

## Change Your Mind, Change the World Transcript

October 9, 2020

**Presenters: Richard J. Davidson and Dekila Chungyalpa; featuring a pre-recorded conversation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

>>Richard J. Davidson: Good evening, everyone. I'm Richie Davidson. And it's a pleasure to welcome you to the final event of this week-long series *The World We Make*, a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It's really been such an honor and pleasure to offer this to the world this week, these series of events. For those of you who were not able to tune in on previous evenings, all of these events will be available, are available online. You can check them out again. It's free. It's open to everyone. So please avail yourself of these opportunities. During this time of the pandemic, of the election in the United States, of racial injustice so vividly exposed, the importance of envisioning a different kind of world, a world that is designed to promote human flourishing, a world where well-being is prioritized is more than today than at any other time I think in human history. And so we're really grateful that such a large group from all over the world has joined with us tonight. In the few minutes before we began, I was seeing people from Brazil, Argentina, Australia, Uruguay, many other parts of the world. So please let us know. Siberia! Early in the morning in Siberia. Please let us know where you're from. From Mexico as well as many – Argentina and many different parts of the United States. Before we begin this evening, I want to thank our sponsors without whom these events could never have occurred – Chris and Sara Fortune, the Madison Gas & Electric Foundation, Jim and Judy Hirsch, the Outrider Foundation, the QTI Group, Atomic Object, and Delta Properties. All of whom contributed to allow this to be freely offered throughout the world. So we're really super grateful to all of them. Ten years ago, the Dalai Lama was in Madison, Wisconsin to inaugurate the Center for Healthy Minds. And many years before that when I first met His Holiness in 1992 he challenged me and he said why can't we use the same tools of modern neuroscience that we've been using to study anxiety and depression and fear? Why can't we use those same tools to study kindness and to study compassion? And then a few years later on another occasion when I was with His Holiness, he said to me in a more direct way "I want you to take the practices from our tradition, turn them into a form that enables everyone to practice – to be able to practice a more universal form, test this with the most rigorous tools of modern science that we have, and if we find those practices and tools to be valuable, to disseminate them widely." Of course, this is my assignment for the remainder of my life today on this planet. And that is why I am here this evening and why we do the work that we do. So recognizing that travel was impossible during this period, I asked His Holiness, the Dalai Lama whether he would agree to have a dialogue with me on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of our Center. And we shared some memories of his visit to Madison

when he inaugurated our center. He's been to Madison many times. Actually 16 times since he's been in exile. Really we're so fortunate to be blessed in this way. But when he was here in 2010, he came for the purpose of inaugurating our center. And he gave us some assignments for the work in our center including the study of compassion, to also begin to apply these tools to young children. When we asked him how we should go about doing that, he started laughing and he said he's never been a parent so he doesn't really know. But we should investigate that scientifically! So we've been doing that. He also asked us to work on strategies for bringing this out to many different sectors of our society. And that has been at the core of our activities as well. So it's really a delight to be able for the very first time to share this interview with you or parts of this interview. We should say that this evening we're going to show you excerpts for the interview. But if you sign up for watching this tonight and you can do this later too for those friends and relatives who may not be with us tonight. And you can get access to the entire dialogue that we had which transpired over the course of about an hour and a half. And so you can see both the specific excerpts that we're choosing for you this evening as well as the entire interview. And this evening to discuss these clips after each is shown, I've invited my dear friend and colleague at the Center for Healthy Minds who is the director of the Loka Initiative which was featured last night in our series and I'd like to now introduce Dekila Chungyalpa. And Dekila is a dear friend. She is an environmental activist and scholar. She has initiated the Loka Initiative here at the University of Wisconsin and for those of you who did not attend last evening, I highly recommend that you go back and look at the – at the recording from last evening. She assembled a remarkable group of faith leaders from different faith traditions to talk about the environment and the relation between personal well-being and planetary well-being. So it's really a pleasure to have you this evening, Dekila.

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: Thank you, Richie. It's lovely to be here. *Tashi Delek*, everybody!

