

The practice of self-love

Guest: Dr. David Hamilton

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Alex Howard - [00:00:08]

Welcome everyone, to this interview where I'm super happy to be talking with Dr. David Hamilton.

Firstly, David, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Dr. David Hamilton

Oh, it's my absolute pleasure and thanks for having me on this. I'm really thrilled.

Alex Howard

Well, I really enjoyed our conversation last year for the Trauma Super Conference, so I'm excited to get into this area with you.

I think this is such an important piece of the jigsaw that ultimately our relationship with ourself is really the core influence and all the other relationships in our lives. So I think it's a great topic.

Just to give people a bit of your background. David is a writer, columnist, speaker and kindness scientist.

After completing his PhD, he worked in cardiovascular and cancer research and development with one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. Inspired by the placebo effect, he left the industry to write about and educate in how we can best harness our mind and emotions to optimize our health.

He's now the author of 11 books, but I believe, you were saying David, you've just finished your 12th.

Dr. David Hamilton

No, I just finished the 11th actually.

Alex Howard

Oh you just finished 11th.

He has appeared as a guest on Sunday Brunch in the U.K. and CBS Sunday Morning in the U.S. discussing the health benefits of kindness.

David, I'd love to start a little bit with how you got interested in this subject. How does a pharmaceutical researcher become interested in the area of self-love?

Dr. David Hamilton - [00:01:37]

Well, I started out writing books that cover the mind-body connection. That was my first series of books. And then I had a very powerful experience that really brought to the surface issues that I'd been trying to sweep under the carpet for years.

On reflection, maybe it's a male thing or certainly a male thing from where I grew up. I grew up in a very small village in central Scotland that has a large intake of coal miners and that kind of stuff. So it was very much, you're a man's man and you've really got to be tough and man up and that was the overall attitude. So I'd grown up in that type of environment.

And I remember I was speaking at a Hay House conference. We're both published with Hay House. I was speaking at Hay House conference and it was in Glasgow in Scotland. It was a home gig for me, I suppose. And I was the next speaker on after the late Dr. Wayne Dyer.

Alex Howard

That's a tough spot.

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah. And I was standing at the side of the stage and Wayne was getting a standing ovation. And I was next to come on. And I experienced an anxiety attack. And it wasn't because I was nervous about speaking, not even the fact that it was Wayne Dyer who was a personal hero of mine. It wasn't really that. It was a sense of feeling that I'm rubbish. And who do I think I am?

If I could put any words at how I felt, as if there was a voice in my head, if I could put any words, it was along the lines of, who do you think you are? You can't go in after Wayne Dyer. You can't speak at this conference. Half those speakers at this conference have been on Oprah. You're from a village, you're from Banknock. That's the name of the wee village I grew up in. You're absolutely shit kind of thing.

And then as odd as it might sound, maybe not odd to yourself actually, I had a very powerful visual and emotional flashback or memory of being at school, Primary school. Now I would have been about 6 years old. And the teacher was reprimanding me for not bringing my money in for a school trip.

Now the school trip, it was like £5 or £15, £5, £15 something like that. We're talking 1977ish. So maybe about £10 or something. And I forget what the school trip was for, but we were all to bring our money in for it.

Now, I didn't ask my mom for the money because my mom and dad were really struggling financially. My dad was working as a laborer at the time in building sites and in Scotland, when the winter sets in, very often the building trade slows down. And so, the newer, more of what you used to call casual workers, the ones who just get taken on for short periods of time would get made redundant coming up to Christmas and rehired in January or February. So every year this repeating cycle, my dad would get made redundant and maybe four weeks before Christmas and get taken on four weeks after.

My mom was so stressed because there was four kids. You know, I've got three sisters, and my mom would often take these, what you now call payday loans just to cover Christmas time. We had the catalog that you'd buy all the Christmas presents on and then spend the whole year paying them off kind of thing.

And there was a more ethical company called the Provident, and a man from the Provie, a collector used to come every Friday night to our house for years with a lined book, Jeanette Hamilton. My mom has paid, lined in pencil, £5 or £1, whatever my mom paid back every week.

