



**Dr. Elise Bialylew, founder of Mindful in May (mindfulinmay.org) and The Mind Life Project (www.mindlifeproject.com) and author of The Happiness Plan, interviews
Rodney Smith**

Rodney Smith

***Rodney Smith** is the retired founding and guiding teacher of the Seattle Insight Meditation Society. A former Buddhist monk and hospice director, he has taught meditation for over 30 years and is the author of *Lessons from the Dying*; *Stepping Out of Self-Deception: The Buddha's Liberating Teaching of No-Self*; *Awakening: A Paradigm Shift of the Heart*; and *Touching the Infinite: A New Perspective on the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness* (Oct 2017).*

What you will learn in this interview:

- How mindfulness can change the relationship we have with our thoughts
- Understanding the principle of "letting go" when practising mindfulness
- How to manage the obstacle of boredom in meditation practice to experience greater benefits and freedom in life
- The two different realities of form and formless and how to understanding this can reduce our suffering
- How learning to stay with the unpleasant in meditation builds greater resilience in life

Elise Bialylew: Welcome, Rodney, to the program. I'm absolutely delighted to have you here because you have personally been a teacher across the oceans in America. I'm over here in Australia, and I've really gained so much from your generous teachings online and your many books, and I can't wait for this conversation to share with many listeners who may not have actually yet come upon your work and your books. So, thanks for being here.

Rodney Smith: Most welcome.

Elise Bialylew: Just to begin with, I'd love for you to give the listeners a sense of, perhaps, your trajectory, and what has been the driving force in your life that's led you to the different reinventions of yourself? Because you've had quite a rich and interesting life up until now.

Rodney Smith: Yeah, my reinventions of myself are never deliberate. They're more evolutionary. Let me just go through a little bit of those evolutionary steps. I got involved in meditation in my early twenties, with transcendental meditation, but I couldn't afford the mantra, so I made up my own mantra. And, it wasn't very successful. Although I did experience some degree of calm and tranquillity, it wasn't until Ram Dass, in the early '70s, came through the city I was living in and gave a lecture, and then I got *Be Here Now* that the light switch of my conscious awakening turned on.

Rodney Smith: It was really overnight. I knew from what was being revealed to me in these very simple books was true, and it wasn't an intellectual truth. I wasn't deliberating on it as a philosophy. It was cellular. I knew that something was right that I couldn't explain, and I essentially, literally overnight, became a vegetarian, warded myself off to be more secluded, and dropped many of my friends. I was a little extreme.

Rodney Smith: After a couple of years of that, in silence and in isolation, I journeyed over to IMS, which is the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, and I became the first long-term yogi there. That was where my path really took a particular direction and context, which I totally ... I believe that most of our paths don't necessarily have a context, a way of framing it. We do piecemeal practices, but we don't necessarily know how all those practices move together. But, Buddhism provided me that singular avenue in which I could move down.

Rodney Smith: Later, after three years of practice at IMS, I became a monk in Asia for four years. And then, I came back, and I went into hospice care, and it's just evolved. Hospice care, I felt, was an extension of those years of self-reflection. One of the questions that would come up to me, come up in me, as I was meditating was, what is death, and how am I to work with death, given the fact that that will eventually happen to me?

Rodney Smith: So, that wonderment took me into hospice care, and from there, I also started teaching meditation nationally. And, it's just evolved that at some point, I left hospice and became a full-time teacher, and then, a couple years ago, I retired from that and have been living pretty much a secluded life. So, it's kind of a circle, going back to my original intention of deepening my stillness and quietude.

Elise Bialylew: Wonderful. Thank you. You know, there are many definitions, particularly these days, around mindfulness and what it is. I wonder if you could give your perspective on this word mindfulness, what it is. And, maybe, where it comes from.