>>Richard J. Davidson: So before we start this evening, if folks might please enter into the chat box where you're from, if you haven't done that already, and maybe a word or two about how you're feeling right now in this really crazy, uncertain time in which we're living. Just give us a word or two to share just right now, whatever it is. Don't think a long time about it. Just tell us: How are you feeling right now? And there are folks from Columbia, from Peru. One of – the words are now coming in. Hopeful. Happy. Stirred up. Blessed. grateful. Thank you for sharing. Very hopeful. Worried. Insane. Safe. Great. Stressed out in New York. Hugs from Kansas. Feeling hopeful and inspired. Anxious. The full range. Certainly, this is completely natural and understandable and I think we are all experiencing all of those emotions. They go up and down. So we're at the present now where we're going to begin sharing the clips. And I'd like to ask for the first clip to be shown. And in this clip, I was asking His Holiness to just give us some opening words about how he is doing right now and any words he might just share with us about his current situation in Dharamshala, India which is where this recording occurred.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: So I'm Buddhist. So one of my commitment is promotion of religious harmony. I have many genuine friends, spiritual friends, are among Muslim, among Hindu, among Christian, among Jews. Like that, so last now 60 years, I really find good opportunity and meantime also opportunity try to contribution from my little experience and knowledge. Then especially meeting with scientists. When I was very young, I received some toy, so something moving like car and like sometime human being moving. So I always, you see, wondering how, what is the mechanics and the way to move. So whenever I received some toy, few minutes I play, then I open, how it work. So since childhood, I have some keen interest about science. So now, here in this country, free country, I have very good opportunity to meet scientists and now including Richard Davidson. And then his profession about brain. So, these days I am telling, I am expressing that we, everybody want happy life, healthy body. Now here we should pay more attention, hygiene beside hygiene of physical we should include hygiene of emotion. So here, you see, in order to explain about how to bring inner peace. Something like mental level hygiene. So now very very useful. Those scientists, you see, who have much deeper knowledge about brain, how to work like that.

>>Richard J. Davidson: So that was the beginning. Dekila, do you want to comment on any aspect of this before I chime in?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: Sure. It just – hearing you tell your story also reminded me of how I ended up working with faith leaders all around the world. I am from Sikkim. I am raised Tibetan Buddhist. And I began working with Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in 2008 on environmental and climate issues. And I was training them, you know, all of my personal time at that time. And in 2009, I was able to present what we had done [to the Dalai Lama]. We had at that point trained monks and nuns from 22 monasteries and I thought he might say good job or pat me on my back. And what he ended up telling me was, “Why are you only working with Tibetan Buddhists? You should be working with all Buddhists!” And then he paused and said “...not just Buddhists, you should be working with all religions” and at that time he said there are 7 billion people on this planet, and 85% of them follow a faith. And whatever environmental and climate training programs I create must serve all of these faiths. And the Loka Initiative is very much designed around that with the idea that we serve faith leaders and Indigenous leaders on environmental and climate issues. It doesn't matter what their religion is. Very much inspired by his mandate.

>>Richard J. Davidson: That's beautiful. And actually that was the first time that Dekila and I met --

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: That's right.

>>Richard J. Davidson: – was at that meeting and since that time we have stayed in contact and it's really such a blessing and an extraordinary alignment of the stars that enabled Dekila to move to Madison and to establish the Loka Initiative here which we're really so grateful for. One of the other things that we heard in this clip is – for those who have not been familiar with the Dalai Lama's biography is his deeply inquisitive nature and his very long-standing interest in science. And he has been very much the inspirer in chief that helped to catalyze in a very direct way this hybrid field that we now call contemplative neuroscience, the study of how the brain changes in response to contemplative training. And it was really through His Holiness asking questions and really probing deeply in many ways he's like your ideal graduate student with intense and insistent curiosity and very empirically driven and someone who actually is able to change his views based on science. Wouldn't it be wonderful if other leaders in the world today had that same opinion, had that same stance toward science? Something quite remarkable. So in this next clip, I asked His Holiness to follow up on a point that he made just in the one we heard about cultivating mental hygiene. And I brought up the analogy that I often use of people brushing their teeth. Virtually every human being on the planet brushes their teeth. This is not something that is part of our genome. It's something that we've obviously all learned to do because we recognize that it's important for our personal physical hygiene and what we're talking about are practices important for our personal mental hygiene. Now, many people recognize that doing this is valuable. But they just can't sort of bring themselves to do it. And so let's listen to His Holiness on this next point.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Now basically the existing modern education very much oriented about material value. Never pay much attention about inner world. So now here, just simply tell to people you should pay more attention about the inner world is not necessarily convincing. Now, question of health – physical health, everybody take care. Their physical health very much related with mental health. So through that way about emotion, how to develop emotion, how to say make distinction positive emotion destructive emotion. Then how to reduce destructive emotion – this not as something religious matter. No. Simply education and academic subject.

