

Dena Samuels: Living a life intentionally. That's how I think about living from the inside out. And so, how does that affect our interactions with others, especially when we're trying to build relationship across social differences? Which to me, you know, that's, I always call that building relationships across social differences is an antidote to social injustice.

Sam Fuqua: That's Dena Samuels, and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. On this episode, we talk with Dena Samuels about the role of mindfulness in addressing conflict and advancing social justice. Dr. Samuels has taught at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, for over 20 years, and also consults on mindful, inclusive leadership development. She's the author of several books, including *The Mindfulness Effect: An Unexpected Path to Healing, Connection, and Social Justice*.

I am Sam Fuqua, joined as always by our co-host for the program, Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

Alexis Miles: Hi Sam.

Sam Fuqua: And we're really pleased to be joined by Dena Samuels for this conversation. Welcome, Dena.

Dena Samuels: Thank you so much for having me. Appreciate you.

Sam Fuqua: Could we start with a working definition from mindfulness? I think people hear the word. It's used nowadays in many different contexts. I knew it first from the Buddhist tradition, but when you say mindfulness, uh, explain what you mean.

Dena Samuels: Um, yeah. So mindfulness does have a lot of different definitions and you know, when I go around and ask folks, I, when I'm teaching and I say, what do you think mindfulness is, I, I get a list of, a list of ideas and concepts that are almost identical, one group to the next. Um, things like, you know, um, breathing, being in the moment, focused, energy, awareness. Those kinds of things. My shortcut to that is present moment awareness.

Sam Fuqua: Present moment awareness of what? And how? Because we can be in the present moment and really be off track, at least in my experience.

Dena Samuels: Yeah. Well, so if we're really aware of what's happening in the moment, and when I say what's happening, I'm really talking about internally. So oftentimes, our focus is on what's going on around us, and that can send us into many tailspins as we all are, you know, we've all experienced, um, and the idea is that present moment awareness is sort of a pausing, noticing, reflecting, and breathing so that you're really focusing inward rather than focusing outward. That opportunity, which is the way I see it as an opportunity, a moment of noticing allows us to basically separate from ourselves, our true selves, from what's really going on around us. So that, even though we might be bombarded by, you know, somebody's comment, or the way somebody shows up, or a look somebody gives us, or something like that, if we can be aware in that same moment of our own, of how we're receiving that, that can make a big difference, instead of reacting to what's happening. We can actually breathe through it and then respond in a much more inclusive way.

Alexis Miles: So Dena, that reminds me about your writings about living from the inside out versus living from the outside in. And living from the outside in, I think you've described as our social conditioning and living from the inside out is who we really are. So, can you talk more about that and the impact on those ways of living, um, in resolving conflict?

Dena Samuels: Yes. I love the question. You can see the big smile on my face because this is one of my favorite things to talk about. Um, living from the inside out is truly the idea that our true selves who, who we really are, maybe for some folks it, it might, uh, what might resonate for them is maybe who we're meant to be, what our purpose is, living a life intentionally. That's how I think about living from the inside out. And so, how does that affect our interactions with others, especially when we're trying to build relationship across social differences, which to me, you know, that's, I always call that building relationships across social differences is an antidote to social injustice. So, it's a critically important piece of the puzzle. Looking to your own, to your inside. You know, looking, looking inside yourself is very important because we are often conditioned, that social conditioning happens when we're taught stereotypes about not only others, but also ourselves. And when we start to believe those as true, not only can they become self-fulfilling prophecies, as we all know, that's what their social psych research shows, but also, it's not really fair and it's not really true to what's happening in the moment. There's a ton of research out there now that shows that if you have any kind of mindfulness practice, so that could be from where mindfulness came from, which is eastern practices, eastern philosophies, um, eastern religions, indigenous cultures, um, and other religions, re, other religious beginnings. It could be prayer. It could be, um, finding your own spiritual connection to the larger universe, if you will. It could be going for a run. It could, that's what it might look like. It may be getting in the zone, as we say, maybe doing some artwork. If you do any of these things, meditation would certainly fall into that, those categories too. If you do any of those things, it turns out, the research shows that it actually lowers your bias.

