



Mindfulness for deep rest and sleep

Guest: Lodro Rinzler

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Anna Duschinsky - [00:00:15]

So welcome, everybody, to this interview with Lodro Rinzler, and I'm really pleased to have you here to talk about meditation and specifically the impact it can have for stress and relaxation and for recovery and sleep as well.

So thank you for being with us today.

Lodro Rinzler

Absolute pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Anna Duschinsky

So for anyone who doesn't already know, Lodro has been teaching Buddhism, I think, well you've been meditating since 6, is that right?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah. So over 30 years of practice at this point, I suppose. Yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

Amazing. And then obviously teaching for around the last 20 or so years.

And obviously you've written some great books. Your most recent one, 'Take Back Your Mind'. I love the title. Very snappy and very appropriate for right now.

And also some very well-known books, 'The Buddha Walks Into the Office' and 'Walk like a Buddha', which have both been given awards and been New York Times bestsellers.

So we're very, very pleased to have someone of your experience here to talk to us about this topic today.

So if we just start, obviously the frame of all of what we're talking about this week is around fatigue and around recovery. So, when we talk about, which we do a lot, managing our stress, managing our anxiety in order to facilitate being in more of a healing state, to relax, to facilitate our healing journey, from your perspective, obviously we've looked at it from lots of perspectives this week, medical and psychological, from your perspective, when we're talking about stress and anxiety, what are we really talking about? What does that really mean?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, it's a great question. And I think it's really important that we sort of split those two out to some

degree. Even from, I'll just say from a Buddhist perspective, because that is the lens through which I view the work, of course, when we talk about stress, we're talking about something triggering a stress response, like the fight, flight, freeze response that we often hear about. That's where we're at.

And my go to example that comes to mind is like your landlord knocks on your door and says that you're late with rent. That is a stressful situation. In that moment you might notice like, oh, my gosh, you want to defend yourself, you want to say something, you want to shrink away or whatever your version of it may be. There's already response happening and there's something happening in the body.

So then there is the sense of anxiety. So let's talk about what we're seeing here. That ultimately when we look at, so the body's reaction to the trigger, whether it's an angry email in your inbox, heavy traffic, whatever it might be, that's a short term experience. But anxiety, on the other hand, has been defined as a sustained mental health disorder, which actually may arise from a stressful trigger but doesn't actually fade away.

So why does it stick around? Anxiety often has a cognitive element and a physiological response in the form of stress. Which means that we experience anxiety in both our minds and our body.

So one way to think about it, OK, we've got this landlord and he says you've got rent due, you don't have the funds to pay for it, that's a stress trigger. Obsessing about a future awkward conversation with your landlord when you actually have to see them again. That's when we've moved into anxiety. We're not focusing on a current present danger, but we're like spiraling. We're spiraling into our own sense of what's going to happen. What are they going to say?

Anxiety gets lodged in the mind and sticks around for the long haul, leading us to frequent headaches, to restless sleep, to feeling lightheaded, feeling faint or dizzy, frequent illnesses, irritability, gastrointestinal issues, feeling overwhelmed, our concentration goes out the window. There's all sorts of things because anxiety is like this hidden veil that keeps us cut off from the world around us. And like an actual veil, it obscures our vision. We're unable to see beyond the things stressing us out today. And then when we're done with that thing, there's something new.

Because unfortunately, this is the downside of like meditation that people sometimes think like, oh, I meditate and then I don't have stress anymore. The downside being, there's always stressful things in our life. I'm sorry. I wish I could wave the magic wand for everyone and be like, no more stress. But that ability to acknowledge the reactions that we have and to come back into the present moment, to not lock ourselves in a state of anxiety with these stories that I mentioned before, that's something meditation really helps with.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:04:47]

OK, and I love that differentiation between stress and anxiety. And it's something that we talk about a lot. You know, stress is the immediate response, right? It's the stressor, it's the trigger, the physiological response. Anxiety I often describe as being actually an avoidance of connecting to the body. Right. It's a pattern, habitual pattern, which actually keeps us from connecting to ourselves, it keeps us from feeling what we're feeling and maybe being able to work it through in some way.

So, I love that. Yeah. Meditation isn't necessarily going to fix the stress. It's not going to fix the landlord necessarily. And equally, actually, it won't directly, immediately fix your health issues. But what it will do is change that habitual pattern over time of being in that state of anxiety, right?

Lodro Rinzler

Yes, that's exactly it. Very well put. Yeah. So this is the controversial thing that I often say, which is that we actually have a choice. We don't have a choice as to whether the landlord can come to collect rent. We have a choice in terms of how much mental energy we put on the stories we tell ourselves about it, how it's going to go, how it might go, how it used to go versus being present.

