



MIND & LIFE
INSTITUTE

EMBRACING OUR INTERCONNECTION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



*Mind & Life bridges science
and contemplative wisdom
to foster insight and
inspire action
toward flourishing.*

Featured throughout this report is the work of artist [Chetna Mehta](#), whose hand-drawn illustrations captured the themes presented in [Mindstream](#), our monthly email newsletter.



A WORD FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of Mind & Life's Board of Directors and dedicated staff, I'm excited to share with you our 2023 annual report. As reflected in the following pages, we continue to witness a profound yearning for the insights, practices, and wisdom that have been a hallmark of our work for 37 years. All of our offerings—from our in-person and online convenings to our digital education to our grantmaking—foster a deeper understanding of the nature of the human mind that can be universally shared in service of creating a more compassionate and equitable world.

Throughout last year, the notion of belonging—to ourselves, each other, and the Earth—was a guiding principle, reflecting the message of interconnection that lies at the heart of our work. In 2023, we continued to elevate diverse voices in our programming, events, and initiatives with the goal of expanding the conversation and integrating the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion more firmly across all that we do.

A key milestone was the launch of the Mind & Life Digital Library. This expansive video archive features conversations between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and leading scientists, scholars, and contemplatives spanning over three decades. We also celebrated the 20th anniversary of Mind & Life's signature Summer Research Institute (SRI). Two decades ago, SRI was launched with the vision of seeding a new field of contemplative science. More than 2,500 emerging and established researchers have participated in transforming the vision of this unique program into reality.

And in November 2023, we said farewell to president Susan Bauer-Wu, who for eight years led Mind & Life in the face of unprecedented challenges in our world. With the help of consultants and valued stakeholders, we led a dedicated search for our next leader, and in early 2024 we welcomed Suzanne Bond as Mind & Life's new president.

As we chart a new chapter that builds on Mind & Life's extraordinary legacy, I offer heartfelt appreciation for your role in our collective efforts to foster new insights and bring about much needed change in our world rooted in an appreciation of our shared humanity.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thupten Jinpa". The signature is fluid and cursive.

THUPTEN JINPA
BOARD CHAIR

PERSONAL WELL-BEING



Mind & Life seeks to better understand the role of contemplative practices in helping people develop healthy mental habits—and resilience.

In 2023, we supported research and hosted conversations investigating how better understanding the mind can help alleviate suffering and nurture positive emotions.



Disentangling Self from Pain

Fadel Zeidan writes for *Insights*



Protecting College Students' Well-being with Mindfulness-Infused Dance Movement Therapy

Malena Price, Varela grantee



Compassion and Care

Matthieu Ricard on the Mind & Life Podcast



In Your Dreams: One Mind & Life Grantee Has Big Hopes for Exploring the Past and Future of Tibetan Dream Yoga



2023 Mind & Life Summer Research Institute

After three years of being hosted online due to the COVID pandemic, Mind & Life's 20th annual Summer Research Institute (SRI) was held in person at the Garrison Institute from June 4-10. Through the theme, "Trauma, Resilience & Flourishing," participants addressed the experience of trauma at the individual, intergenerational, collective, and ecological levels, and explored whether and how contemplative science and practices may be of service to help prevent or process trauma, to promote resilience and recovery, and to guide restorative social and existential justice. The program facilitated a dynamic, ongoing dialogue among scientists, humanities scholars, Buddhist and Indigenous traditions scholars, contemplatives, social activists, and students and trainees alike.

Our esteemed faculty included ethnographer Natalie Avalos, restorative justice facilitator sujatha baliga, child development expert Ann Masten, and neuroscientist Robin Nusslock. In 2023, participants joined us from 17 countries and we were pleased to provide 89 scholarships.