When this research came across my, my desk about 18 years ago, I got so excited because I thought, well, my goodness, I've been teaching implicit bias trainings for, probably at that point it was a decade and a half, and I happened to have my own mindfulness practice from my own healing journey through childhood trauma and torture and horrific-ness that, that I went through. So, everything kind of combined for me. I got really excited and I sat, thought, oh, this is, this is what this is. This is what I'm meant to do. This is what I'm, the direction I'm meant to go. Um, that's how it felt for me. So, the idea is when I teach about implicit bias, not only do I teach the science of it and what happens in our brains, but also the fact that if you're coming from a mindful place, that you are more likely to not only know what your biases are, through, whether you've taken some implicit association test through the Harvard project, um, pro, Project Implicit, or you know, you've learned about your biases in other ways, then, uh, in that moment when you're connecting with somebody across social differences, those, those stereotypes tend to kind of calm themselves down. And you can truly be present with the person in front of you. Does that make sense?

Alexis Miles: It, it certainly does make a lot of sense. So, you are saying that part of the way that we react to people if we're living from the outside in, is based on the way our brains work. That there is some way that our brains function that impact how we interact with other people.

Dena Samuels: A hundred percent, yes. Because what happens is, and I can do a very quick overview of that, that, um, process. Uh, basically we get, we have a stereotype that we learned from a very young age.

Typically, those stereotypes come from when we are, um, when somebody who is different in some ways, so has a different social identity than either we do or our family does, and those might be different, you

know, those might be different things depending on the family structure that you're in, or perhaps your people, around you, right? And so, somebody comes into your, your, your space, you meaning your family, or your, you know, your, your group, and you start looking around you to see how are other people reacting to this, the person who's coming in who has different social identities than you do, right? And that, all of a sudden creates, you know, a stimulus, if you will, like the stimulus is the person entering that space and the reaction, uh, is the stereotype, typically. That's typically what ha, what we've learned.

And so, over time again and again, we get the same stimulus and we've created a neural pathway or if you will, a rut in your brain so that it be, go, goes from stimulus directly to the socially conditioned response, right? That's the way biases manifest in our brain over time. And as adults, it's still there. Unless we've gone and done the work to figure out, well, where are those ruts? Where do they exist in my, like, what's going on? Which of the, these things are problematic and what do I need to do about them? And so, if you've had a really good comprehensive implicit bias training, for example, where you've learned not only your own, um, uh, some of your own biases, but also what to do to ameliorate or, or lessen them, right, minimize them on both an individual as well, and as an organizational level, if you've had all of that, you're well on your way to challenging some of the biases that you've learned along the way.

Alexis Miles: So Dena, can you give a practical example of what that might look like? I know the first thing that popped into my head was the murder of George Floyd, which most of us are familiar with. But could you give a different example of how that plays out in life?

Dena Samuels: Sure. So, we can talk about racial inequity. We could talk about, I mean, I, when I do the, my work is very intersectional so that I don't just think about race, I think about gender, sexuality, um, all of the different ways, the social conditioning that we've had in all the different categories, basically that's, that's what that looks like. And I, I don't wanna also minimize the structural piece here either. Um, when I talk about implicit bias, you know, and I talk about the social conditioning and I will, I will answer your question, but I think this is important too. Um, that, uh, that we are also looking at these structures that are making it more likely that some will benefit by the system as it exists today, and some will lose, right? And, um, or are, are more likely to lose right, from the same thing. George Floyd was, unfortunately, a horrific victim of that system. So, uh, what do we do as individuals, you know, in terms of those examples. And the idea is that when we see, so for example, um, you know, again, to answer your question, we know that in classrooms, for example, of preschool children, right, that who is more likely to be sent to the principal and even, even expelled. We're talking about three- and four-year olds. Who is more likely to be expelled from preschool is young, black children. African American children, right?

Um, and this has nothing to do with the child, right? Because the child is, you know, whether, regardless of the race, the, the, the, whatever they're being expelled for is for the same, the same issue. The same, uh, behavior, right? So, the fact that more, that it's, that it's more likely that a child of color is going to be expelled, again has nothing to do with the children. It has to do with the implicit bias, what the teacher has been taught. What the principal has been taught. And then as it goes through the system and you talk about now, no longer preschool, but now it's the pri, school to prison pipeline and all of that. So now, you're talking about the police and the, and the, um, judicial system, et cetera. It goes all the way down the line. So, uh, that's, that's one, one of many examples. And, this isn't to beat up on teachers. I'm a teacher. I

love teachers. Some of the best people on the planet are teachers. It's just that we belong to a society of inequities. And so, we are constantly, as teachers, getting those same messages. And, unless we learn to

challenge those messages, we're going to continue to perpetuate them. And again, whether they're based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, all, et cetera.

