

*Life As It Is*

“A Guide for When Things Don’t Go Your Way”

Episode #28 with Haemin Sunim

February 28, 2024



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**Haemin Sunim:** Ultimately, true acceptance is when our mind does neither, that is, to look for something else or resisting what is coming our way, in this moment of pause, in this moment of acceptance, letting everything be as it is, and then finding no self in the midst of any of this, and thereby you feel completely free, which is your natural state. That’s where you want to arrive at.

**James Shaheen:** Hello, I’m James Shaheen, and this is *Life As It Is*. I’m here with my co-host Sharon Salzberg, and you just heard Haemin Sunim. Haemin is a Korean Zen monk based in Seoul, where he founded the School for Broken Hearts and the Dharma Illumination Zen Center. In his new book, *When Things Don't Go Your Way: Zen Wisdom for Difficult Times*, he offers a guide to transforming life’s unexpected challenges into opportunities for awakening. In our conversation with Haemin, we talk about the importance of learning to welcome unpleasant experiences, how giving up can actually open us to new possibilities, and how we can find happiness when we stop looking for it. Plus, Haemin leads us in a guided meditation. So here’s our conversation with Haemin Sunim.

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**James Shaheen:** So I'm here with Haemin Sunim and my cohost Sharon Salzberg. Great to be with you both.

**Haemin Sunim:** Thank you for inviting me.

**Sharon Salzberg:** It's great to be here.

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**James Shaheen:** We're here to talk about your new book, *When Things Don't Go Your Way: Zen Wisdom for Difficult Times*. To start, can you tell us a little bit about the book and what inspired you to write it?

**Haemin Sunim:** Well, things didn't go like the way I planned it, so that's why I had to write this. About three years ago, I had a very challenging experience. I started the School for Broken Heart, and also I was in the process of making a meditation app, and in order to let people know what I was doing, I appeared on a Korean television show. Shortly after, I was pretty much attacked by many different YouTubers in Korea, which was very difficult, especially since one of them was one of my Buddhist monastics, somebody I knew very well. He was publicly denouncing me.

That experience was quite traumatic for me because I had to pause all the work that I did and then go back to my beginner's mind and try to really look into my own shadow that maybe I wasn't aware of. This was the moment where the rubber hits the road. Is that the right expression?

**James Shaheen:** Where the rubber meets the road.

**Haemin Sunim:** Yeah, where the rubber meets the road. So, all the things that I studied and practiced, what do I do? I was the founder of the School for Broken Hearts in Seoul, and I found myself in a desperate need for my heart to be healed. And in that process, I was able to reflect and try to meditate on many issues, not just my own, but also a lot of people me telling me about how lonely they feel or the rejection they often come across, the feeling of unworthiness, as well as meeting with uncertainty in life and jealousy as well. So I dug deeper into my own past experience and tried to impart some of the lessons, and hopefully readers who get to read it get to receive some benefit of finding resilience and reclaiming joy.

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**James Shaheen:** Just so our listeners understand a little bit better, you were the subject of a very public attack in Korea. You were accused of living a life of luxury, and most of those stories were manufactured. For instance, they said you had a Ferrari and you don't even have a driver's license in Korea. So you withstood all of that with some silence and stoicism, but you describe in the book how terrible you actually felt. You found yourself feeling all of the things that anyone might feel under public attack. So much of the book focuses on learning to sit with difficult emotions, which you certainly had experience with, especially then, and you share that one of the most challenging emotions for you personally was the fear of abandonment. In fact, you were quite literally abandoned by your own culture, in that moment anyway. So can you say more about this fear? How have you learned to work with the fear of abandonment?

**Haemin Sunim:** This was like a learning experience, a learning opportunity for me to reflect. I tried to understand what my shadow is. What is it that I was not aware of, or maybe that I was too scared to confront? And as I was trying to heal my heart, I'm sure that people who have experienced rejections or people who went through where your heart is being broken, maybe you can relate to this. I saw a lot of difficult, hardened emotions within my body.

