**Minds Matter Bonus Episode: Questions for a Buddhist Monk**

0:00:04.6 Beth Fisher: Welcome back to Mind Matters podcast sponsored by the Monash Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies, I'm Beth.

0:00:12.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: And I'm Ava. And on Minds Matters, we explore research in neuroscience and psychology while talking through our own personal experiences.

0:00:19.7 Beth Fisher: So this week on the podcast, we have a little bit of a different episode, we spoke to one of my friends who's doing the PhD with me, Kevin. And Kevin is actually a Buddhist monk, so we don't speak so much about his research, but more about his experience as monk his ideas on what it means to have a self or no self, and these broader broader themes.

[music]

0:00:52.6 Beth Fisher: With one of my dear friends now and Monk. [laughter] Kevin [laughter]

0:01:00.7 Kevin Berryman: Dear Monk.

0:01:00.8 Beth Fisher: So the way we came about this idea is I've been... So Kevin's doing a PhD in my lab, and we always stop doing a whole lab work and have these conversations about life and enlightenment and the implications of meditation and all these kinds of things, and I've been telling Ava for about those conversations I've been having, and Ava thought, Oh... That's, a lot of those questions are really interesting, so maybe it would be good to have Kevin on the podcast and we can ask you about some of that.

0:01:28.7 Kevin Berryman: And I'm very, very happy to be here on the podcast and I echo the sentiment that Beth is a very, very good friend now, and Ava I'm sure you'll become a good friend as well.

0:01:40.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: We'll get there, I just gotta get to Australia and then.

0:01:44.4 Kevin Berryman: Yeah [laughter]

0:01:44.7 Ava Ma De Sousa: And then we'll... He'll be my dear friend and monk as well.

0:01:47.8 Beth Fisher: When Ava first asked what kind of monk Kevin was, I did say extreme. So that, that's my extent of knowledge on what's going on. So hopefully you can shed more light on all of that.

0:02:00.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Am I an extreme monk? [laughter] I dunno how extreme I am, but it's so technically though, I am a monk in what's called the Theravada forest tradition.

0:02:09.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:02:11.9 Kevin Berryman: So that is, you could say it's one of the earliest schools of Buddhism and the objective of the Theravada forest lineage is most of the time you spend your time living in the forest.

0:02:23.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Oh, okay.

0:02:24.2 Kevin Berryman: And meditating. You don't spend most of your time in a lab at university [laughter] So I have spent many, many years already in a forest. And so now I'm not in a forest anymore, so am I extreme [laughter]? Maybe.

0:02:42.0 Beth Fisher: So how many years have you been... And do you say practicing.

0:02:47.6 Kevin Berryman: In essence, I've been a monk for quite a long time, I've been... Actually, I've been ordained now for 17 years, and in that 17 years, I said I spent many, many years in Thailand in the jungles, and then come back to Australia, living in mainly the forest in Australia. And I got to a point where it's like, Well, I can do my own meditation and I can live my life in this way, but it is pretty sheltered and it's pretty much... You hear the same kinds of opinions. You do the same things, you talk to the same people, the kind of ideas that you have, it all just echoes each other. That gets a little bit boring after a while. So I decided to finish up my psych degree that I'd started beforehand, and I just found it quite rewarding to actually do an academic path outside of Buddhism, but my Buddhist practice, but also there's something that's a little bit aligned with what I do in my kind of practice of meditation and Buddhism.

0:03:58.6 Beth Fisher: And yeah, some of these questions that I ask are gonna be entirely naive because I am quite naive to all of these.

0:04:03.0 Kevin Berryman: Naive questions are great.

0:04:05.7 Beth Fisher: So from my understanding of becoming a monk is that yeah, you remove yourself from kind of interacting with society, you have these long periods of time where you don't speak in all of those things, is being in academia in conflict with some of those core beliefs, or is that another form of contemplation. So how does that fit together?

0:04:28.2 Kevin Berryman: I wouldn't say it's in conflict of a core belief, because there's plenty of monastics that do take an academic track, but most of the time they'll take an academic track in specifically in Buddhist Studies and Buddhist philosophy, so it isn't really in conflict, but you could say it is a little bit different, at least in my specific tradition, because we are so focused on being in the forest and all those kinds of things. So it's not in conflict, but it's just not so common. So therefore, you don't see too many of me walking around walking around, it's not common, but everybody that everybody that's in my lineage and stuff that they are all fine with it.

0:05:10.5 Beth Fisher: Yeah, so then... And what do you wanna give a bit of an overview about what you're studying in your PhD? Yeah.

0:05:16.8 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah. Cool. So what I'm essentially looking at is whether different kinds of meditation actually change the way that you morally engage in the world. Obviously, different kinds of meditations are meant to do different things to your mind states. So you would assume that if you are doing those over a long period of times, your mind states and the way that you're viewing the world is changing. So essentially you'd also include in that, that maybe the way that you're morally engaging in the world is changing. So the kind of questions that I'm asking are, well, what actually is meditation doing to your moral life? I obviously come from a Buddhist perspective, and we obviously have Buddhist meditation, but within that we have a pre-existing ethical framework that we're meant to adhere by. Most meditation styles these days they don't have that. So it's pretty hard to say that, okay, meditation will just make you a better person, a more moral person.

0:06:15.2 Kevin Berryman: It's like, well, actually, is it, and are different meditations doing different things to your morality. And in essence, what hopefully the research I'll be doing is getting to, is one of the biggest goals of practicing meditation is that you are trying to see through the illusion of the ego that you have or the sense of self. And now if you actually get that, my question is, is like, well, if you are not operating from a sense of self, what's that actually doing to the way that you're morally engaging in the world? And so I'll try and do a little bit of experimental work around that and try to do a little bit of like philosophical conceptual work around that. So that's me in a nutshell, and if I can get that worked out, [laughter] I'd be pretty happy. But let's see. [laughter]

0:07:02.2 Ava Ma De Sousa: So are you working under the assumption or hypothesis that a certain type of medication... Meditation, sorry, which you can maybe explain more like what exactly goes into the meditation that you do would lead to someone becoming more morally engaged or just differently morally engaged? And like a part two of my question is, because I guess from the outside meditation, Buddhism feels like it's about reaching this point where you completely disengage from your ego and you let go of your attachments, then why would you want to morally engage at all if you're no longer like, you know, living in the world as us regular humans? So I guess that's a kind of two-parter, so you can take that as you will.