>>Richard J. Davidson: So here I think His Holiness is talking about something that he has been talking about for the last number of years. And this is a kind of hygiene of emotion. And educating the emotions to diminish destructive emotions. And Dekila, I wonder if you have any thoughts about how these practices might be related to your central interest which is planetary care and caring for our environment? What is the connection between the reduction of destructive emotions and a greater awareness and openness and sensitivity to planetary well-being?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: I – well, I think a lot of it comes from why we are so easily manipulated to become mindless consumers. You know, understanding what is it that drives us to just consume and why is it that we grasp towards buying things continuously. When I think about all the large, you know, forces that are creating climate change and creating environmental destruction, so much of it is just part of, you know, the garment industry, for example. It's one of the highest carbon emitters, right? Flying in planes. You know, the diet that we have. The type of things we buy. What the cars we buy. And so all of it really comes down to the individual actions that multiply and become collective action and leads to collective impact. So if we were able to inculcate mindfulness in ourselves every time we had the desire to buy something, to stop and say why does the desire exist? Because we saw an ad or because they managed to get us really to desire something we didn't need before we saw that ad? Or because we were unhappy in the moment and we just wanted to get over that hump of unhappiness. Even having that mindfulness could help us become kinder to the planet, to each other. You know, just by choosing to live more simply. So I think that would be a wonderful place of connection.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Yeah. That's beautiful. I love that. Let's listen to the next clip of His Holiness.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: So now that I think remaining 100 year or 200 years I am hoping with helping scientists now people more paying more attention about our inner peace to tackle our destructive emotion. Now here, I always you see, expressing the quantum physics. The quantum physicists, you see, they make distinction – appearance and reality. Appearance things independently exist from objectivity. Most of the destructive emotion based on that. Then other hand is compassion. These, I think right, right emotion. Not based on these appearances, but thinking deeper level. So that some ancient Indian psychology, Indian text, which mentioned about psychology they also, you see, say same way most of the destructive emotion based on appearances. Now quantum physicists, some quantum physicists, you see, when they develop the deeper sort of understanding about quantum physics then they are sort of grasping. Some positive appears, some negative appears. Very much because of that grasping that much reduce, much less. So this Indian ancient psychology also is mentioned. So that's I think hopeful sign. All destructive emotion based on appearances. So appearance analyze not like the deeper reality, reality. So thinking more deeper reality everything combination of particle. A mind also momentarily changing. No independent mind. So through that way there is no 'Where is I?' no independent 'I.' So all this negative emotion is based on grasping something independently exists there – good or bad. So once, you see, we realize nothing as appears on deeper level – something different, some quantum physicists, they say deeper level, mental projection.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Amazing!

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: It's so profound in 3 minutes.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Really. So do you have anything you'd like to share about that, Dekila?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: Well, you know, what he's talking about, this idea of emptiness, there are three parts to it that everything is impermanent, that everything is changing, and, you know, we are – nothing is independent. Everything is interdependent. And this idea of dependent rising, that is the basis of our understanding of emptiness. And in the West, I've often heard emptiness being described in very nihilistic terms - nothing has meaning. It creates anxiety in a lot of people. In Tibetan view of emptiness, it's everything. It's just the giving up of the self. And the understanding of emptiness, you know, the way we personify it is in the form of Gyalyum Chemo, which in English, it's the great mother. So it's the personification of emptinesses basically the feminine divine. I just find that very beautiful!

>>Richard J. Davidson: That's great. Well, from a scientific perspective, this is really a profoundly important idea and there are many things to say about it. Perhaps some of you have had an experience where you have had a dream and in the dream something – anxiety provoking happens and you feel anxious or fearful. Then you might awaken or you might even actually recognize that you're in a dream. But the moment you recognize that it was a dream, the anxiety dramatically dissipates. And the interesting thing is the dream is created by our minds. And it turns out that the way we represent the world is really the same way that we generate a dream. And so we are constantly constructing reality based on our own idiosyncratic history, our upbringing and so forth. All of that shapes the brain and so what we experience as reality is something that we ourselves are constructing. In a very real way, everything is like a dream. And so if we can recognize that, it can really help to diminish the intensity of these destructive emotions. In scientific research on phenomena like stress, we find that it's not so much what the quote objective stressors are in our environment that determines our -- even our biologic response to the stressor. What is essential is our perceived stress. That is, how we actually perceive it. And so one person's stress may be another person's nourishment. It's very variable. And then this idea of the self. When neuroscientists have searched for the location in the brain where the self is represented, guess what? There is no location! And so it's represented all over the place! And this too is informative in helping to loosen this sense of a rigid, fixed identity that forecloses other possibilities. So let's now turn to the next clip.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Now this illness, also you see, happen. I don't know how much sort of connection – peace of mind and this illness. I don't know. As a sort of brain specialist, do you have some idea. Is this illness some connection with brain?

