



Conscious Life presents

# TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

## Another way to live: grounded in goodness

Guest: Martin Aylward

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### [00:00:10] Jaia Bristow

Hello and welcome back to this Trauma Super Conference. My name is Jaia Bristow and I'm one of your hosts.

And today I am very pleased to be welcoming a special guest. Not only is he my father, but he is also the author of the book, *Awake Where You Are*, and a Buddhist teacher. Welcome, Martin Aylward.

### Martin Aylward

Hi, Jaia. Nice to see you.

### Jaia Bristow

Great to see you, too. And I'm particularly excited about today's conversation because I think it's a really interesting one to be having on a Trauma Super Conference, right? Because it's more about the opposite of trauma. So maybe let's start there. What is the opposite of trauma and how can we cultivate that in our lives?

### Martin Aylward

It's hard to find a word. It's hard to find a word that would suggest the opposite. I mean, we might have a simple word like ease, wellbeing, the capacity to live in a well-regulated nervous system and without the kind of emotional wounds and psychological defenses that get built up through the accumulation, not just of painful or difficult experience, but of the ways in which those have become traumatic residue, i.e., by the fact that we haven't been able, the impact of a painful or difficult experience has been so much that we haven't been able to digest it or metabolize it in real time.

And then it's become a kind of, well, a physiological tension pattern and then an emotional wound and then it affects our behavior and our responses and the sort of wired-ness of our nervous system, et cetera.

So on the one hand, we could talk about the opposite of that as just the absence of defensiveness. But specifically, there's another kind of opposite which is like the inheritance of goodness, in a

way. So that's an interesting angle, I think, the opposite of trauma as goodness. And the way in which we can, each of us, look back and, of course, we've all got our own stories and we may have come from a more or less supportive kind of background.

**[00:02:29]**

We may have been in a stable situation with basically a lot of love and support, and yet within that there will be places where we felt marginalized, hurt, ignored, unseen, not well attended to, et cetera. Or we may have come from a background in which there's been a lot of disruption, even violence, abuse, neglect and all the severe forms of that.

There may have been the repeated difficult situations that have given rise to trauma, or there may have just been one or several isolated incidents that had a very painful impact.

But along with all of that, it's like if you've made it, the you, being whoever might be listening or watching this. If you've made it here, to an adult situation wherein you're more or less functional and we could have the range of that quite wide. If you're more or less psychologically, emotionally functional, there's a way in which your capacity to more or less function is the evidence, for want of a better word, of blessings of love.

And the way in which we may look back and say well, I don't remember much love. I remember a lot of the other stuff and a lot of difficulty and a lot of things for which, you know, I still feel the painful effect.

And so to give an example, I remember somebody asking my teacher once, telling about the difficulty of their background and their history, et cetera. And the response my teacher gave was the very fact that the person is here, inquiring into that now is somehow, they can only do that because there was somehow enough holding or enough care or enough support of some kind or other. And it may have been not very much, but enough to get you to the fact that you are more or less functional today.

And so it makes a difference what we focus on when we look back. If we keep reinforcing to us our sort of hard-luck story, all the painful things that have happened to me, then that has one effect.

And if we're able to look back and actually recognize, and it may be just an isolated event. I know people who've had a very disruptive background, but there was maybe one person, and sometimes it can be like a woman in a shop when the person was eight-years-old who spoke to them kindly, while their parent was shouting at them or something.

And that one expression of attentive, caring, supportive kindness, one person who really saw them as a child and attended to them with presence and love, that somehow becomes a kind of beacon for the person.

So that's an example of a small thing, but it can become what I'm calling enough. And I think it's very important and helpful in dealing with the painful residue of one's past, to also be able to look and really recognize, and even amplify, where did I get enough support? Who are the people? Or what were the situations where I got some kind of signpost of okayness or some sense of possibility that it is actually possible to live in a way that's free and well regulated, et cetera? So that's a bit of a long answer to the first sense of what could be the opposite to trauma.