0:07:44.9 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. So I guess to the first part, so you would... You'd maybe think like there's different... Obviously there's many, many different kinds of meditation, but let's take two of the really big ones and the really popular ones these days is, mindfulness meditation and then also compassion meditation. Now these are two very different styles that actually instigate very different kinds of mind states. Compassion is very, very different from being non-judgemental to all of your emotional experience in the world. So you might think that, well, if I practice compassion meditation, I might have more of these compassionate feelings, more of these kinds of compassionate ways that I interact in the world. I'm actually trying to actively promote these compassionate feelings. So maybe the way that I'm morally engaging the world is more kind and generous now.

0:08:37.8 Kevin Berryman: But maybe something like mindfulness, because you're operating from this standpoint of any emotion that I have, I... Looking at this non-judgemental things arise and pass away in the world and I just step back from them, that actually might be changing the way that you are judging moral events. If you are trying to foster a non-judgemental attitude, what's that doing to the way that you're morally judging things in the world? And so there's the potential there for different kinds of meditations to sort of change the way that you morally engage in the world, maybe in that way. And there's... Obviously, there's lots more different kinds of meditation, but they're just two of the bigger ones. And you'll have to ask me the second part of the question again because I have a very, very bad short term memory.

[laughter]

0:09:23.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. I guess I have a follow up question to...

0:09:27.2 Kevin Berryman: Yeah.

0:09:27.5 Ava Ma De Sousa: That part. I guess you're hypothesising that these different forms of meditation would lead to very different kind of world-views and engagement. So are you hypothesising then that the mindfulness and the more no judgment would lead to a kind of detachment and that the compassion would be... Would be doing the opposite? And what about people like... I again, don't know much about Buddhism, but so if you're a standard everyday Buddhist, so like a civilian Buddhist versus like a monk, are you practicing both or does it really depend on the tradition that you're in as well?

0:10:08.7 Kevin Berryman: 'Cause the thing is a big part about Buddhist meditation practice. It's not just the meditation. Like it's, there's so many other things that are involved in it. As I said, there's this kind of... There's this... There's an ethical component, there's a social component. There's the different kinds of components where you're actually actively trying to do acts of generosity all the time. You're pushing against your natural inclination, there's all these different other kinds of practices. There's study, there's all these different areas that are a part of the practice that are above and beyond the meditation. So from the kind of Buddhist framework, a lot of these external forces are changing the way that you actually engage in the world anyway, as opposed to just the meditation. But what I was getting to before of like, well these days, most of the time people just practice the meditation side of it and they forget the rest of it.

0:11:04.8 Kevin Berryman: I think it's hard to say, well like, well... Okay, is it just the meditation that's making you morally better or morally worse? I can't really tell yet. So the kind of hypothesis is that I do think different kinds of meditations are gonna change the way that you morally engage in the world. But I also think maybe within those specific kinds of meditations, maybe one kind of meditation makes some aspects of your morality better, but it might make it worse, other parts worse. Whereas another meditation might do the same. Might make some other parts of your morality better, might make some other than worse. So I think we need to do a bit more careful research around this and actually find out, well which kind of meditation is making, say, for example, your behaviors better, but which kind makes it worse. And if you realize that one makes it worse, then you can supplement with a different kind of meditation.

0:12:03.1 Beth Fisher: I think that's a really good point. I think I definitely forget that in terms of being a monk, that it's not just this meditative practice, it's all these other things that you do with the community and all of... Yeah. And, and that kind of helps. I don't know that path that you're on and that that journey. And I think, yeah, that's good to remember because I definitely, when I think, oh I think, oh it's just meditating and not speaking and trying to lose sense of self. [laughter] But I... Obviously it's all these other practices. Well I don't know if it's too early to get into it [laughter], but another thing I wanted to talk about is well first of all is the... Is the ultimate goal of becoming a monk is that to achieve enlightenment.

0:12:48.0 Kevin Berryman: In most cases. Yes.

0:12:50.7 Beth Fisher: And then could you just explain a bit about what enlightenment is? Because we hear about it a lot and I feel like at the moment it's kind of one of these hot topics that everyone is talking about and different ways you can achieve it, whether that's taking like psychedelics or all these kinds of things. But yeah, so what, what is it? [laughter]

0:13:11.1 Kevin Berryman: Alright, okay, so I've gotta answer this in a very short period of time.

[laughter]

0:13:18.6 Kevin Berryman: So in essence what I... And just as a caveat to this, like I'm not enlightened so I don't really know I'm not there yet. Whatever I say is just coming from at least what I know conceptually, not what I know personally. So what you'd say enlightenment is though to some extent is that you've trained your mind to an extent where any kind of negative states of mind that come up, any kind of wanting and... Any kind of wanting or any kind of ill will or hatred in the mind or any kind of state of fundamental confusion about the way things are that becomes eradicated and in place of that then the mind becomes very positive.

0:14:11.1 Kevin Berryman: You could say there's states of compassion, kindness, clarity, wisdom, the kind of full enlightenment experience would mean that your mind sort of fundamentally changed to that way. And it's not going back. Now you can get smaller glimpses of that where it changes for a little while. It might... You might get inside into it for half an hour or a day or two days or three days, but then it... You just go back and [laughter], you get angry because you have to walk up the stairs or whatever it is. You can have these smaller kinds of experiences where things change but then you... There's a bit of a regression to the mean, you go back to normal. But you could say like the bigger enlightenment is where it would fundamentally change altogether.

0:14:55.0 Beth Fisher: And do you think if... Yeah, 'cause this is another thing that I wonder about. If people do achieve this sense of enlightenment, what is your engagement with "the real world". And because when I... I don't know, Ava how you feel, but when I hear about enlightenment, it's actually something I don't want to achieve. [laughter] Because for me, you know, relationships and complexities with around those and feelings so connected to the world is so important. And I do feel that strong feelings of love need to come with these other feelings because when people you love are hurt and those things, I would never, ever wanna give any of that up because I feel so connected to that. So yeah. What are the consequences, I guess of your engagement in the world if you become in enlightened? And also did you initially... Like, is that an experience people initially have it apprehension to become enlightened? I mean, I'm saying like it's easy and we could all just choose to do it, but is there a worry around what you lose through that?