>>Richard J. Davidson: Well we know, Your Holiness, that it actually in some cases does have effects on the brain. We also know that there is a second pandemic, which is going to follow the direct pandemic caused by the virus itself, which is a mental health pandemic. In fact, the

findings from 2003 with the SARS, the severe respiratory syndrome, which was a variant of a coronavirus that happened in 2003 in a much less extended part of the globe. But we know from the SARS epidemic that there was a 30 percent increase in suicide rate among people who are 65 years and older. There was also more than 50 percent of the patients that recovered from SARS actually remained significantly anxious for many years after they recovered physically. And so there is a challenge of a different sort from the COVID virus that will be a mental health challenge. And so whether the brain is involved – it certainly is involved in these indirect ways.

>>Richard J. Davidson: So this was precipitated by a question that His Holiness asked and the question was whether there may be differences in the severity of COVID symptoms depending upon a person's mental state, what their mental state can affect that. And you heard the answer that I provided then. We also know that – that personality factors, a person's emotional demeanor, all impact the susceptibility to various kinds of infections. This has been studied with the common cold. It's also been studied in a less direct, but nevertheless scientifically compelling, way by looking at how different people respond to a vaccine. So, for example, in early work we did with mindfulness meditation, we demonstrated that those who went through a beginning 2 month training program in mindfulness based stress reduction actually had a more robust response to the flu vaccine. We can measure that by taking blood samples and looking at the antibody titers which provides a quantitative index of how effective the vaccine actually is. And we found that people who meditated for just this short period of time actually had a boost in their response to the flu vaccine. These are the kinds of findings that suggest there are indeed close connections between the mind, the brain, and the body. Again for those who have not listened to the whole week of programming that we've been putting on, the very first night on Monday evening featured the work of Melissa Rosenkranz in our Center who directly studies these mind-brain-body interactions. I encourage you to tune in. Dekila, from the perspective of Tibetan medicine or Tibetan culture or folklore, is there anything we can say about this issue, of different people responding to illness in a different way?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: I think so because we – we – I am not an expert I should say. But, you know, we believe the mind and the body are connected and we have these wind channels through which we can circulate not just blood but also energy. And we can actually cleanse those energy channels. And so this idea of the self only existing in the body doesn't exist, right? We see the self as being somehow in many ways I suppose larger than the body. And so there is a lot of space in there also for us to think about pain as something that might be happening to us but is also in some sense separate. Because we are working through meditation as one of the techniques for addressing pain management and because we understand that the mind and the body -- that the mind is larger than the body in a sense that we can actually through meditation heal the body if that makes sense.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Great. Thank you. So in this next clip, I reminded His Holiness before -- just before this of some of the progress that has been made in scientific research since he challenged us to begin studying the positive qualities of the mind and studying the practices which have evolved over more than 2,500 years to train the mind to nourish or cultivate these positive qualities. And I asked His Holiness if he had any advice for us, as scientists, about what we should be working on in the next 10 years or 20 years? And this is what His Holiness said.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Basically, not only we human being, but even animals for their survival... you see, they have some kind of sense of closeness feeling because of the basic nature of "we," including human being. Some other animals, those social animal, you see their survival, you see, entirely depend on the community. So therefore, biologically, just selfish self-centered 'I, I, I' is very much against that basic nature. And since we are social animal, we should use the word 'we, we, we, we' rather than 'I.' At young age, young children, they don't care what is the other's country or social sort of situation - rich or poor. And then like color now - these days, you see, the color make distinction. So young child never. So long play together with smile. We consider we are same.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Yeah. That's really beautiful comment by His Holiness. In fact, there is very good developmental scientific research that shows that children before the age of about 2 and a half or 3 years actually don't make any distinction based on skin color. And then it's after that that they begin to make distinctions. In research that we've done with our Kindness Curriculum which is a curriculum designed for 4 and 5 year olds, we have evaluated the impact of this curriculum on the cultivation of kindness and other prosocial qualities in kids of this age. And one of the really unexpected findings was this: Over the course of the first year of [AUDIO DROP] preschool in the United States becomes progressively more selfish. And the Kindness Curriculum helps to prevent that regression toward increased selfishness. And so it maintains a high level of prosocial behavior, of kindness, of cooperation. But it actually doesn't significantly increase it. It prevents it from decreasing which is what the typical child shows who is attending a typical classroom. A sad commentary on the education system at least here in the U.S. Dekila, I wonder if you can say anything about the more kind of Indigenous forms of education that you have studied and are familiar with? And also you've worked closely with monasteries in the Himalayan region. Some of the monasteries have very young children who are educated in the monastery, including kids 4 and 5 years of age. I'm wondering if you can say anything about how education in those different cultural settings might be different?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: I think the first thing I notice now that I'm grown-up about my own upbringing and how my cousins and my nieces and nephews are being raised and also what I know observe in other Indigenous cultures in the monasteries is we consider kindness to be a very important trait to be cultivated in children and they are rewarded for it. So you might