**[00:05:59] Jaia Bristow**

No, that's fantastic because I think there's lots of really interesting threads in what you've just shared, right? One is that it's hard to define the opposite of trauma. But that if we were to try to, it's like you say, it's blessings, it's love, it's holding, it's lack of defensiveness and difficulty.

And again, what I'm hearing is like how often, especially these days, trauma is a word that's kind of trending, right? It's something that's also very valid. Like a lot of us do have a lot of trauma to process, but it's also become this word that's trending. It's something that people like to cling onto.

And what I'm hearing you say is that the more we cling onto it, the more we focus on our trauma, the more that it's creating this sort of pattern of hard luck or difficulty. Which is not to deny that difficulty is present, but that there is another way of managing trauma, which is to cultivate whatever this opposite of trauma is, right?

Where it's to cultivate and to remember the areas where we have had more ease, where there has been holding, where there has been love which is created not to deny the trauma, but maybe to give space. Maybe you could say a bit more about why it's useful to cultivate and focus on the blessings or the love or the holding, as opposed to focusing on the trauma. Because of course, there's the idea that if we focus on the trauma, then we can fix it or undo it, all right? So why would you suggest that we focus on the opposite?

**Martin Aylward**

Yeah. Well, if you want to actually enter into the field of difficult historical residue and address it, understand it, process its residue, which means in some ways, going back into the painful circumstance, albeit with some skill and some holding.

The very fact that you need skill and you need holding to do that, it's like, where is the holding going to come from? Well, partly it can come from a skillful therapist, for example, right? That's partly what a therapist is doing there, providing some skill and some holding, but having the sense of your life being a holding container and the sense of that holding being one where there is goodness in your life. And not just being able to think about that or trying to persuade yourself of it, but to be able to realize that your life has its emergence.

You have a body and breath and a heartbeat and blood pumping and skin renewal and all the rest of it, because, in some way, of goodness.

And that's not an idea. It's like it's feeling your way into and relaxing your way into this kind of felt sense that, oh, life is supporting me. Life is supporting me. And being able to recognize your own heartbeat and your own breath and your own sensory capacity and all, as somehow the evidence of life's support.

And it's interesting you talk about trauma as sort of trending and it's true that it's a relatively new recognition. And it's a really important recognition. What trauma is, how it gets caused, how it gets perpetuated over time, and then the increasing, not just recognition, but the increasing skill with different modalities for managing that.

**[00:09:31]**

And it's also interesting that somehow the recognition of trauma and the way it's gaining more widespread acceptance, somehow seems to have gone along with our cultural forgetting of blessing, in a way, or goodness.

And it's interesting that in pretty much all traditional societies and cultures, the sense of, and often that comes with a religious type of background. And of course, religion has been the origin of a lot of trauma as well.

And yet within some kind of spiritual view or spiritual understanding of life being bigger than just the material sense of me and my life and the world I'm living in, a sense of the way we relate to, particularly three things, land, lineage and ancestry.

The way we relate to land as the goodness of the support of land, like the way things grow, the way the sun shines, the way the rain blesses the soil, the way trees grow and provide for us. In traditional societies, the natural world has been a source of blessing that you can actually connect with and reflect on and plug into and receive from, the feeling of receiving blessings by walking barefoot on grass, for example.

And then lineage and ancestry, right? And again, trauma we often relate to the ancestry as this painful or problematic thing. And yet, there's also a way in which we're here because of, and of course, there may be bad things in our past and, objectively, ways in which our own ancestors have mistreated us in various ways.

And yet, there's all of this sense of ancestry in a wider sense. Not just my parents and their parents, et cetera, but the fact that we emerge out of a vast, not even just human lineage. I mean, actually the lineage all of life. We carry, even in our DNA it's like we're carrying the goodness of every single life. Like, you imagine these thousands of generations of people that have been basically doing their best and messing up, just like you and me, right? And everybody else we know. We're all trying our best and messing up in various ways.

And we are the inheritance of millennia and millennia and millennia of beings trying their best, and yet failing to do as well as they would like. And there's something kind of quite beautiful in that.