Rodney Smith: Yes. I would be happy to. I only know it from a Buddhist perspective. I haven't been too involved with the secular aspect of mindfulness although I hold it in high esteem. Anything that makes our consciousness more aware has value. Whether it's happening within a Buddhist context or a secular one makes little difference. But, I have a slightly different definition of mindfulness, which has a greater context to it. I try to put a context to my definitions, and I would say that, from my point of view, mindfulness could be defined as a self-directed awareness with minimal intrusive thought.

- Rodney Smith:** Now, why do I say self-directed? Well, because if you look at mindfulness and how we operate it, mindfulness of the breathing, mindfulness of our bodies, mindfulness... it has a sense of somebody who is being mindful. And so, I select out what I want to direct my attention toward, and I do that and try to separate out the confusing thoughts associated with that particular direction.
- Rodney Smith:** Now, that's mindfulness as we begin in our early stages, to learn it. And, one of the tricks of being mindful, say, of our breath, is to know when we're breathing, and the ... physical sensations associated with that direction. And then, the accompanying thoughts that try to intrude upon that contact.
- Rodney Smith:** Now, what we do in mindfulness is we release the need to have to think about where that direct contact is being placed. And so, we begin to learn, even at that early stage, the difference between that direct contact that I'm making with an object, and the thinking I have about it. Those are two different realities. The thoughts I have about it are not at all connected to the physical sensations that ground it as an actual experience.
- Rodney Smith:** And so, we begin to move from this intellectual concept that we live within – this bubble of thinking – into a more experiential format where we start living our reality, rather than thinking about the reality. And so, that's how mindfulness evolves, but through that evolvment – and this is an important point that I hope, at some point, will be understandable to everyone that practices it – is that, the closer you get to the object and the less thoughts there are, the less self-intrusion there is.
- Rodney Smith:** The sense of 'I' becomes less obstructive because there are fewer thoughts. And so, the object becomes much more discernible. And so, at some point, the mindfulness that we applied in self direction becomes open, and it becomes much more universally available to us than the simple way that I direct my attention from this to that. And so, the evolution of mindfulness is from mindfulness, self-directed, to awareness that is not self-directed.
- Elise Bialylew:** So, can I ask you, from your perspective and in service of the listeners ... Why is it helpful or important, or what's the relevance here of these two different realities? Let's just stay with mindfulness of breath. So, the tendency that we have to think about breathing, this whole thinking reality that we spend a lot of our time in versus the direct experience of what's happening. Because this is obviously a big part of the practice of meditation.
- Rodney Smith:** Huge.
- Elise Bialylew:** What does this make available to us, or how does this practically help us in our life, to start practicing being more with the direct, rather than the thinking?
- Rodney Smith:** Well, again, to provide context to your question, which is a beautiful one, we have to realize that as we get quieter, we begin to perceive thoughts as arising without necessarily us thinking them. They're just coming up as noise in the

mind. You begin to sense that the mind itself is not necessarily, not necessarily, it's not a product of my own choosing. It's developing and emitting whatever conditioning ways that we have learned to perceive, and thoughts are a part of that conditioning component.

Rodney Smith: Now, conditioning is the past intruding upon the present, and what I mean by that is that we learn about something in memory, and then, in the present moment, our eyes light upon that thing, and then the memory of what it was to us back when we first learned about it also comes in, and the emotional charge and everything about it, and the context. So, when we see something, we see it in context to the past that we have had with it.

Rodney Smith: That's fine for most objects, but it's not fine in relationship to us or into a broader and more contemporary relationship to the world because we're constantly living our past replication onto the present moment. And so, we don't have any choice in that because the mind is so...we're so immersed in the processes of mind, and we think, that's us. And so, whatever we're thinking or feeling, that must be true because that's what the mind is telling us.

Rodney Smith: As we go deeper in meditation, we begin to see that this process is conditioned. We begin to see that there's a choice. There's a space that meditation holds that allows that conditioning to come, and we don't have to choose to abide within it. The space around those thoughts and emotions that are rising within it, that's the awareness that sees it, and what we begin to do is to understand that where the spiritual journey really goes is out of the conditioning into the conscious awareness that holds the conditioning.