During the event, we also celebrated the 20th anniversary of SRI with a panel discussion featuring in-person and virtual participants, including: Mind & Life Co-Founder Adam Engle; Founding Stewards Richie Davidson, Roshi Joan Halifax, and Jon Kabat-Zinn; early contemplative faculty Sharon Salzberg; and attendees at the first SRI—Tish Jennings, Marieke van Vugt, and Sarina Saturn.

Said one participant:

"I am a full professor with tenure and have been in academia for over 10 years. SRI was qualitatively unlike anything that I have ever done before... Simply put, being with others who shared similar aspirations (but with different life experiences, backgrounds, and even global citizenship) was the single most transformative conference experience of my lifetime... I am ready to give back to the world in new ways, broaden my research agenda, and connect with this amazing community."

On the [Mind & Life blog](#), attendee Yikai Xu reflects on his SRI experience and how science and spirituality can contribute to collective liberation.

Engaging Young Adults

In early 2023, Mind & Life formed a new [Young Adult Advisory Council](#) (YAAC) to deliver on the goals of our Young Adult Engagement Strategy, developed with generous support from the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation in 2022. These goals include elevating young adult voices in decision-making, communications, and events; building community among young adults attending our Summer Research Institute (SRI); and tailoring offerings with this audience in mind. The Council comprises three external members and two Mind & Life staff.

The fresh perspectives shared at YAAC meetings throughout the year were influential in shaping Mind & Life activities, such as our revised online climate course (learn more about the course below). The Council also played a valuable role in community building at the 2023 SRI, forming a robust group of 30+ emerging professionals who continue to stay connected online. The YAAC went on to host four virtual presentations by SRI emerging professionals in the fall, helping to strengthen relationships among young adults representing the next generation of Mind & Life-supported scholars and researchers.

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES



Mind & Life explores how the inner workings of the mind influence the formation of the views, behaviors, and social systems that separate us, and the role of contemplative practice in creating more compassionate communities.

Our 2023 offerings explored the role of contemplative practices in healing divisions and interpersonal conflicts to help transform local and global communities.



Restorative Justice
sujatha baliga on the
Mind & Life podcast



Contemplative Dyads
Tania Singer writes
for *Insights*



“The Global Refugee
Crisis: How Can
Mindfulness &
Compassion Training
Help?”



Fostering Compassionate
Communities: Enhancing
Empathy for Diverse Others by
Intentional Listening
Anat Perry, PEACE grantee

Global Majority Leadership and Mentoring Program

How would the field of contemplative science be different if more Global Majority scholars and researchers felt accepted—and their voices heard—within the academic environments where their careers take shape? And how might the field evolve and its impact expand as more Global Majority scholars and researchers apply the knowledge they gain to advance mental health equity, trauma-informed care, and other interventions benefiting underserved communities? These are questions at the heart of [Mind & Life's Global Majority Leadership and Mentorship program](#). Developed in 2022 by a committee of Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous contemplative scholars, the program seeks to nurture and expand the community of BIPOC investigators in contemplative research, with a special focus on those seeking grants from Mind & Life.

Following a successful six-month pilot, the program was formally launched in 2023 with the selection of six mentor/mentee pairs. Pairs met regularly via Zoom, with the full cohort meeting bi-monthly. From the outset, mentees identified the following areas for growth and development: building confidence, networking in contemplative and academic contexts, setting career goals, balancing work with personal life, and working with a mentor whose contemplative practice differs from one's own. [Read more](#) about the program from planning committee lead Dr. Kamilah Majied.

Wrote mentee Felipe Mercado on the [Mind & Life blog](#):

"While firmly established in my career, my journey to navigate both internalized racism and systemic barriers continues to this day. But something has changed: A nascent movement is underway to foster more inclusive academic environments from the inside out."



Kamilah Majied (left) with Juan Santoyo and Dominique Malebranche, other members of the Leadership and Mentorship Program Planning Committee.