When these hands move, when this voice speaks, when this brain fires, when this heart pumps, it's not in isolation. And so reflecting on goodness is a way of recovering a sense of holding, safe holding, trustworthy holding, loving holding is the context in which we're able to turn towards that which is painful without being overwhelmed by it.

### **Jaia Bristow**

That's beautiful. And I love, yeah, like you say, when we think about ancestry, the ancestry of all of life and focusing really on the goodness. And how, of course, there's something around what you were saying at the beginning, around how we need that holding, we need that support to work on trauma in the first place, right? Because if not, there's the risk of retraumatizing ourselves or if we're working with someone and there's not that skill and that holding, there's always the risk of retraumatizing, which can be dangerous.

**[00:13:07]**

And also just the idea that if we're focusing on the goodness and the blessings, how that's such a nicer way in some ways, a more enjoyable way of working with trauma in ourselves, in others.

And this idea that there's so much division in the world at the moment, across so many different topics. And in my work, as you know, I work around power and privilege dynamics and anti-discrimination work and inclusion work and equity, diversity, all those kinds of topics which are very divisive. And again, there's a tendency to try and put people in a good box or a bad box, right?

And we know that as humans, everything is so much more complex than that. And so looking for the good in people, looking for the good in ourselves, focusing on the feelings of goodness, focusing on love and holding, it can totally rewire pathways, right?

And I noticed that in my own trauma healing journey that, yeah, there's different approaches, right? And I'm not saying anything against all these other modalities which are important. And I've worked through many modalities in trying to understand my trauma and work on things and stuff. But one way to do that, one way to access that is to focus on the good, on the positive, on the blessings, on the love, on the holding.

And another thing that I've been taught is like in my body sometimes I have huge amounts of pain a lot of the time, but trying to find that one area that feels okay, where there's some ease, some lack of pain, some spaciousness or something. And so, yeah, that's what comes up for me as I hear you share.

### **Martin Aylward**

Yeah. And it can sound in the telling of it, like there could be an element of denial or ignoring, but just like the example you gave, right? It's not that you're pretending that which is painful isn't happening or that you're shutting down to it, but it's just that one can easily get engulfed by that which is painful, right? And so how do you not get engulfed by that which is painful? Well, you need a bigger container, in which you can allow for that which is painful without getting engulfed by it.

And so that sense of actually the training of learning to recognize what we're variously calling goodness, a spaciousness, love, et cetera, because otherwise we get imprisoned by the negativity bias. And so that's a well understood mechanism by which we tend to reinforce the negative.

And the way that happens psychologically is we each get caught up in our own hard-luck story. And we can all find plenty of evidence if we go around looking for it, for poor me. Why things don't work out for me and people have got it in for me and that person isn't behaving nicely towards me and life isn't turning out the way I want it to. And I can find plenty of things that are wrong in here, in my own heart, my own mind and my own body and my own life circumstances, my own family and the world around me.

And yes, wow, that's actually, not just painful that stuff is happening, but it's painful to walk around amplifying that and to be reinforcing one's own hard-luck story somehow.

**[00:16:39]**

But because of the negativity bias, because we're hardwired evolutionary to be alert to danger, for example, and because for our survival we needed, right, when we were about to be jumped on by a sabertooth tiger or whatever the evolutionary situation was, or when tribal warfare was much more prevalent than it is now. And of course, some people are still living in that kind of situation.

But historically, evolutionarily we've been hardwired in our nervous system to attune for danger. And the fact is, there may be plenty of situations in your life and my life and whoever's listening, where you're not in imminent danger. But the hardwiring makes you look out as if things are bad, things are wrong, things are dangerous, things are shit. And is that true?

And in fact, whether it's even true or not sometimes isn't important. Is more important, is it useful? Is it useful to reinforce that? Or what about if you actually consciously tune into a body, which may be tense in some way that's making us uncomfortable and just to evoke the possibility of relaxing a little, of feeling our breath, the warmth of our body, our feet on the ground, et cetera. So some of those very simple things that allow us to attune to the good and the beautiful, rather than just the difficult and the painful.