Rodney Smith: We don't have that choice in our everyday life, for most of us, unless we have practiced some method that allows us to know the differentiation between our conditioning and the awareness. Once we're aware of something, we have a choice of whether to participate in it or end it, and that's a freedom. That's a lot of freedom that we didn't have because we were too busy reacting to our past memories of something.

Elise Bialylew: I remember when I had a bit of a light bulb moment in understanding that, actually, the thoughts that I'm thinking are not me. That was probably one of the most revelatory moments. It totally changes your life.

Rodney Smith: Right.

Elise Bialylew: So, the metaphor, I think, that was shared at the time was something like ... that awareness is always there. This vast awareness, like the blue sky, it's there and ever present, and then the thoughts are kind of moving through like the clouds in the sky. Is that the ...

Rodney Smith: That's a nice metaphor. I like the sense that ... awareness is like the air around us ... I breathe it in. When I breathe in the air, it's in my lungs, and I know I'm breathing in the air, and that's like mindfulness. It's self-contained in the

body, but the greater expanse of the air is everything around us, and we're not necessarily aware of it, but it's there all the time.

Rodney Smith: Now, how do I get to be aware of the air? I become aware of the air by allowing myself to get a feel, a sense of what it is that is being touched by the body and holds the body. And, whatever direction I move in, I'm being surrounded by it. Now, if you substitute awareness for the air, in this case, if we're quiet, we get a sense, the fact is that we're being held by existence, by creation, by life, and that this sense of being held is this close, I think, as the physiology of awareness holding all things.

Rodney Smith: It's quite beautiful when that switch, like in your case, when you begin to see that what you thought yourself to be, literally, your whole life, is something that's happening within awareness rather than something that you're being aware of that's just happening within you. Once that switch occurs, it's the beginning and an imprint on a greater context for our other identity, rather than the limited one in which everything that's happening mentally is because of me.

Rodney Smith: I can blame and feel guilty for all this, or I can open it up to a different identification entirely. Really, the spiritual journey is shifting identities. It's a shift of identities from the encased way we believe ourselves to be, to an open-ended frame of reference that awareness provides.

Elise Bialylew: I want to just move now to... it's connected to what we've been talking about, but imagining that someone is actually in practice, in meditation. Someone that's perhaps newer, and they're inevitably coming towards the hindrances, which is the word that's in the ancient texts, but which is essentially obstacles that arise in meditation, that really challenge us to stay in the now and accept reality as it is. And, one of them that's probably my personal favourite, because I struggle with it quite a lot, was boredom and agitation. So, restlessness. That was my personal favourite, and I remember the feeling of nearly literally feeling like I was going to die from boredom on one of my first silent retreats.

Elise Bialylew: Could you speak, because I want to offer the listeners a practical tool or takeaway ... because when they're starting meditation, that can be a real challenge, and people come to meditation expecting or thinking that a good meditation session is one in which they're feeling great, calm, and what have you. So, speak to that, but specifically, what does someone do? How can someone work with this feeling of agitation or boredom when it arises?

Rodney Smith: Okay. Very, very good question. Very practical question. So, as Westerners, we have lived on the juice of stimulation. If the moment isn't stimulating enough, we try to ratchet up the dial so that we can get the stimulation we know. We often have a kind of threshold in which we think stimulation needs to be there in order for us to be alive. Unfortunately, we think like that. So, when we take ourselves out of that packaging, and out of that cause and effect, stimulation and excitement, and put ourselves on retreat, which is the opposite of that, nothing particularly interesting is going on at all, well, guess what we feel? We feel boredom.

