish all the books in the world, but science proves itself through rigorous studies, the results of which are published in peer review journals. And so if you want to have any lasting impact, we ought to do that." And again, like a dumb entrepreneur, you say, okay, that sounds good, let's do that. What do we have to do?

(00:40:24):

And so Francisco said, "I'll do a study in my lab." And Richie said, "I'll do a study in my lab." And Francisco said, "We need a public meeting. We need to get more people involved. We got to do something in public," because up until then, the private meetings were starting to get some level of publicity. But in the very beginning, Francisco really was very, very adamant that he didn't want any kind of press in the room because it could be very, very damaging to scientific careers to be known, to be in scientific dialogues with the Dalai Lama.

(00:41:09):

But at this point in time, it was time to open up. And so the meeting disbanded and I had those clues and I started scratching my head, put on my entrepreneur's hat. And I said, "Well, if they're talking about research, we got to think about how to develop a research program. One or two studies isn't going to make it. We got to have a multi-generational research project," and how do you get one of those things going? And so I started doing some research and how quantum physics and genomics started as fields. And then the other thing that came up for me was the fact that I didn't really have a lot of personal juice for and motivation for developing a science program. I'm not a scientist, I'm a social activist. What happened was that I linked up one of the comments that His Holiness had made a number of times in the private dialogues, where he had said, "You people in the West are fixated on physical hygiene and physical fitness. What about mental hygiene and mental fitness?" And as a practicing Buddhist, I knew what he meant.

(00:42:36):

At that time the science of mental health was really about mental disease. Marty Seligman was starting to talk about positive psychology, and I put those two things together. Actually what happened was I thought about mental fitness. And then I did some research on physical fitness. What was it that took physical fitness from barbell gyms to ubiquity. And what I found really surprised me, and it was cardiac science. When the Dean Ornish and his cadre came up with this crazy idea that physical activity and diet and lifestyle change could positively impact cardiac

disease, they were jokes in the industry. And they raised some pilot money and they did some studies and damn if it didn't show that they were correct. Those pilot studies got picked up by the New York Times and everyone else. And all of a sudden there were these articles about how it was really healthy to increase your physical activity. And people got, oh, I ought to do that. I ought to do that. And that stimulated demand and the Nautilus and the Pelotons of the world created an industry and it became ubiquitous.

**Adam Engle** (00:44:10):

So I looked at that and I said, wow, I wonder if we could do that with mental and emotional fitness? This links everything up the scientists and the academics want to do research. I want to do this crazy idea of mental and emotional fitness industry. And that gave me the juice that I needed to move forward with the project. And so we started thinking about, and we actually put together a meeting, the first public meeting that was supposed to happen in, I think it was the spring of 2002. Well, wait, let me backup for a second.

(00:44:56):

So we developed this strategy for the development of Mind & Life, figuring out how to support research on meditation. And then we had a private meeting in the year 2000, the Destructive Emotions meeting. And I went to Dharamsala early. I met with Tenzin Choegyal who had been our champion over the years with His Holiness. And I reviewed this idea with him. And then I had a private audience with His Holiness, and I reviewed the idea with him and he was very enthusiastic about it. And then he came into the destructive emotion meetings, as I remember it. And the first words out of his mouth, he started talking about and asking the scientists whether they would... Basically, as I remember it said, "We in Buddhism think that we have put together a number of practices that are really, really useful for human beings. Would it be possible for you Western scientists to take these practices, to study them in using your methodologies and your laboratories to see if they are beneficial or harmful even, according to your notions of benefit and harm. And if you find that they are beneficial, then to find ways to teach them in a purely secular environment so that more people get the benefit of them.

(00:46:40):

And that really got people's attention, especially Paul Ekman. And Paul started spearheading what got actualized and is a very, very robust cultivating emotional balance program.

(00:47:04):

But that really moved the project forward. And then the next thing in Mind & Life that happened was a 2001 meeting at Madison where Richie and Francisco were going to present to His Holiness at Richie's lab in Madison the preliminary results of the studies that they were doing. And Matt Hu was a collaborator in that. He was the subject and the collaboration. But Francisco's health had really, really turned down. He had had a liver transplant previously, and he went through a really, really good period, and I think that they had said that if you could get 30 months past that without a relapse, and he was maybe 24, 20 anyway, he had a relapse and it came back with a vengeance. And I remember I was in California on that tour that was going to go to Madison and I spoke with Amy and she said, "He's not going to make it for very much longer. And he can't go to Madison. He's going to send Antoine Wootsin his place." And then we

went to Madison and... We arranged to have a camera and Cliff worked his magic to have a television screen in Francisco's bedroom so that he could watch the meeting as it took place in Madison. And I remember when His Holiness got out of his limousine that morning, I told him that Francisco was going to be watching. And His Holiness walked into the room and looked at the cameras and he said, "Which camera?" And they pointed out the camera. And he looked right at the camera and said goodbye to Francisco. And then just a few days later Francisco passed.

**Adam Engle** (00:49:31):

And so that was a traumatic event for me, but I picked myself up and I rallied and really threw myself into this public meeting that we had been organizing. And it was going to be co-sponsored by a unit of Harvard University that Anne Harrington was heading up. And it was going to be at Harvard University and nothing really was flowing well with the organization. The agenda was really, really bullet. Richie and Anne had put together a stellar program, but the room at Harvard wasn't really that good. We wanted to pair it with a public talk at the Boston Garden, but we couldn't get in there because it conflicted with their hockey schedule. And anyway, we moved forward with it. We got online to sell tickets and then His Holiness got sick. And that whole visit to the United States was canceled. And Mind & Life was technically bankrupt. We had more liabilities than assets, but it turned out to be a really, really, really fortunate occurrence because it gave us another year for planning.