Sam Fuqua: This is going back to some of what you said earlier about how our brains and bodies react in the moment, and it made me think about this ancient physiological response that's often referred to as *fight or flight*. We think of that in terms of our ancestors, uh, as being, you know, a physical response to danger. But I wonder sometimes, both in my own life and when I watch someone who is confronted, whether it's in a gentle way or a very direct way about sexism or racism, they either fight, meaning they become very argumentative and defensive, or they flee and not, I'm not generally, don't like flee the room, but kind of shut down, which is a way of fleeing. So, that's just an observation and a connection I was making when you were talking about some of the physiological things that are happening to us. Does that track with what you're saying?

Dena Samuels: A hundred percent. So much so that that's exactly how white fragility in particular shows up. So that if you know, a white person is confronted with this, you know, the idea that there may be some racism going on in the room, whether they're the ones who are, who are, um, instigating or someone else is, the white fragility piece actually puts them in a fight or flight, so that they feel like, oh my gosh, I'm gonna be next. I'm gonna be attacked for, for being a white person, you know. This is the way white supremacist ideology, I'm not talking about skinheads, I'm talking about the system of racial inequity that exists, uh, this is the way it plays out. This is the way it operates in our society. Uh, it's truly problematic. And what ends up happening is white folks don't wanna have that conversation because they're afraid of being called a racist. And, that's one of the worst things you could be called in our society today. Um, without realizing that you know, racism is a system in place that we are all a part of, right? It's a white supremacist ideology that white is right, and that, you know, if, if you, if you challenge that, that that means that there's just a threat to white folks. You know, that, that this is what, these are the notions that are consistently perpetuated that we really need to challenge.

Sam Fuqua: So, can you put that into practice for our listeners? When you go in and perhaps are a, asked to work with people in a workplace, for example, around DEI and bringing some of the mindfulness ideas and techniques to, uh, to perhaps a workplace that has had a difficult situation around, uh, race or gender or some of the other things that come up. How do you approach that and what does that look like?

Dena Samuels: So, um, typically if I'm brought in and something has gone wrong, oftentimes I'm brought in because people know there's something that needs, they need to do in their organization. And certainly, you know, before and during and after George Floyd, um, that, that's been the case where people are starting to more and more, I should say, get the idea, oh, maybe we need to do something differently or we need to start a conversation around this. Um, and for some of those in, in some of those instances, something has happened. There's been, um, uh, some sort of microaggression or many microaggressions that are happening in the workplace, and they know they need to do something about it. And so, so the idea is, um, I, I, I truly believe in healing. Again, healing from the inside out, that there's so much healing work that needs to happen in, in this DEI space. Um, oftentimes we jump to the science of it, which is important. We jump to, you know, if we change this policy or that policy, which also does need to happen,

but what

often is left out is, you know, I talk about, you know, hold up, holding up a window. Hold up a window, and you point out the window and say, we need to change that policy and that policy, that policy, and what the work that I do is to transform that window into a mirror. And I always say it's a mirror with gentle lighting, you know, that, that it's not a harsh glare. It's, you know, comes with compassion because

we have all been taught things that we don't even know, we don't know. And so, the idea here is let's reflect on what our own biases are, what our own behaviors are, what is it we don't know, we don't know, and how do we have that conversation so we're brought into the conversation rather than being called in, rather than being called out, as we know.

Alexis Miles: That sounds like an interesting dilemma. How do you know what you don't know? So, how does your work help bring people to an understanding of what they're not even aware of?

Dena Samuels: Mm-hmm. Yeah, so, so here's the thing. We all have biases. One thing I like about Harvard's Project Implicit is that there are so many different social identities. They, they, they, you can "test yourself" on, each test only takes five minutes. And so it's a great way to find out, you know, you can take, uh, a, a, a little test on, on race. You can take, you know, they have many on gender. They have, you know, all the different social identities that I've been talking about. They have. So, you know, some people will say, well, you know, I, it turned out, the results showed that I had no bias in this area. And I'm like, well, then try a different area, and then try a different area, and then... Because we can't possibly know everything about every culture. So, the way I talk about it, I, from my own experience is that, I expect to be microaggressing for the rest of my life. And you know, when people hear that, they think, oh my goodness, you know, you're, you know, you're gonna be hurting people. Like really, that's what you see this work as? And I'm like, no, it's just an inevitable consequence of the fact that I am consistently putting myself in situations with people of different social identities. And, I've made a commitment to do so knowing full well that when I do so, I'm probably going to, you know, misstep along the way.