actually not be the best student. You might, you know, not be the fastest athlete. You might not be great in athletics. But typically your parents, the community, your teachers all praise you when they see you being kind to another child. It's something that is really rewarded for. And when you behave in a way that is selfish or unkind or ungenerous, we are called out for it. And I've seen this again and again in Indigenous communities too, especially communities that really value kinship. The idea of kinship because then that extends beyond the human community. It really goes into seeing an extension of your community into non-human species. You know, and people have these very intricate relationships with nature. For example, we're in Madison, Wisconsin. You know how the Indian tribes of Wisconsin feel about wild rice where it is a living entity that has its own rights. And if you look in India, there are two rivers that also have been given legal rights. And it comes right back to this idea of valuing not just -- not just compassion for human beings but also valuing compassion for all living beings. So it resonates a great deal.

>>Richard J. Davidson: That's beautiful. Actually that's a great segue. I think in the next clip, His Holiness is commenting on some of the really critical issues on climate change in the world today. So let's listen to that clip.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Global warming. Some expert, they say next few decades, the global warming reach such a level, then most of the river dry. So, so now, from another sort of aspect. So this very world now ending, reaching ending Ending. So the remaining maybe one century, two centuries, I think we should live happily. (laughs) No longer use, too much emphasis "we" and "they" and "fight." No longer! It's foolish! Short-sighted! The very world now coming to end, so remaining few century, logically we have to live happily helping each other and protect ecology. People usually call Tibet as roof of the world. So, according some scientists about global warming, they say within few decades most of the river which come from Tibet now gradually reduce. We can notice when we flying over Afghanistan. The many lakes now become very small. And many lakes, many rivers now something like little stream, like that. So eventually Tibet also become like that. So then Tibet measure most big rivers the ultimate source Tibet. So once Tibet become like desert, then whole Asia, you see, they're really facing... drink water, including China. Yangtze River in China Brahmaputra in India and then River in Southeast Asia, like that, and one river in Pakistan side. So now from the viewpoint of people in these area, should pay more attention about Tibet ecology. So since political matter, I retired already, 2010. 2011 I totally retired. But ecology of Tibet and culture, Tibetan knowledge, originally come from India. Ancient Indian philosophical knowledge we kept over 1,000 year. So this I fully committed to preserve as well as preserve the ecology in Tibet.

>>Richard J. Davidson: So, Dekila, please say a few words in response.

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: I mean, you know, to start with, the Tibetan plateau is critical for the well-being of over 3 billion people. What His Holiness is referring to is Tibet is called a third pole because it has so much of the ice and fresh water on the planet in its glaciers. Seven of the greatest mainland Asian rivers come from the Tibetan plateau – the Indus, the Ganges, the Yangtze, Mekong and others. His Holiness mentioned some of them. The rivers go into 7 or 8 different countries. 48% of that water from Tibet flows into India. When you think on how many people depend on the glaciers of Tibet and then you think for a second about how global warming means that temperatures are warming three times faster in the Tibetan plateau than anywhere else on the planet, the projections are very frightening. We're looking at a 4.6 centigrade increase of temp by the end of the century. Then on top of that we have this problem of the albedo effect because of the black soot caused by all of the coal burning and fossil fuels by India and China, primarily. So the soot actually goes over the glaciers and prevents the glaciers from being able to reflect some of the heat away. Instead what happens is the glaciers are just absorbing all of the heat even more. So when we think about Tibet, a lot of people have a tendency to just conflate it in political terms. The reality is if you care about health, well-being, peace, disasters, Tibet is actually critical for almost half of the planet's population. And it really matters what happens there.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Thank you. Very sobering. One of the questions that I asked His Holiness toward the end apropos of these difficult challenges is what gives him hope for the future? And this is what His Holiness had to say.