(00:50:52):

And then there was a quirk because once the dates were rescheduled for the fall of 2003, this is my recollection, Anne said that they couldn't do it. Their unit was being prohibited from co-sponsoring this meeting with us at the orders of Larry Summers, who was the then President of Harvard, because he felt that it was beneath the dignity of Harvard to be in a science dialogue, science dialogue with the Dalai Lama. I don't know whether that's true or not, but that's what I remember.

(00:51:38):

So fortunately, we were also doing an October meeting back in Dharamsala, 2002 Dharamsala meeting. And we were in Cambridge that summer, just about the time that we got the word that we couldn't do it at Harvard doing our pre-meeting for the 2002 meeting. And one of the participants was Eric Lander from MIT. So I said to Eric, "Is there any chance that we could do this meeting down at MIT?" And Eric said to me, "Well, I'm going to meet with the president tomorrow. I'll ask him." And he met with the president and the president said, "We've got this 1,200 seat auditorium, Kresge Auditorium, and if it's free, yeah, they can rent it and do the meeting there. I'm fine with that." And so he told me that. The dates were open, came together beautifully. The dates at the Boston Garden were open and that came together beautifully. And Eric had introduced us to Phillip Sharp, who is a Nobel Laureate at the McGovern Center for Brain Research, and been our champion to get them to co-sponsor the event at MIT.

(00:52:59):

And it was an incredibly magical time. What you have to understand as well is that the state of organization of Mind & Life at that time was, we had two full-time employees, me and my

assistant. And we had contracted with an independent contractor who was a meeting planner, Sydney Prince. And the three of us had to carry all the water to make that meeting a success. And I'm talking about designing logo, designing the brochure. We had a science meeting of 1,200 people and a separate meeting of 12,000 people. There were lunches, there were dinners, there were sponsorship programs and there was marketing. How do you fill up 1,200 seats with the right people? You could easily get 1200 people, but you needed the right people in the room. And I thought of it later. And in those days the internet was just starting. But the way that graduate students and postdocs learned about meetings, I was told, was through bulletin boards. And so we created this double size poster. And I said to the scientists, I said, "How do people make their buy decisions in the business world, but how do they decide which meetings they go to? Graduate students and postdocs, they don't have unlimited funds, they got to choose." And they said, "It's a question of really who's in the room."

**Adam Engle (00:54:55):**

And so I think it was Anne who came up with this great title, which no one knew what it meant. It was Investigating the Mind, Exchanges Between Buddhism and the Bio-Behavioral Sciences on how the Mind Works. And so we created this big red poster with these nice logos of images of brains, and we had that title and then His Holiness' picture, and the list of this incredible list of academics that Richie and Anne had put together. And what I was trying to imagine was a graduate student or a postdoc going up to a bulletin board and seeing this, that would dominate the bulletin board. And they'd look at it and say, "Exchanges? I wonder what the hell that means." And then they'd look at the people and they'd say, "Holy shit, if those guys are there, I got to be there." And then at the bottom it said for more information, log in here or something like that. And when you logged in, there was a short questionnaire where you had to self-select who you were, academic, graduate student, postdoc, undergraduate, media, Buddhist practitioner, other, something like that. So we were building up a database of people who were interested in attending, and we knew who they were or what their disciplines were.

**(00:56:37):**

And we mailed out a thousand of these posters to every psychology and neuroscience and that kind of stuff. And then we started getting the responses and we built up a database of about 3,000, 3,500 names. And so what we did, it was really interesting. We had 1,200 seats. And the first thing we did was we went to everyone who was going to be on stage and said, "Here's a private website. Anyone you want to attend, tell them that they can do that before tickets go on sale." And then they had their family members and stuff like that got us up to about 400 seats. And then what we did was we started sending out individualized emails by category to research scientists, graduate students, post docs. And every day kept on looking at the number of registrations. And then when we had a thousand, so we knew that we had a thousand people that we knew wanted in the room, then we opened it up to everyone. So we packed the room with the kinds of people that we wanted.

**(00:58:01):**

And the other thing to really get behind in that meeting is that we were doing a science meeting and we had no data to present. How do you do a... I'm not a scientist, I don't know that, but Richie and his crew put together this incredible program, Richie and Anne, and what they did

was they took three of the four sessions and they said, "We'll devote each one to one of the topics that is top of mind present in the field of neuroscience," as a result of neuroplasticity, which had become the norm now. And one of them was Tension and Cognitive Control led by Jonathan Cohen. Emotions led by Richie. And Mental Imagery led by Steve Coslin. And posed the question, you now understand the nature of the truth of neuroplasticity, and you're investigating what mental and emotional inputs affect the brain in various ways. So would it be interesting to you to have on your research teams the Olympian athletes of mental training, adept meditators, to help you in your research. And that was the nature of the dialogue that we invited everyone to have.

**Adam Engle (00:59:56):**

And I really encourage people to look at those tapes because it was really interesting. My recollection, I haven't looked at it in a long time-

(01:00:03):

Four scientists on one side and His Holiness in the middle of translators and three or four contemplators. And initially, it was like these academics were showing up because it was cool and they were interested, but pretty skeptical. And figuratively, they were kind of like this. And then, the dialogue started. And His Holiness made the comment that if science disproves one of the tenants of Buddhism that Buddhism's going to have to change. And the scientists were like, "What? Did he really say that?" And they opened up. And then, the meeting started unfolding, and they started getting into the chemistry of His Holiness. And it was kind of like, "Wow. This is a really interesting proposition."

(01:01:06):

And then, the fourth session was Eric Lander and Jerome Kagan, kind of taking notes during this whole thing and then summarizing it. And they did an incredible job, and basically said, "Yes, this is really worth pursuing." Now, let me backtrack for a minute because I just thought about something. In the ensuing years, I had mentioned Paul Ekman's name earlier, and Paul was working on cultivating emotional balance. And Paul was also invited to the public meeting in MIT. And at one point, Paul said to me, "Why are you doing that meeting in MIT? You have such a good thing going in Dharamsala. Why do you want to take the chance of blowing it?" And I said, "Well, because we want to do research, and we need to get more people involved."