And the beautiful thing about the meditation practice is that it just retrains and rewires the brain to actually learn that we don't have to go down after every anxiety producing rabbit hole we can acknowledge these thoughts, come back into the present and when we're actually present, where we find more skillful ways to deal with our current situation, even if it's stressful.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:06:17]

From your perspective, from all of your experience, teaching for 20 years, your own experience personally and then teaching so many people, what's your take on what it is that gets us so locked into that habit of anxiety? What was your take on that?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, it's a good question. I do feel like, I'm going to get very big very quickly, but hopefully it's relatable, which is from a young age many of us have been told that we're not enough and we don't have enough. And, you know, I feel very, people often say, oh, you grew up meditating, what was that like? That's fine. That's good. I mean, it's a good tool to have. But I was also, more importantly, raised with the view that comes out of the Buddhist tradition, that inherently we're whole, complete good as is, that we possess this basic goodness.

And that's a radical view in our world, that we already have everything we need and that we can just cultivate a relationship to ourselves to find a sense of contentment for fullness, joy, all of these things. Because most of us are raised within the environment of we're basically messed up and we need fixing. And whether that's something that came in from our parental situation, our schooling, the internet, but I mean, it's particularly those of us that live in a consumer society, it's really hard to avoid the messages that's like you're not good enough and you need blank to fix you. And the blank could be the new I product. It could be cosmetic surgery. It could be a better education. It could be this perfect car or this perfect home. And then you'll be happy. And what happens when we get the car, the home, the cosmetic surgery and so on, the mind goes on to the next thing. Well, maybe this will help fill that hole.

So it's a really messed up system we live in where we're constantly pursuing, maybe this will make me happy, maybe that'll make me happy. It's all external to ourselves as opposed to working with our current present experience.

And I think one of the beautiful things, for us personally, in terms of my experience of the meditation practice, is that some of the most potent and wonderful experiences of contentment can be as simple as really carve out the time every day to sip my morning coffee and I taste the morning coffee. I'm not mentally checked in at work and thinking, here's when I send that email, here's when I do, I'm tasting the coffee and the coffee tastes good.

And there's just this enjoyment within the present moment, there's nothing more that needs to happen and in fact, the sense of I need to do more, I need to produce more is so baked into many of our brains is what's causing us anxiety. So it's actually instead of looking at the anxiety of the day and the situations like, I need this, I need that, could we look at sort of, it's like treating the symptoms as opposed to the disease. Can we actually look at the disease in this case being that sense of not enough-ness and can we find a sense of enough-ness in the present moment?

Anna Duschinsky

It's something that we deal with, I've been a practitioner for 20 years as well, and it's something we deal with every single day, as you say, the system, the cultures that are wired to create this belief in us that we have to do, and as you say, a lot of it can be external achievement, but it can equally be, you know, we've got to be a good girl. I've got to help in X Y kind of way, or I have to be perceived in a certain way in order to feel like I'm OK, to feel like I'm validated. And all of that, as you say, is about the external as opposed to the internal core sense of enough-ness, right? Of OK-ness that is within us.

And so that spirals, as you say, and becomes a real habit of a way of being. I like what you're saying there as well in terms of, it's not just about today, it's not about what you're anxious about in this moment. It's actually about recognizing that this is part of, if we zoom out, a much bigger picture of how we're approaching the world that we live in.

So from your perspective, if we kind of get that and I think a lot of people will recognize that they are constantly seeking or trying to be something or be some version of themselves to feel OK, first off, I think that frame must be really important, right? As you say, it wasn't just the meditation that you were taught from 6, it was the whole frame, the concept of you are inherently enough. You are inherently OK.

So with that, I guess, where can people begin to go if they conceptually get that, right? There's a difference between conceptually getting that and then beginning to live that, apply that. How do we begin to make that leap?

Lodro Rinzler - [00:10:44]

Yes, a great question, because it is, it's exactly that, it's a leap for many people. And I also would like to think that maybe one person even out there would hear what we've already talked about and say, holy moly, that's where, we don't know, it's probably this wide audience.

Anna Duschinsky

I have to say a lot of people have the talk. Don't worry.

Lodro Rinzler

Yes, OK. Holy moly. Like, I never would have suspected this, but it rings true.

And, you know, one of the things I do is I lead meditation teacher trainings every year. And one of the earlier ones that I led, a number of years ago, there was an opportunity for everyone to give a short talk. And a gentleman gave this most beautiful talk where he talked about being raised in a culture that said that his sexual orientation was not OK. He's gay. And he was told from a young age, it's not OK to have these desires. It's not OK to be attracted to these type of people. And as a result of the messaging, he thought, there's something wrong with me.