2023 Mind & Life Institute Service Award Grant Jones

“The first thing that comes to mind when thinking of service,” says musician, contemplative researcher, and Mind & Life Steering Council member Grant Jones, “is giving yourself to move an organization in a more aligned, rooted, and actualized direction.” After years on the Mind & Life Steering Council, participation in the Global

Majority Leadership and Mentorship Program Working Group, and as a volunteer and faculty member for numerous Mind & Life offerings, Grant was awarded the [2023 Mind & Life Service Award](#) in recognition of his contributions to supporting and guiding the direction of Mind & Life’s work.



Grant Jones at Mind & Life’s 35th Anniversary Celebration in Charlottesville, Virginia.

HUMAN-EARTH CONNECTION



Mind & Life investigates how the union of contemplative wisdom and science can lead to greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all life—and action—to support and sustain both individuals and the earth’s living systems.

In 2023, Mind & Life continued investigating our interconnectedness with the natural world, from connections between the gut and mind to the role of contemplative practices and communities for relieving eco-anxiety.



Biological Interconnectedness
Emeran Meyer on the Mind & Life podcast



Mindfulness and the Climate Crisis
Jyoti Mishra writes for *Insights*

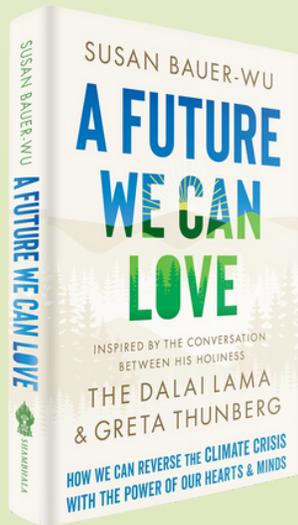


Sharing the Power of Nature-Based Contemplative Practices for Inner Peace and Collective Well-Being



Bridging Contemplative Practice and Climate Action: One Community’s Experience

A Future We Can Love



In 2023, Mind & Life President Susan Bauer-Wu published *A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis With the Power of Our Hearts & Minds*. The book expands on the 2021 Mind & Life Conversation that brought together the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg for the first time to discuss the crisis of climate feedback loops. *A Future We Can Love* shares the reflections of these two great figures, generations apart, bringing them into dialogue with dozens of visionary scientists, activists, and spiritual luminaries. These include Indigenous scholar and artist Lyla June, medical biochemist and author Diana Beresford-Kroeger, climate scientist and Zen teacher Kritee Kanko, interfaith environmental leader Dekila Chungyalpa, Buddhist teacher Willa Blythe Baker, Rabbi Steve Leder, and many more.

Through this world-changing conversation, readers embark on a four-part journey toward active hope in the face of the climate crisis: from knowledge of climate science through the capacity for change, to the will that is needed and the actions we can take. We also produced a free downloadable [Discussion Guide](#) to help inspire individuals and small groups to dive deeper into the themes of the book and rise to the occasion to ensure a brighter future for generations to come. All of the author's proceeds from this book are being directed to Mind & Life in support of our mission.



Yuria Celidwen, David Gelles, Kritee (Kanko), and Susan Bauer-Wu at the Rubin Museum for the launch of *A Future We Can Love*.

On June 9, Mind & Life, in collaboration with Shambhala Publications, hosted the book's launch at the Rubin Museum in New York City. The event featured a panel discussion with David Gelles of the *New York Times* climate desk, contemplative scholar and Indigenous activist Yuria Celidwen, and climate scientist and zen priest Kritee (Kanko). The book was reviewed in [Spirituality & Health](#), [Lion's Roar](#), [Tricycle](#), and other blogs/publications, with Susan interviewed by over a dozen podcast hosts/radio shows.

"We are in a moment when very ancient wisdom and the latest science are converging on some difficult and important questions for our species—and this conversation between young and old is a perfect example of how rich this moment can be!"

—Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*

Do we have the will, the capacity, and know the action to take to protect our earth from climate change? A Future We Can Love is a profound call to action. Rather than be an abstract or philosophical declaration, it provides tangible ideas to help support our earth for future generations.