It wasn't enough for me to say that all the things that I see and feel are illusory and don't have their own inherent existence. All the training, all the cultivation that I did, it helped. But at the same time, it was also equally real that in my body, there was a lot of traumatic energy that had to be released. I had to honor those emotions.

In the process of honoring the emotions, I start hiking a lot and talking to my trusted friends. And also I danced quite a bit, actually. I got into dance therapy. And then I started journaling. I asked myself, What am I really afraid of? What is your fear? And in the beginning, my fear was, Can I continue to support all those people who have been dependent on me for their own livelihood,

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my parents and my godsons, my assistants and their family, and all the teachers who've been working together for the School for Broken Hearts?

And then I asked another deeper question, What are you really afraid of? And then I came across this fear of abandonment deeply rooted in me, and then I realized that this fear of abandonment has a much deeper traumatic experience, and maybe this was an opportunity for me to really take a look at it and to understand what that was all about.

**Sharon Salzberg:** Well, I feel like I can relate very clearly to everything you were talking about, the fear of abandonment, which is very strong in me as well, and even to some extent, although I'm sure not to the same extent, this idea of needing to live up to someone else's vision of what I'm supposed to be. I think we all have elements of being able to relate to these things. So in the start of the book, you pose a question. You say, Why are we unhappy? I'm curious to hear your take on this really universal question. Why do you think we're unhappy?

**Haemin Sunim:** It's because we are looking for something else. That's why we are unhappy. We cannot accept it as it is. Instead, we are constantly chasing for something else. Or we are resisting whatever comes into our way. So this tendency, either pursuing, looking out to get something that I don't have, or resisting what is coming my way, these two tendencies are the very cause of our unhappiness. My first book, *The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down*, actually in Korean, the original topic was things you can see only when you can pause.

Ultimately, true acceptance is when our mind does neither—that is, looking for something else or resisting what is coming our way. In this moment of pause, in this moment of acceptance, letting everything be as it is, and then finding no self in the midst of any of this, and thereby you feel completely free, which is your natural state, that's where you want to arrive at.

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**Sharon Salzberg:** So would you describe that pause as the way to break the cycle and learn to practice acceptance?

**Haemin Sunim:** Yes, absolutely. When you say pause, it also means step into the present moment. When we are not pausing, often we are caught in thoughts and thereby we are living in anticipation of something in the future or thinking about what happened in the past. So you're not actually seeing things as it is. If you truly can see things as it is, everything that is appearing in front of your eyes, it spontaneously magically appears without you doing anything in it. But at the same time, it just constantly appears and disappears and appears and disappears. And whatever the thoughts, whatever the trouble you have, it's no longer here. It's just gone. It's insubstantial, you know? So seeing that clearly as it is, it just instantly frees you. But oftentimes, what happens is we go back to our thoughts and try to live in this imaginary world where time exists.

**Sharon Salzberg:** Maybe we need to suffer enough. I mean, I can remember in my early practice, the process really exactly as you describe, and I'd be really burdened by jealousy or something like that, and then I would learn to pay attention to it and it would pass and I would bring it back. I think, Where'd that go? I was uncomfortable with that sense of space or spaciousness and freedom, and I had to kind of grow to be comfortable with that.

**Haemin Sunim:** Right. Absolutely. In the midst of all these things that were happening around me at that time publicly, I also had to really look into what is really here? What's happening? People imagine things, and thereby we suffer more and we give so much power to the words and thoughts of somebody else. But in fact, if you can just pay attention to what's here, what is real in front of you, there is nothing substantial, nothing that is binding you. There never was.

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**Sharon Salzberg:** You also suggest that gratitude can counter this great tendency toward grasping and resistance. Can you say some more about this? How can gratitude help us out of this cycle?

**Haemin Sunim:** Oh, thank you for the question because when we feel grateful, we are not chasing after something. We are content with what is. And also we are not resisting when we feel grateful. Even the bad things, what we label as bad things, if we feel grateful, then there's no resistance, and when there's no resistance, there is peace. And that's the quality of mind I think we all aspire to have.

