

VIEW to the U transcribed
Season 4: An Eye on ‘Why?’; Episode #1
Professor Norman Farb
Department of Psychology
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Carla DeMarco (CD): First a summary of the meaning of mindfulness and an intro to today's guest.

Norman Farb (NF): Being connected to what's going on is part of the puzzle, but I think what's a bit undersold or undervalued is also that connection and engagement to the present moment has to be met with some sort of intentionality. Being able to make a promise or hold an intention and then use your awareness to monitor whether you're following those intentions. And if you're putting those things together ... there has to be some sort of intention about what attitude you want to have or what value you'd like to see manifest in the world or what's right and what's wrong. That is being used as a sort of comparator against the awareness that's afforded by being engaged and in the moment.

I'm Norman Farb. I'm in the department of psychology and I'm an associate professor. I study emotion and wellbeing broadly stated, and I'm especially interested in how emotions and the sense of wellbeing change over time for better and for worse. So some of it's happier climbs when people are taking courses or doing training or trying different techniques to improve their wellbeing. And that the pull of my research focuses more on vulnerability to mood disorders, especially depression.

[theme music fades in]

CD: Welcome to 2020 and a new season of *VIEW to the U*.

For this next season, we tap into the amazing breadth of expertise on the U of T, Mississauga Campus and focus on a main driving question for the series this year. For this particular episode because it is January and people may have started off with some intentions for the new year ahead, which statistically speaking might be starting to wane right about now. Or is it just me?

Our main question or the ‘eye on why?’ for this episode: why is meditation and mindfulness so important for us? And why is it on so many people's radar these days?

That of course led to a few related follow-up questions. I am delighted to say that we are turning to professor Norman Farb from UTM's Department of Psychology for an answer to this question, but also for some inspiration about maintaining a meditation and mindfulness practice. So if you have made it one of your goals for 2020, hopefully it will help to keep you on track. Again is it just me? Over the course of this interview we cover how yoga ties into meditation, how Norman got into this area of research to

begin with – spoiler alert, psychology wasn't his original academic path. And a bit of a Eureka moment he had in the lab in a study related to students' mental health.

CD: Hello and welcome to *VIEW to the U*, an eye on UTM research. I'm Carla DeMarco at U of T Mississauga. *VIEW to the U* is a monthly podcast that will feature UTM faculty members from a range of disciplines who will illuminate some of the inner workings of the science labs and enlighten the social sciences and humanities hubs at UTM.

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Norman Farb is an associate professor at U of T Mississauga where he has been on faculty since 2014. He did an undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo, his master's and PhD at the university of Toronto in 2006 and 2011 respectively. And post-doctoral training at the Rotman Research Institute. He currently oversees the regulatory and Affective Dynamics or RAD lab, which is dedicated to understanding how emotions and regulatory responses unfold over time to determine a person's sense of wellbeing. We start with how Norman got into this line of research in the first place.

NF: I do think I was always sort of a bit obsessed over some of those big cognitive science questions like, what is consciousness? What is the mind? And even entering computer engineering, I had aspirations of, I'm going to make Data from *Star Trek*. I'm going to figure out how to make an artificial brain and really figure out where awareness comes from. And then I realized, that for me at least, the realities of the first few years of computer engineering were very far from that. It was a lot of calculus. I switched into psychology and philosophy and thankfully there was some really good courses and programs.

That was a much more immediate gratification because immediately in psychology and in some type branches of philosophy, you're talking about the nature of the mind and what is consciousness and what's the purpose of awareness. And what makes for a good life and things like that. I was like, "Oh yeah, I probably should have started off doing that stuff." For me it felt like a better fit and that's I think a little microcosm also of this mindfulness process is, "I'm suffering, I'm suffering, I'm suffering and I keep doing the same things. I keep suffering. Could I take ... could I roll the dice? It's not what I expected, but can I try something different? And then if I do that I might end up suffering more. Right? But I might end up suffering less."

CD: And the main driving question:
I wanted to focus on sort of the meditation mindfulness piece because I think you know, the start of the new year, people are thinking about ways that they can maybe improve their life. Whether it's by ... I don't like to use the word resolution or goals, but things like that. I know that part of your research is about meditation and mindfulness. And so I'm wondering why is meditation and being more mindful important for us as humans? And why do you think it's on so many people's radar right now?