—Sharon Salzberg, author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Happiness*

"The Mind, the Human-Earth Connection, and the Climate Crisis" Online Course

In 2023, we updated and expanded our online climate course, [The Mind, the Human Earth Connection, and the Climate Crisis](#). Originally launched in January 2022, the 10-hour course is based on presentations shared during our online 2021 Summer Research Institute. As such, it features an interdisciplinary faculty of Indigenous leaders, scientists, scholars, contemplative teachers, and activists, who examine the root causes of the climate crisis and share strategies for healing our relationship with one another and the Earth. Structured in four parts, this course reviews the science behind climate change, explores Earth's ability to heal and humankind's ability to change, shows how heartbreak and wonder can catalyze our collective will, and provides actionable steps to effect positive change. The updated course includes revised video content, upgraded graphic design, readings from *A Future We Can Love*, and a revised registration system and a give-what-you-can option. Said one course participant:

"I now understand in my mind what I already knew in my heart; that this moment in time is a spiritual reckoning with our habitat, and that science alone will not fix the problem."

DIGITAL EDUCATION



Mind & Life inspires action through creating and distributing a range of digital media products.

In 2023, our digital offerings brought insights into the nature of the human mind to a growing global audience.

Mind & Life Digital Library

The Dalai Lama has long implored humans to move beyond conflict and wars, calling for the 21st century to be one of dialogue. Twenty-four years into the century, it's clear we have a long way to go. Violent conflict continues to be a defining characteristic of our age. What's more, the digital media landscape has made it far easier for people to dwell within online echo chambers, where one-sided views are validated in the absence of meaningful discourse.

What does real dialogue look and feel like? And how could it help expand possibilities for deeper understanding at a time of growing complexity—and mounting divides? Launched in May 2023, the [Mind & Life Digital Library](#) seeks to help answer these questions by featuring video recordings of our Dialogues and Conversations between the Dalai Lama and leading scientists, philosophers, contemplatives, and other 'big picture' thinkers.

The library provides a unique window into the art of interdisciplinary dialogue, while tracing the evolution of the field of contemplative science. We created this free resource for anyone with an interest in the art of dialogue, the field of contemplative science, and/or questions at the heart of the human experience. That includes students, scholars, scientists, contemplatives, and changemakers around the globe, with the site receiving roughly 5,800 unique visitors to date.

“The Dialogues are inherently optimistic and pro-social. There’s an intrinsic belief that there’s something we can learn from each other.”

— Ryan Stagg, Mind & Life Director of Digital Strategy

The library currently features content from ten edited dialogues and conversations, including:

- Dialogue 5 | Altruism, Ethics and Compassion
- Dialogue 8 | Destructive Emotions
- Dialogue 13 | Investigating the Mind
- Dialogue 23 | Ecology, Ethics, and Interdependence
- Dialogue 26 | Mind, Brain, and Matter
- Dialogue 27 | Craving, Desire, and Addiction

Additional sessions are being added to the archive on an ongoing basis.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Richie Davidson during the 2013 Mind & Life Dialogue, “Mind, Brain, and Matter.”

Mind & Life Podcast

In 2023, the Mind & Life Podcast, hosted by Science Director Wendy Hasenkamp, finished its 7th season and continued to draw a growing global listenership. With 64 episodes released by the end of 2023, the podcast has neared a million downloads. To further expand its reach, we added the podcast to YouTube. Podcast guests and themes featured in 2023 include:

- Matthieu Ricard – Compassion and Care
- Elissa Epel – Mind, Body, and Stress
- Ed Taylor – Leading by Example
- Brendan Ozawa-de Silva – Embodied Learning
- Fadel Zeidan – Mindfulness and Pain
- Rob Roeser – Transforming Education
- Linda Carlson – Mindfulness and Cancer
- Grant Jones – Music, Meditation, and Healing
- Robin Nusslock – How Stress Gets Under Our Skin



Here's what listeners are saying:

"The Mind & Life Podcast has become an essential part of my routine. It offers a unique blend of wisdom, introspection, and scientific inquiry that never fails to broaden my understanding of the human mind and experience. Your ability to bring together guests from diverse fields and engage them in thought-provoking discussions is truly remarkable."