**James Shaheen:** You know, I think of our reactivity, our impulse to move away from something that's unpleasant or move towards something that's pleasant. It's counterintuitive, but doing neither actually takes far less energy and work than simply reacting, particularly when it comes to unpleasant experiences. You suggest that we can learn to welcome unhappy experiences as a way of reducing the layers of unhappiness we experience. So what are some concrete practices you've developed for welcoming difficult situations?

**Haemin Sunim:** Instead of thinking that difficult situations are abnormal, it is something that is not supposed to be there in our lives, just accept the fact that it will be there. It will be there.

**James Shaheen:** I especially like your mantra while brushing your teeth, “Bring on discomfort, I will accept you gladly.”

**Haemin Sunim:** Yes, yes, exactly. So my book talks about precisely what to do, and one of the methods is to say, “Bring it on” to all this discomfort because inevitably we'll have that. What we are trying to do here is to reduce the resistance, the energy of resistance, because we suffer to the amount that we resist. It's not necessarily the situation itself that's making us suffer. It is the

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resistance to that situation that is making us suffer. So reducing that energy of resistance is a key to making us feel more peaceful.

And if I may add one more teaching, that is, whether we say something that we like or something we don't like, it's not objective. Only when we discern this to be likable or discern it to be unlikable, then these things that are likable or unlikable come to exist. In other words, what gives anything in this life that is pleasant or unpleasant or likable or unlikable, it is our own discernment that allows those things to come to exist.

Prior to our discernment, prior to distinguishing between what is good and what is bad, it just is. It was neither good nor bad, and only when we make that very much subjective discernment, which is never objective, you know, it's highly subjective based on your past experience, whatever the conditioning you have, and therefore being able to see clearly the likable quality and dislikable quality, they do not reside there. Actually, it comes from my own discernment. The quality is not inherent in them.

We often think that that bad quality is inherent in them. But what we're also forgetting is what allows those qualities to manifest in my own awareness. It is my own judgment that allows them to come to exist. It is the discernment that's doing the work, not so much that there is an objective reality out there that is doing the work.

**Sharon Salzberg:** This very much reminds me of when you recommend the technique to pay attention to how we view the universe, and as you write, “We can decide what kind of universe we would like to live in.” So how can we cultivate trust in the universe and shift from an attitude of scarcity to one of abundance?

**Haemin Sunim:** Yeah, this was a big revelation for me, because even after so many years of meditations, I could not shake off some of the basic human needs. I lived in this fantasy when I

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became a monk, that once you awaken, once you have enlightenment, that all of your basic human needs, whatever that is, it will all just disappear and you no longer have any kind of attachment to that whatsoever. Well, that's a pure fantasy. Just because you have this very cognitive wisdom, it doesn't mean that your earthly human needs just all of a sudden disappear.

For example, for me, that quality has to do with generational pain. My grandfather and my father's pain, I subconsciously inherited that. My parents were born right before the Korean war. So while they were growing up, they didn't have anything. They didn't have enough food. They didn't have any shoes. They didn't have much at all. So they had this mindset of scarcity. That is, the universe is not going to come to help them unless they strive and make their own living. Subconsciously, I also inherited that mindset too. And because of that particular conditioning, I also had this fear of will I be able to support myself? For example, ever since I was very young, I had to work really hard and diligently in order to support myself, so to speak, whereas, when I met my own master, my Buddhist teacher, he was exactly the opposite of my father. I was just so surprised, because he has a completely different mindset. That is, if he prays to Guanyin or the Buddha, whatever he prays, it's going to come to him.

And indeed, it has come to him. Whenever we have a Buddha's birthday celebration, then he'll pray that we'll have good weather, and we do have good weather. I was just so amazed that depending on how you see the universe, whether the universe is benevolent, loving, and caring and always trying to help you versus you see the universe uncaring and you are alone in this universe and you have to struggle to survive, these two mindsets, you get to choose how you're going to live your life.

**Sharon Salzberg:** You also described this process as cultivating faith, which is a topic dear to my heart. So how do you understand even the word faith?