0:15:56.0 Kevin Berryman: There could be, but because as I said, like if it is enlightenment in this more grounded and real sense, you're developing so many of those other qualities anyway, there's good positive qualities. It's not like you're going to lose anything because of it. It's that the kindness and compassion that comes about through the mind that is well trained in this way, you're not losing any of those love and connections. If anything you are getting more of it. But it's not, maybe not just so focused at these individual things in the world, it becomes more boundless. I don't... I'm not really sure that you actually would lose anything because of it. One thing that you might lose though is the... Like the downsides of the love and attachment of, when things change, when things change, you get heartbroken. Those kinds of things potentially wouldn't rock you as much.

0:16:56.4 Beth Fisher: Right. So if you experience like the loss of a loved one, that would be something that would... You wouldn't feel the pain as much? Is that.

0:17:07.4 Kevin Berryman: Not... I wouldn't say that you wouldn't feel the pain, obviously. If say for example, again, not enlightened, but if my mom died I'd really upset. I'd be super upset, that'd be terrible, but there would be this kind of acceptance there that this is the way it is. And that's part of the enlightenment experiments as well, is that you are just at ease with the way that the world is. It's not like you're taking anything away of like, well I just... I don't care about the world anymore.

0:17:37.9 Beth Fisher: Right.

0:17:38.2 Kevin Berryman: You care about it deeply, but you have a deep acceptance of the way that it actually is as well. If people are to come and go, it's like you're very... You would be very like overjoyed that you got to spend that time with them, but you'd also be okay with when it does finish.

0:18:01.3 Ava Ma De Sousa: I guess from... Yeah, from like a lay perspective, it just feels really difficult to understand how you could simultaneously have love and compassion and care deeply without also being attached to someone.

0:18:15.2 Kevin Berryman: One thing with attaching to people, we always attach to people because they're like a certain way. We love them for a particular reason. Now, one thing you sort of have to ask yourself is like is that a true kind of love or is that a love of the way that I think this person is. If we can actually really have kindness and compassion for someone, whoever they are and whatever way they are, and if that changes, that's a more, you could say... That's a more kind of... That's more care and compassion in this kind of altruistic, pure kind of sense. 'Cause you don't care if they change or not, but it's like, well I love this person and now they've changed. Now I don't love them anymore. So there's an attachment there. But if you do it without attachment, these people can change and it's fine.

0:19:07.0 Beth Fisher: And another thing is, 'cause sometimes I wonder, do you think that just say, if everyone became enlightened would we have a functioning society? What would that look like? Is this something we should all be aiming to achieve, or is this something that we should be letting a few people to achieve so they can then help others? What should our, I guess... Yeah, what should the end goal be?

0:19:35.1 Kevin Berryman: Just as a quick answer to that, I'm pretty sure most people aren't gonna become enlightened.

0:19:39.0 Beth Fisher: Yes, so we don't have to worry.

[laughter]

0:19:40.1 Kevin Berryman: So I don't think you have to worry about it too much, 'cause it's pretty difficult to do. So, yeah. I don't think it's too much and also it's... And the reason I say that is because different people are predisposed to do different things, like I'm not a truck... But there are plenty of people that are disposed to be truck drivers. So not everyone's predisposed to become enlightened either or to give this...

0:20:05.9 Beth Fisher: Right.

0:20:09.8 Kevin Berryman: To give their whole life up to actually do this thing. But is it something that we would want if everybody could do that? That's a very different question. I'm not really sure, I've been thinking about this for a few years, and it might not be the best thing that everybody is enlightened. You do need people that cure cancer and do all the kind of work that needs to be done. So I'm not sure if it is good for everybody to actually do that, but that doesn't mean that everybody couldn't benefit from actually trying.

0:20:47.2 Beth Fisher: Right, I see.

0:20:48.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: How actively would you say are you pursuing enlightenment and is the academic part of it helpful to that, or is it kind of like you're taking a pause on the enlightenment path or it's just a deviation or it's actually helping you get there?

0:21:02.8 Kevin Berryman: For me, I think it's helping me get there because a part of it is... 'Cause one of the big things about what I think enlightenment is, it's really deeply understanding your experience for what it is. And a part of the academic track and the things that I like to work on are working in that area. So I'm thinking about these things deeper and thinking, "Well, okay, all these Buddhist beliefs that I've had are they all... The things that I'm reading, the things that I take on, are these things right?" So it's helping me get clearer and clearer about the things that I think are the most important to me in life. Would it be better if I was back meditating 16 hours a day? Maybe, but at least for where I am at this point in time, I think this is the best use of my time and this is the thing that will actually get me clearer on the way I understand my life.

0:22:02.2 Beth Fisher: Yeah, 'cause Kevin's not panicked about time. Sometimes I'm saying, "What are you gonna do after your PhD?" And he's like, "I don't know."

[laughter]

0:22:07.0 Kevin Berryman: I don't know. I don't care.

0:22:09.1 Beth Fisher: Another thing... And this doesn't... This is a question I feel like applies to a lot of people with a lot of different religious beliefs, but is it sometimes hard because you have a degree in psychology and all of these things. How does that fit with the beliefs on some of the things like reincarnation and those kind of things in your practice? And that's a hard question I feel like that all scientists probably are asked. So, yeah. There's no... It's a difficult question, but I'm just curious what you think of that.

0:22:45.1 Kevin Berryman: I think of anything that we experience or anything that we can know about, we really do have to be... I fundamentally believe we have to take the stance that we have to be agnostic to anything. You have to be open to the fact that we could be wrong. Though I'm as open to the fact that rebirth is wrong as I am as open to the fact that rebirth is right. I could be wrong about... I could be totally wrong about it. So for me, taking the agnostic stance on most things is the best way to go about it. Obviously, there's the Buddhist beliefs and there's the party line that I meant to tow, but I've never really towed it. It's just like, well, I'm very agnostic about these things and very open to it, so for me, it's not really a problem.

0:23:41.8 Beth Fisher: Yeah.

0:23:42.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is that type of deviation from the party line and issue in the communities that... I don't know if you're... Are you part of a monastery? I don't know how it works.

[chuckle]

0:23:55.1 Kevin Berryman: I raise eyebrow sometimes.

[laughter]

0:23:56.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. Okay.