"Thank you very much for your work and all the inspiring interviews! I have had many insights over the time and felt inspired more than once to integrate something new into my work as a psychotherapist but also as a private person concerned about the climate crisis, etc."

Mind & Life Connect

Mind & Life Connect, launched in Spring 2023, is a dynamic online series featuring 75-minute sessions. In six episodes held last year, the program delved into themes of personal, societal, and planetary healing through the lens of contemplative science. Designed to be both participatory and inspirational, it addressed the expressed needs of our community for a space for meaningful conversations and knowledge-sharing among researchers, scholars, activists, and contemplative teachers. Each session featured a guest speaker, a Q&A segment, guided contemplative practice, and interactive breakout groups.

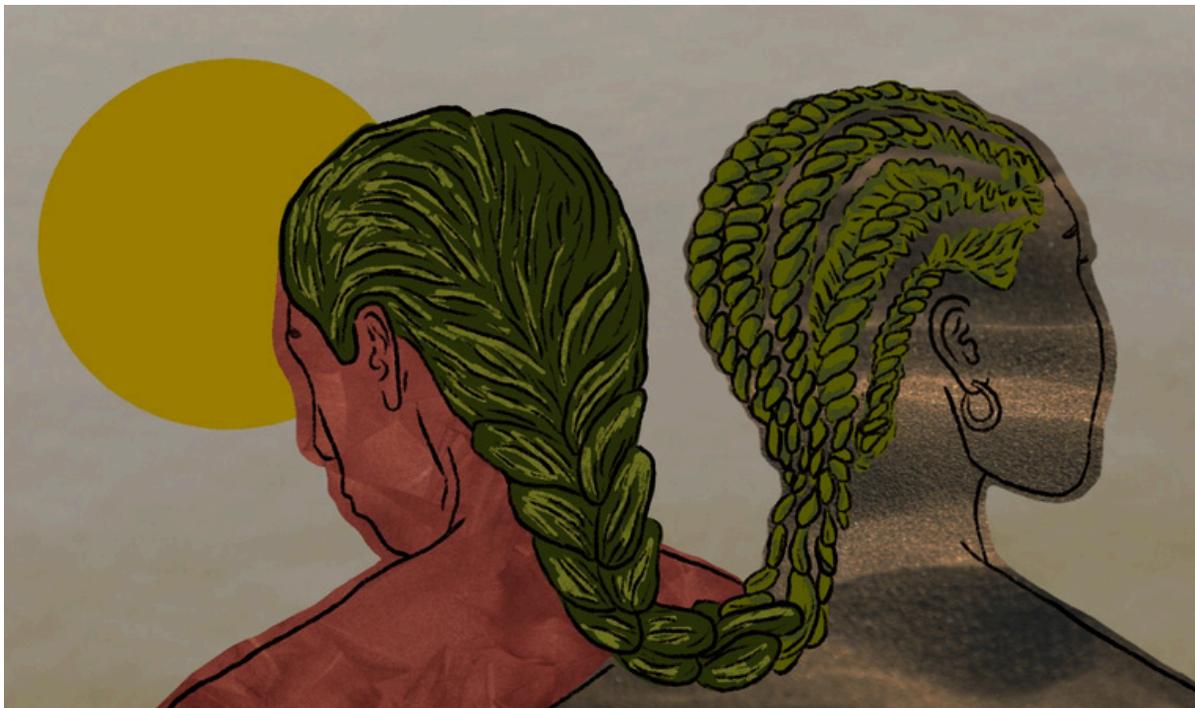
Approximately 6,000 people registered for Connect sessions throughout the year. In the spring, we presented Cultivating Trust in the Body with Juan Santoyo, Exploring the Complex Relationship between Stress, Trauma, and the Body with Dr. Inger Burnett-Zeigler, and Trauma and Resilience with Dominique Malebranche.