(01:02:04):

And Paul said, "Well, I understand that, but this is the wrong meeting for that. What you got to do if you want to do research, you can get a handful of senior scientists like me involved, but that's not going to move the needle at all. What you need to do is you need to get people at the beginning of their careers, the graduate students, the postdocs, and you got to get them interested enough so that they put their stake in the ground and they decide that they want to do that. People in middle science, they can't make a right turn. They've got their funding sources. They've got their reputations. You got to get the younger people. And it's a totally different meeting." And I thought, "Hmm, okay." Talked to Francisco about it. He said yes.

**Adam Engle (01:02:55):**

So, we had this fabulous meeting, got a lot of attention at MIT. And then at, as I closed the meeting, I announced that in June, this was in October of 2003, that in June of 2004 Mind & Life was going to host the first ever Summer Research Institute for any of the researchers that were interested in learning how to research meditation. We didn't have an agenda. We didn't have a faculty. We didn't have an admission program for figuring out how to bring people in. The only thing we had was a venue, the Garrison Institute, because previously Deanna and Jonathan Rose, who had founded the Garrison Institute, said that they wanted to work with Mind & Life. They wanted to bring His Holiness to the Garrison Institute with a Mind & Life meaning and I said, "I don't think it's going to work for that because it's not big enough. But I got this other idea," and told them about it. And they said, "Oh, well, that's perfect," and they gave a grant.

(01:04:10):

So there we were, off and running. We had a public meeting, which interested a lot of people, and that was watershed meeting. And then, followed it up with... In those six months, nine months, we put together the application procedures. We put together the funding. We put together the agenda. We turned basically to the people who were on stage and asked them whether they would be the faculty. And the thing that really surprised us though... We thought we were going to put this out and we were going to get applications, if we were lucky, from graduate students and postdocs. We did, but we also, alongside that, got applications from tenured professors, which really surprised us. And so, we created two categories: what we called "senior investigators" and "junior investigators," or something like that. The only difference was we made the senior investigators pay the full cost of the program, five- or six-hundred dollars, and we subsidized the others. And then, we launched the Summer Research Institute for a week.

(01:05:35):

And then, the other piece that I think is really interesting is that when we came out of the MIT meeting, we had money in the bank. I had mentioned, in 2002, we were virtually bankrupt, but we pulled through that with the generosity of a couple of donors. But we came out of MIT and because of the public talk and other things, we had hundreds of thousands of dollars. And Richie had convinced the board to take a couple hundred thousand dollars and to allocate that for research projects, and we had invited everyone who had participated at the faculty level of the MIT meeting to submit proposals. And we had gotten four proposals and had internally awarded \$50,000 to each of the four, but we hadn't told them about it yet. And then, we went into the Garrison Institute meeting, and we started that meeting.

(01:06:46):

And I remember I looked around the room. I was new to the whole thing. And at the first break, the mid-morning break, I went up to Richie and I said, "Richie, if we're giving away research money, why don't we give it to these kids?" And he looked at me and his eyes got big. He said, "Adam, that is a brilliant idea." He said, "If we could give 10 grants of \$10,000 each for five years, we could create a field." And I looked at him and I said, "Hold that thought." We're going to talk about that at lunch. And so, at lunch, we went into a private meeting. It was Richie. Ben Shapiro was there. Barry Hershey was there. I think Joan was there. And I looked at Richie and

I said, "Say that again." And he repeated the \$10,000, 10... And I looked at him and I said, "What the hell can you do with 10 grand in the field of research?"

**Adam Engle** (01:07:59):

And Ben was on the other side of me, and he said, "You would be amazed at what graduate students and postdocs can do with that kind of money. They're already in research labs. They got all the fixed capital there. You'd just be amazed." So I said, "Okay." So I turned back to Richie and I said, "Okay, Richie. We got 200 grand on the table. Is there any way we can repurpose any of that money into this program without compromising the..." And he thought about it for a minute, and he said, "I think we can take 25 from two of the four." And I said, "Okay, well, that's 50." And then, Barry looked at it and he said, "Well, if you guys are going to put up 50, I'll put up 50." So we had a hundred grand to fund 10 research grants.

(01:08:57):

So I went back after the lunch and announced to the group that we were going to start a research grant program to fund pilot studies to examine the hypotheses that were generated by the meeting. And that started what is now known as the Varela Program. And a word about that: Normally a grant program, in my experience, is named after the donor. The primary donor was Barry. I think we just called it the Mind & Life Research Grants the first year or two years. And I remember going to Barry at one point in time and saying, "Barry, by rights, we should be naming this program after the Hershey Family Foundation or something like that. But how would you feel about naming it after Francisco?" And Barry, true to who he is, said, "That's a great idea, Adam. Go ahead and do that." And so, that's how the name for the program was established.

(01:10:04):

So there we had now the private meetings with His Holiness. We had the public meetings. We had the Summer Research Institute. We had the grant program. And then, we followed up the 2003 meeting with a 2005 public meeting in Washington, D.C. on clinical applications. The MIT meeting was on neuroscience. This was clinical applications of science and meditation. And then, that had its added bonus, because as Rusty Gage, when he came to the 2004 Dharamsala meeting, came with an invitation from the Society for Neuroscience for His Holiness to address the Society of Neuroscience at their Washington DC annual meeting. And we rearranged the timing of the Mind & Life meeting to coincide with the neuroscience meeting, the SFN meeting, so that after His Holiness finished the Mind & Life within a day or two, he was addressing 20,000 neuroscientists. And, boy, did that create a ruckus.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:11:29):

I was one of them. I was in the audience.