And I remember I came down, I was going to ask my mom for the money for the school trip. And my mom and dad were, they were having a wee bit of an argument. Then I could hear my mom crying, she was upset and she was saying, oh my God, what I'm I going to do. I've got to get a new skirt for Lesley for school. David needs a new pair of trainers, and how am I going to pay for the Christmas presents? And how are we going to feed ourselves?

And my mom was just so upset, breaking her heart, because for me, my mom still is the kindest person I'd ever known. And I felt so upset that my mum was crying because she felt she couldn't provide for us. And I didn't feel like I wasn't provided for. I thought we had needed everything we needed or wanted.

And I ran up to bed and I jumped into my bed and I was crying for two reasons. First, I just felt such heart and empathy. I felt such empathy for my mom, my mom's crying, I started to cry because my mum was crying. And then, secondly, I felt so selfish because in that moment, I realized that every penny, every spare penny my mom would get, she'd spend it on the family. If mom had an extra £1 the first thing she does is she spends it on the family.

Even now, my mom goes to Bingo with one of her friends. If mom wins £20 in the Bingo, she'll give us all £5. She's still got this thing. She gives and gives and gives.

And, I felt so selfish that whenever I get my pocket money, the first thing I would do, never give a thought for anyone else. I'd run to the shop and spend it all on sweets for myself. And I remember at that moment deciding that I'm gonna be like my mom one day. I'm gonna be kind as well. I'm gonna be that good person.

And that really set a course for the kind of a person I decided to be from that moment. But you can understand why I didn't ask my mom for the money. Because as a 6 year old kid, I didn't know that 10p is a lot or a little amount of money. For me, I felt asking my mom for 10p or whatever it was, that could have been a week's wages or that could be my mom's dinner or my sister's dinner tomorrow night kind of thing. So I didn't ask the teacher, but the teacher didn't take it well at all.

Now in her defense I think she was probably just a student teacher or on exchange. She certainly wasn't there for very long, wasn't very experienced.

Alex Howard - [00:08:06]

And she probably thought you were forgetful rather than there was something substantial behind it.

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah. Yes. I don't hold any grudge against her for how she behaved in the moment, that I'll tell you about in a moment, because I think she just didn't have the experience. But anyway, she reprimanded me in front of the class and she said something like, well if David Hamilton isn't good enough to bring his money in then he can stay here and we'll all go on the school trip without him. And she made me stand in the corner. Remember, stand in the corner, taking breaths, trying not to cry and feeling sorry for myself. And trying to do anything with my mind to stop myself crying. I was doing the 5 times table and the 3 times table, the hardest time tables using the 3 and the 9 that I could think of to try and stop myself crying and feeling sorry for myself.

And I looked around and all the kids in the class had been given a yellow badge for bringing their money in. And I don't remember the details of the badge, I was 6, but it was like a sunflower or sun or a smiley face, but it was yellow. I didn't care about the school trip. I'd never been on one. I didn't know what a school trip was. But the badge, when you're a kid and you get a badge, you only get a badge on a special day, on your birthday. So for me, to my 6 year old brain, the badge meant you're special. So what my 6 year old brain processed that day is all the other kids in the class are special except for me.

And that got under my skin. Because over all my teenage years I had this need to prove myself to people that I'm just as good as you. And I got bullied a heck of a lot at high school, mostly towards the latter years of my high school. In some part, people thought I was a big head, bragger showing off, which I did, but they didn't understand, neither did I at the time, that the reason I was doing that is because I just needed people to like me, to accept me. And what was underneath us is just this drive that everyone's special except for me.

And that echoed through my life. People say repeating pattern or an echo. And the same circumstances would manifest in my life at repeated intervals all through my teenage and adult years.

So wind the clock forward, here I am at the side of the stage, about to go on after Wayne Dyer, and that's what I'm remembering.

Alex Howard - [00:10:19]

Isn't the unconscious amazing, though? It found exactly the piece that explained how you were feeling in that moment.

Dr. David Hamilton

I think sometimes you remember of times in your life more clearly when you felt exactly the same way you feel right now. And right now, at that moment, my child brain was running the whole show. And to my 6 year old brain that was now running the show at the side of the stage, everyone, all these other speakers are special except for me.