Our fall offerings included Developing Emotional Awareness to Understand Burnout with Eve Ekman, Reshaping Systems: Toward a Culture of Belonging with Tony Chambers, and What is Your Karmic Assignment with Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Below are comments from Connect participants:

"It was a joy to be present and know there are many others seeking to build a resilience to life's traumas and enrich their lives and thereby others too. I appreciate the depth of knowledge imparted and the breathwork which I hope to continue to practice."

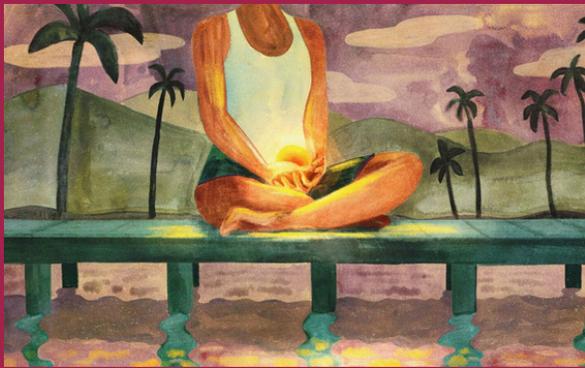
"Just really appreciated the held wisdom and how it [the session] continued to embrace the koan question of "What is your karmic assignment?" It also felt like a really warm community with the ability to focus attention gently, and I enjoyed being in the space."



Insights

In 2023, Mind & Life's *Insights* website—originally launched in 2022 in honor of our 35 anniversary—continued to grow and attract new visitors with timely content. *Insights* authors described in palpable terms their journeys to advance the field of contemplative science, what's been accomplished, and where more research, dialogue, and investment are needed.

We added five new essays: *Disentangling Self from Pain* (Fadel Zeidan), *Understanding our Emotions* (Eve Ekman), *Mindfulness and the Climate Crisis* (Jyoti Mishra), *Contemplative Dyads* (Tania Singer), and *Embodied Healing* (Brendan Ozawa de Silva). Readership included over 25,000 visitors from 100+ countries having visited the site.



Illustrations for *Insights* by artist [Sirin Thada](#)

DONOR GRATITUDE

WHAT YOUR SUPPORT MAKES POSSIBLE

We deeply appreciate the generosity and dedication of our donors, whose support is the bedrock of Mind & Life's mission to bridge science and contemplative wisdom. Your contributions have fueled our programs, expanded our reach, enabled groundbreaking research, and supported our efforts to diversify the field of contemplative science.

Thanks to the support of our donors, in 2023 Mind & Life awarded 33 grants and over \$850,000 in funding in 2023 to researchers around the globe studying contemplative practices and changemakers applying those practices in their local communities.



United with Uvalde:
Building Community
Resilience

Aroteem Choudhury,
Contemplative
Changemaking grantee



Adherence in Naturalistic Use
of Digital Meditation-based
Interventions

Zishan Jiwani, Varela grantee



Engaging Stakeholders to
Nurture Emotional Resilience
Among Environmental
Experts and Stewards