And I've heard this story many times from friends. And this particular one is just the beautiful thing that he shared was hearing, just hearing the notion that he was whole, complete good as is. There's nothing wrong with him in need of fixing that notion of basic goodness it just penetrates to his soul and he said, oh, my gosh, I always suspected, I never knew, but someone's actually saying this is true.

And I always think about that talk. It's beautiful talk, I'm not doing it justice. But it is the sense of we all have some version of I'm not OK. If everyone knew how checked out I am most of the time at work, they wouldn't even keep me employed. Or if my, you know, the person I'm dating really understood exactly how emotional I am, then they wouldn't want to be with me or whatever, we have our versions.

And it's so hard for us to come to terms with the fact that maybe, you know, everyone else at work is scattered and they don't mind, you're doing great. That our partner actually accepts us exactly as we are and knows exactly how emotional we can get. You know, like that there's all these things are actually really potent and the way that we've sort of convinced ourselves, I use this term earlier, like the veil of anxiety, and I love it because it literally obscures our vision from reality as it is.

And what we're talking about is not, as you said, a theoretical jump to maybe I'm OK, it's us lifting the veil of our confusion long enough to look at reality and say, maybe like I actually feel that there's nothing wrong with me. In the way that, to answer your question more directly, the way that this can look is even within the act of meditation, when people are like, I don't know about this, I don't know. Do you ever have an experience with the sense of basic goodness? Maybe. I don't know. Have you

ever been with the body breathing and just relaxed and you felt like I'm OK in this moment? Yes. Well, there we go. It's that simple.

And maybe that one moment, the next time we sit becomes two moments, maybe those two moments become four, which would come six and so on, so forth, so that we actually start to relate more of our mental energy in the direction of our OK-ness as opposed to what's wrong with us.

And that's when I talked earlier about the choice, that's the sort of choice we're making. How much time do I want to spend mentally locked into this veil of anxiety? And how much time do I feel I can be present? And within being present do I discover that I'm OK? If so, then maybe we want to, we feel motivated, I'll say, to go further in that direction.

For me, it's sort of like a bar graph where it's like there's two bars and it's like 90 percent anxiety, 10 percent presence, mindfulness, compassion. And maybe we start there. Maybe some people listening are like 98 percent to 2 percent. I don't know. But, you know, the more we engage in the practice, it's like the less mental space goes into, if we only have like 100 anxiety points, 100 mental energy points a day, maybe it becomes that 85 of them, go to anxiety, 80 percent go to anxiety. And naturally, as a result of acknowledging the stories that keep us locked in pain, letting them go, coming back into the present moment, that present moment, mindfulness, compassion bar graph goes up. So maybe it's 50/50. Maybe we start to have more compassionate and mindful life than, you know, 60-40, mindfulness and compassion. And it just starts to gradually shift.

And one of the funny things compared to a lot of stuff around fitness and exercise, and things like that, I can get on a scale and say, oh, I have this much percentage body fat or I lost this much weight. It's harder with these things because I don't know, like, I wish that there was some sort of like button we could push and all of a sudden that graph indicates, well, you've only spent this much time on anxiety today, it's not like that.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:15:33]

You need a smartwatch to tell you, right, you've done this many steps in this amount of time in anxiety.

Lodro Rinzler

That would be perfect. Yes. If we can invent that, that would be really good. Maybe we can work on that. But it's that, it's that sense of like it's so subtle. It's hard for us to notice. Sometimes we're the last people to notice that we're actually becoming more present and kinder people.

Anna Duschinsky

Such a lot in what you just said. One of the lovely things that you said way back, I think, was actually how big it is for someone to say you're OK. And you're right. I kind of skipped over that. I'm like, yeah, great. So we're OK so now what. But actually, you're right for a lot of people just hearing that for the first time. You with your anxiety, with your pain, with your fatigue, you're OK, this is OK to accept even in circumstances that don't feel OK, perhaps you're OK, you're inherently good. You're inherently OK. That's huge, right, as a start point. So I think you're perfectly right to reiterate that as a really important start point.

And then what you're saying there in terms of the bar graph, I mean, one thing that struck me over the years is that actually our bodies are, we're intelligent organisms. We're going to move towards what feels better. Right. And therefore, if we have more experiences of presence that feels compassionate, that feels OK and more peaceful, we will begin naturally to seek that out, to spend more time there. And also, which I find beautiful, to also notice more and more when we're not there. But it's that start point, isn't it? As you say, when we're at 98 to 2 for anxiety, it's beginning to have those moments of recognition and trusting, I guess, trusting that enough to recognize that there's something to build on there.

Lodro Rinzler - [00:17:26]

Yeah, beautifully put.