Wayne Dyer's got a yellow badge. So has Louise Haywood who was also speaking that day. So has Cheryl Richardson and Brian Vice and Robert Holden and Gregg Braden and all these other speakers who were speaking throughout the rest of the day. They all had a yellow badge except for me. And I felt sorry for myself. I felt like crying. I literally wanted to grab hold of the curtain, and lay on the floor and cry.

And if it wasn't for the fact that the event director was walking and announcing my name and someone else put their hand on the small of my back and ushered me on stage. I just wanted to run away and cry.

Alex Howard

Right.

Dr. David Hamilton

And that was the day I decided that I had been putting off dealing with this issue long enough, and I knew it was to do with self-love. And I had to, self-love and self-esteem are two different things. I think I had outer self-esteem, I had achieved a lot in my life. So you have the things that you could pin on, look at what I've done, that's external self-esteem, but that's not inner self-esteem, which is more self-love. Which I define as an inner sense of worthiness and value.

And I had very little of that. And that's what I realized on that day that I have to address. And I decided to write a book after that, because I thought if I don't, then I wouldn't really do the work on myself.

Alex Howard

But it's also interesting that you, in a sense, had been become an expert in kindness and in some ways giving to others what you haven't yet learned to give to yourself, right?

Dr. David Hamilton - [00:12:18]

Absolutely. Yeah, exactly that. And I didn't even know how to. I didn't even know what that looked like. I'd never read a book on self-love. I'd managed to somehow not be in the audience every single time there was a talk on self-love.

I'd spoken at quite a few Hay House conferences. And whenever, even Louise Haywood would speak on self-love, I somehow manifested that I couldn't be in the audience at that moment. I'd be there for some of it. But then I couldn't be in just at the point, because maybe I had an interview to do or something else happened, or I got distracted, but somehow I missed all of the stuff I needed to hear on self-love until that moment at the side of the stage when I realized that I have to deal with this now.

Alex Howard

And just to broaden this out a little bit towards the relationship piece. What do you see is the relationship between self-love and being able to love others?

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah. Well, you know what? I think we hear this phrase, you can't love another unless you love yourself first. And that's almost become a cliché.

I don't think it's quite as clear cut as that. What I would say is when you love yourself fully, you've got more space in your heart and mind. It's not that if you're not loving yourself it's not that you can't love someone else because you can. But things get in the way. The way you respond to things, the way you communicate sometimes. So these color things they just get in the way, so to speak.

So when you learn to love yourself more fully, you just clear away some of the clutter, some of the debris, and there's just more space available. There's more of you available. It's not that you can't love someone else if you don't love yourself, because it isn't quite as black and white. I think there's a scale of no self-love to quite a lot.

So I think as you move up through those stages, I suppose, I call them the three stages of self-love, then there's just more space available in your heart and mind to give to someone or to allow someone else in.

Alex Howard

And it's interesting the distinction you made between self-esteem and self-love, or to put it in some slightly different words, one can have an almost over inflated sense of themselves, perhaps compensating for a deficiency. But to others, it may be they like themselves a bit too much like it's almost something we would criticize. But often that's also a sign of ultimate deficiency, right?

Dr. David Hamilton

Absolutely. Yeah. Because I would say that you have external self-esteem and external of internal self-esteem, which is more what we might call self-love. And external self-esteem is when you build your sense of worthiness and value out of events and circumstances in your life. Things that you've achieved, positive things that have happened, even positive things people say about you. So you derive your sense of worthiness and value from all these external things.

But, a line we've got where I grew up, is if that's the only type you have, then, as they say in Scotland, your coat is on a shaky nail.

Alex Howard - [00:15:33]

I haven't heard that. That's great.

Dr. David Hamilton

Your coat is on a shaky nail. So all you need is a failure or a bad review for opinions to change and it's devastating. It kills you, it's devastating.

So what you need is an inner sense of worthiness and value, where your sense of worthiness and value comes from the inside. It doesn't mean that you don't want to succeed in your life. And it doesn't mean that you don't want to achieve things. And it didn't mean that you don't want people to like you. I think that's human nature. It just means that if things change in the outside world, you've got something on the inside, a resource, a resilience on the inside that knows that no matter what's happened out there, I've got this and everything's going to be okay. I'm still here kind of thing.

And it's just that switch from out there to in here. And that's why I call it an inner sense of worthiness and value, which I would then expand into saying that's how I would define self-love, which takes in self-compassion as well.