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**Haemin Sunim:** I think as we cultivate this mindset of appreciating what is already here, and then this will generally bring the feeling of gratitude and the feeling of seeing beauty in everything. As we are beginning to see more beauty and more gratitude, as we feel more gratitude, then we begin to have a little more faith: “Oh, yeah, there are a lot of wonderful things that are happening in my life.” And as you begin to notice, rather than focusing your mind on what is lacking, you are just zeroing in on what you already have and what is already happening in front of you.

Right now, there's beautiful snow outside, and it's just so lovely to see it. It's so beautiful. And as we are appreciating it, I feel quite rich already. And so it is the mindset of appreciation and gratitude that brings more faith that better things are in store. They're going to come in my way, and I can do meaningful work that's going to help not only me but also other people around me. And I'm sure I'll be able to make very precious connections with all those wonderful people along the way. So as you begin to pray for it or have faith in it, then it usually materializes, like the way my master has been.

**James Shaheen:** Haemin, we've been talking a lot about the causes of unhappiness, but you also discussed how we can cultivate sustainable happiness, or to quote the novelist Haruki Murakami, small but certain happiness. So, first of all, what is small but certain happiness?

**Haemin Sunim:** We can find small but certain happiness. That is, rather than look for something spectacular like getting married or having a child or graduating from your university or buying your first home, why don't we just look at the little things that make us feel happy? If you can truly appreciate those moments, like, for example, you can enjoy freshly made coffee in the morning, and then you actually smell it, appreciate the color, the texture. It's all the little things where if you actually appreciate them, then you begin to feel happier. So rather than thinking about what are you supposed to do today or what you want to achieve next year or this year, appreciate what you already have. And this little thing can be smelling coffee or a bunch of small

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flowers. I love to buy flowers, having vivid colors in front of you. It can be sending a caring message to your friend, and then you usually get back a very caring message and a feeling of connection. I love to listen to radio, you know, especially radio that plays old music. Just listening to old music makes me feel really happy. Then the smell of a fireplace. Just the little things. The snow coming down from the sky. For me, I love bread. Maybe I shouldn't. I eat too much bread, and whenever I discover a wonderful bakery, oh my gosh, I just want to go line up and get that bread, the smell of it. One time I was in Thich Nhat Hanh's wonderful Plum Village, and after four or five days, a Vietnamese monk said, “Let’s go.” We drove to a nearby bakery, and we had nice coffee and croissants and said, “Oh, this is the best croissant. This is what French living is all about,” and then we were giggling and singing together at night. You know, those kinds of things. It doesn't have to be spectacular, big things in our life. Just being able to appreciate little things. That's where it happens.

**James Shaheen:** I have to say you stoke some craving in me now. I really want some bread. It can be very easy to get caught up in superficial notions of happiness, where we think meeting a certain goal or an achievement will bring us the big happiness, the final happiness, but it never lasts. Instead, you suggest that when our mind stops trying to find happiness elsewhere and relaxes in the present moment, we often experience what we have been searching for. So can you say more about this paradox? By no longer looking, we find ourselves sort of incidentally happy.

**Haemin Sunim:** Right, right. I mean, this was also the case for my spiritual experience. For a long time, I thought that there is such a thing as enlightenment and such a thing as the goal. Because of your incredible, immense effort, you will be able to arrive at the final destination. People might have some goal in life, which is important. I'm not belittling that. I'm not saying that you shouldn't have any goal. What I'm trying to say is that it was very ironic. As I was cultivating meditating and all that, I realized that buddhanature, and especially in Zen traditions, we talk about it as it's not something that you try to gain. It is something that you already have in front of you. The very act of not pursuing it allows you to awaken to your buddhanature. So all

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the way up until the very last moment, I guess I didn't have enough faith that I already had buddhanature. Somehow I felt like I had to strive to get it as though it is some kind of objective goal, as though it is something separate from the reality in front of me.

What I'm trying to say is that we can relax into what is here right now, because ultimately, whether you achieve something spectacular and then feel happy, or you just feel happy because you are listening to your favorite music, the quality of your mind is the same. You are relaxed, and you are not pursuing anything else. If you can get to that same mindset, that's what you are after.