Anna Duschinsky

So, I mean, if we just come back to, because we're talking about meditation and we're talking about compassion and actually those are two words which kind of seem like they have a lot of meaning. But I think maybe it would be helpful to try and define what we're talking about here, particularly with meditation.

When I started meditating, not as long ago as you, but about 20 years ago when I had my own journey with chronic fatigue, it wasn't out yet. This was a weird thing to be doing. I couldn't tell my friends that I was doing it. They thought I was odd. Actually, in today's world what's really lovely to witness, I'm sure you witness that far more than me, but that has really shifted, right? That has really shifted and as witnessed by the success of your books and the work that you're doing.

So a lot of people are familiar with the idea of what meditation might be. But actually, I think there's still a lot of preconceptions or misconceptions around what that actually means. So as our resident expert here, when we talk about meditation for you, what do we mean? What are we talking about really?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, great question. I think one of my favorite definitions of meditation is so straightforward, it's almost too simple and that it's substituting our discursive thoughts for another object of our attention. Meaning that we spend most of our day, let's say that you hop in the shower, are even present for the water? Are you present for any of the activity? You probably just locked into a conversation that may or may not happen. Right. Like the discursive thoughts are just taking up that time.

So not that, you know, I'm saying go do shower meditation, but there's something like this is just the momentum that most of us carry throughout the day, like what's happening next? What do I need to do? Very rarely do we train the mind to be present. So substituting the discursive thoughts for something else.

And, you know, the starting point, I think, for many people is mindfulness of the breath practice. And this is a practice that's been around for thousands of years. It's not like anyone made it up last Thursday, which is good. We know it's time tested. We know it's the same thing that the Buddha did 2600 years ago, that it really enabled him to wake up in a really big way.

So we've got some good markers for success. And then we throw, of course, all of the science that's happened the last decade or two around this particular practice of mindfulness and saying, yeah, actually some of the stuff I mentioned before, there's ways of treating the mind, rewiring the mind, they're real, that we actually create new neural pathways that allow us to live a less stressed out life.

So somewhere between the traditional stuff, the scientific stuff, there's a good argument for mindfulness meditation. And the act of mindfulness meditation is very straightforward in that there's three steps.

One, we take a relaxed and uplifted posture. What that looks like can be different for different people. Often, if we're in a chair, that might mean placing our feet firmly on the ground or if we're on a cushion, sitting with our legs loosely crossed, lifting up to the top of the head, and I can go into all the other points of posture perhaps later. But the idea here being we take a position that feels relaxed, uplifted.

Two we notice how the body's breathing. We don't control the breath. We don't change the breath. Mindfulness, if we're going to keep defining terms, Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is the father of mindfulness based stress reduction, is famous for defining mindfulness as the act of being present to what's currently occurring without judgment.

And I love that. That we were just present with the breath as it is, we're not judging ourselves, it should be deeper, shallower, my back should be straighter. We're just present with things as they are.

And then the third step is when we get distracted and those discursive thoughts pick up again, we acknowledge it. We come back to the breath. So simple, but not easy, because our mind does generate thoughts all the time. Sometimes people think they should be able to meditate and just turn off the mind. They shouldn't have thoughts, but that's sort of like asking the heart to stop beating. It's just not how it works. The heart does its thing. The mind does its thing. And one of the things it does, it generates thoughts all day.

So it's not about not having thoughts. It's about acknowledging the thoughts coming back over and over again so that when we are in the shower, we can acknowledge, oh, I'm having a conversation with someone who's obviously not even here. I can come back to my present moment experience. So we learn to be more mindful of the rest of our life as a result of that training.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:21:53]

OK, lovely, so I think it's a massive point is this idea of an expectation around it and the idea that, yeah, the mind is going to be quiet, we're going to achieve some kind of blissful experience, we're going to see beautiful colors or we're going to have this amazing experience. And actually, I think the expectations that sometimes we have around it can color or distract from our ability to really sit with what's there. As you say, our mind is going to think, so it's what we do with that, right? It's the bringing of the attention back and back. And I'm guessing this is what you teach every day. So what are some of the challenges that you see when people begin the meditation practice?

Lodro Rinzler

Some of the challenges are really it's across the board, but as you can imagine, I've seen it all at this point, but I'll see number one with the bullet, people thinking, I can't meditate, I have too many thoughts. This is followed maybe by I'm too busy and things like that.

But there is an initial, what we talked about earlier. I mean, this started with the profundity of like maybe I'm basically OK, maybe I'm basically like, good. There's this thing that immediately butts up against the practice, which is maybe I'm basically, I'm the one who can't meditate. I guess this deep self-doubt, which is the antithesis of that sense of OK-ness. I am the person out there, meditation works for everyone else, I get it. I have too many thoughts. I can't do it.