Alex Howard

Yes. Yes.

And so, you came offstage at this event and you'd made this commitment to yourself that this was, in a sense, the next chapter on your own inner journey. What were some of the tools or some of the insights that you discovered that helped you do that inner work?

Dr. David Hamilton

Well, the first thing was accidental. And it was just after I finished, I finished the book, which I hadn't. It turned out to be the longest writing project I've ever taken on in my life. But I agreed with my publisher, Hay House, that I would get this book done and my deadline was the 30th June, a few years back. And I submitted the book and then Michelle Pilley, the MD of Hay House in the U.K, asked if we could have a wee meet for a wee cup of tea. And I thought ohh.

Alex Howard

This is either really good or not so good.

Dr. David Hamilton

And we sat down and Michelle is a wonderful person and also very honest and very helpful. She's trying to help all the time. And she said, you know we all love you in the office, that was the opening line. But I just can't accept this book as it is because if we were to publish it as it would be damaging to your career. That's what she said.

With hindsight looking back on reflection, the book was so weak and so it didn't have any substance at all, because I had written a book on self-love in my head.

Alex Howard

Right.

Dr. David Hamilton - [00:18:15]

Doing the way that I had written some of my books prior to that, by just researching through scientific psychology and medical journals and pulling out facts and statistics and cerebral stuff. And it was on that day I realized that you can't write a book on self-love without the experiential part. You need to know what you're talking about because you either write a book in one of two ways. You either write a book because you've got the experience, like 10 or 20 years experience and you're writing from experience or you're writing it as you're going along and you're learning as you're going along. But you can't write that can book from your data, from your head.

And Michelle was so nice, I actually remember crying in front of Michelle because I suddenly realized that all the stuff was coming up and Michelle was absolutely brilliant. She says, look, no deadline. Something a publisher would never say but Michelle said, no deadline. You take as long as you need to write this book and even take a break from it and come back to it when you feel like it. And then when you feel it picking up again and you've got a better idea of when we might finish it, then let's talk again and we'll schedule in the publication.

And that was amazing. And on that day, I had this sense, I think of it as the acceptance paradox. The moment you accept yourself, you spontaneously change. If you're trying to get to somewhere by saying I'll be happy when, or I'll be happy when I've lost weight, or I'll be happy when I've got that amount of money. Then you're putting the happiness at an endpoint somewhere over there.

And what the acceptance paradox I call it is, the moment you accept I'm not there yet. I'm just here. You spontaneously change. And so acceptance leads to spontaneous, infinite change, if you will. And in that moment, I just accepted. You know what? I've been working on this book for 6 months and I've learned nothing at all. And that was the realization, I was partly crying. I realized nothing. I've learned nothing. I can't write a book, that kind of a book the way I've written other books, I've gotten nowhere.

I just accepted where I was. That, yeah. I don't know anything about self-love at this moment at all. I've got no experience of it, I don't even know where. It's like trying to imagine a color that doesn't exist. I had no practical experience of even knowing what that felt like.

But in that moment of acceptance, I knew what I could do. And I knew where to go. The answer started to come to me, not immediate enlightenment, I know all about self-love, but I know that I can find a way. And I know I can feel that way.

And over the next few months, I started to uncover tools and strategies. And the first one, which was life changing for me, which actually had a strong basis in what I knew about the mind-body connection. But this was more about the body-mind connection. You can use your mind to affect your body. But what few of us realize is what you do with your body also affects your mind.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Dr. David Hamilton

And I'd always thought about it as the mind affecting body. And I hadn't realized it goes the other way. And I came across some research by Amy Cuddy at Harvard on the Power Pose. You sound like Wonder Woman or Superman. And there's lots of other researchers that've done something similar since then, and even before then about posture. But realizing that by the way in which you hold and move your body can impact how you feel. And it'll impact your brain chemistry, your internal body's biochemistry quite radically away from stress if you adopt a, what you call a high power posture, then that will help tilt your biochemistry away from stress and towards more self-confidence.

And I started to practice it every day. But I went a little bit further and I thought, I know from practice, from visualization that whatever you repetitively do, whether it's a mechanical movement or visualizing, your brain doesn't distinguish between whether I'm moving my hand 150 times or visualizing my hand moving 150 times. The brain will wire into an area called the motor cortex in exactly the same way to almost the same degree.