**Adam Engle** (01:11:30):

Yeah, the Chinese went apeshit over that. But it was great. And alongside that, there were private meetings with the executive committee of Society for Neuroscience. And then, again, it's all history from there.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:11:52):



Wow. Thank you so much for sharing all of that. That's amazing to hear those stories and that history. Yeah. I have so much that I could say personally about how that's all impacted me, as well. But I want to shift soon to start engaging with the audience, but maybe we can just wrap this time with a reflection. We're celebrating 35 years now of Mind & Life and all this work in this field, so I'm wondering for you looking back, are you surprised by what's emerged, or what stands out to you as some of the biggest impacts or accomplishments that have come out of all this?

**Adam Engle** (01:12:35):

Am I surprised? One of the things that I didn't talk about was kind of my dark night of the soul personal experience. Because when we formulated this idea, or were formulating this idea, to expand, it's not like we shifted. We expanded the vision of Mind & Life. I knew I was going to have to spend full time doing it. And it's hard to understand this at this point in time, but I remember saying to myself, "Adam, you got to be realistic about this. If you do this, you're going to be putting your life energy into a project that you are not going to see the benefit of or the results of during your lifetime. It may fail completely. But if it succeeds, sometime in future decades, people might be looking at some kind of a research field and saying, 'That teeny little organization back in the early 2000s, they really contributed it to that kind of a thing.'"

(01:13:59):

So, am I surprised? I think all of us were just blown away at the speed at which it took hold. I mean, it was just mind-blowing. And for me, I had to really risk the... Because I couldn't see how I could make a living out of this, but I decided to do it anyway on the chance that maybe it would work, or at least it would work enough so that I could support the family. Looking back, it's one of these things where the ripple effects of what we had done... I mean, clearly, I think it's safe to say... This is my story at least. I can't support it. But I think that in the same way that the physical fitness industry was stimulated by the science, I think it's true with mental and emotional fitness. What we're seeing with the mindfulness all over the world... I mean, there are billion-dollar mindfulness companies now. There's no way to prove it, but I think that the science really was a primary generator.

(01:15:17):

You could look at books like Dan Harris's and Arianna Huffington, and they talk about how persuasive the science was in their personal journey. And then, you've got all of the relationships, all of the careers, all of the friendships that His Holiness has made. The Bridge Builders Collaborative, which is a venture fund that most people don't know about that was established 10 or 12 years ago that Charlie Hartwell chairs... Not chairs. He's the operating partner. He and Maureen told me at a dinner that we had a year or two ago, he said, "There's no way that you will ever understand what the ripple effects of Mind & Life have been. We're seeing it every day because as we're funding companies that..."

(01:16:15):

So, anyway: Am I surprised? Yes. Am I grateful? Yeah. I'm overwhelmed with gratitude at the hundreds and the thousands of people who have been involved with Mind & Life over the years, who have made this successful. And for me, looking back, it's like... My brother paid me a

compliment on my 65th or 70th birthday. He said, "You know, Adam, I thought you were nuts when you were doing this stuff, and you certainly could have been successful in the money management field or any field that you would've chosen." He said, "But you know, you would've been just another billion-dollar money manager, and you've done something that has been really, really unique and really true to who you are." And so, for me, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:17:17):

Thank you so much, Adam. We are overwhelmed with gratitude as well for you and all that you've given to this organization. So, yeah, I want to open it up now to the folks who are with us here in the room. I will turn on my gallery view and I encourage everyone to turn their videos back on. Hi, Dave. Yeah. Good to see some new folks since joined from the beginning. So, I think maybe just literally raise your physical hand if you want to say something. So, yeah, Jinpa, why don't you start?

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:18:01):

Wonderful. Wonderful to see you, Adam, and sharing all that very detailed origin of the history, particularly the one before that 1987 meeting. I vaguely knew about it, but this level of detail is the first time I've heard, so it was really wonderful. Thank you.

**Adam Engle** (01:18:20):

Actually, the detail that I forgot to talk about was all of the effort that went into, first, understanding that it was necessary to pair you with Alan as the translators. And then, also all of the work that we did to bust Alan out of retreat in order to make that happen. I'm sorry to interrupt. Did you have a question?

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:18:55):

No, no, no. I just wanted to express my appreciation, to bring this level of detail, because it was really your full-time life.

**Adam Engle** (01:19:04):

Yeah.

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:19:04):

You were there, and you were very right; that had it not been for your entrepreneurial spirit keeping this flow-

**Adam Engle** (01:19:12):

And skill.

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:19:13):

Yeah. It wouldn't have really happened. And, especially after the initial buzz of the 1987 meeting, there were a few years when the steam was running out, and had it not been for your steadfastness and perseverance, we wouldn't be here today where we are. So thank you.

**Adam Engle** (01:19:34):

Thank you. Thanks for that.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:19:42):

Elaine?

Elaine Jackson (01:19:46):

Thank you so much. That was really good. I had the same sort of teary feeling. Adam and I go back many, many, many, many years. And I started out doing the brochures for Mind & Life in the very beginning, because I had a little graphic design business. But Adam, in his great kindness, invited me to come and offered me the gift of the trip in 2000 to On Destructive Emotions. And it was phenomenal. Phenomenal experience to be in that meeting. Adam has such a generosity of spirit his whole life. So thank you for this, because it was really fun. Fun to listen and go back. Thank you, really, from the bottom of my heart.

Adam Engle (01:20:40):

Thank you, Elaine.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:20:43):

Jeremy?

Jeremy Hunter (01:20:45):

Yeah, thank you. Well, where should I begin? I'll say that when I started doing my work 23 years ago, there weren't that many people interested in it and not a lot of people would take my call. But Adam took my call and has been taking my call for twenty... How many years, right? So I cannot imagine what my life would be like if you weren't in it, Adam. Your ability to ask the penetrating, strategic question that opens up a pathway of clarity through a sea of chaos is just brilliant. And your dogged support of a good idea is really what made my life. I mean, I can't imagine what it would be like if it weren't for you. And we were talking last week, and at 80, you are still ideating like a madman. And when I get to be 80, I hope I'm living life with as much vigor and energy as you are. You really are a hero, and I love you very much. So thank you.