Rodney Smith: Why do we feel bored? Because boredom says this moment isn't worth paying attention to. That's the message of boredom. Just hang out, wait for a while, and maybe the moment will change into something more exciting. And so, essentially, boredom is like this, it's a very unpleasant state of mind in which we are just waiting for some bright flash of insight, or some inspiring talk, or something that can take us out of this blankness, this kind of dullness.

Rodney Smith: So, here is a key. Listen, listen, because this is a key. It's important for each of us to experience, fully, the complete state, all states of mind. Know them. When boredom comes, the first thing we want to do is wait it out and get to some other moment. But, it's a state of mind that will keep reinforcing itself back into our awareness unless we really get to know it.

Rodney Smith: What does it mean to get to know it? Get to know what it's asking. Get to know what the thoughts are, what the feeling in the body is, how emotion accompanies boredom. Usually, it's very negative. It's not neutral. It's unpleasant, very unpleasant, and the one thing that's missing from us and boredom is interest. But, we can be interested in boredom because when we get the sense that this thing is ruling our life, this state of mind called boredom, there's a way that the heart begins to connect and say: what's going on here, in a very serious intent, to be interested and curious about what boredom is. Not what it is in a psychological or philosophical way, but its experience.

Rodney Smith: Now, when we're interested in boredom, guess what we're not? We're no longer bored because the interest was what the boredom was missing. And so, it's a very interesting way, and it's not underhanded or in any way slighting the nature to reveal what boredom is, but that interest itself, we find, dissipates the boredom that we had.

Rodney Smith: To your listeners, and to all meditators, every state of mind has to be known to that extent. We have to be willing to take it on. It's not pleasant. It's hard, but if we're going to open this thing up beyond what the conditioned way we believe it to be, what its thinking generates, what its emotions make us feel like, we have to sit there with it and really get interested and see what it's like. Anger, boredom, agitation, worry: these are ways that... we have to be so completely willing to say you know, I'm here. I am going to get to know this state of mind. At first, it doesn't feel like you're learning anything. It feels like you're in battle. But, after a while, you begin to wear down that need to resist and battle your way through, and the details of what and how it keeps you aversive begins to reveal itself.

Rodney Smith: And, it always reveals itself as thought and emotion. It's what the thought and emotion associated with this particular state of mind. Do I want to be governed by that for the rest of my life? And, that, again, increases the interest and curiosity, and it's curiosity that opens up all these states of mind towards a different frame of reference.

Elise Bialylew: The Buddha talked about, it was really about alleviating suffering. That was the whole point. How do you see meditation as supporting our greater happiness? Because, I'm sorry, just to add there, because, I think, for many

people, you could look at meditation and think it's actually quite a masochistic process.

Rodney Smith: Yeah.

Elise Bialylew: Sitting there, suffering, staying with all these unpleasant sensations, thoughts, emotions, for days on end in a silent retreat. What kind of person does that, and why the hell would you do that?

Rodney Smith: I've asked that many times. Again, you have to have broader context. Because if you're just in there fighting and thinking that sitting, and struggling with the sitting ... First of all, Buddha's path is suffering less, not suffering more. So, if sitting is just a struggle to me, and I hate it, well, you're just struggling more. You're not struggling less. So, there must be some context that we're missing, some way of looking at meditation that we're missing because it's not being resolved.

Rodney Smith: And so, when we involve ourselves in struggle, we have to say, what is it that I want? What is it that I'm wanting in this that's not occurring because struggle always has to do with, as I mentioned before, the sense of what is happening, as opposed to what I want to happen. The more I believe in the thoughts of what I want to happen, the more that is the definition of struggle. So, what does it look like when I can allow meditation to be just as it is?

Rodney Smith: For those who have practiced a little more than ... the beginning courses, sitting and just allowing whatever is to be rather than trying to change what is in any way whatsoever. If my mind is thinking, it's thinking. This is in the four foundations of mindfulness, the third foundation – where we're allowing whatever the mind is doing to be okay. So, the greater frame of reference is not some contention with what's going on, but rather a complete acceptance, and allowing, which is awareness of what's going on, rather than any sense of contraction to what's going on.