**James Shaheen:** Haemin, another aspect of happiness you explore is learning to give up. In fact, that portion of the book we're excerpting in the magazine, and it may seem like another paradox. So how can giving up actually be empowering, and how can we cultivate what you call the courage to say I can't?

**Haemin Sunim:** While growing up, especially in Korea, which is very much that you have to conform to social norms and because of it, you are expected to go to high school, to go to university. You don't have a whole lot of agency. You're not deciding anything. You feel like everything has already been decided for you. But if you can look into yourself and ask whether what I'm about to do or what I'm asked to do or expected to do is something that is in line with my own ability and interest, and if it's not, can you be courageous to say this is not going to work for me, I know everybody want me to do this, but I'm sorry, this is not the path for me. So being able to reclaim your agency, it actually will make you feel happier.

**James Shaheen:** You that giving up doesn't mean being passive; it means allowing ourselves to discover a new path. In other words, perhaps we're on the wrong one, given our abilities or inclinations. So how can giving up actually open us to new possibilities?

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**Haemin Sunim:** Once we give up, then another path opens up. So whenever one door closes, another one opens. The problem is, can you just close the door and say, “OK, I did my best.” For me, it was a meditation app. You know, I’d spent three years working full time, and I failed. So I closed that door and when that happens, then another door opens up.

**James Shaheen:** Right, one of the difficulties in closing the door is in business, they have a phrase called sunk cost bias. You put so much into something that even if it's no longer fruitful, you just can't give it up because you just put so much into it that you think, How can I really turn away from it? I mean, that's often the obstacle, isn't it? We've gone so far along this path. You went so far along your academic path. And you think, “Wow, I put so much into this. How do I walk away from it?” So how does one walk away from it and say, “You know what? That wasn't for me”?

**Haemin Sunim:** I think you have to have a conversation with yourself for that. Can I see things as it is rather than expecting you'll get better? Maybe you'll get better, but even after six months or a year or two years, things are not getting better. Can you accept it as it is rather than hoping that maybe you will turn around, you will change? I think being able to really see it as it is, that's key for us to reexamine and be able to let go.

**Sharon Salzberg:** You also tie happiness to the notion of *querencia*, a Spanish term for a place of refuge. So what is a *querencia*, and how can we find our own place of refuge?

**Haemin Sunim:** It's a very special thing you can do. That is, in your own town, look for a small corner where you feel very happy or you begin to see a lot of beauty, or you feel very comfortable. It can be one of the chairs that local bookstores have, very comfortable chairs. Or it can be an area where you get to see your favorite paintings. Or it can be a coffee shop that you love. Somewhere where you feel relaxed and happy. Try to go there as frequently as you can. If you can find yourself what they call a third space, not quite your home and not exactly your

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workspace, but somewhere in between where you feel relaxed and you don't have obligations to your family or to your coworkers. Find that place and go there as often as you can.

**Sharon Salzberg:** I'm curious, can you share a bit about your own querencia?

**Haemin Sunim:** Yes. I have two favorite places. One is my favorite coffee shop in Seoul. And there is a precise time that I go. I go there at 10:30 because from 10:30 to 11:30, the coffee shop is very quiet, and from 11:30 onward, all the salarymen rush out, and they want coffee. So if I just go there around 10:30, it's very quiet. And there's a particular chair, a very comfortable and a kind of minimalistic, very lovely aroma. The people are so wonderful and kind, and they bring coffee to you instead of yelling people's names. So I love that place.

And then another place is, of course, a Buddhist monastic community. There is one particular Buddhist temple that I love. And whenever I feel very stressed or overworked and I need some place to rest, that's where I go.

**Sharon Salzberg:** Seems like this notion of refuge is also tied to beauty, at least for many people. So how can beauty be an antidote to burnout?

**Haemin Sunim:** When we see something beautiful, our habitual tendency to ruminate pauses. Let's say you climb up to a beautiful mountain, and you see the city from the top of the mountain, and what happens? Your mind becomes very quiet, and you are just in awe of the beauty. When we encounter, whether it's beautiful art, when you see a beautiful art, your mind becomes silent and appreciates what is already here in front of you. And that's where you feel happy.