Adam Engle (01:22:22):

Thank you, Jeremy. I love you, too. You know that. Does anyone have any questions?

Jared (01:22:23):

I have a question, if I can hop in.

Adam Engle (01:22:23):

Jared. A question.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:22:34):

Oh. Yeah, sure. Wait, I'm sorry. Who's talking?

Jared (01:22:38):

Sorry, this is Jared.

Wendy Hasenkamp (01:22:40):

Oh, hi, Jared. Oh, sorry, you're on the next screen.

**Jared** (01:22:41):

I tried to wave at the camera. Yes, I apologize.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:22:41):

I'm sorry, there's-

**Jared** (01:22:41):

I figured maybe I was on the other... Yeah. Sorry about that.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:22:43):

Yes. Thank you, Jared.

**Jared** (01:22:47):

So, yeah. Adam, you're a cool, dude. Appreciate you walking us through the history. That was really fun to listen to. Actually, I'm just curious: You were talking about kind of some of the lasting impact being tied to the scientific rigor that was put in place, understanding that idea of mental fitness versus physical fitness and that whole process. I'm curious if there were any learnings the other direction in terms of the Buddhists coming into were like, "Oh, I didn't know that's actually what happened when we were doing this physically. Well, that's really interesting." I'm curious if there's any impacts in the reverse, where not only were we seeing that of course having mental fitness is extremely beneficial in many ways, but also just insights that the meditators were bringing back that, again, maybe they were feeling good, they were having these wonderful impacts, but they weren't really understanding the physiologically themselves, and if they found that interesting or helpful.

**Adam Engle** (01:23:48):

That's a great question, and I'm not the right person to answer it. I think that should be answered by either the scientists or the contemplatives. I'm just a dumb businessman who organizes things. I try and listen as deeply as I can and sometimes I try and ignore conventional wisdom to come up with ideas. But I don't know the answer to that. Someone else would have to answer that.

**Jared** (01:24:25):

Cool. Thank you. Yeah, just curious. Good to see you.

**Adam Engle** (01:24:29):

I think Dave Vago had a question. Didn't you, Dave?

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:24:32):

Yeah. Dave, go ahead, and then we'll go to Rob.

**Dave Vago** (01:24:37):

Thanks. I'm also just so grateful to be part of the Mind & Life community and been connected to Adam and all of you here over my life. And sometimes I question, "How does this all happen?" Just to answer maybe quickly the question there about how the science may affect practice

practitioners' experience, you see it all the time. I mean, especially in contemporary settings, right? The contemporary practitioners are always saying that the science helps inform the practice, helps to understand how my attention is now stable, or how different parts of the relaxation response versus something related to physiology can inform how you continue to practice. Just like you get data on your watch or something that shows you how well your cardiovascular system is functioning. It's data. It's feedback. So I think that's kind of where the field is going anyway.

**Dave Vago** (01:25:47):

But I did want to just say a few things about the inspiration and the emotion that sort of arises for me personally. And I connected also when Wendy said that she was at the 2005 meeting in Society for Neuroscience. And Wendy, myself, Rob, Fadel, we were all part of that group of people that were first touched in 2004/2005 by that intention to create a field. I know personally, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing. I wouldn't have a website and a lab called Contemplative Neuroscience if it wasn't for that initial motivation. I kind of blame the Dalai Lama for that whole trajectory of a new field. Not only is there the Mind & Life Institute, but there's a new society: The International Society for Contemplative Research. And that's also a beginning, right? So the ripple effect is continuing, right? It's continuing.

(01:26:49):

And now, although our generation, Wendy, myself, and Fadel didn't have a field to sort of be part of, now there are degrees, graduate degrees, in mindfulness studies. There are people who are doing dissertations that focus on mindfulness, and that was not even possible even in our generation. So it's amazing to see how the ripples are forming. And I could just say personally, when I was a practitioner in college, but when I went to graduate to school, nobody talked about the science of meditation. It just didn't happen. I started graduate school in the year of 1999. And in 2003, I saw the advertisement for that MIT meeting on the bulletin board in my graduate school department in the University of Utah. And I was like, "What? The Dalai Lama is going to be talking about the mind, and there's scientists who are going to be also talking about the mind at MIT? That's amazing. That's like a mix of fields that I'm so personally interested in because nobody does that." I remember seeing that sign. It was actually really nicely done. I'm not sure, Elaine, if you had something to do with that sign. But it was a really cool visual and it just struck me as something that I wanted to get involved with. And that's when I found out about the Summer Research Institute. Came to one of them. I think it was 2005 was my first one, and went for 14 years after that. Continued going. And then, when I met Richie and Dan and such amazing people who were just... I think there was also a level of community that I gravitated to immediately, and there was a kindness and there was an inclusiveness, and felt that really strongly from those people. And because of that, the walking of the walk, the talking of the talk, immediately I felt like this is something that's growing in terms of science. And I shifted completely from studying neurobiology of learning and memory to wanting to study meditation.

(01:29:09):

And so, for me, it was a bit of a shift because I was already finishing my PhD. But then, was able to join Mind & Life as a senior research coordinator. I think that's what it was called back then. Came up with a title that was basically picking up the bandwidth where Richie didn't have

it. And that was the position that was created. And then with Rob as the... What was your title, Rob? I think it was program coordinator. And so, together, we rooted ourselves into the scientific domain and really started to create a network of science, scientists, and the first hundred Varela grants really became those seated, scientific questions and data that spawned more and more laboratories from emerging. I mean, there's this great video actually of some of the original-

**Dave Vago** (01:30:03):

Varela Awards. Wendy you on there, Willoughby, Eric Garland. It's an amazing group of people who have now well established themselves in this field of contemplative science and who are very successful. And you know it all started with that idea that you came with Adam, to really think about bringing money to the younger generation. And I just wanted to say again, thank you for that. And I'm also very emotionally connected to that narrative, that inspiration, that came from you, Adam. So thank you again for just being who you are and as challenging as it was to have you at the helm for many people, without you, there would be no field. So I thank you. Just great gratitude, lots of gratitude. Thank you so much.