We can't all be the person that has too many thoughts, right? It's like, so a lot of the work I do. And then I also work, as I mentioned, I train other meditation teachers to lead this practice. And a big part of the conversation is how do we normalize someone's experience around this? So that they realize, oh, it's not something wrong with me. This is the most normal thing in the world. I have thought this, sometimes we just start meditating and we're like, it's a waterfall of thoughts, maybe meditation is making me more wild. It's not. It's like your mind's always been well, you just never looked. So we've got to start there. So start with the bad news. And then we work our way in the direction of like it gets easier to acknowledge the thoughts to come back. The volume of them comes down.

Other obstacles are indeed, I'm too busy and often that looks like a sense of, like prioritization of everything else over the practice. Sort of like saying I'm going to line up a bunch of chocolate sweets and also some broccoli and you know that you should eat broccoli. And I was like, yes, but I'm going to keep eating the chocolate sweets. And then, I'm full, I don't want to eat the broccoli. I'll eat the broccoli tomorrow. It's sort of like that. Right, so it's like we know it's good for us, but as we get going, it feels a little uncomfortable. Am I doing it right? So and so forth. Which is why I often encourage people to work with trained and certified meditation teachers so that they actually get like some help to overcome some of the initial obstacles.

But we all do have this is, we sort of, drawing a line in the sand here. We all do have time to meditate, even if it's 5 or 10 minutes. I've worked with a lot of people who, you know, have full time jobs, many kids. There's a lot on their plate and they are still waking up before everyone. They're like, I'm just

going to get 10 minutes in. And sometimes the kids wake up and they come and jump on them and they're still doing it. You know, they have a kid on each knee as they meditate and they're doing it together. And that's fine. Like we do it how we can do it. But we all have time to, even just a few minutes a day to meditate. So it's a lot of that. Working with people to make sure that they can find a consistent time, consistent place, consistent way to meditate.

And just disheartenment is unfortunately I would say another one, which is the sense of it's not working as quickly as I want. Because there's that, when we go back to the thing that you're mentioning around expectations, there's the idea that it should feel like a massage. I've sat in a meditation class for half hour and I didn't walk out completely relaxed and in bliss. Let's say we go back to the waterfall analogy. It's like that's not necessarily what you're going to feel. You might feel like, oh, my gosh, it's just thought after thought after thought. And that's overwhelming. And then, of course, it gets easier.

So it's before re-education has to happen around that. But a lot of the work that I do is sort of figuratively holding people's hands until they start to get that glimpse of OK-ness, that glimpse of I'm all right in the moment, able to rest with the breath. And then I know I can go further based on my own experience.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:26:11]

That's really interesting. So having that glimpse. If you've got a glimpse, you've got a vision, you've got a sense of where you're going, then, you know, as we were talking about earlier, it gives you something to move towards, right? It gives you something to kind of come back to.

And actually what you're saying there, I mean, yeah, as we see with a lot of tools that we might teach, I think, it's the stories that we play out about it that are the problem. So I'm not good enough, everyone else is going to do it, I can't, it's not working quickly enough, I'll never get better and this isn't really kind of making the difference or I'm not seeing the evidence yet.

I always say to my clients that whatever we're playing out around that is probably what we're playing at around our world as well.

Which brings me back to what you're talking about in terms of compassion. We talk a lot about, and you're talking about inner doubts, you've given it a lot of good terms, we call it the inner critic, right. That voice in our head. And it seems like the idea of compassion is also hugely important in the way that we approach this.

In fact, I loved in your most recent book, *'Take Back Your Mind'*, you talk about, which I know is not a strictly Buddhist practice as you frame very nicely, but that when the thoughts come up to actually have something as powerful as to say I love you to the thoughts, I thought, yeah, you know, what a shift. Because of course, a lot of times what we're going to do is get frustrated or beat ourselves up for thinking or whatever it is. So that compassion, which I know is a central tenet of what you teach, but the importance of that energy to bring that to what we're trying to do here.

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, yeah, beautifully put and, you know, I realized here that I didn't even answer the second half of the previous question around compassion in general, but the practice you're mentioning, it's mindfulness of the breath. Basically what I mentioned before. And when we drift off in some traditions, we might even just say to ourselves, thinking, just to acknowledge I drifted off, I had a thought, not a big deal. I come back cool. That's a little bit different than what we normally do, which is, you jerk, why are you like this? And many people have that level of self aggression, which is not helpful.

And as you said, the way that we do that one thing is often going to show up how we do other things that if we perpetuating meditation, self aggression and meditation, we're gonna end up perpetuating that the rest of our life. So to take this moment of deep kindness toward our self and say, oh, it's really

OK, it's not a big deal.