Rodney Smith: Now, if I can just sit and allow the mind – no matter what is occurring – to be there, that means I'm going to be forgetful. That means I'm going to lose the context of awareness for a while, and that's okay. So, now I'm not being aware. Now, I am. Now, I'm being irritated. And now I'm not being irritated. Once those polarities of: "this is good meditation, and that isn't good meditation," are brought together so that they're not in competition with one another, you find that meditation goes much easier, and it isn't in struggle.

Rodney Smith: It doesn't mean that they're all pleasant because nothing is, but it means I'm not fighting the unpleasantness that may be there. It's the fighting, it's the antagonism to the unpleasantness, not the unpleasantness itself, that creates the struggle. It's the war of words. I hate this, I wish this, I can't stand this ... If we just drop the wording and allow the experience to be as it is, you'll find that this whole thing opens up, and, instead, meditation goes to a natural contentment based upon the quiet that you're allowing, rather than the argument that you might be enhancing.

Elise Bialylew: So, again, like another example that just came to my mind when you were speaking, is that which is also very common when people start for the first time, bringing attention to the breath. So, mindfulness of the breath, and then they discover a very uncomfortable experience that, when they put their attention on the breath, it somehow makes them anxious, or they feel that they're forcing themselves to breathe, they get in a struggle with the breath, which is quite common, I think. So, can you speak to that? What would someone-

Rodney Smith: I can, yes. Okay. The body holds many things. The body isn't just... I don't think of the mind up here and the body down here. I think of mindbody. I think of them both being... in sync with one another. In fact, the same thing, really. One's just a mental fabrication. The other is a physical, but the context is there. Now, so ... our emotions don't just stay in the mind. They get invested in the body, too, deep into our tissues. And so, any time you begin to journey into the body, even at the level of breath, you arouse different anxieties, or fears, or ... irritations, patterns, reactions, that come up out of the body. We're not investing these things into the body at that point. They're coming out because we're paying attention to the body.

Rodney Smith: When attention is applied, that releases some of the content that is contained within the body. So, when our objective is to be present with the breath, and when we do so, we find that there's a bunch of emotions that are arising, and turbulence, and this is not the breath, and what am I to do? You have to get a sense that this is coming out of me. It's not something I'm doing to me. So, you're not at fault here. You're not doing something wrong. This is what the body contains. Just broaden the expanse of your breath now to include the emotional element as well.

Rodney Smith: So, now I'm also feeling, besides just the breath, I'm also feeling the emotions that are arising around and spinning around, and the physical sensations that are occurring. The thoughts that might be accompanied, and now, I'm losing the breath entirely. It's okay. Being patient, coming back to the breath lines you up, centres ourselves so that we can then have the context of all this other stuff coming. Slowly, the body starts eliminating or depositing what its content has been. And, once that comes out of it, meditation usually, in this state, I'm talking about years now, not in a day or an hour, the contact, the breath meditation will start quieting down into silence and to more quietude.

Rodney Smith: But, known to be upset, if the body contains a lot of things that you didn't know it did, be thankful that you have an opportunity to allow those things to arise out of the body and be gone forever.

Elise Bialylew: There's a question, actually, that was asked of me, which I didn't know. You know, I've been sitting with this, and I'd like to put it forward to you, to hear your opinion. And, it's about ... So, we've alluded to this idea of impermanence, which is a major, I mean, so this idea that everything is constantly changing, and that's just the nature of life and things. And, I think I heard somewhere, I think it was one of Joseph Goldstein's talks, where he references Suzuki. Someone says, "If you had to put Buddhism into two words, what's it about?" And, he says, "Everything changes."