And I remembered recently hearing from somebody who had a very disruptive early life and had done lots of therapy, in lots of different ways. And the person was saying that looking back on all the different things they'd done, that the single most helpful, and it can sound very simplistic almost, the single most helpful and transformative thing they'd done, they recognized, was that very classical practice of making a list of ten things at the end of every day for which they were grateful or appreciative. And how hard that can be at the beginning, because you're full of the hard-luck story and everything that's gone wrong and everything that's been unfortunate and uncomfortable.

And so maybe I'll just, oh, I felt the sun on my skin. And you don't really feel it right, but somebody's giving you this job to do, so you write it down and you struggle to make the list. But as the person did it consistently for more than a month, right, which is how long it can take to rewire a habit until it becomes natural to actually list not just ten things, but that the general sense is that there's limitless amounts for which one can be grateful.

And that's in no conflict at all with the things that are also painful or distressing, things that need care and attention, difficult conversations I might need to have, things I might need to apologize for, things I might need to actually enter into that I would rather ignore or stay away from. And one can still engage with the territory of the difficult, but one can engage with it more fluidly and fearlessly, because it's held within the bigger territory of the beautiful and the blessed.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And I love that idea of moving away from just what's true to what's useful. Right, because truth can be subjective in various different ways and there's so many different things that can be true at the same time.

So if we're just trying to focus on what's true, yes, difficult things are true, but good things can also be true and there's so many different elements and it's like you can just focus on things in different ways. So focusing on truth is often what can create division, right? Because it's like people are

arguing about the same thing, because they have two slightly different versions of truth. And it's not like one person is right and one person is wrong, it's that they're both right.

**[00:20:28]**

But instead, if we focus on what's useful and like you say, that example of this person who was sharing with you, it can be so much more useful to focus on the good and the blessings and gratitude for the positivity. And sometimes it can also be useful if trauma comes up, right?

So again, it's to focus on that or to explore that, with support in whatever way. So I love that shift of let's move away from what's true, which is too vague a word in some ways, to actually what's useful. What's useful for me in this moment, becomes a much more interesting question.

### **Martin Aylward**

Yeah, exactly. And it's quite radical that, because we get fixated. Yeah, but it's true. And maybe plenty of things that are true in one's own background as well, and yet focusing on them because they're true.

Sometimes, of course, it's helpful and important to be able to go back over one's story and understand what's happened to me. But sometimes, by overly focusing on it, that which is supposed to be in the service of understanding and resolving and dropping one's hard-luck story, can sometimes end up actually reinforcing it.

Because the more I tell this is what happened, the more times I tell it to people, the more times it becomes this sort of harder and harder truth. And it can be very difficult to shift from the true to the useful, because we get wedded to the idea of truth. But that's the fact. And the idea of something being true seems to make it very solid.

And so, yeah, it may be true, but is it useful? And that then gives us a whole different sense of what's actually useful to focus on. And mostly we tend to need actual practices for that.

Like I said, to compensate for the negativity bias firstly, and then to find out what's useful, right? And then to be able to focus on what's useful. And if we spent the last few decades focusing on what's true and let's face it, on a particular version of what's true, the version that I'm calling my hard-luck story, then you can't just decide not to think about that anymore. Because if you decide not to think about it, then it does become more of a repressive movement.

You're just trying to deny it or distract from it. So how to find out? How do I find out what's useful? And how do I, it's not just thinking about it, but how do I more inhabit? How do I feel my way into what's useful? How do I feel my way into a sense of goodness? How do I feel my way into being able to have the genuine sense that I'm receiving the blessings of my life? I'm receiving the blessings of my life?

And so in the meditative traditions that I sort of grew up in, in my practice and that I've been teaching for the last 20 years or so, it's really not much about what we do with our thought or our belief, but much more how we learn to really turn towards and inhabit these different mind and heart places.