It's almost like if you have a dog under your bed during a thunderstorm, you just want to coax the dog. Come on, buddy. It's not a big deal. This is OK. It's OK. But the technique there is, you know, that I mentioned, and I think it might've come from me, is that we might even just say to ourselves instead, I love you because it's sort of hard to be mean to ourselves, we say we love you. So it takes a particular skill set to yell at ourselves.

But that we would say, oh, my gosh, I drifted off. I love you, which is just sort of saying, I'm OK. It's OK, I'm OK. I'm going to come back. I'm going to start fresh. A gentleness is really important. And this does get into that sense of compassion. Compassion for our self.

This is very geeky. Hopefully you'll, you won't mind that I go off on a tangent, there's this term in Buddhism that often gets translated as compassion, but the Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, sometimes translates as love. And I like that he's sort of making it very clear that compassion springs out of love, that when we open and awake the heart, that there is a natural love that flows and it can often manifest as looking at our own situation and holding a sense of compassion, looking at other people's situation. And it's flowing freely, it's not based in attachment, it's not based in, I want you to do this thing and then I get to love you. It's a sense of free flowing love that we all possess. This is a very core fundamental Buddhist belief that we can be with love.

And the flip side of this coin, so to speak, is, in his words, it's a very geeky thing we're doing. But it's a Sanskrit term called *prajña*, which can be translated directly as super, superior, knowing or knowledge. Sometimes it's translated as wisdom, he translates it as understanding. And he often will say variations on the idea that understanding is the other name for love, if we can understand we can love.

So that does directly apply to our self, to get to know our self better, to understand our self better, it's also a way to offer love to our self. And then, of course, others, the people that we love. And we call them up and we say, I want to understand what's going on with you. I want to understand what's going, what challenges you're facing in your life. And love naturally flows if we hear that they're having a hard time.

If we have challenging people in our life, what separates us from them is probably a lack of understanding. If we understood how they were suffering, would we perhaps feel a sense of tender heartedness toward them or at least that sense of compassion?

So I do love this sort of equation that he's working with of love and understanding, going hand in hand. And that can really, that gives birth to great compassion in our day to day life.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:31:19]

And if we bring this back to this frame around chronic fatigue and one of the things that I've always said to people is, and I think it equates very strongly to what you say, you know, fear, I always thought the opposite of fear is trust. But actually, I think we could say the opposite of fear is love as well. They are diametric opposites. You cannot be in a state of understanding, love, compassion for self and simultaneously in fight, flight.

So I guess the invitation of this work, of this mindfulness, I love those ideas, you know, that you've thrown in there of self understanding. If we are watching our thoughts, but with compassion, with love, we get to understand what's playing out in a whole new way. If we can sit with what's going on and be present to ourselves on good days and bad days with that space, then that is kind of the opposite. It's what we call healing state. Right. This kind of holy grail of how do you recover? Well, of course, that's complex. But a big piece of it is to kind of create a habit of being in more of a healing state, the opposite, if you like, in simple terms of that fight, flight. And it sounds like what you're defining here encapsulates that beautifully. Not that it's easy. It's a process. And I think you've spoken to that. Right. It's a process. It takes practice. It's about managing your expectations, managing the stories that we have around it.

The other thing that strikes me as you're talking is that this isn't about meditating for 10 minutes a day and then getting on with your life. It's about how you bring this into your moments in the shower, drinking your coffee, which, of course, is mindfulness, right?

Lodro Rinzler - [00:32:57]

Yeah, beautifully put again, I really appreciate that. We call this thing meditation practice, so it must mean that we are practicing for something. If I was going to practice the guitar, I might practice to play it at a party or in a band or something like that. So if we're practicing meditation, this implication is that if we're developing mindfulness and compassion, we want to apply it to every other aspect of our waking hours. And to really begin to appreciate the environment that we're in, to relax into the world as it is, which is, of course, as we've talked about before, moving away from anxiety.

So I do you think that, you know, there is the conscious ways of actually manifesting mindfulness, and unconscious. The unconscious is the stuff that I mentioned before, it's so subtle, the effects of these practices on us that we're often the last people to notice, oh, I'm a better listener or I wasn't so reactive in that difficult work situation.

But the conscious things we sort of say, well, I want to consciously be mindful for brushing my teeth every day. I want to be conscious and mindful of that shower, the coffee, or it can be as simple saying I'm off my phone at a certain hour and I'm present for my family at dinner and I'm present in the conversation.

So starting to also think through like as I develop the skill set and fortitude of mindfulness, how can it then start to show up for me in the other parts of my life as well. It's really important.