>>His Holiness the Dalai Lama: I don't know. (laughs). Here myself is a concerned people, including police. But now I more of this completely isolate. Because of the, this illness. So I have more time meditate or study. So meantime, I have more anxious go outside and meet people and talk. Although through television, we can communicate, but the meeting with people person-to-person, I also feel something fresh. They, people also, you see, say not only hearing Dalai Lama's voice, but seeing the person. So that I'm a little bit sort of anxious. After few months, this illness then reduce. Then I can go my sort of temple and different places like that. So otherwise, now I have more sort of restful day. Like that. And then my main meditation: altruism. You know, one of my daily prayer is so long, space remain, so long sentient beings remain, I will remain in order to serve. So that really brings inner strength. Not only question of one life, or 10 life, 100 life. But so long space remain, so long sentient beings remain, I will remain in order to serve.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Quite extraordinary. That last passage for those who might not know is from Shantideva. It's always so deeply moving to hear His Holiness articulate that as his commitment for the remainder of his days.

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: The – you know, the prayer, it's the *Bodhicharyavatara*. For anyone who works in let's say, in the caregiving field, for anyone who is either an environmental, climate, health, mental health, community service, the prayer is basically the aspiration that all of us have, that what we do is an offering to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings. It gets right to the motivation of why we decided to enter these fields. For Tibetan Buddhists there is this additional layer of emotion. It's very emotional to hear His Holiness say this prayer because also as Tibetan Buddhists we are appealing to him directly that he not leave us. You know, we believe that as a *Bodhisattva*, as an enlightened being, he can choose to be reborn again or not. He can go on without coming back as the next Dalai Lama. Or that he can even control his age, how long he wants to live. And so when we hear him say that prayer, it's a reminder of the commitment we have to him and he has to us because he's reassuring us that he's going to be around. He will stay. And so there are two layers of meanings that I always am just so moved by.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Yeah. That's so beautiful. So I think we are at the present now in our evening where we would be happy to entertain questions. Of course, we can't speak for His Holiness. But we're happy to have the dialogue and discussion. Shaun from our Center will come on and good evening, Shaun.

>>Shaun Huffman: Hello. Hi, Dekila, hi, Richie. Very nice to be here. Thank you to all of you again who are joining us this evening. We're very excited to have you all here today. I'll dive right in and start with our first question from our friend Octavia. The question is, reality is not one and is objective. Is it still reasonable in social and humanity sciences to continue talking about the scientific gold standard for research projects?

>>Richard J. Davidson: Well, I'll take a crack at it. I sort of think I know what you mean. And let me just say that the scientific gold standard is a moving target. There are some ways in which this quote scientific gold standard in research, for example, on contemplative practice it does not make any sense. For example, the pinnacle of scientific clinical research, the most rigorous kinds of clinical research, is the so-called double blind randomized control trial. And in pharmaceutical research, what double blind means is that the person administering a pill and the subject or patient receiving the pill, that neither of them know whether the pill is a placebo or is the actual drug. And that's the sense in which it is double blind. If you're exploring the impact, for example, of a practice designed to cultivate compassion, the person who is engaging in this practice can't be blind to it! And the person who is administering it also can't be blind to it. It doesn't make any sense. And so the very notion of a double blind trial is completely inappropriate to impose as a standard in this kind of research. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that the research need be any less rigorous. There are all kinds of other ways of rigorously controlling things. But they need a very different kind of framework. So this is a really important question. And we are still making real I would say baby steps at tinkering with the

quote scientific gold standard. And coming up with what may be a more appropriate way for science to address these issues.

>>Shaun Huffman: Hello, everyone again. Thank you so much, Richie for that answer. Our next question comes from Rachel. How can we approach leaders who deny or ignore the climate crisis with kindness and compassion when their actions are so cruel and harmful at times.