And I thought, what if I just catch myself every day as I hold and move my body while I normally respond in a non self-loving way. A way that I call I'm not enough. I got that line from *Daring Greatly*, Brené Brown. Lovely book, *Daring Greatly*. It was a great inspiration for one of the chapters in my book, actually. And she talked about I am not enough. And I thought, well, I feel not enough a lot of the time, I didn't realize it, but I meet the world in that way, and I meet people in that way a lot of the time. And noticing that a lot of times I would curve my shoulders in or step back, you always put my head down in a submissive kind of way, my voice would drop and go deeper and all these different things.

And I thought, what? Every time I do that, I'm wiring that into my brain. So whenever I enter a situation, my brain is just processing learned habits through wiring. I thought, what if I don't do that anymore? Then through neuroplasticity or the reverse of it, all that wiring will begin to ascend and fade away.

And what if instead what I replace it with is training myself to adopt a posture, a way of holding my face and my neck, my shoulders, even my vocal cords, even how I speak, the tones, the rate at which I speak. And if I even adjust my shoulders and my back and just literally figure out how will I hold and move my body, if I've got this,? If I can feel I've got this, I have an inner sense of worthiness and value.

And I was relentless with that. I practiced it for 2 or 3 minutes every morning. I caught myself with my phone every hour kind of thing all through the day. How am I holding my body right now? Even if I'm standing in the queue at Starbucks, for example, instead of sitting like that, I would stand back, hands in the pocket. Just a posture that says, I have an inner sense of worthiness and value.

So I'm taking those words and I'm wearing them. I'm taking I have an inner sense of worthiness and value. And I'm saying, how would that feel in my body right now? So what would my body be like right now if I have an inner sense of worthiness and value? And knowing that as I'm doing this, I'm now wiring brain circuits so that that posture becomes a habit and the old wirings begin to fall away.

It's like you've got a wheat field, and there's a path that's been worn right through it. That's the way things go in the brain. But if I stop walking on that path, it will quickly overgrow. But what if I lane in a new path now? And this new path is I've got this. I have an inner sense of worthiness and value or I am enough. And I wear that. And what happens is, after a little bit of time, there's a tipping point, and the new path becomes more definite than the old one.

And I noticed after a couple of months, I just started to feel a way I had never felt before. I was starting to meet circumstances and conditions in a way that I have not, I hadn't preplanned them. I was just responding to people and circumstances in a brand new way. And for me, that was a game changer. It was a first of two major jumps I made.

Alex Howard - [00:25:26]

It's interesting as well because there's obviously the postural piece of how moving your body is affecting your mind and emotions, but also, in a sense, the discipline that it takes to do that is also its own act of self-love, isn't it? It's almost like saying I care about myself enough that I'm going to do this thing that's actually quite difficult to keep remembering to do.

Dr. David Hamilton - [00:25:47]

Yeah. Because for me, I went through a lot of psychological process I think of as leverage. And I say, what might the consequences be to my mental and physical health and the evolution of my life and my relationships if I were to keep going the way I've been going and do nothing about this issue?

Then question number two, what might things be like? What could things potentially, and I allowed my mind free rein to wonder, if I was to start working on this and see it right through to completion? And I think of that as leverage. And that for me, gives me the motivation to keep doing the work that needs to get done. And that for me, it was such an important, I realized the absolute importance of it. And I had to keep coming back to those two questions to keep reminding myself over and over again the importance of doing that.

Alex Howard

Yes. And you mentioned that working with your body in that way was the first of two major turning points. What was the other one?

Dr. David Hamilton

The other one was, it was painful at the time. It was, I think embracing, and I know it's a bit of a cliché now but embracing the power of vulnerability that was thrust upon me. I've made great gains, huge gains in self-love, self confidence, self belief, everything through just working on my posture. And that's the main thing I'd done. I'd done a few other things, but that was the main thing.

And then my dog got sick. He was still a young dog. He was only, at the time he was only about 18/19 months old. A Labrador, Oscar. And we were at the vet and he was getting a CT scan. We thought he'd maybe had a ligament thing, or maybe at worst, maybe even had a fracture on the knee side of his left hind leg. And the vet came back and said these words, very sorry to say he has osteosarcoma, bone cancer. There's nothing you can do. He has about, at best, three months to live. There's nothing you can do. It's not your fault. If it would be easier for you, he's under anaesthetic just now, we can just give him an extra dose and let him go.