Christine Wilson-Mendenhall
PEACE grantee



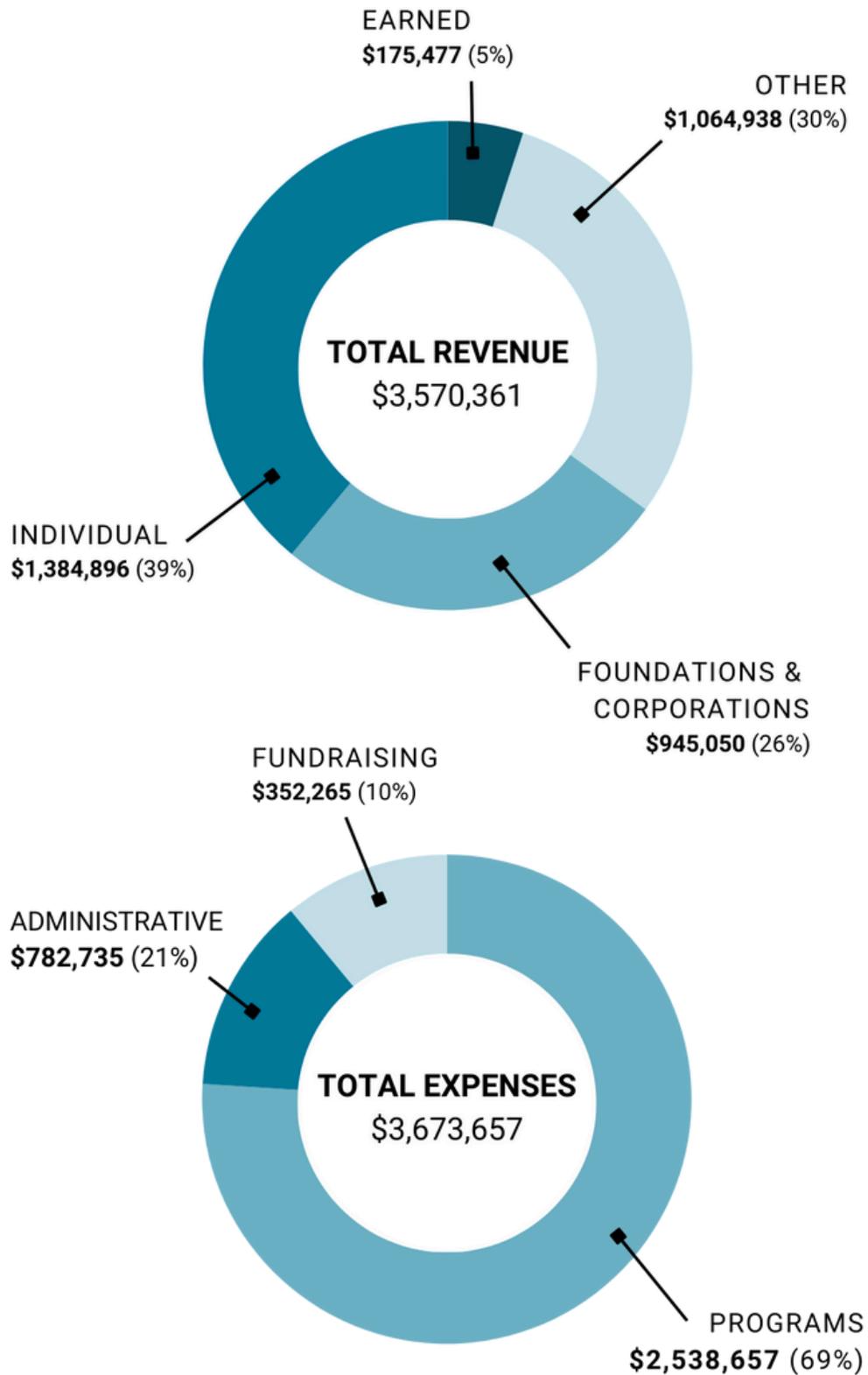
Seeding the Future Through
Contemplative Gardening

Mansi Kotak, Contemplative
Changemaking Grantee

"There are very few first-generation Latinx women like myself represented in the scientific field. In my experience, and likely in the experience of other racial and ethnic minorities, there are few known accessible resources within our communities that help foster a competitive edge in science careers and in higher education institutions. Through their commitment to funding non-traditional research ideas and embracing alternative perspectives in science, the Mind & Life Institute helps close disparities in resources often present in marginalized communities."

— Vanessa Somohano, 2018 Varela grantee

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



[VIEW 2023 FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT](#)



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I N S T I T U T E

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