**Adam Engle** (01:30:58):

Thank you Dave.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:31:00):

Thank you Dave. Rob, did you want to jump in?

**Rob Roeser** (01:31:05):

Yeah, I have a question. But I just want to say seeing Judy Martin here and David, Adam, bringing me back to that time in Boulder. And I'm so happy to see you. And I just want to associate myself with both Jeremy and David's remarks that I think we're all overwhelmed by gratitude for you in the way that you feel. I've been asked to give a little bit of a history of the education dimension of the work. And one thing I've never talked to you about Adam, because as you know, I got hired just after it had started. Could you talk a little about the genesis of MLERN, Mind and Life Education Research Network and just have that idea arose initially? Because I don't think I know that story really.

**Adam Engle** (01:31:53):

Okay. So yeah. And it'll be interesting to get your perspective on one piece of this. So what happened was, again, I'm an entrepreneur, right? So 2003 happens at MIT. 2005 is really, really successful at Washington. And so I started thinking, okay, it looks like we're going to get some traction here. So what's the killer app? And I said to myself, if meditation proves to be good for people and beneficial for people, then what we ought to do is figure out how to bring it to children and get people to start it earlier in life. The earlier that we can start it, the better, the more impact it'll have on people's lives. That was the idea.

(01:32:56):

So I went to Richie and I said, "Richie, I think we ought to do a meeting on education, children's education with the Dalai Lama." And he looked at me, he said, "That's a great idea," He said, "but I don't think we know enough." So I said, "Okay, well how do we get smart? What do we have to do to know enough to have a meeting?" And he said, "Well, one of the things that I've

seen work in these areas where you don't really know what you're doing is a research network. MacArthur does this, where they have a field where there's not any real understanding and they start noodling it around." And so that was the genesis of what came to be called the Mind and Life Education Research Network.

**Adam Engle** (01:33:49):

But I have a question back to you because in the formation of that Richie and I had a disagreement. The way I operate is that at a certain point in trying to flesh out an idea, I try and ignore the conventional wisdoms and I just really probe into what would be a solution that could work. And what that would translate to in MLERN is that we would really be... Essentially Richie said we need to bring in educators, professional educators who are policy people. And I said I think that's dangerous because what they're going to do is, we're going to start talking about stuff and they're going to say, "Well ever going to be able to do that in the school system." And it'll shut down an area of inquiry that may be fruitful.

(01:34:52):

And my approach would be, let's just focus on the science. Figure out from a scientific point of view, what's the starting point for a child. What's the initial practice that we should start with, and what's the developmental sequencing of how to get that program to adulthood. And then research that and figure out from a science point of view, what is the optimal way to go and then offer it to the policy makers and have them figure out how to incorporate it. And I lost that battle, or I gave up on that battle. And as you know, we had policy people in the... And I'm just wondering from your point of view, what your reaction is to that. Because, I've been wondering about it myself.

**Rob Roeser** (01:35:44):

You mean the 2010 meeting in Washington that we held the-

**Adam Engle** (01:35:49):

It was 2009. Just the idea of how would MLERN have worked differently, and maybe even better or worse, if it would've just been, what I guess you'd call a developmental science meeting rather than having the policy makers in there that tore conversations in their directions.

**Rob Roeser** (01:36:13):

You're speaking my language. I continue to think a developmental science perspective is critical from birth to death and beyond. But I think it's a big problem. And I don't know, I did feel a little like by having higher level educational policy talks at that meeting, we were a bit over our skis because we didn't have data-

**Adam Engle** (01:36:34):

Right?

**Rob Roeser** (01:36:36):

And so on the other hand, a lot of programs in education are developed outside of it. And then you have this big problem of retrofitting it into the system. And so it's a hard problem, but I similarly felt a little bit like you did. And thank God that we then decided to roll up on the

beachhead of social, emotional learning, because that was sort of that kind of an endeavor in some ways. So...

**Adam Engle** (01:36:59):  
Yeah.

**Rob Roeser** (01:37:00):  
Thanks Adam. It's great to see you.

**Adam Engle** (01:37:02):  
Great to see you, Rob. Yeah.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:37:06):  
Thanks Rob, glad we got to touch on that education angle. Other folks reflections, that's Cliff.

**Cliff Saron** (01:37:15):  
So it's almost like what is there to say? I'm just feeling like I'm in this deep, wonderful lake of experience and commitment and community. And so I want to thank you Adam, for shining, your wide and narrow and varying flashlight of many colors in all these different corners is of effort, that have made this come to being. I think I share, given 32 years of contact with Mind and Life, the sort of life formation that is possible by the duration of this contact. I think I wanted to ask you to say something about how another element of the secret sauce, and perhaps this might be a fourth leg of this stool, was the world translations that took place through the minds of Jinpa and Allen in the mix of bridging between Buddhist practice and the lens of the academy.

**Adam Engle** (01:38:36):  
Ask that question again. I'm not sure what you mean.

**Cliff Saron** (01:38:38):  
Well that's typical for me. The role of the translators in the evolution of the whole program, because the dialogue with his holiness was not just a translation of terms or words. But there was a whole translation of worlds and the moving away from what could be looking like there was a tutorial going in both directions. And there were many bridges that were built conceptually that went under the guise of translating, and perhaps Jinpa can also talk about that.