**[00:23:49]**

And so, like the simple practice of meditation, just learning to attend to breath. It's not just about attention in a neutral sense, just being attentive to the breath, but about the kind of attention you give. So you're giving an attention that's appreciative, giving an attention that has room for the wonder, like the wonder of breathing. It was so simple and ordinary, but if I had to be in charge of breathing, I'd make a mess of it. We all would. Tried to meditate, and pings off here.

And so the fact that I am a useless breather, right, and yet it keeps on going, and then the heart, don't even think about the beating of a heart, but yet it keeps on going. And then I cut myself and it heals. And then the various autonomic processes, just a bodily life.

There's a way in which the more we actually are not so lost in our heads and our thoughts and our hard-luck story, but the more we're plugged in, which is the whole theme of my book, right? That exploration of what embodied presence really is, the more this sense of what's useful and the more the sense of receiving something that's inherently supportive, just comes online in a way that's not about thinking about it, but it's more about the felt sense of being able to receive that.

### **Jaia Bristow**

And I'm just going to come in with a slightly different angle. Because again, what I love about what's useful is, like you say, practices can be useful. It can be much more useful to focus on meditation and the sensation and appreciation than on the story, for example.

And sometimes it is useful to bring in some context, to bring in the story. It depends on also, if you're in talk therapy, for example, then it's useful to feel and to share. But sometimes the story is relevant as well.

So just to anyone listening, once again, it's a bit more nuanced and complicated than there is just one right way and one wrong way of doing things, right? Yeah, as you say, focusing on appreciation, on goodness, on practices. But it's just asking that question of what is useful?

And if context and sharing some of the story can be useful without getting so caught up in it that we're reinforcing it, then that's also okay. It's not saying forget the story, because I know that can sometimes go more into bypassing, which can also be not very helpful at times. Could you say a few words about that?

### **Martin Aylward**

Yeah, it's very useful, very important to be able to focus sometimes on the story, on what's happened to me and how to address it and how to understand how's it set up certain defenses or behavioral patterns, and how I might resolve those.

It is useful to focus on that to the extent that I can hold it. Because if you can't hold it, then it's actually not useful to focus on it. That's when it becomes retraumatizing, when you get pulled into the vortex of my hard-luck story, right, then you just end up reinforcing it.

So it seems to me, and that's often what a therapeutic context is doing, or what any kind of transformational practice context is doing, is first setting the container. So the container of the



therapeutic relationship or the container of the practice environment, the container of meditation, the container of being able to establish embodied presence.

**[00:27:31]**

And then when you've got a sense that you can stay present and you can stay as the witness of your story and your feelings and the residue of them, without getting pulled into them, then I would say that's when it becomes not just useful, but necessary in a way.

Because if you just oh, just goodness and blessings. Goodness and blessings, and there's space. All the nice things we've spoken about, if you don't then use that to make room for addressing the difficulties and the pains that have befallen you, then you end up in avoidance, denial, bypassing, et cetera.

### **Jaia Bristow**

Absolutely. The whole concept of useful is that it has to have a use, right? And so I'm also curious, we've spoken a bit about things like therapy and different modalities and holding and we're talking about useful.

And one question that comes to mind is how, as different people, we have different ways of processing, we have different ways of managing our trauma, and we've talked about a few different things already. But I think something that can be useful as well is to understand how we function. So, for example, you and I have very different ways of processing, right?

I'm more of an external processor where I often need things like therapists, friends, family members to talk things through. You're more of what I call an internal processor. There's other types. So I'm wondering if we could say a few words about that as well, on how there are different ways of regulating and different ways of processing trauma, or even different ways of focusing on the goodness.

You talked about someone writing a journal or writing ten things that they appreciated or that were good. And that can be really great for some people and not so useful for others as well, right?

### **Martin Aylward**

Yeah. I think there are a few universal goods, if you like. It's good to develop, for example, some sense of being able to just stay present and not get caught up in your story, whoever you are.

It's good to be able to recover some sense of gratitude, whether you do that through thought or whether you do that through some of the meditative process I've described or whether you do it through writing a list, et cetera.