>>Richard J. Davidson: I think Dekila should take this.

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: So through the Loka Initiative I work with all kinds of leaders. Leaders you might think would have nothing in common with Buddhists from the Himalayas including Evangelical leaders. What I've learned is that the place we begin is what we both care about the most. So typically the issue I start with for example is disasters. As it happens, Evangelical leaders are some of the most generous donors post disasters. It is an issue they care about very deeply and see as part of their church mission. It's really important that instead of us perpetuating that kind of us versus them narrative that we actually find some common ground. Something that they care about deeply enough that we can build a bridge over. I think this idea that people deny climate change because they don't believe in the science is turning out to be not true. What we are learning more and more is that, for example, just in the United States 70% and over actually believe that climate change is real. The parts where it starts fraying, that acceptance of climate science when it starts fraying is because of what those consequences might look like for them. And so more than ever, it's really important that we have these conversations and that we not ignore what these leaders are saying. If anything, we need to be reaching out to them and go and negotiate what those consequences look like because we cannot afford to be siloed in our own world.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Thank you.

>>Shaun Huffman: Hi again. Hello. I'm in the middle. That was a very lovely answer. Thank you so much, Dekila. The next question is from Oscar. Has healthy minds investigated a possibility of researching the minds of spiritual and religious leaders such as Pope Francis?

>>Richard J. Davidson: We are certainly interested in that kind of research. Although we are very active and we do a lot, we do have limited bandwidth. And so we can't investigate everything, including many things that we deem very worthy of investigation. And so there are other scientists with whom we partner and collaborate who are engaging in contemplative neuroscience with other faith traditions, for example, with Christianity. And that work is still in the early stages. But it's heartening to see that it is beginning and I expect over the next 5 years it will continue to flourish.

>>Shaun Huffman: Thank you, Richie. I think this question is very valuable for this time we're in. From Mary, could you comment on the global epidemic of loneliness?

>>Richard J. Davidson: Yeah. Maybe we can both take this. Let me just – I can begin by saying that (loneliness) in a recent survey of a large sample in the United States, 76% of the adult population rated themselves as being either moderately or significantly lonely. We know that loneliness is a risk factor for various kinds of physical illnesses and it actually is a greater risk factor than obesity is for cardiovascular disease. And so loneliness gets under the skin and exacts a toll on our well-being and on our biology. It's really a problem. And I would say that one of the four pillars of well-being in our framework for well-being is connection. And it's really about the qualities that promote healthy social relationships. Qualities like gratitude and appreciation and kindness and compassion. And those qualities can be nurtured. And so it's not so much the number of physical, you know, social contacts that we have. It's really about the quality of those social connections. And that's something that we can actually begin to nourish through these simple kinds of practices. So I would encourage viewers who might be interested in this to download our app. It's a free app. It's called the Healthy Minds Program. It's available throughout the world. Unfortunately, it's now only available in English. But we hope to have it translated into other languages soon. But it provides scientific content and simple practices for the four pillars of well-being which include awareness, connection, insight, and purpose. So please try it out. Dekila, do you have any comments about loneliness that you'd like to share?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: It's-- we've been seeing it, especially among young people, that engage in faith based action, faith based conservation and climate work. And one of the things that I find myself saying a lot of the time is that we have to step out. It's a trap. Loneliness in itself is like a jail. And you have to break it because if you shift your – the center of yourself to your community or to a species that you love or a river that you love or even the planet, then you are able to break out of that jail of loneliness because you are now doing something. The byproduct of that is that you end up being in community. Just by taking that first action of working either for an issue that you care about or to protect a community or someone that you care about. What you end up doing is breaking that cycle of suffering. And you end up, you know, from a place of compassion for something else, you end up actually doing something that's really compassionate for yourself. So I really encourage all of you that are watching to get out there, find your community.

>>Richard J. Davidson: Beautiful. Thank you.

>>Shaun Huffman: Thank you again. Our next question comes from Kelly. How can we balance a peaceful mind with the urgent need to protect those being persecuted?

>>Richard J. Davidson: Yeah. I think we both have something to share about this. Dekila, you want to go first?