0:23:58.2 Kevin Berryman: But I think if you're just being honest with people most of the time, you're actually trying, you're really trying to work something out with people. Even if you do say something that is against the party line, most people will be like, "Oh, okay. Well, that's a different way to look at it." And that's fine, you're trying to work this out and they're quite accepting of it. So, yeah, as I said, for me, it really is about being agnostic about it. That's... I can't be pinned down on either side. I can't be pinned down if I'm supporting this thing or I can't be pinned down that I'm not supporting this thing. It's just I'm really truly agnostic about it. Yeah, while I say some things when I move on the side of not supporting it, it'll raise an eyebrow here and there, but most of the time it's fine.

0:24:44.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. I was just gonna ask, if you were to reach enlightenment, does enlightenment have anything to do with attaining or understanding or having knowledge of truth as a concept? If you were to be enlightened, would you have a better understanding of these things like reincarnation or would you still be agnostic and that's also part of enlightenment it's just being okay with these types of contradictions?

0:25:11.8 Kevin Berryman: I'm not sure there's... If you look at the textural and scriptural beliefs in Buddhism, it says that if you become fully enlightened, some people might develop the ability to know these things, but other people might become enlightened and they don't have the ability to know these things. So it's not to say that if you were to become enlightened, that you would definitely know for sure, or not for sure. But the thing about it is, if you were to become enlightened, these things wouldn't really matter because what you're becoming clearer on is the nature of phenomena and the nature of your existence, that it fundamentally is just something that continues to change and you've deeply accepted that. The questions... Those kinds of questions, they don't really matter anymore. Are you getting closer to reality? I guess it's just more getting closer to an understanding of the way existence appears to be. But is that reality though? I don't know.

0:26:20.2 Beth Fisher: And another... We have had Kelsey on the podcast and spoken about the self, and we've had other episodes where we talk about the self. Yeah, in you're trying to achieve. Lots of ego, right? And is that also a loss of self?

0:26:38.0 Kevin Berryman: It's... I guess the first thing we have to think of is, what do we actually mean by the self?

0:26:45.1 Beth Fisher: We don't know.

[laughter]

0:26:45.8 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah. What do we actually mean by the self? Most of the time, most people... When you ask people explicitly, what do I actually mean by the self? Most people think it's like, "Oh, this is kind of me, that's sort of inside here, that is the little voice inside my head, and this is the thing that I feel like is, this is me. This is the center of existence." If we're gonna speak about the self in that way, what you would be... One thing that you're trying to do on the path to enlightenment, on the path of practice is to always be inquiring into what this thing is. Is this thing really me? Or is it something that continually changes all the time? What I feel is me continually changes, and what I feel is me actually is an appearance in my conscious existence. If you really deeply look at it, it's just this thing that appears there, and it continues to change. This thing that appears and continues to change, can I say that that is a real thing? Is this a solid thing that stays throughout time? And if you look at it, it's like, well, it's just another appearance, it's just another feeling. So this thing that I think is me, it's just this like changing phenomena. And so, that can be terrifying.

0:28:09.9 Beth Fisher: That panics me. I'm smiling 'cause I'm panicked. This makes me really freak out.

[laughter]

0:28:16.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Yeah. I actually wanted to ask about that because this is one of the things we talked about in our episode on mindfulness and meditation, was that that's one of the things that actually causes people a lot of anxiety. And there's one researcher who's done work on how meditation can actually make people more anxious and worsen mental health problems because of... And I had this experience too when I was on this meditation app and they were like, look for the self. Where is it? And I was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa." And apparently it can cause dissociation in really bad cases. I was wondering how you feel about that and how you feel about... Or if you know anything about the fact that people are now practicing mindfulness and meditation without all of these other practices that are potentially safeguards or potentially just create this almost like cultural framework in which you can understand the experiences that you're having? Because for a monk it's like, "Oh, I'm losing something that feels like the sense of self, but that's the point." Whereas for someone who's like a business man who's just trying to enjoy playing with his kids, then losing a sense of self is very distressing. I'm wondering if you know anything about how this kind of thing is translating into more mainstream, non-religious, like secular, Western life.

0:29:35.4 Kevin Berryman: For sure. And yeah, definitely, it can have a negative impact on people. There's no denying that and it can go wrong, and it can really go wrong. And I think we should do everything that we actually can to understand that more when it does go wrong and to put the guidelines in place so you don't actually go wrong. The biggest thing in practicing these things, and as you said, in a lot of apps now, they're actually teaching this and it's like... My view on this is like, you've missed a few fundamental steps first. You need real stability of the mind before you actually start delving into this thing. You need a few years of practice, and as you said, all those other frameworks around that before you actually start diving into that. I think it's a bit of a... I'm not too confident about diving into it straight away. I think it's something you do need to build up a bit of resilience, a bit of practice. You need to take it in small doses before you really go hard and go into this kind of, who is the self?

0:30:47.9 Kevin Berryman: And then just spend the rest of the weekend by yourself. You don't wanna do that. So I think there should be a bit more of a build-up to it, and there should be some more of these fundamental practices around it before you start jumping into that. And so, yeah, I think we should be really careful because... And I've seen a lot of people have very bad experience in meditation trying to look at these kinds of things and it's just not for them, not for their benefit. So you should... I think you really should be ready to actually look for this thing. It's not like everybody should actually go and look for it anyway.

0:31:20.2 Beth Fisher: Right. Do you think some people they don't need to... I just feel like all these stuff gets so confusing and complicated. But do you think that there's some people who... You know how you're saying for some people best to be truck driver and some people... Do you think there's some people who are best just to feel sense itself and not go with that?

0:31:41.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah.

0:31:42.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: This is Beth trying to have an excuse to not meditate and...

[laughter]

0:31:48.5 Kevin Berryman: It's okay. I'm dragging her, I'm dragging her eventually. No, but actually, this is one of the things that... Obviously, one of the big things in Buddhism is things are not self, and this is the big thing that we're all trying to get at. But actually, there's so many aspects of meditative tradition and Buddhist traditions where it is actually... You're actually trying to build an actively, very positive sense of self. You have to really build the sense of self in the most positive way and understand it the best that you possibly can before you can let it go.

0:32:25.7 Beth Fisher: Right. Okay.

0:32:27.6 Kevin Berryman: You can't just go, I don't understand this thing so I'm gonna get rid of it. That's when people are gonna get terrified.

0:32:30.9 Beth Fisher: Right.

0:32:32.8 Kevin Berryman: But if you really build this thing up and positive and you understand exactly what it is, then you can start not ignoring it or whatever, but just you've understood it and you're, "Okay, yeah, I've understand what the construct is now." Once you understand it, then you can let it go, but before you can understand it, don't let it go 'cause it's really, really helpful.