And yet, we have different styles like you just alluded to. And so that sense of, and this might be a good reflection for people listening if it's not already clear, to recognize, okay, how do you regulate? How do you recover some sense of okayness? And I imagine a lot of people listening to this are familiar with Peter Levine and his work, because he's written so much about trauma, in particular about regulation, right.

**[00:30:29]**

And so that, if people are familiar with that sense of the trauma vortex and the way we get caught up in the difficulty, or what we've been calling the hard-luck story, and then what do you do? What suits your style to help you regulate back to recover some sense of blessing or goodness, to use the language of today?

And so for some people, withdrawing to be alone is like the most efficient way of doing that. I go and I have a bath or I have a hot chocolate or whatever it is. It's like, give me my own space, get me away from all these other difficult human beings, and I'll be able to recover myself in that way.

And then for others, it's actually oh, having somebody that I can, so we could call that self-regulation, the first one, or co-regulation, where we're actually. And it can be verbal, but there's other forms of co-regulation.

Sometimes, just like when people know each other well and you just get to hang out with somebody that you know and love and trust. Sometimes you don't need to say anything to them. Being in their presence is reassuring in some way.

Or with pets. Some people would co-regulate very well, they wouldn't say oh, I keep my dog for co-regulation. But actually that's a part of what they might be getting from the people they live with or the animals they live with, is that kind of co-regulation where the reassuring presence of another, through something they do or through something they say, or through just the fact that they're there, is another kind of regulation.

And then of course, there's various activities that we might find regulating. I just mentioned having a bath or all kinds of other things.

And then also contact with nature. And again, it's different for some people. If people have grown up predominantly, or only, in the city. Some people find going out into the woods just plain terrifying. And all that they've got is the imagery from various horror movies about the forest that they've seen. So then that wouldn't be regulating.

But for a country bumpkin like me, there's something about being under trees, being in the natural world, feeling the sort of psychologically uncomplicated nature of the way trees grow and rain falls and sunshine and water flows and leaves fall.

We could make a long list of regulating situations and regulating activities, but we wouldn't cover them all anyway. So I think it's just helpful for people to consider firstly, in those three domains, are you more somebody who withdraws to regulate or engages to regulate or can sort of open up to nature to regulate.

And then finding regulating activities that allow to recover a sense of being okay, basically. And then what's useful, if we come back to that, to use the okayness, not just to take it for granted until something difficult gets stimulated again.

But to use those moments where you are okay, to then build your resilience, in a way, so then when you are okay, then you can actually turn towards the good or the beautiful, et cetera. Because it's too much to expect to be able to just do that in a moment where you're really

activated. There's a saying in my tradition which is practice while you can, you'll need it when you can't.

**[00:34:15] Jaia Bristow**

I love that.

**Martin Aylward**

And so to use the times where we are well-regulated and basically grounded and basically okay to actually take care of your mental health and your emotional wounds and all that stuff. And so that you build resilience, because when you're activated and hurt and confused, you can't then, you can't. All you can do then is try to regulate in some way. When you're in good condition, oh, you've got a lot of possibility there. Practice while you can, you'll need it when you can't.

**Jaia Bristow**

And something that comes to mind as well, as you share about these different ways of regulating, is I think we might all have our own tendencies, but we probably all have a bit of the various types. So again, it's asking what's useful in this moment, right?

So sometimes it is actually, depending on the situation, it might be more useful to retreat and take some time to process. Sometimes it might be more useful to call a friend or reach out to someone or ask for a hug or whatever it is. And I think that's important as well, because sometimes our responses to regulation can be trauma responses as well, right?

So sometimes, because of our patterning or whatever. So again, having that ability to know oneself, to know one's tendencies and asking oneself, what's useful in terms of choosing the regulating strategy, as well as like you were saying, once you're in it, what's useful?

**Martin Aylward**

Yeah, what's useful and also just what's possible, right? Like there is a sort of hierarchy of skillfulness with regulating activities. Like it might be regulating to just eat a whole chocolate cake because then you feel better, but that's okay. That's what you need to do to feel okay.