**Adam Engle** (01:39:30):  
Yeah, I think it's a question more for Jinpa. But I think it's important to emphasize that at the very, very beginning, the question of translation came up. I mean, obviously if you're going to have a meeting like this, you have to have proper translation. And so I went to Jeffrey Hopkins and to Bob Thurman who I knew, and I said, "What do you... We going to do this meeting..." And both of them insisted that it was not going to be... That we needed to have someone who was fluent in Tibetan, who was also very deeply grounded in science. And then we also had to have someone who was a native Tibetan, who was really, really good in English. And that if we didn't do that, we didn't have a chance of getting anywhere close to the proper translation and the proper chemistry and world translation that you're talking about.

**Adam Engle** (01:40:41):



And so, it was pretty obvious that the people who embody, who needed to be there were Jinpa and Allen. And as I recall, Jinpa, volunteered to participate very easily. But Allen took a lot more work. And eventually I had to go to the Dalai Lama and ask him personally, to invite Alan, to Basanti retreat in order to go there. And I think it's been incredibly impactful on both their lives. If you look at the trajectory of their lives as a result of, and I don't know whether it's causation or correlation, but anyway... Jinpa, what do you have to say about that?

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:41:33):

Well, thank you Adam and thank you Cliff for bringing this up. You are right, the translation is not just from, at the level of words. There was a real need for conceptual translation to take place across the two traditions. One of the things is that, personally I was in my late twenties, I was very interested in Western culture and Western idea, but science wasn't really my main focus. I was more interested in Freudian and Jungian psychology and philosophy and literature. So science was not really... Because both of my brother and sister, they were in science and math, and I wasn't particularly inspired by what they were studying.

(01:42:25):

But then after becoming his holiness's translator, I soon realized that science was very important for him. I was at some of his discussions with David Bohm and Karl Popper as well. So I soon realized that this was a major gap in my education. And I had to actually do a lot of reading because his holiness is science was, even though my English was better, when it came to content of science, he was way ahead. So I had to do a lot of... And then Mind & Life really provided the opportunity for me for that steep learning.

(01:43:06):

One thing, looking back, having Allen there was really helpful because he did physics at Amherst. So he has a very strong background in science. He even wrote a book called Choosing Reality. And Allen is also one of the sharpest and the quickest minds I've ever met in my life. I meet a lot of people from academia in the Buddhist monastic position, but Allen has a very sharp and quick mind. Sometimes some people at the receiving end see it as offensive, but he has a very...

(01:43:44):

And one thing looking back, the first meeting was, I don't know whether it was by design or coincidence, it was beautifully designed. It was comprehensive, although there was a major focus on biology, but I remember Jerry Hayward's presentation was for me the most compelling one. He gave a synoptic history of ideas and the power of science. And that's when he introduced to his holiness the idea of paradigm shifts. And for his wholeness and for myself, that was completely new because we both had the naive idea of science as being very dispassionate, descriptive discipline, which builds up knowledge. And to some extent, attempts to mirror the nature of reality. And the paradigm shift concept really blew that up. And so that meeting, I think, really set the tone for how can science, not just neuroscience, but a multiple perspective, can really inspire a deep conversation with Buddhism.

**Thupten Jinpa** (01:44:58):

And of course, one of the things that people forget is that his holiness may not be fluent when he engages in these conversations, but his command of English is very, very good. So the attempts we were making is to help the presenters in such a way that his holiness can follow the presentation in English, so that we don't have to translate back into Tibetan. And then when he engages, and when he has a response or when he has a question, and then he could ask that in Tibetan. Which we can then render in plain English. So that was the design.

(01:45:31):

And that was also one of the reasons why Mind and Life conferences always have extensive rehearsal where Allen and I would be present. And this is a way, kind of, preparing the presenters to find the right level of pitching so that His Holiness would be able to follow the presentation as much as possible in English. So all of this has really made the actual dialogue, a real dialogue. So there is no attempt to just be a presenter tutorial. And there were some sections which were completely true. Like, Bob Livingston actually gave His Holiness a separate tutorial on basics of biology. He brought that three dimensional model of brain, which sat on His Holiness's table for a long time. So there were, of course, certain factual parts of science which one has to go through a tutorial, because we don't study science as a form of discipline.

**Adam Engle** (01:46:29):

And let me say that the construction of that first meeting and the way that you talked about it was really Francisco. Jeremy was brought as a quote philosopher and Francisco insisted that there be a philosopher in the room. And I think, he had tried to do meetings like this in the past and they hadn't worked. So anyway, that was Francisco.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:47:06):

Thanks. Fadal you want to jump in, we have time for just maybe one or two more, and then I think we have some closing.

**Fadel Zeidan** (01:47:13):

I will try to be brief. And I just want to say hi to everyone in this room, it's good to see you all and be with you. Adam, you and I have had some really neat, long, wonderful conversations that I still think about. And I feel like I just had another one with you listening to this historical account. And really just added another level of depth of appreciation for the vision that you all started and the risk that you took, especially now that I'm older. 20 years later, 15, 16 years later from the first Mind & Life, I can really now... Well, I mean, maybe 10 years from now, hopefully I'm around to say, "Oh wow, it's even heavier than I thought." But it's pretty intense what y'all, what was started. And it's incredible to hear the origin of the Varela Awards.

(01:48:13):

I think it's safe to say Dave, right, that maybe the Varela Awards were largely, if not, at least... Yeah, largely a reason for how the mindfulness movement got to take off like it did. No one else was funding us. No one else would even consider this until someone took the great leap to invest a little bit of money. And look what blossomed, that's just remarkable. And so I think we're all grateful for the initiation and then how we all came together in a concerted fashion and just

said, "Oh yeah, you're going to give us a little bit of money? Watch what we can do with this, watch how rigorous we can be.

**Fadel Zeidan** (01:49:04):

And so that really is amazing. And I just want to just put in a little bit more of a nugget of this vision of how it keeps reciprocating. This morning I had this incredible meeting with Amit Bernstein who... Y'all, right? I could say his name and everyone just got a blast of endorphins, because he's that way. I attended the 2005 SRI and my life changed because I was all alone and then all of a sudden there was this whole community of people that thought like me. I didn't mean that as an insult. And we were in this incredible experience.