0:32:53.2 Beth Fisher: Yeah. Actually in our ascent we have a contemplation room and Kevin laid some meditations with the group, but they are only five-minute session so I don't know if we're quickly gonna lose our sense of self.

[laughter]

0:33:05.1 Kevin Berryman: I hope not.

0:33:05.6 Beth Fisher: Thank God.

[laughter]

0:33:08.3 Ava Ma De Sousa: Beth is clearly not ready for that.

[laughter]

0:33:13.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: I feel like we could have... Well, if you would be okay with that, we can have some little pop things you've always wanted to ask Kevin as much.

0:33:22.0 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah, for sure. For sure. Ask me all this... I love stupid questions.

0:33:27.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:33:27.3 Kevin Berryman: I love questions that is like it's... Yeah, you didn't think you would wanna ask it but it's like, "Oh, I'll ask that thing." I really like these kinds of things.

0:33:34.7 Beth Fisher: Yeah, what did... 'Cause remember, I come in sometimes and I'm like, "Kevin, I'm really embarrassed to ask this, but... " All right. Well, we'll start off with, why do you have to wear that? Kevin's in his robes and they're browny and Kevin also wears everything the same browny tone. Why is that?

0:33:57.5 Kevin Berryman: Well, in a way it's to differentiate you. Because as I've taken on the role of being a Buddhist monk, so I have to live my life in a particular way. And so, there's certain things that are appropriate for me to do, and there's certain things that are not appropriate for me to do. Now, if I wasn't wearing this uniform thing, I could just go out and do whatever I want and nobody would really care. So I have this on now, and I wear this because it's in a way, it does... It's like an external reminder of what you do.

0:34:38.7 Beth Fisher: Right.

0:34:39.0 Kevin Berryman: And so it's something that can differentiate you from the rest of the world of like, okay, well, there's a reason he's not going to the pub and all these kinds of things. Yeah, it's also... And the robe I use, it's said to be the ones... The same ones that they used in India 2600 years ago in the time of the Buddha as well.

0:35:05.1 Beth Fisher: Oh, wow. And another thing that I think people are interested in, and I still don't think I've wrap my head around this, you can't receive income. How then... Yeah. How does that work with survival wise?

[laughter]

0:35:27.1 Kevin Berryman: I'm in the probably one of the most fortunate positions in the world where I live off the kindness of other people. Anything that I have in my life is due to somebody else's kindness. The food I eat every single day, the bus pass thing that gets me on a bus somebody gives that to me. So I'm really, really fortunate that people see what I do and think, "Well, that's actually... That's a good way to live, so I'm gonna help him with that." Now, obviously there's different things where it's like, okay. My mom's still around as well, so if maybe somebody wants to offer something to help out with a plane ticket or something, they might just give the money to my mother or something, and my mother sorts it out for me.

0:36:23.9 Beth Fisher: Oh, I see. Invited you.

0:36:26.2 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. But for me myself, I can't go call, get a credit card, let's just go and buy these things, I can't do that.

0:36:33.1 Beth Fisher: Oh, so you don't have a bank account?

0:36:34.8 Kevin Berryman: No.

0:36:36.0 Beth Fisher: I didn't know that. Oh... I spent so much time with Kevin and I've never noticed that.

0:36:48.0 Kevin Berryman: So you see I never buy anything?

0:36:49.1 Beth Fisher: Yeah, I didn't. Oh, wow.

0:36:50.7 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah. No, I don't have a bank account.

0:36:53.1 Beth Fisher: Yeah, I can't imagine not having a bank account. Not in a bad way, just in the... Ava, can you imagine?

0:37:02.2 Ava Ma De Sousa: No.

[laughter]

0:37:07.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: Who are these people who are providing you with these things? Is it mostly random strangers who are providing you as an individual stuff? Or is it people who are also part of this Buddhist tradition? And is it to a community? Or is it to you as an individual?

0:37:26.0 Kevin Berryman: Most of the time it's obviously, Buddhists that have an affinity with a particular Buddhist tradition and they... Well, most of the time... Because, again, I can't... If somebody says, "Here's $50." I just say, "Oh, I can't actually receive that. It's very nice that you do that, but you have to give it to the community." Most of the time it does go to like a... You could say like a central fund thing. And then... But obviously in that if somebody offered you something and you go, "Oh, well, I need a pair of shoes or something like that." Somebody can actually take that. Most of the time it is Buddhists, but you'd be dumbfounded how many just absolutely random strangers give me things. And I know it's such a hard thing to wrap your head around of like, how do I get around in the world without money? And as I said, I'm in a very, very fortunate position where my whole life is geared around that. So it's not like I'm saying everybody should do this. Everything in my existence is geared around this, but you'd be surprised, it's like... There's so many times where it's like I would be in a situation where I'd need money, and it's like, "I don't know how I'm gonna get around this." And something just works out.

0:38:45.3 Beth Fisher: So... Yeah, like going to the doctor.

0:38:47.6 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, going to the doctor is... I live in Australia, so it's not really a problem.

0:38:51.7 Beth Fisher: Sorry US listeners.

[laughter]

0:38:56.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: What are you talking about...

0:38:58.8 Kevin Berryman: Yes, I go to the doctor. It's fine, and yeah, again, people help if something extra needs to be done, people help me out. So...

0:39:07.5 Beth Fisher: Yeah, wow.

0:39:08.5 Kevin Berryman: And you just have to be... And also, you just have to be content with whatever comes away, and it's like, Well, look, if I need new glasses and nobody's gonna help me, it's like, Oh fine, I just... I don't have classes now.

0:39:20.0 Beth Fisher: Kevin lost his glasses the other day. But you've got new ones, right.

0:39:24.5 Kevin Berryman: No. They're my old ones, but I have... I'm lucky enough, I've got some new ones coming. So...

0:39:29.7 Beth Fisher: And Kevin lives at the Buddhist is it the Buddhist Association of Victoria.

0:39:37.5 Kevin Berryman: Society of Victoria, yeah.

0:39:37.6 Beth Fisher: Society of Victoria. So people... Yeah. Do you wanna just explain a bit about that, 'cause you always have people coming and staying and coming in, and... So what are your other more, I guess... Yeah, day-to-day duties or...