>>Dekila Chungyalpa: Sure. I think it's really important – I mean, you know, there is – we have Buddhists that like to just sit back and meditate on emptiness and compassion but don't do anything in the community. I am not one of those Buddhists. I should say that first. I think there can be no interpretation of our practice of compassion than to protect those that are vulnerable. There can be no better meditation, no better practice than taking care of those who are suffering around us, especially those that didn't make the choices that have caused these consequences. So, you know, if I think about the impacts of COVID-19, for example, on Black and native communities in the U.S., the system is already rigged that they are going to be the most vulnerable. And then COVID-19 comes along and, of course, it decimates the population that has in some sense already been deemed expendable. How can we not as people that care about peace, that care about balance, that care about compassion not respond in a way that protects these people, right? And so it brings me always right back to that importance of starting from a place of compassion.

>>Richard J. Davidson: That's beautiful. So there are a few things to say about this from the perspective of the kind of science that we do in contemplative science. One is that we can train our mind as we are actually engaged in the world. It is the idea that all forms of contemplative practice necessarily are sitting and quiet is a misconception. In fact, in our app, we have practices that you can do that are either sitting practices or they're active practices. And you can actually go through the entire program to cultivate well-being doing entirely active practices. And so it requires an orientation of one's mind as one is engaged in these kinds of activities. But it is possible to do. So that's one thing I encourage you to explore. There is research that shows that volunteering and engaging in that kind of community service is enormously helpful for our well-being and for peace of mind. In fact, there is a very famous study in the U.S. called the experience core study which has been done with people who are 98% African American from very low income households and what was done in this study is to have grandmothers become aids in a local public school. And scientists have tracked the impact of that. And this has had an enormous impact on their peace of mind and well-being because it has given them a real purpose in life. And that is an essential pillar of well-being in addition to all the other components of well-being that are pulled along. It even changes their brain in healthy ways. This has been documented. And so I think that there are many different ways to cultivate peace of mind and some of them can actually occur through direct service. Of course, at times I think it is helpful to step back and to take some moments of quiet, to do certain kinds of training, and then I think we can actually maximize our impact when we are engaged. So we can go back and forth in that way and be more present and less distracted when we are serving. So thank you for that great question.

>>Shaun Huffman: Thank you for your answers as well. This will conclude our Q&A section. For the last question we have it's from Annika. It asks as a mother of young children who have used the Kindness Curriculum and practice mindfulness and meditation, I'm curious what is your hope for the next generation of young humans of this planet?

>>Richard J. Davidson: Well, I – I'm very inspired by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama's emphasis on education. And when we talk to him about his sources of hope for the future, they often come down to or back to the younger generation and to the importance of education. I believe that we can nurture qualities like kindness in our young children, qualities of awareness. Scientific research has shown that we can actually nurture these qualities and they have really important impact on children's development, both social and emotional development, but also their academic development. We know from the scientific literature around social and emotional learning that kids who have the opportunity to benefit from social and emotional learning not only improve in their social and emotional skills but they actually show an average of an 11% point increase on standardized tests of cognitive and academic skills. And this is based on a very large metaanalysis with more than 280,000 school kids in the U.S. And so these kinds of scientific findings are really important in establishing the evidence base for implementing these kinds of programs at scale. And it is my vision and aspiration that training our minds, cultivating our minds in the way we're talking about in a way that can improve both personal and planetary well-being will be as commonly practiced in 20 years from now as physical exercise is today! And I think this is nothing short of an urgent public health need. So I encourage you all to be part of this journey and to join us in this global movement. If you'd like to learn more about our Center, we'll put up a couple of slides in a moment. But I first want to express my deepest gratitude to Dekila for joining me this evening, for sharing your wisdom and your passion, and a little bit about your upbringing for all these viewers. If you'd like to learn more about our Center, please go to our websites which you'll see in this slide both the Center for Healthy Minds and Healthy Minds Innovations. Please download our app to try it. Also all of the evenings that we've had for the public over the last five days will be online and you can go to our Center website to find the location for them. We encourage you to please check out the other evenings if you weren't able to be with us. For those of you who wish to see the full hour and a half dialogue that I had with His Holiness, we will provide a link for that as well. So I want to also say that this work that we do is dependent on the generosity of so many people. If you feel so inspired, please donate to our Center and help us bring human flourishing to larger and larger segments of the globe. I think we all agree that this is a time when we need it the most. We really so deeply are grateful for all of your support, for your engagement, for joining us tonight and other nights. And we wish you all the best. Please be safe. Please remain healthy. And I look forward to having you engaged in person at some point in the future. Have a good evening or a good day wherever you might be. Thank you so much!