And even saying those words I still feel emotional. And the ground just fell away because he was our boy. We didn't have any human babies. My partner Elizabeth was there. We couldn't take it in and she just openly wept and I did as well. I tried to deal with it, because he was the King of a house. He was the boss really. I thought when we got a dog, I'll be the man, I'll be the master. It taught me so much about self-love. I'll be the top of the tree. And I was actually third in the pecking order, he was the boss, then Elizabeth, then me.

Alex Howard

I have this joke with my wife that there's the kids, there's the dogs and then there's me right down the bottom.

Dr. David Hamilton

That's kind of how it was. I thought I was going to be the Alpha male, but instead Oscar saw me as the playmate. I was the one he plays with and stuff.

But anyway, in that moment of trying the manning up thing, the only thing I knew to do in difficult situations is to man up and not cry because that's what I learned in that village I grew up in in central Scotland.

So I just thought I've got this. Don't worry about it. I know what to do. I know a lot about it. I used to work in cancer research and development. I've forgotten more than I ever know or something like that. I've learned a hell of a lot more now since then about other approaches in addition to all that.

And I thought, I know what to do. So anyway, I phoned my mom and dad that said, mom, there's this kind of stuff I gave you a few years ago. I need it back. And why is it son? Are you ok? No it's for Oscar they said he's got bone cancer and he's going to die. But my mom goes, oh, I'm so sorry son. Mom, don't worry about it. I've got this. I can solve it. Totally fine.

Anyway, got into the house, I walked in the door. My mom was standing in the middle of the living room. And as soon as I saw my mom, I just broke down and cried. My mom gave me this great big hug, and I just wept and wept and wept at the fear of losing Oscar. Now it was safe. My mom was there. And then she turned round and I saw my dad sitting in the chair. And my dad, also part of the whole man up thing. He learned that as well. And I saw my dad and the moment my dad saw me crying. He went like that. He just turned away. He didn't mean to. It was an instinct because my dad didn't know how to meet his son in an emotional situation, and he just instinctively turned away.

And at that moment I thought of backing out and manning up. And then I had that little realization that, no, that's what I always do. I'm not going to cheapen Oscar's experience by trying to pretend, I will do the best I can for him but I'm not going to cheapen his life by pretending that I don't feel the way I really do. And in that moment I thought, I'm not going to hold back. I'm not going to pretend. I'm not going to buckle to the pressure of being manly anymore. I'm not going to buckle to the pressure of being the person who supposedly has all the answers.

I remember thinking, fuck it. Sorry for the language, but that's how I felt in that moment. And, you know sometimes when a shift inside yourself so profound it sends a ripple out and affects everyone.

Because my dad got shifty that day because I went to the front door when I was saying cheerio, and my mom always comes to the door and gives me a hug and my dad sits in the living room and goes, right son, see you next week kind of thing. But this time my dad came over and my mom gave me a hug and my dad was almost there as well. And that kind of developed over my dad.

Oscar did pass away. We got a leg amputated. That was one of the ways we tried to save his life. And he passed away after six months. He had a really happy last time and we spent a lot of good times with him.

I remember that. Waking up the morning after he passed away and the house was empty. It's funny how when a soul leaves a house, that's what kept the house alive. And it was quiet. It was empty. It was like an empty egg shell. It's hard to describe it. It was nothing in that house and it was a rental. There was nothing in it, it was just empty.

My dad phoned me up about 06:00 in the morning and he said, sorry to phone you this early son, I was just wondering how you're feeling?

Now, in all my life prior to that, my dad had never once inquired about my emotional state. And after then he would phone me in the morning and other times just to check on me. My dad and I have a great relationship and he hugs me. We hug now. From my dad that's huge.

But that was part of it. And then the other part of it was a few months later, the book came out. Michelle held the book publication back after Oscar passed away because she said, maybe you should write an afterword because he played such a huge part in writing my book, *I Heart Me*. And Michelle says, look, we'll just hold it back. This is more important to you right now. And I wrote an afterword, and Michelle held the publication back.