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**Sharon Salzberg:** Another major theme of the book is loneliness, which seems to be so pervasive in actually many societies these days. Why do you think people feel so lonely?

**Haemin Sunim:** I think we are lonely because a lot of us are living in a big city, and there are lots of people living alone. In the medieval period or even a hundred years ago, people lived in a small community and they knew each other. They could rely on each other. But that is not the case nowadays for many people living in a large city. Especially for me as a Buddhist monk, I just look into why I am so lonely, look for the cause of loneliness. As I was looking for the cause of loneliness, I realized that whenever there's a thought of resisting, resisting being alone, that creates loneliness immediately. Because sometimes when you're alone, you feel free, you feel happy because you get to do whatever you want to do. You don't have to worry about whether your friends are going to agree with the kind of food that you want to have, for example. When you are alone, you feel free. But at the same time, when this thought of “I do not like this feeling of being alone,” then this creates the feeling of loneliness immediately. We end up having a very negative experience, and we label that as loneliness.

**Sharon Salzberg:** You quote the psychologist Carl Rogers, who said that we're afraid that if we show others who we really are, they might judge us or even reject us, and of course, it's very true. At the same time I felt an irony because we started this conversation talking about people judging us or rejecting us when they have no idea who we are and it's all their projections, so kind of stuck either way, but especially in terms of this tendency when we are afraid to reveal ourselves or live as who we are genuinely and authentically. Can you say more about this dynamic and how we can counter this fear?

**Haemin Sunim:** I think we want to drop our guard. We want to show up as who we are to other people. And yet we end up just playing the role of somebody at work or mother or whatever the role that you are expected to play, but behind the roles, and there's a different side of you, which is much more complicated and messy. Can you actually reveal that side? That requires



vulnerability in order to be genuinely connected with other people. I think we should be able to risk it and reveal the side that is behind those roles and behind those personas.

**James Shaheen:** Haemin, you said something very interesting in the book. You write that pretending to be someone we're not causes us a lot of self-loathing, and the reason I found that interesting is that often I think we pretend to be someone else because of the self-loathing, yet you're identifying one of the primary causes of self-loathing as pretending to be someone we're not, playing that role and denying ourselves. Can you say something about that?

**Haemin Sunim:** Well, people project all kinds of things onto a Buddhist monastic. I'm talking about myself. I remember two months ago, I was in the Netherlands giving a talk, and this wonderful lady came and said, “Haemin, you've been helping me so much. You are wonderful. You're like Buddha.” When I heard “You're like Buddha,” I was like, what? And then I realized that what's happening is this woman is projecting certain qualities, idealizing me, and I felt very uncomfortable, to be honest. I have to play some of that role in the Korean Buddhist monastic community sometimes. Because it is necessary to receive support, we have to play such a role in our Sangha. But at the same time, knowing the difference between the sort of idealized image that people expect you to behave versus what you really are, and when you are pretending to be that idealized person when you know yourself that you are actually not, then that creates the self-loathing: I don't feel very comfortable with this role.

**James Shaheen:** Could you say something then about what you refer to the many mes inside of myself? We're talking about playing roles, we're talking about being disingenuous or pretending to be someone we're not, and yet there are many mes within oneself. In particular, what is the me of me, and what is the me of others?

**Haemin Sunim:** The me of me is somebody I would like to be, someone I would like to become, but the me of others is someone that other people are expecting me to become. While growing

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up, our parents expect us to behave in a certain way, and maybe they are expecting us to become a lawyer or a doctor or somebody. And yet you realize that the me of me is saying, “That's not what I want.” So being able to juggle between these two roles, because you don't want to completely ignore me or others either because if you do that, then your relationships with your family or your coworkers can get restrained for no good reason. So being able to balance these two, the me of me and the me of others, that is a path to a harmonious and happier life.

**James Shaheen:** Like a happy socialization.

**Haemin Sunim:** Yes.

**Sharon Salzberg:** So it sounds like one component of bringing ourselves into balance is learning to restore broken or estranged relationships. Can you speak about how mindfulness practice helps us to mend relationships, both with others and also with ourselves?