Anna Duschinsky

And so interesting what you say. I think it's really encouraging as well, the idea that some of it's conscious, it's your practice and it's taking those moments or, you know, yeah, every time you drink a cup of tea or every time you have your shower or having those moments as well as you're kind of sitting practice perhaps. That also through all of that, there is an unconscious shift that's happening without us needing to be aware of it.

I think that's very encouraging for people who are working really hard on their recovery. And this is part of what they're doing. That actually without them even noticing there is a shift that's happening in terms of where they are living almost in themselves and how they're being in response to their world. I think that's that's very hopeful of the concept as well.

So if we take this, obviously we're talking today on a day that is focused on sleep. I think everything that we've said kind of makes sense of why this practice is going to support and impact sleep. But certainly for a lot of the people that I've worked with, a lot of people out there who are recovering from chronic fatigue, as well as healing state, sleep is the other Holy Grail, right?

So, what's your experience after all these years of the impact of cumulative meditation or mindfulness practice on sleep? And also, I guess, is there anything directly that we can do using the kind of toolkits that you have and that you teach, to support and promote helpful sleep?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, thank you for that. So as I mentioned earlier, these days, when you Google meditation or you skim social media, you're going to find like a new scientific study coming out every week saying here are all the benefits of a consistent meditation practice. You boost your immune system, you're more productive, you're more creative, you sleep better. It's just like one of them.

And I do think that these all get lumped under the sense of stress reduction. So the reason that I don't always lead with stress reduction is because, you know, it's hard for us to live a life without stress almost makes it seem like if I meditate, I don't have to pay taxes or I don't have to deal with that

landlord, whatever. Those things don't happen. But a lot of those benefits seem ancillary for us being less stressed out if we have less stress, we're going to be more productive at work because we're more focused on the project at hand because we're not trapped by anxiety. If your body isn't held in a fight or flight response mode, yeah, your body might feel better, you're going to have more room for creativity and lo and behold, yes, you're going to sleep better.

Because what keeps us away from sleep? Many people, it's not the fact that they just drink a cup of coffee right before bed and their body's wired. It's the stories they're telling themselves. It's, oh, my gosh, this thing's going to happen tomorrow. And I don't know if I'm ready. And the stories keep us locked in that sense of pain. So earlier we talked about the difference between a stressful trigger and anxiety. And anxiety is that thing that even though we're not yet at work, we're telling ourselves so many stories about what might happen. We're holding ourselves in the fight or flight response mode. And that means that we're probably not going to get deep rest or fall asleep to begin with.

So, I feel like you're right, we've sort of been talking about it all along. But how much can we train ourselves to, in the meditation practice, acknowledge our stories, come back to the present moments. By the time that we're actually getting in bed, the body's already relaxed, it's already able to say, oh, I don't have to lock myself in the state.

But then, you know, I realize that there's also people that are like, that's nice later, yes maybe at some point I'll meditate. What can I do now? What can I do when I get to bed tonight? Any number of things.

I do think one of the techniques that's really helpful around mindfulness practice for beginners is to count each breath. So the way that might look is that we would notice the in breath, notice the out breath, and there's a slight gap at the end of that out breath. In that gap, we could silently say to our self, one. Breath enters, leaves the body, two, and we can continue in that cycle until we reach 10 cycles of the breath. Or one of those thoughts pops up and we get pulled away from the breath. We don't even remember what number we're on, we can start again at 1.

But I think that just even laying down in bed, maybe on your back, putting your hands on your belly, feeling the rise and fall of the belly as you breathe, counting up to those 10 breaths, starting fresh, 1 again, that can go a long way in terms of bringing us out of the stories and into something that actually feels a little bit more soothing and stable.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:38:52]

Sounds like a kind of meditation version of counting sheep. I love that.

Lodro Rinzler

Totally.

Anna Duschinsky

So, really simply focusing on the breath and at the end of out breath, 1 all the way to 10. And anything else? Great, that's fantastic. Are there any other tools or techniques that you would specifically apply? Actually, what we find often time, and you talk about those stories, it's really interesting, is the stories people tell themselves about sleep as well. That can become such a piece as well.

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, yeah. It's the old purple elephant syndrome that if I said don't think about purple elephants, you immediately think of purple elephants, you say well, I want to sleep, then you say, but I'm not going to be able to sleep. Here's why I'm not going to be able to sleep. And we tell ourselves lots of stories about that and we become anxious about that thing.

It is very hard. So I think at some point we need to just interrupt the momentum of these stories. And I call this the hiccup meditation, which it's in the book as well, *'Take Back Your Mind'*, but the idea is that we would just take 3 or 7 deep breaths in the way we do is we breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth. It's a short interruption from the stories that we're telling ourselves. But it also calms the nervous system to such a degree that we've entered the present moment. We might be able to say, oh, I don't have to go right back into that story. So it's an interruption long enough for us to realize, again, I'm saying that controversial thing, that we have a choice. Do we want to go straight back into that story about how we're never going to sleep? Do we want to actually try something new?