And so, to me it's not so much of let's not get involved in the conversation, or let's not go there, or let's stay "safe" in our own little, you know, box, but rather, to know that part of the work is to learn about what we don't know, we don't know. Knowing we might misstep along the way and then know very well, what do we do when we do misstep? Like, how do we do that? How do we do that in a way that's going to be consistent, it's going to be effective, and it's gonna build relationships across difference rather than causing rifts? Um, most people when they, when they have been told that you, you know, you just microaggressed, they turn around and bolt bec, and they're like, I'm never going back to that. Because of the shame that comes up and what, my work partly, is to let people know that, okay, if shame comes up, I'm not suggesting you shouldn't feel shame or anything like that, I'm suggesting that you know what to do when that happens, right? That you learn exactly what to do. So, I mean, my, my work and my books and those kinds of things, they give, um, some very clear guidelines of here's what you can do in those situations.

Alexis Miles: Could you very briefly define what you mean by microaggression?

Dena Samuels: Absolutely! Absolutely! So, microaggressions, um, that it was a, it was a term that was coined back in the seventies by a man named Pierce. Um, and, uh, Dr. Derald Wing Sue is probably best

known.

There's tons and tons of research on microaggressions now, but he was the one who wrote all, you know, so many books and articles, et cetera, on a, on, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, is a great resource, for example. Um, and, you know, the way he talks about them are, um, slights or invalidations that a person, um, in a socially uh, dominant category, makes against somebody who is, you know, in, within, so like, for example, a white person might make, microaggress against a person of color. A man might microaggress against a white, uh, a woman or a trans, uh, person who identifies as transgender or gender queer, et cetera. A heterosexual person might microaggress against somebody who, um, is LGBT, who identifies as LGBTQ. You know, like that. So, the idea here is that when those comments are made, um,

we call them microaggressions. I, I always focus, there's lots of people define them differently. Micro inequities, mi, you know, there's lots of different ways of thinking about it. Um, to me it's unintentional. It's an unintentional slight. So, if it's intentional, and that is always the first question I ask is, was this intentional? Is somebody trying to be racist, sexist, heterosexist, ageist, ableist, et cetera? Um, if so, it's no longer a microaggression. That's outright racism, sexism, hetero, you know, et cetera.

So, uh, this is the idea that people don't know, again, don't know what they don't know. So, they might say something that they don't even realize is a problem. Um, and when they're confronted with it, maybe most of the time they go unchallenged, which makes it so that nobody knows it's a problem and continues to perpetuate this. Uh, but when they are confronted that, that's when the challenge comes up. Oftentimes, it will be met with a comment like, oh, I was just kidding, or, oh, I didn't mean it. Or, you know, trying to brush it off rather than taking it seriously because the person who is on the receiving end, whether it's a person who, um, identifies in that particular category that the microaggression is in, or maybe it's a, a, an, I call 'em upstanders, bystanders. Somebody who witnessed what was going on and wanted to, wanted to, um, jump in. So, when that happens, what do you do? How do you, how do you respond in an effective way? That's, that to me is the critical piece. And, once you have the skills to be able to handle those, and I'm not going to say that they're not, you know, that they're super easy, whatever, that, you know, it's gonna make your heart pound when somebody confronts you. It's gonna, it's going to not be the most comfortable thing you've ever been through. But the more you, uh, learn how to do this and practice it, it gets at least a little bit easier. When I, when I microaggress, I have sort of a mnemonic that I use and I immediately go through the mnemonic and I know that it's effective and I know you know, whatever I'm feeling, all the feelings I can, I can deal with on my own later on. Um, maybe with a best friend I can talk to or something like that. But in this moment, how am I going to, how, how am I gonna handle it in a way that's gonna be effective?

Sam Fuqua: Can you share the mnemonic that you use in those moments?