Which astonishingly, the date was pushed back a month and actually came out on International Day of Self-Love by accident.

Alex Howard - [00:33:31]

Life has its own wisdom.

Dr. David Hamilton

The day before Valentine's, which is the 14th February. It came out on 13th February. None of us actually knew that that was actually recognized as the day of self-love. It's funny how it works.

Anyway, one of my first talks, it was a Hay House conference, and I was standing on stage and I was talking about self-love. And then I didn't mean to talk about the vulnerability and Oscar. And I started crying because it just all came up still red raw and very fresh. And I started crying in front of this audience of about 700 or 800 people.

And, you know, sometimes when you feel embarrassed, crying and you try not to so you go.

Alex Howard

It gets worse not better doesn't it?

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah, it just makes it worse.

And at one point again, I had that little realization. Remember thinking, fuck it. At that moment, I was thinking, if people see me crying, I'm in front of the stage. I'm the speaker. I'm the author. I'm supposed to have the answers. No one's going to buy this book anyway, but no one's going to buy anyone in my books. My career is over. If people just think, if he can't even hold himself to get to give a talk, he's not bloody good self help, speaker at all. Not interested in him.

And I remember that was the pressure I was feeling at the time. I need to be the one that has the answers. And this is the vulnerability part coming. I remember thinking, I'm done with that. I'm actually done with it. Again, I'm not going to cheapen my experience I had with Oscar and the love I felt for him, I'm not going to do that. And from this moment, I'm just going to be myself. And if that means people stop reading my book, it's better if I'm, more, better, healthier for me and for everyone whose lives are unparalleled if I just be myself, even if that means I'm not a good teacher.

Alex Howard

What it is, is it's the modeling of self-love, isn't it? It's saying I care for me enough to let myself be free.

Dr. David Hamilton

And I didn't even think of that at the time. I just knew that that was the right thing to do. And I just stood there and I said I'm really sorry this was very painful for me. I just openly wept then.

And after what felt like an infinity, a woman jumped up on the stage and gave me a hug. And then everyone started clapping.

But anyway, and the rest of my talk went really, really well. And funnily enough me thinking that no one will buy my book, that book sold out in like, 3 minutes. It was the fastest ever complete sell out of a book Hay House had ever had at a conference. Hay House were sending people out to find Waterstone shops in the town and buying up all theirs because they had none left because they literally sold so fast. Everyone wanted to get it.

And that was an amazing teaching experience for me that your teaching is more powerful when you actually embrace who you are. And it was really about saying this is who I am. I don't have to be a great teacher in the way that I thought a teacher is. I just have to be myself, that's teaching.

Alex Howard - [00:36:24]

What comes to my mind as you're talking, David, is that both with the postural piece, with the vulnerability piece, that it's ultimately self-love is a practice that you're being committed to showing up to yourself, whatever that means in that moment.

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah. It was taking it from things that you say to things that you do and therefore things that you are.

And I never went back after that. That was my commitment to keep showing up as myself.

And what was amazing is my career, actually expanded from that moment. And when I stopped trying to be what I thought I was supposed to be, having written half a dozen books prior to that, and then feeling a subconscious pressure to be the teacher. And I stopped doing that, and I just decided maybe my way of teaching is just to be wholeheartedly who I am in whatever direction that takes me, and that's the teaching itself. And I became a better teacher from doing that. And so, my relationship with myself dramatically changed over that period of working on that book, really.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful. That's beautiful.

Dr. David Hamilton

David, for people that want to find out more about you and your books and your work. What's the best way for them to do that?

My website, drdavidhamilton.com and I'm active on social media, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. So [@davidrhamiltonphd](https://www.instagram.com/davidrhamiltonphd) is my handle. Except on Twitter, it's [@DrDRHamilton](https://twitter.com/DrDRHamilton). I couldn't get davidrhamiltonphd.

Alex Howard

You will have the second doctorate in a few years.

Dr. David Hamilton

Yeah I will.

But, my website is pretty much the vehicle. It gets into all these things. I write loads and loads of blogs, got loads of videos I do on YouTube and stuff like that and they're all through my website anyway.

Alex Howard

Fantastic. David, thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

Dr. David Hamilton

It's been my pleasure. Thanks very much for inviting me to share this conversation.