Elise Bialylew: I loved that. So, impermanence. Anyway, so coming to the question, I can understand this concept of impermanence, that things are coming, arising and passing, and that when I sit in meditation, I'm practicing noticing that. And then, that perspective goes into my life, and that helps me to not hold on to things, and hope that they're going to stay the same, and then be disappointed. But, there are people in our lives, and particularly, having worked in psychiatry, where we have this pretty awful label called personality disorders, which I had a lot of trouble with my whole training, where there's a sense that there are people who actually don't change, and that when you're practicing meditation, and you have a person in your life, maybe a family member, or it's obviously hardest when it's a family member, and it's someone that's in your life forever, and they just have pervasive patterns of behaviour that seem quite predictable. And, you're sitting there practicing meditation, thinking about impermanence, and yet, everything else in the world, you can see things changing, but this person doesn't seem to change, and their behaviours and patterns are harmful, selfish. And so, I guess the question is, how do you justify or support this principle of impermanence when it comes to a person like making sense, because is impermanence true if I'm really looking at that-

Rodney Smith: Absolutely.

Elise Bialylew: Consolidated personality?

Rodney Smith: I'm laughing because the question is so poignant. They're changing. They're just not changing the way you want them to change. That is, they may be getting harder and more conditioned. That's change. That's impermanence. It's just going in the opposite direction of the way you would like, right?

Elise Bialylew: That's actually brilliant. That's brilliant. Yes.

Rodney Smith: Well, it's true. And so, the thing to remember is that impermanence doesn't necessarily make the world lovable. It just makes it different. And, that difference is sometimes more ensconced, and contrary, and separate. Well, look at the United States, for god's sake. It's not getting more beautiful at the moment. It's getting uglier. But, something's happening there. It's changing. It just isn't changing the way most of us want.

Rodney Smith: So, to understand that impermanence doesn't mean total disintegration. At some point, everything is going to die, and so, ultimately, all things, no matter what their duration is, are going to leave the Earth. And, that's ultimately impermanent. But, it's also important to know that impermanence is not the nature of reality. So, I'm a little contrary to the teacher who spoke. Impermanence is the nature of formed reality. There's a difference. The nature of reality is really stillness, is the formless, is that which holds both form and the formless, really.

Rodney Smith: So, when we're talking about formed reality, that are, the objects that we see and also the internal processes that come in through us, the thinking and the emoting. Those are all impermanent. The point of seeing things to be impermanent, again, is to not objectify them, not distance ourselves so far from them. If there's nothing inside of me that is going to last, I am already

joined with all things because nothing's lasting. In that nothing lasting, in the evolutionary realization of death to all, to all things, including myself, there's a commonality there. There's a way that everything is being held. And, if I can see from that commonality, you see, then I begin to become that oneness, become that interconnectedness that allows impermanence to really show forth its wisdom.

Elise Bialylew: Is there a favourite story from the ancient teachings? I know there's literally hundreds, if not thousands. But, is there a story that arises in this moment for you that could be a nice one to share with the listeners that speaks to some aspect of the journey that they're embarking on?

Rodney Smith: The Buddha, before he awakened, it is said that he had gone through six years of ascetic training and many years as a prince, and he'd seen the worldly beautification and offerings as a prince, and the absence of all that in his ascetic training. And, when he sat down to understand, he took a vow. He said, "I'm not getting up until I understand." And, to me, there's a kind of resolution in all of that history of his, where he realized none of it had any real bearing on anything. It was all delightful or abhorrent, or whatever it might be, but that something was driving him in his heart that was compelling beyond. The pleasantries were not of his circumstances. And, he says, "I want to know what that is. And, I'm not going to get up here until I understand it."

Rodney Smith: To me, at that moment, he made that assertion, that intention, that was his awakening. Before, we just play a little bit over here, and we try that, and we try to do this, and we're really self-reinforcing our way all along the way. But, at some point, the self-reinforcement doesn't offer the benefits that it wants to. And, we're tired of the burden of carrying ourselves around when we look at existence, we can't find ourself.