(01:49:45):

And now Amit and I meet in Haifa. He's Israeli, I'm a Palestinian refugee. My dad was born in Haifa. And together in this SRI, we are going to both plan, co-plan the next SRI on trauma, resilience and flourishing. And I just wanted to just plant that seed, not as like a, "Hey, this is..." It's just the vision started from there and look at the level where we're going to be as we try to move forward in this, using self-regulation, and using science, using contemplatives to appreciate the human condition and how we can alleviate suffering. So thank you from the bottom of my heart. And this has been such a rich dialogue to listen to. And so I thank you for your time.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:50:32):

Thanks Fadal. Well, Adam I want to give it back to you and I know you wanted to have a chance to say a few closing thoughts. And I'll just first echo everyone's gratitude and appreciation, and really just overflowing with gratefulness for all that you have done for this organization and what it's become. It's just amazing. And thank you for spending this time with us today.

**Adam Engle** (01:50:59):

Thank you. And thank you all. I want to close, at least my section, by again expressing my overwhelming gratitude to have the opportunity to serve this way and to lead this organization, this group of people and to the thousands of people that have supported the organization and the effort over the years.

(01:51:27):

But especially, I wanted to just touch on some of the people that I consider to be unsung or under-sung heroes of this three and a half decades. And I'd like to start with Tenzin Choegyal, Ngari Rinpoche, His Holiness's brother. Without him being a champion of Mind & Life for a decade or more, this wouldn't have happened. Private office is not easy to deal with by any means. He heard what we were doing. He was very, very receptive and housed us when we were there. Was on the board for a short period of time. And so I want to give voice to that.

(01:52:23):

I also want to recognize Barry Hershey, my long time friend. Barry, I've always considered him the third or the fourth partner in the development of Mind & Life. And without... What happened was that, as I said, when it started, Michael and I and Bronco started funding it. And then the next meeting... And actually I looked Barry, you were right. I looked at the old program and you

were recognized as a funder. It was basically Barry and I. And then we had some funding from Nathan Cummings and Barry.

**Adam Engle** (01:53:06):

And then Barry basically said, "Listen, as long as I have the means and as long as His holiness wants to continue, I'll continue to fund these Dharamsala meetings." And so the fundraising part of these early years was basically me putting together a budget in a one page Excel sheet, Barry and I talking about it for a while, and then it was done. There were no grant writing. And if I had to have gone out, and looked for funding on a meeting by meeting basis, not getting paid and everything else that I had on my plate, I don't think it would've happened.

(01:53:50):

And then the Varela Awards. You heard the story of how it started and then Barry looked at it and he said, "Hey, I'm in." And as far as I know, Barry's been, and the Hershey Foundation has been funding the Varela Awards. Not only in the United States, but also in Europe since that time. And at one point I remember Barry coming up to me and he was saying, "You know, I think of all of the philanthropy I do, the highest leverage work, the highest leverage money, are these Varela Awards. And is there any way we can use more money?" And I think that shifted it up to 15 or something like that. So Barry...

(01:54:32):

And then others along the way, Klaus, Deanna and Jonathan Rose, were very, very close and providing the Garrison Institute. Bill and Penny George, Rip and Jackie, Gator and Hannah Paulman in Europe, Elaine Jackson, Charlie Hartwell, Maureen Pelton, Judy Martin, all people who have really devoted a lot of time and energy and money to this that are under-recognized in the process. And I'm sure there are others. In the faculty area, Arthur, who stepped up. You know, he was... Arthur, Anne Harrington, Ben Shapiro, Hal, Paul Eckman.

(01:55:21):

But really what I want to try and impress upon people is that the way I look at it, the true unsung heroines and heroes of this journey are the group of people that I lovingly call the Mind and Life kids. Rob, Dave, Willoughby, Jud, Fadal, Antoine in Europe and hundreds of others. Think about this. These were kids, young people at the beginning of their careers, Wendy, who had to choose a path. And they were being told by the senior people in the field, "Don't go public with this. You got to keep this secret. This is a career killer. Do not do this." And they did it anyway. And without that courage, and without that commitment, and without that dedication, and without that effort, we just would've been talking to ourselves. So, I think that people should recognize the incredible power, and dedication, and life work, and the risk that these people took to make this work.

(01:56:56):

And then finally, to you Susan and your team. I think it's underappreciated. And we've never really talked about this process for you. But I've got to imagine that when the board started talking with you about taking over the leadership of Mind & Life, there were huge, huge risks for you as well. I mean, you had a thriving career in your chosen fields. And this was a new effort for you and a lot of danger in taking over an organization with the history of Mind & Life and the

momentum of Mind & Life. And sorting through the pieces of what to keep and what to... with an infinite love, infinite patience. And then developing the new strategy or the continuation strategy on how to make Mind & Life even more contributive. And then assembling a team that just... Anyway, so hats off to you, your team and gratitude to everyone. Over to you, Wendy.

**Wendy Hasenkamp** (01:58:32):

Thank you, Adam. I think I'll pass it to Susan.

**Susan Bauer-Wu** (01:58:37):

Thank you. Thank you so much, Adam. I've heard the origin stories of Mind & Life a few times. And every time I learn something new, and just so grateful that we had the opportunity to be together and to capture the fullness of your story in this recording, that will stay in our archives. And I'm just really deeply grateful to all of you that are here in the room for taking the time to share this precious two hours together. Thank you for all, everyone who's here has contributed to Mind & Life in some way. And Adam, I say it all the time, I feel it in my heart, your vision, your tireless efforts for three decades are the reason why I'm here and why we're all here. So lots of love and deep gratitude to you and to everybody. Thank you.

**Adam Engle** (01:59:37):

Thank you. Thank you all.