NF: Great question. Meditation or mindfulness practices, more specifically, I think have value because they help us to cultivate qualities that we assume everyone walks around having. Like being able to choose what you think about, what you pay attention to, to be in touch with how we're feeling, and to act responsibly in the face of whatever we're feeling, whatever's happening in our bodies. But the reality is most of us have no formal training in these domains other than things our parents yelled at us when we were young. And so what's emerging in modern society is, as the main marketplace I would say, that we are embodying or inhabiting, is one where people are competing for our attention. Or they want us to feel certain things and associate those feelings with certain people, or products, or ideas.

And the currency is attention, right? User clicks or time spent on a page, or the likelihood you're going to go back to a given store or service. And so in the face of competition for attention and the absence of any formal education around how to regulate what you pay attention to and for how long, people are finding less and less unadulterated space, I would say. space where it's really just up to you what you pay attention to, do what you want. To the extent that I think people, more so than in previous times, in modern history, are throwing themselves into distraction as a way of protecting themselves from the demands on their attention. But distractions are not always satisfying over the long term, especially if they have negative side effects.

CD: Can you talk about maybe some of the negative side effects?

NF: Anything to an extreme probably isn't healthy and some things even in small quantities aren't healthy. So binge watching a Netflix show if it gives you some relief and helps you just compartmentalize all the other stuff going in your life is probably fine. But feeling like you have to binge every new show that comes on Netflix. Or a snack in the evening's okay, but if you have to constantly be snacking to feel okay in the evening because you're so stressed from the day. Where you have to drink or do drugs to get away from the stresses of the day. And then the next morning, now you have to take more and more caffeine or stimulation to get over the drugs you took the night before.

NF: It can become this sort of vicious cycle. And there are physical and mental limits to how much we can just keep from the outside in, trying to get leverage on our attention, on our own minds. So what we end up seeing is people feel isolated, overwhelmed. They actually become more reactive to stressors because there is no internal locus of control or it's atrophied because most of the solutions that we're employing are external solutions. And so there's this yearning for, "Well, how do I get out of this loop?" If my physical objective conditions are good, I have a place to live, I don't have to worry too much about whether I can afford to buy groceries or things like that. Many of us are operating at an okay level and even if we're not billionaires. So why do I feel worse and worse and how do I escape from this?

If I don't have a clearly diagnosed medical condition, it seems the healthcare system isn't really oriented to help us improve our mental health until we hit that kind of breakdown point. And then that point, now there's an entry point to the healthcare system. So is that really the likely predictable future for everyone to just continue

NF: toggling between stress and distraction until breakdown, or is there some alternative? And so meditation techniques, in much the way that exercise I would say became quite popular in the 80s and 90s, and now they're really almost is a cultural expectation that you are in some way responsible for your physical fitness.

There's a both a yearning to be able to have some agency and also perhaps a growing expectation that we should be curating our own mental health. And so because of some slowly building scientific evidence based around the clinical efficacy of meditation practices and helping to promote stress relief, people are latching onto it. Because maybe this is going to be the thing that helps me break out of the cycle because at some level, even if it's not fully explicit, people realize they're kind of trapped. There's this feeling of, I need to escape from what's happening. But just escaping into distraction is not getting me completely out of the loop, it's actually part of the loop.

CD: Why mindfulness and meditation now? How we can incorporate these practices in our days and some of the ways in which Norman incorporates meditation in his own life.

NF: If there's something mainstream that people believe in, will help them, then you tend to have less of this fringe stuff happening. And then if there's no innovation that's introduced into the mainstream, or it's not being introduced quickly enough, that's when you start seeing these sort of offshoots of, "Well maybe I should go to this intense meditation retreat." Or things like that. Which is not to disparage these things on the fringe. But I think in terms of historical cycles, we sort of buy-in and then sort of opt-out of what seems to be happening in the sort of mainstream narrative. And this clearly seems to be an opt-out period for a lot of people living in large urban centers. And so if you feel like democracy is voting against you all the time, or you feel like the mainstream interests are not your interests, then that's the recipe for ... even if it's not in a formal way, kind of slowly divesting oneself from the norm and trying to look for alternatives ways of living.

So it's feels like that's kind of been happening now, but it's so hard to tell because you're like, well, I'm stuck in my own echo chamber. I don't know what it's like for someone ... three degrees of separation from me that I haven't met. And maybe it looks really different there.

CD: And I think one of the questions that I had thinking about your work, but maybe it's hard to quantify, is there something that you would suggest that we can incorporate in our daily lives? Like putting aside 10 minutes a day to meditate at certain timeframe?