**Haemin Sunim:** As we are becoming mindful of what we want, for example, and what society or what my family expecting me to become, then you can maybe delicately try to balance the two, doing it in a very wise in a way that's not going to hurt a lot of people, but at the same time you are honoring your own needs too. I think that's very important. And as we are talking truthfully about our own needs, we can become very mindful of what's happening between me and the person. It can be me and my parents or me and my loved one, me and my child, because sometimes we can easily become defensive and speak from the perspective of our ego. And then when we do that, once you are mindful of what's happening, then you can actually pause and drop that. Once you become mindful of whatever the quality that you're aware of, then there is a power to pause. But when you are not mindful, then subconsciously you will just react continuously. So I think mindfulness is very important.



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**Sharon Salzberg:** And one last question for me. You have a very beautiful phrase where you talk about the power of transparent silence. So what is transparent silence, and how can it be the grounds for freedom?

**Haemin Sunim:** The quality of your true nature doesn't have any shape or form. And because it doesn't have any shape or form, another word for that is silent. But at the same time, if you want to portray that visually, you could say transparency. So there is nothing there, but at the same time, it's extremely quiet. But that does not mean that you are seeking a quietness, like if you imagine enlightenment as a state as though it is just a quiet and peaceful state, that is not the case. Even in the midst of your miserable experience, your true nature is shining in front of you. So you're not trying to grasp the peaceful, wonderful quality of your mind and then try to resist all these noisy and unpleasant situations. That's not the practice. The real practice is to see even in the midst of this horrible situation, what you subjectively label as such, you still see this amazing transparent awareness that is in front of you. However, this awareness itself does not have any form or any shapes, so I say that it is transparent and silent.

**James Shaheen:** Haemin Sunim, thanks so much for joining us. For our listeners, be sure to pick up a copy of *When Things Don't Go Your Way*, available now. We like to close these podcasts with a short guided meditation, so I'll hand it over to Haemin Sunim.

**Haemin Sunim:** I want you to first sit comfortably. Relax your shoulders, relax your head, and just feel your body, just for one second.

And then we're going to breathe. Breathing in, breathing out. Breathing in, breathing out. One last time, breathing in, breathing out.

Leave the world as it is. Leave the world as it is. You're not trying to get somewhere, and you're not discerning what is right or wrong. You are just leaving the world as it is, and you are slowly

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going back to your childhood where you didn't know the language. You go back to maybe one year old. You haven't learned any language. You don't know any words. Just a feeling of “I am here” is here. However, you don't know any words. You don't know any language. Everything that you see and feel is a mystery. You are in awe of everything, and you don't know anything. You cannot conceptualize anything, and yet you feel this aliveness, this vivid aliveness that cannot be separated.

I will ask you to open your eyes and see the world as if you are one year old, in wonder, awe, and aliveness. See how everything is one, as we do not know any words, we cannot cut out anything, it just appears as one mysterious, alive thing. This unnameable wonder is your true nature. This unnameable wonder is your true nature. Thank you. Namaste.

**James Shaheen:** Thank you, Haemin Sunim. And thank you, Sharon.

**Haemin Sunim:** Thank you.

**James Shaheen:** You’ve been listening to *Life As It Is* with Haemin Sunim. To read an excerpt from Haemin’s book, visit [tricycle.org/magazine](http://tricycle.org/magazine). Tricycle is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to making Buddhist teachings and practices broadly available, and we are pleased to offer our podcasts freely. If you would like to support the podcast, please consider subscribing to Tricycle or making a donation at [tricycle.org/donate](http://tricycle.org/donate). We’d love to hear your thoughts about the podcast, so write us at [feedback@tricycle.org](mailto:feedback@tricycle.org) to let us know what you think. If you enjoyed this episode, please consider leaving a review on Apple Podcasts. To keep up with the show, you can follow *Tricycle Talks* wherever you listen to podcasts. *Tricycle Talks* and *Life As It Is* are produced by Sarah Fleming and The Podglomerate. I’m James Shaheen, editor-in-chief of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. Thanks for listening!

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