Anna Duschinsky - [00:40:23]

Beautiful. I think those are both really usable and I love that focus on the breath as a shift, right, that shift into the body, shift and focus on the breath as opposed to the mind to give that space, to begin to give those moments of, oh, actually, OK, I could do this differently. And now I can count my breath. So, beautiful.

I wonder first before we do this, I just like to ask where people can go to access more of your work? Your website, I guess, but do you want to tell us the best places to go to get access your work?

Lodro Rinzler

Sure. Yeah, I have the distinct pleasure of having a weird name, so it's very easy to find me on the internet under Lodro Rinzler, so Lodro Rinzler. And that's lodrorinzler.com or Lodro Rinzler on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), if you're a Twitter person.

And you know, it's also like people can reach out to me at LodroRinzler@gmail.com and there isn't an elaborate system of assistants who get back, it's me. It's like I am a one man operation.

Now for a lot of like free meditation classes throughout the year, free how to launch meditation kits, because I just want to get the information out there. And I also do 5 month long Buddhist immersions and mindfulness teacher trainings and things like that every year as well.

So those are sort of the big ways to get in touch. I'm always happy to hear from people.

Anna Duschinsky

That's fantastic. And as I say, I really love the fact that it's you, we get in touch with you. And also the books I found are really usable. This isn't just conceptual. There's tools, there's techniques, there's pieces that people can really pick up and go away and use. Right. So that's another great way to connect.

Lodro Rinzler

I always love the fact that, when someone's like, oh, and you also you should probably tell people that your book just came out. Do you remember that?

Anna Duschinsky

You wrote a book, remember that? Which I think is beautiful as well and we could talk forever, but it's very specific, well not specific to but very pertinent to the year that we've just lived through as well.

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah. It's been a very anxiety producing year for many people. I think it's, the last thing I'll say about the topic it's just that so many of us feel like, oh, I should suffer in silence because this is my problem, not realizing how many people out there are struggling with anxiety and anxiety producing thoughts. So it's just important for us to have a conversation about it.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:42:51]

I wondered if you would do us the great honor of maybe leading just a few moments of meditation for us as a wide group out here listening? Would that be OK?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah, I'm going to see if I can somehow weave in everything we've talked about, counting and I love you and the whole, let's see if I can do it.

So we'll just take a few minutes to get into the body.

And if you, as I mentioned before, if you're in a chair, you can just place your feet firmly on the ground. Maybe sit a little bit away from the back so you're not slouching over. If you are on a cushion, you want to sit with your legs loosely crossed, that's great. If you want to kneel, that's OK too.

But gently lifting up through the spine elongating vertebrae by vertebrae here. Relaxing the shoulders. Relaxing the arms. Even tucking the chin in slightly.

When you're ready, just come into feeling the body breathing. Noticing the natural flow of the breath and not altering it in any way. Just letting it occur.

As we breathe in and breathe out, we notice that slight gap at the end of that outbreath. And in that gap, we can silently say to ourselves, one. Another breath enters and then leaves the body. Two. Three.

Inevitably, when we notice that the mind wanders off, we can just silently acknowledge it and come back to the breath. As I mentioned, in traditional terms, we might just say thinking to ourselves, but here we'll gently say these three words, I love you. Even if it feels a little foreign at first, just experiment with it for now.

Drift off, I love you, we come right back to feeling the breath. When you're ready, you can begin to raise your gaze or open your eyes. Transitioning out of the practice. Bring some light movement into the body, perhaps.

So very simple practice, right, but also for anyone who was like, oh, that was hard, that's normal. If we're newer to meditation, it's like learning anything else. Learning new language, learning martial arts, learning a musical instrument. First, we're just figuring out how to do it well. But then the more we do it, the more fluid it becomes and the more joy that comes out of it.

Anna Duschinsky

To use myself as an example, I remember, kind of, I mean, as you can probably note, I kind of naturally talk and think pretty fast. I remember starting out trying to figure out meditation. And, yeah, this is very similar to what you've just done there. And the thought that immediately came up to my head was right, and now what? What next?

Lodro Rinzler

Yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

This is now.

Thank you so much. I could talk to you for much longer. I really appreciate you being here and sharing all of those. I think some really important points and pointers as well for people. So thank you so much for being with us today. And thank you, everybody, for listening and for watching as well.

Lodro Rinzler - [00:49:42]

Thank you. Thanks so much for having me. Thank you, everyone, for listening.