Dena Samuels: So, um, the mnemonic, what, what I, what I came up with is called *Mind the GAP*. So, *Mind the GAP* is the idea, first of all, to be mindful of what just happened, of, you know, if somebody comes up to you and says, you know, I was really, when you said whatever it was, it made me feel really, you know, uncomfortable for this reason, or it made me mad, or it, you know, this is how it felt to me. Um, oftentimes, like I said, most people will feel the shame of that and then try to defend themselves. So, that's not what we're gonna do here. Like that, it, it's, it takes practice to do it differently, but that's another reason it's mindful 'cause you pause and breathe. Internally, you're pausing and breathing and noticing what's going on, not only in the situation, but also in your body. Where are you feeling this? How, how hard is it hitting you? Is your heart racing? All of those things can be, um, lessened slightly. You can calm

your
parasympathetic system by taking a deep breath. And so, that's the first thing is *Mind*. And then the *GAP*. And the gap is G-A-P. So, the first thing is Gratitude. Thank you so much for telling me. I so appreciate you because they didn't have to, right? They could have just left the situation and you know, and you would never have known. It's really a gift that they're giving you. So, that's the G - Gratitude. The A is an Apology. And when I say apology, I mean a very brief apology, not to go on and on. Well, what I really meant was, and here's the reason I did that, and da da, because that's what you wanna do. Like in, as a human being, you want to explain yourself. But that's not the, this is not the time for that, right? This is the time for, I'm so sorry. Right?

And then the P is a Promise or a Pact, if you will, to say, I'm so sorry, you know, as the A, and then the P, I, I, I, I promise to, to do better. I hear what you're saying and I promise to do better. Um, and you know, I'm, I, I

will learn from this, right? And then, and, and so that's what you do in the moment. So, you're taking the person's, um, concerns, completely validating that this happened and taking responsibility for your part in it, and the fact that you, you, you caused some harm, right? Uh, and so that, that's *Mind the GAP*. That's how that works. And then, after you're done and you go away, you can process in whatever way you typically do, whether it's, you know, talking to a friend, talking to a therapist, maybe, talking to a DEI person that you know, that, you know, you feel comfortable like sharing what you, you know, what happened. And breathing a lot. Breathing through whatever feelings you're having, uh, separate from the situation, doing that on your own. And then, a promise also to come back again and again. Don't let that one, uh, situation or one instance make it so that you're not gonna come back again. What diversity, equity, inclusion, what this work really takes is a dedication to show up again and again and again and again, right? And so, don't let whatever shame or feelings come up make that, you know, stop you from engaging further.

Alexis Miles: So far today, we've, you've talked about microaggressions, implicit bias, mindfulness, DEI work (diversity, equity, inclusion work). Uh, it's intriguing to me that you've brought all of those things together. Um, I, I think that's unusual that someone is looking at all of those diverse areas. And, I know in your book *The Mindfulness Effect*, you talk about how all of those strands came together. Can you say a bit about that? I also wanna say the tagline to the book, so it's *The Mindfulness Effect: An Unexpected Path to Healing, Connection, and Social Justice*. So, can you talk about that a bit? That path?

Dena Samuels: Sure. Yes. So, um, as I mentioned, you know, when I started, uh, my own mindfulness journey, um, it was a, it was a journey of healing. And if you look up mindfulness today, you will see, you know, literally almost a million, yeah, I think we're close to a million, uh, hits that you could, you know, of books and articles and things like that, that you can find. And, a lot of them are, are touting mindfulness as something we can do for our own healing and how it, how it helps our brains and it calms, as I mentioned earlier, it calms our parasympathetic system, lowers our cortisol levels. Uh, it just does really good things for us. It actually affects our brains in ways, uh, that are super healthy. And so, that's where I was coming from. So for me, that's what mindfulness meant. And, when I came across the research that I mentioned earlier and saw that there was a connection between mindfulness and implicit bias, that's when it kind of came together for me and I started to really delve deeply into that. And, and I kept asking a question, why is that the case? And, I realized that when you are calm in yourself, right, and you are, um, you know, you are aligned with, you know, as I would say, your higher purpose or why, why you're here, what you're

meant to

do, what, however you wanna, whatever resonates with you, whatever language resonates with you there. When you're really feeling your best, right?

Um, and you are, you know, you're, you're calm within yourself and you feel connected, for example, um, then when you're, when you're speaking with somebody who, you know, as I, as I mentioned before, across these social, social differences, social group memberships, um, as we're building those relationships, the stereotypes calm down and we can really interact and really build relationships deeply with other people. And, one of my other more recent areas that I'm, I'm really interested in is this idea of conscious relationship. And, that's the idea that we can really be conscious in our interactions with each other. So, as we're building relationship with others, we might be, have a little bit of fear, but we don't let the fear get in the way of building that relationship. What I mean by that is to be very mindful about how we're interacting and the idea that we can, we can say what needs to be said to get our needs met for not only building relationship, but building understanding and building authentic, au, authentic connection, right? And so, uh, doing so can be really challenging and most people just ignore those kinds of conversations. And, the idea here in, in mindful conscious relationship is that we can have those conversations and, and

build deeper, deeper connections as opposed to what we often have, which are very superficial 'cause we're afraid we're gonna misstep or we're gonna say the wrong thing and all of that. Um, hope that, that's, gives you some understanding of, so that, that's sort of been my journey.