Rodney Smith: And, that, from the heart, from the deepest part in us, there is an intention that can arise, in which I am going to understand this process. I am going to find that freedom that is promised. And, to me, that's a beautiful context, the Buddha sitting there, by himself, after all these years of heavy and laborious practice. That's it. I'm not moving.

Elise Bialylew: So, just that commitment and that intention to-

Rodney Smith: Intentioned reality.

Elise Bialylew: -to really see what reality, to really understand things.

Rodney Smith: Yes. To look deeply and not just try to find the pleasant part of our experience and go with that. Really, the whole thing is based on that. Because we're driven, pleasant, unpleasant. We're driven. We're like a protozoa, some one-celled ant. Even a one-celled creature will move towards warmer water, rather than cold or freezing, you know? So, our mind is just a bunch of one-celled creatures that are trying to find the pleasantness of life, and move

endlessly towards that. And, it's not until that search is seen as being more irritant than pleasurable, that we're willing to give it up.

Elise Bialylew: And, sometimes, it takes people a long time to realize.

Rodney Smith: Who knows how long? It's taken 50 years on my very deliberate life, in this particular expression of it. But, it's possible.

Elise Bialylew: This has come up a lot, this idea of ... You know, the Buddha talks about attachment, desire. Clinging is one of the causes of our suffering, but there's a desire that we can hold onto that's kind of, I guess people call it wholesome or ... So, what I'm getting at here is we come on this planet, and we're not just going to sit still. We all have some kind of purpose, or we want to live out our purpose, so it's practicing meditation and all of these, the whole path, it's not to say that you have to let go of everything and just sit there, waiting to die. You're allowed to have ambition, right?

Rodney Smith: Okay. Remember the form joins the formless. So, as a human being, you're going to ... A human being is a human being. It's going to want this and not want that. It's just that when it's tempered by the formless, by a greater reality, it doesn't drive you into struggle. You don't become attached to having your way. It opens up a gate. That doesn't mean that there isn't a drive within us all. The drive may change so that it becomes more universal, that I want to help others, rather than just myself all the time, because the focus of what has been revealed has shifted so that there's a natural value now of wanting to work with other people, or to help them out of their suffering. That's just part of the awakened values that come very naturally. You don't have to work yourself into those. You have to be ambitious about them. They just come naturally. And, you are willing to set your life on line and in the course for that end.

Rodney Smith: So, you don't lose anything. People are afraid that if they aren't ambitious, there won't be anything left. There'll be just, I'm lazy, I'm not. Not at all. When there isn't ambition, when there isn't a strong internal focus of what I need to do, life begins to inform you of what your real life needs to be about, what life needs to be about outside of your individual selfish intention. And, it's always towards a betterment of itself. It's always that. It has to be because that's the way it feeds.

Rodney Smith: So, it's going to be working in concert with what it sees, and its value system is going to be in accordance with that. That's all. You don't have to be afraid that I'll give up being a social worker, or helping. No. You'll be a better social worker because you'll think clearer. You'll see from a more discerning, spacious way, and it won't cut down your natural tendencies towards approaching other people. It will refresh that tendency so that you won't get burned out, so that you won't get soured by bad experiences, because this particular direction never ceases. Regardless of the experiences, that interface, it never ceases.

Elise Bialylew: Thank you so, so much, Rodney.

Rodney Smith: Oh, yeah, it's been a pleasure.

Elise Bialylew: Absolute pleasure, absolute pleasure, and just again, for the listeners who want to explore your work further, they can find your books, your many books, and anywhere else that you would like to direct them to find some of your other resources?

Rodney Smith: Well, there's a Dharma Seed Tape Library, dharmaseed.org. And, you can find many teachers talks. I think I have 300 talks on there. So, you're very welcome to explore more teachings that way, and I wish them all well.

Elise Bialylew: Thank you.

Rodney Smith: Thank you.