But if that's what you do every time you need regulating, it's going to cause its own problems over time. But then, I work with a lot of meditators, right, and so sometimes their problem is they think that meditation ought to be the medicine for everything. And if they've got any kind of a life, they ought to be able to just sit in meditation.

And so sometimes encouraging them, maybe in some situations TV is a better regulating thing, or maybe masturbation. That's a good one for meditators, because it's like a shocking idea. It's like actually a bit of self pleasuring might be a really good regulatory medicine for you.

And so that sense of not having too much of a fixed idea about what I should be doing, especially if one is involved in various sorts of self-improvement or spiritual disciplines. How easily we have an idea that there's a right thing to do and a proper thing to do, and it doesn't matter what it looks like. If it's helpful and it's not harmful, then it's good.

### **[00:37:09] Jaia Bristow**

Absolutely. And maybe, I'm aware of time, but maybe whilst we're on this idea of 'shoulds', in relation to trauma and to everything we've just shared, maybe you could say a few more words about that and about the 'shoulds'.

### **Martin Aylward**

I could say a lot of words about that. How the way we 'should' on ourselves, the way we reinforce the ways I should be, what I should do, how I should have handled that. The way all of that really reinforces the most pernicious bit for many of us of the hard-luck story, which is the sense that it's my fault, that I should be able to, that I shouldn't experience it like this or I should be able to do differently.

And I'm aware of that even in the way we've been talking today, right? I stand by all I've said about that sense of attuning to the good and the beautiful. But how easily if we grasp at that, I should be able to and then the 'I should' becomes an inner tension pattern.

There's so much to say. I've done whole month-long courses about that. So if I try to resume it very brightly, I think that I would say, and a lot of different things work for different people, but if I was to try to highlight one ground-level approach or practice that's helpful for all of these things, it's to keep recovering a kind of attunement to one's own felt sense.

Because that's where we find tension. And often, we're carrying tensions in ways we don't even know. And it's not until when our attention goes there, oh, like right now, just notice is your jaw loose or tight? Whoever's listening. Are your eyes relaxed or tense? Are your hands at ease?

We tend to have particular places and for some of us it's facially, some of us it's our shoulders, some of us it's our belly. But we tend to hold ourselves in tension patterns, and physical tension then drives along the hard-luck story, drives along the 'shoulding', drives along the feeling that there's something wrong.

And so just even in very, very simple ways throughout the day, it's like check, feel, breathe, soften. And just to see if you can check and soften, check and soften, even a little bit throughout the day and see what the beneficial results might be.

### **Jaia Bristow**

Wonderful. Well, I think there's some great material here today to be shared with listeners and viewers around cultivating goodness. That no one's in denial, not being in denial of one's trauma. And the difficult stories that some of us may or may not have lived, but within that there's space to focus on the goodness, to count our blessings. Maybe they're uncountable as well, but maybe listing ten blessings at the end of the day, or ten things we're grateful for.

And that not doing it with the lens of 'should', of tightness, but rather with a kind of appreciation and seeing how things shift. And I love the idea of if people are going to start doing this more as a practice, trying to start with at least one month, especially if people have had many years of focusing on the difficulties, and just seeing what happens. And that checking in with oneself and softening if there's tension there. I think that's already a huge amount of beneficial sharings and tools. So thank you very much.

**[00:40:55] Martin Aylward**

Thank you, Jaia.

**Jaia Bristow**

How can people find out more about you and your work?

**Martin Aylward**

I have a website, [MartinAylward.com](https://MartinAylward.com), which has my general teaching schedule on, and then [@MartinAylward on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/MartinAylward). And that's probably enough to lead to various places.

And they could also check out the meditation center where I live and teach in southwest France, which is called [Moulin de Chaves](#). And don't worry about the spelling of that, but everything's findable from my website, basically.

**Jaia Bristow**

Brilliant. Thank you so much for your time today. I really enjoyed this conversation.

**Martin Aylward**

Nice. Thank you.