0:39:45.9 Kevin Berryman: So, yeah, I do live a little bit of a split life of the kind of the academic, the academic world, and then having to sort of go back into the Buddhist world where you are doing a lot of teaching, you're leading meditation retreats. And also on a day-to-day basis, people come and actually give me food every day. And so a part of that is me actually not just getting the food and going, "Great. See you later." Is I sit down and talk to them and if they got any problems in their lives or they got an issue that they wanna talk to me about, I sit down and listen to them and talk to them about that. So there's that aspect of my existence, but then also the place that I live out of the Buddhist Society of Victoria, it's actually one of the... I think it is the oldest Buddhist institution in Australia.

0:40:39.4 Beth Fisher: Oh, cool.

0:40:40.1 Kevin Berryman: And so many different monks and nuns come through it, so there's other... Plenty of other monks and nuns that come and stay on the weekends and do teachings and do retreats. So I don't have to do it all, so I'm pretty lucky in that way as well. So yeah, plenty of monks and nuns coming through, but yeah, I do have to do a lot of these, a lot of these things. So...

0:41:01.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: So are nuns different than monks? Is it just a gender thing or is it...

0:41:05.9 Kevin Berryman: They do have sort of different rules. The rules are... They're framed in a different way. And they actually, they do have more rules than us.

0:41:14.2 Ava Ma De Sousa: Can a woman be a monk or women have to be nuns?

0:41:16.2 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

0:41:17.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: Oh, okay. Okay.

0:41:18.5 Kevin Berryman: Well, so nun is just sort of the term for a monk that a woman would be.

0:41:22.7 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is a woman, okay.

0:41:24.2 Kevin Berryman: So technically, what they're called is bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. So bhikkhu is for the male, bhikkhuni is for the female, but it's essentially the same. There's just some different sort of rules that are more specific, because you have to remember our rules originated 2600 years ago in Northern India. So yeah, there's different culture, a different time, different things that were happening. So we do have a little bit different rules, but most of them are pretty similar. But yeah, it's the same thing, wear the same brown, do the same kind of things.

0:41:58.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is there any issue... Again, because I don't know anything about these traditions, but is there any, like all the other older religions, misogyny issue in Buddhism?

0:42:10.5 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah, it's pretty bad. And I'll be honest, especially the tradition that I'm from. It is pretty bad, especially in Southeast Asian countries. It's pretty good in the West. Our tradition is pretty good in the west, but yeah, it's not so great in say for example, Thailand or Burma or Laos. It's getting better in Sri Lanka, but yeah, it's... There's an old guard and the old guard never really wants to change things. So the nice thing is there is a newer generation of monastics coming through that are actually changing that, so that's quite encouraging. So yeah, so my tradition, we're not so great, not so great on that, but...

0:42:56.4 Beth Fisher: What would be an... Yeah, an example? 'Cause I... Yeah, and I know that about other religious beliefs, but in terms of Buddhism? Yeah, it's funny, it's one of those things that I don't... Well, I think the general idea of it, if it's just all goodness, so we never think of these things about it. Yeah.

0:43:13.2 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So one of the bigger things was, say for example, in some parts of Southeast Asia, women can't ordain as full monastics, like bhikkhunis. So full nuns, brown and taking on all the rules. Most of the time, they will have to go to another country and ordain and then come back there to do that. So for example, in Thailand, it was basically against the law, like the actual state law that for women to take on full ordination. They could ordain as something that was called like an eight precept nun, but they would just wear white and shave their head. And so the kind of status was very, very different. And there was a big kickback and it was actually... So it was more actually the Western, the Western monastics that said, "This isn't right. We can't sort of continue to do this." And there's been really big steps to actually change that. But yeah, there is still sort of resistance there in a lot of these... A lot of different cultures along that. And that's... That's actually, it's pretty... A lot of Buddhist cultures are like that as well, but it's definitely changing now, which is quite nice. Yeah.

0:44:30.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is there also tension between the fact that some of the Western adoptions of these types of traditions are trying to influence the kind of original... I guess it's not original, but the form in which it is in the country in which it originated? Is there a tension with this idea of it... I don't wanna say imperialism, but this western kind of hegemony that's always taking over things, is there any resentment about that in the traditional cultures? And when you were there, did you encounter any of that? Like anyone being like, "Why are you here? An Australian man."

0:45:06.5 Kevin Berryman: No, no, no. Actually the opposite. So actually, the absolute opposite of like, "Wow, isn't it cool that you're here?" Is like you've... So I, as I said, I went to Thailand to ordain, and the support that I got was phenomenal. It was like, "I can't believe you've... You come from Australia? That place is meant to be really good. Why would you give all that up and come here and live in the forest in a grass-roof hut? Why would you do that? That seems stupid." So there was this... There was an absolute acceptance of like, "This is actually so great that you're coming to do this." There is... At times though, they were... There is a little bit of the kind of looking down on you of like, "Well, they're not really doing it right." Yeah. But that wasn't malicious in any kind of way, but it's like, "Well, yeah, well, we've got the culture, we're a Buddhist culture, Westerners, they don't really know." But, yeah. Overwhelmingly supportive but there's a few of these little things.

0:46:10.7 Beth Fisher: Yeah.

0:46:12.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Are a lot of the people who are in the... Was it Victoria Buddhist Association, is that what it's called?

0:46:19.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah.

0:46:20.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Are they mostly immigrants or are they also mostly Australians who were born in Australia and then moved in and moved back?

0:46:28.9 Kevin Berryman: A mix. Quite a big mix. It's mainly... Yeah. No, actually, yeah, it is a true mix of people that were born in Australia, a lot of Sri Lankans come, a lot of Malaysians, Singaporeans, Thai people. But mainly people that are more interested in the, you could say like Theravada Buddhism. So out from those kinds of Theravadan countries, Thailand, Lanka, these kinds of places that are pretty Theravada-based. But yeah, a lot of different people. Most of the time I give, say, for example, I give teachings on Friday nights, and at least half the room is people that are born in Australia.

0:47:07.7 Beth Fisher: 'Cause I was reading, actually Buddhism is the third most popular, I don't know how you say that, religion in Australia. But we're not a very religious country, so it's not... So it's Christianity, Christian-based religions, Islam and then Buddhism.

0:47:23.9 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. And I think that actually has a lot to do with the immigration population as well. And obviously a lot of people immigrating to Australia from Buddhist countries and they're Buddhist. So yeah.