Alexis Miles: It does, and it reminds me of something that you, you've talked about like moving from shame because of how we might react, to a more restorative justice vision of things. So, some harm happened, unintentional, and here's something that we can do about it. It sounds like that's what you're describing.

Dena Samuels: Exactly. Exactly. So, building those relationships, um, in ways that are, can be, can be challenging. Um, and in ways that we're, we're not quite used to having, you know, we're not used to having those conversations. And, the idea is not only self-healing, doing this work from the inside out, but also, uh, that idea of restorative justice, that not only are, is, has harm been done, but potentially harm might have been done to the community. And you know, so if you microaggress and you're in front of a group of people there, that's a community no matter who you're, you're with. That there is now a community and if they, if the microaggression is not addressed, it can actually cause a hostile environment. And so, this is what I talk a lot about when I'm in organizations, et cetera, where, um, it, you know, if there is harm done that we need, we need to have a conversation. Um, Sam, to answer your, your earlier question too, it's, it's, it's, uh, along those same lines is that we need to talk about the harm that's been done and allow folks to speak on those issues on what's happened, um, in ways that feel like they want to engage as opposed to feeling, uh, like, oh, there's gonna be some repercussions if I say anything about what I'm experiencing. That of, uh, moments of exclusion and exclusive, exclusionary behavior, those kinds of things.

Alexis Miles: Dena, you've talked about the, how we perceive ourselves impacts the way we interact with other people. And, you've said that when we begin to recognize the sacredness in ourselves, our behavior towards others changes. Can you just say a little bit about that?

Dena

Samuels: Yes. Love it. I love the question. Um, I do believe that when we connect ourselves, uh, to, to our spirit, our, um, uh, there's so many different words I could use here. Fill in the blank, you know, with what works for you. For some folks, it's actually God. For others, it's, you know, the universe. For others it might be, uh, source, um, it, it's, I see it as energy. So, when we, you know, when we are, you know, I do this through meditation every day, so that I have, and, and, and throughout my day, in fact, um, through my breathing, but, uh, my meditation, I'm, I'm kind of connected beyond my own skin. So, uh, and I believe that we are all, you know, we all are energy. And, if we're energy, therefore we are all bigger than the skin that we're in, so to speak. Not that our skin is not important, right? Because I do believe that I'm in this white skin on purpose to do the work that I do as a white person doing this work. So, I'm not trying to, you know, to by, do a spiritual bypassing here by any stretch. Um, to me it's a both-and. It's, it's, you know, we all also exist beyond the skin that we're in.

And so, therefore, if I know that that's true, and I believe that that's true, uh, what does that mean when I'm interacting with somebody is with, with anyone else, really, is that if, especially if that person is causing me some kind of anguish or irritation or something along those lines, if I can see myself as sacred and seeing that person as sacred, it elevates the problem to really being much less important, right, than we think. Oh, they're chewing too loud, or they said this terrible thing, or they, you know, whatever. And instead, we can really see this person as, they're doing the best that they can. They're a human being.

They're trying to survive just like we are. You, you know, just like I am. And, uh, you know, they're, there's a humanity there, right? There's underlying humanity there, no matter what they're saying or doing in that moment. That's also part of a conscious relationship, is really seeing the best, uh, and the brightest in individuals that we interact with, especially when it's hard.

Alexis Miles: Thank you for sharing that.

Sam Fuqua: Well, Dena Samuels, it's been a pleasure to talk to you. Thank you.

Dena Samuels: My pleasure. Truly, thank you so much for the opportunity. It's been, it's been a lot of fun.

Sam Fuqua: Teacher, author, and consultant, Dena Samuels. Her latest book is *The Mindfulness Effect: An Unexpected Path to Healing, Connection, and Social Justice*. Thanks for listening to Well, That went Sideways! We produce new episodes twice a month. You can find them wherever you get your podcasts, and on our website, sidewayspod.org. We also have information on our guests and links to more conflict resolution resources at the website. That's sidewayspod.org.

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