0:47:35.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: Did you find that things changed when you... 'Cause how long were you in Thailand?

0:47:40.3 Kevin Berryman: About 10 years.

0:47:41.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: Was it difficult to transition back to living in Australia? Or was it because of the religious aspect and being a monk in Australia, or how was that experience?

0:47:55.1 Kevin Berryman: It wasn't difficult, but obviously there's pros of living in a Buddhist culture. Everybody knows what you do, nobody asks any questions.

0:48:04.7 Beth Fisher: And no one's like, "You don't have a credit card? What?"

0:48:05.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Dumb questions.

[laughter]

0:48:09.3 Kevin Berryman: Everybody knows what you do. So doing things is really, really easy. But when you come back to say, for example, a Western country, people don't know so much so you have to explain a lot more. There's nothing wrong with explaining, but it's just a part of it you have to do. But on the other side of that as well, you live in a Buddhist culture, there's so much that's expected of you.

0:48:28.5 Beth Fisher: Right.

0:48:29.1 Kevin Berryman: And you don't have so much autonomy. You can't just go, "I'm just gonna go jump on the bus." People are like... There'll be different things and people are like, "No, no. I'll take you for a lift and we'll have to do it this way. We have to do it that way."

0:48:37.1 Beth Fisher: Oh, okay.

0:48:38.5 Kevin Berryman: Where in the West I can just... Gonna go for a walk to the museum. So it wasn't a big change to come back and I quite enjoy it 'cause it's pretty quiet here.

0:48:54.1 Ava Ma De Sousa: Yeah. I have two more stupid questions.

0:48:56.0 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure.

0:48:56.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. The first one is, do you eat whatever people give you? And are you allowed to eat extravagant things? If someone brings you a foie gras, can you just eat that or you use...

0:49:07.3 Kevin Berryman: You mean what?

0:49:08.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Like a fancy... Like a steak or something, like a Kobe beef steak?

0:49:11.7 Kevin Berryman: Yeah.

0:49:13.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Or you can eat that?

0:49:14.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

0:49:14.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:49:18.4 Kevin Berryman: There's a common conception that Buddhist are vegetarian? And we're not. Obviously, there's some Buddhists that are vegetarian. The kind that I'm in we're not because we rely on people's generosity. Now, if somebody just brings me something, I eat it. If somebody brings me something really, really like one of those awesome steaks or whatever it is, I eat it. If they don't bring me that, I don't eat it. If people will bring me vegetarian food, I eat vegetarian. If people bring me meat, I eat meat. I'm so appreciative that people actually do this, so I don't wanna go, "No, bring me this thing. Don't bring me that thing." In essence, whatever gets thrown in front of me, I eat. Yeah, whether it's extravagant or whether it's just like toast that's just what I eat for the day.

0:50:07.3 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. So you can eat anything as long as somebody gives it to you?

0:50:09.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah.

0:50:10.3 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. Okay. Then my other question is about, is celibacy a thing? And can you have romantic relationships or is that not possible?

0:50:21.3 Kevin Berryman: So yeah, I'm fully celibate.

0:50:24.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:50:25.3 Kevin Berryman: Fully to the extreme, to the extreme.

0:50:27.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:50:28.1 Kevin Berryman: And you can understand... Maybe I don't have to explicitly say what the extreme of that is. Yeah, I'm fully celibate. Now, that is you could say, unique to my tradition. There are other Buddhist monastics that are not fully celibate. There's say, for example, in Tibetan... Some forms of Tibetan Buddhism, they can take a wife and all these kinds of things. But the tradition that I'm in, yeah, it's the full deal. The full deal. Yeah, and I get that people don't get it kinda thing, but there's... And they don't get how that can be possible, but it is actually possible. And the one nice thing is, obviously I'm not sort of... I think it's fine for people to have a relationship, I think it's really, really good, it keeps people together. But there's something as well as when you take that off the map of every relationship that you have with people, you develop a different kind of relationship with people. It's like, I'm not trying to look for anything with anybody, it's like all that's just gone.

0:51:35.2 Kevin Berryman: So I was like, I just... I at least try to just see the person for what they are and say, "Yeah, I'll talk to you and chat to you about things and... " Yeah, that's something that goes out of it. Now, it's not to say that having that thing is a bad thing, it's definitely not but it's just a different way of engaging in the world, and it's something that I find helpful.

0:51:58.3 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. Actually, I remember...

0:52:00.3 Kevin Berryman: And nobody's forcing me to do it as well. I just remember, I did take all this no credit cards and full celibacy and eating toast. I chose to do this, so it is something if at any point I just go, "Nah, I don't wanna do this anymore."

0:52:16.7 Beth Fisher: You don't have to.

0:52:17.5 Kevin Berryman: I don't have to. I go back to... There's nobody standing around me with like a cat of nine tails telling me not to do this.

[laughter]

0:52:27.7 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay. Looping back to maybe the entire beginning of the conversation, something that I wanted to ask was, when you're talking about relationships, you're saying that you're taking away some boundaries that you might have otherwise had because you're accepting a person as maybe not even just a whole, but maybe more than a person because you're accepting that they're changing. Do you feel like that is what reconciles the love and no attachment in the sense that... Do you have the same types of feelings or if you were enlightened would you have the same feelings towards your mum as you would to any other person?

0:53:16.2 Kevin Berryman: I think it would change, I think it would change, but I really do have the feeling that it would change for the better in that... Like at the moment, I love my mom now, and as I said, I'm not enlightened. I'm pretty attached to my mom, I'm pretty attached to my mom and I do love her. But I can sort of see at times when, say, for example, my practice is going really well, it's like the same kind of care and compassion that I have from my mom I can have for anybody else as well. And so that's not taking anything away from my mom and the relationship that I have with my mom, and that kind of care that I actually have for my mother, but that's actually extending out into others as well. So there's not a kind of like, "I only love you and I don't love you."

0:54:02.6 Beth Fisher: You're like a hierarchy of like, I love you the most...

0:54:04.4 Kevin Berryman: Yeah.

0:54:06.1 Beth Fisher: So you're the most special, yeah you can love... Yeah, that's interesting for me equally.

0:54:12.6 Kevin Berryman: So, it's...

0:54:12.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: So, is that... Sorry, go on.

0:54:15.9 Kevin Berryman: Go on, go on.

0:54:16.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is that what allows for this potential heightened sense of morality? And the second part of this question is, does that mean that you would be able to have a specific opinion or potentially the truth about some of the moral dilemmas that are in philosophy like trolley problem, things like that. Where would the Buddhist enlightenment fall on the different philosophical perspectives that we have from utilitarianism to deontology and stuff like that.

0:54:41.3 Kevin Berryman: Yeah, a lot of people have tried to sort of pin that down, it's...

0:54:45.4 Ava Ma De Sousa: Yeah, I'm sure that's a lot of people's like PhD thesis.

0:54:48.6 Kevin Berryman: [chuckle] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't have a good intuition on that at the moment or kind of thing of where the Buddhist would land on all those different kinds of... I think because... At least this is how I understand it at the moment. Because you spend so much time training to not harm yourself or not harm others, this sort of becomes ingrained in you. So there's kind of... Any kind of dilemma that you would come up against where you would have to cause some kind of harm, you'd at least have a decent handle on, well, what's the thing that's gonna cause the least amount of harm and without going, well...

0:55:28.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: Is that quite utilitarian?

0:55:28.9 Kevin Berryman: A little bit. Yeah, it is a little bit utilitarian. Maybe it's utilitarian with the compassion involved as well [chuckle] as a part of the hardcore utilitarian, so...

0:55:38.4 Beth Fisher: With a side of compassion.

0:55:40.4 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah. I think because you've like... Essentially you've trained so long of trying not to harm others that then potentially once you sort of get to that point, then yeah, maybe you have a... I don't know a decent guiding way of how to morally engage in the world or more finely attuned, but yeah, I don't really know.

0:56:04.2 Beth Fisher: I just keep thinking about... I thought what was so interesting is, if you reach this kind of enlightenment, it's not that the love for your mom changes, is that you can have that love for everyone. And I feel like for me, and probably for a lot of people, kind of just having love for only some people like that's such... Yeah, it's a really attachment thing, and that's so important, I love Ava more than a lot of people, and that's so important to me and that I tell people and I just can't imagine. Yeah, I don't know, I just had this moment, I was like, "Oh wow, I guess it would be possible to love everyone the way I love Ava." But that's just so not what we're... I don't know taught to be.

0:56:47.5 Kevin Berryman: We're not really designed to either. We're not really designed to go, well, I... Going to take on the suffering of the world and I'm gonna love everybody in the next tribe, in the next... The hoarding marauds that are coming over the hills. Loving them as one is not probably the best way to stave the hoarding maraud but so... And this actually gets to interesting questions as well of like, "Well, is that preferable? Do we need aggression? Do we need... All these kinds of things. And so getting back to some of the original things is like, should everybody do it? Probably not, probably not, because there's going to be still bad people in the world.

0:57:32.2 Beth Fisher: Right. And we need to...

0:57:33.3 Kevin Berryman: If everyone could be enlightened, you wouldn't have the bad people, but there're still gonna be bad people. So maybe it is good to have these people that aren't enlightened, but it is something that you can sort of start to work towards of like breaking down those kinds of barriers of like, "Yeah, I love you more than I love you." And this works for things like the way you morally judge people as well. It's like, if I hate you, I'm gonna judge you a lot harsher. Or if you've done something that I think is reprehensible, I'm gonna judge you terribly and I'm gonna punish you a lot. But I love you and you've done the same thing, I'm not gonna judge you or punish you as much as I would this other person. So it can start to dissolve those things where you can actually look a little bit more objectively at the world. Of like okay, well here's the action and now because I'm not so enmeshed attached to you, I can actually judge the situation maybe a little bit better, so.

0:58:37.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: That's so interesting.

0:58:38.0 Kevin Berryman: And that's not always problematic, I wouldn't argue like sometimes we probably should... Like if you know repeat offenders, probably should judge them more harshly, but I think it's a bit of a... You could say like the kind of enlightenment project and the instigating social norms is probably... It is a bit of a different project as well, so sometimes... Okay. Sometimes some of these things are useful. But other times, yeah, maybe it's not so useful. So.

0:59:11.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: Well, thank you so much for letting us pick your brain and for...

0:59:13.7 Kevin Berryman: No, no problem, hopefully something useful came out of it.

0:59:16.9 Beth Fisher: No, it was awesome, I feel like I've got a lot to think about. [chuckle]

0:59:18.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: Just the credit card thing. [laughter] That's what's gonna keep her up at night, none of the questions about enlightenment and existence, just the credit card.

0:59:31.7 Beth Fisher: How does he get by without a credit card?

0:59:33.9 Kevin Berryman: Wait, you pull a phone out all the time, how does a phone work?

0:59:37.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Wait, do you have a phone?

0:59:38.1 Kevin Berryman: Yeah. Yeah.

0:59:40.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: Did someone give you the phone? Is that why?

0:59:44.6 Kevin Berryman: Yep.

0:59:44.7 Ava Ma De Sousa: Okay.

0:59:44.8 Kevin Berryman: So, yeah. Again, I know I'm incredibly lucky, and I'm really in this very, very unique situation, so I try not to take advantage of an idea. So, and that's why, well, sort of getting back to, why do you wear the things you do? I have to remind myself like, I'm really lucky I'm in this situation, and I have to... People are helping me out so much, so I have to try to do the best that I possibly can to live up to that expectation and live up to all the help that people give me, so... Yeah, I'm really fortunate in that way. So I have to uphold my end of the bargain of trying to help people as much as I possibly can in the small, seemingly menial and meaningless ways that I can, so... But yeah, it's...

1:00:41.5 Beth Fisher: Kevin doesn't help people in small ways, he's a very loving, caring, helpful person, so I just wanna... [laughter]

1:00:49.9 Ava Ma De Sousa: Well, yeah, that's the point, right? He's...

1:00:50.9 Beth Fisher: That's right.

1:00:54.8 Ava Ma De Sousa: [laughter] You better be.

[music]

1:00:58.6 Ava Ma De Sousa: Well, it was great to talk to you, I really appreciate it. And it was so fun.

[music]

1:01:07.0 Ava Ma De Sousa: Our intro and outro music is Nobody Stayed For The DJ, by Glassio. Our transition music is Back For More, also by Glassio. Minds Matter is mixed, edited and created by Beth Fisher. She's the Australian one and me, Ava Ma de Sousa. We'll be back in two weeks with a brand new episode of Minds Matter. In the meantime, find all our episodes and show notes on mindsmatterpodcast.com.

[music]