NF: Yeah, so I would say there are a couple foundational elements to breaking out of these cycles. So one of them is, I think you've already touched upon this idea of having some intentionality in the new year as a time where people set these resolutions or intentions to do better than they did before. I know I ate a lot of cake over the break, but I'm definitely going to lose weight this year. Being up to something makes a big difference. Regardless of whether you're successful or not. It's like if you're not even trying to change what's going on, if you don't set up your expectations that maybe I

NF: could improve or grow, or learn, or something, it's very unlikely that anything's going to change. And in the absence of intentionality, we'll just do whatever's easy and familiar.

So setting intentions, even if it's as simple as thinking something to yourself about what you're trying to get out of the day. So it doesn't have to be this formal, ritualized practice. But building some intention setting into the day I think is very, very useful. And there is some research suggesting that people who even set goals, even broadly for success in the future, tend to just do better, without even worrying about the details of how they accomplish it. And then the other element that I think is really crucial is trying to cultivate a sense of awareness as to what's actually going on. So if I intend to get better, but I'm not actually paying attention to what's happening around me, I'm never going to come up with concrete, practical solutions, or even recognize where my primary sources of stress are, or understand what my habits are when I do become stressed.

NF: And then without that awareness, there's no way I can be like, well, is this a good habit or a bad habit? I'm just doing what I do. And I have this intention. I wish things got better, but I'm not engaged enough to discover the particular set of circumstances and conditioning is for me, that's got me stuck. And so when people say, do 10 minutes a day, you could just spend 10 minutes focusing on your toe and it would provide, I think, a distraction from everything else. And there would probably be some relief from that. If what you'd normally do with that 10 minutes is ruminating and beating yourself up or replaying negative events from the day and figuring out, "Oh I should have done this and all of that." 10 minutes of not doing that is already beneficial.

That same 10 minutes I would argue would give you a little bit more value for time, if that time was spent trying to understand, okay, is there a pattern here in how I'm responding. And also what am I really up to? What would I have liked to have happened in the situation, not even in terms of even ... I should've had this great comeback or I should have just left or something like that, but what would I like to have if I could just have anything in the world. Any sort of value, what would I like my life to be like? So breaking away from the details of an upset into what am I aspiring to? And at the same time checking in and being like, and how am I actually reacting? What am I doing?

NF: And if you can make those two things clear, what do I really deeply desire or wish? And what am I doing? A lot of possibilities open up. Because when there's a disconnect between those two things, you can say, "Oh man, I really need to work to change this because there's this big gap between how I'm living my life and the way I wish my world was." In other situations you have to be like, I'm just running on automatic and it's not really ... it's kind of turning out close enough because you got to pick your battles. Everyone's already feeling overwhelmed. And I would argue that most people are doing zero minutes a day of a lot of these things except for when there's sort of culturally sanctioned times, like set your new year's resolution or it's your birthday. What are you going to do this year? Or there's a breakdown, and you're like, how did it come to this?

- NF: And then you start trying to quickly, forensically recompile all of the habits and decisions and inferences that led to this point of breakdown. But in a more sort of proactive way, we could be doing that a little bit each day. And I know just from ... we haven't really, we're still working on publishing this stuff now, but even from undergraduate populations, just having people check in and report on their mood and stress level each day, has a protective benefit on future stress. Anecdotal evidence or reports that come back from students that are asked to do these kinds of just daily, two minute check-ins is, this is literally something that I would never ever do on my own. Because it's just, I have so many other things to do and just sitting there and putting a little bit of work into being like, "How am I doing?" Sometimes it's upsetting, it's not so good. But otherwise it's just invisible. It just gets swept aside until it's unignorable. And usually that's when it's crisis, or breakdown.
- CD: Norman covers a bit more on mindfulness.
- NF: The traditional advice is that it's better first to set up kind of a safe laboratory space to start to explore one's mind and also to cultivate different qualities or capacities. In much the same way as you could say, well should I just go try to run as fast as I can in this race? Or should I start doing some kind of training in a much more controlled or safe environment? Go for slow jog, slowly build myself up and stuff like that. So I think the physical training analogies work quite well with mental training as well. They're all based on the same biological substrates. Depending on your metaphysical beliefs. But I think a lot of us believe that. So the idea that it might be worth exploring even five- or 10-minute practices that are about noticing how inconsistent or incoherent our attentional foci are.
- And then trying to develop some sort of semblance of control. But even at the very beginning, just the ability to monitor and watch things spin out of control and then model, "What do I do when I violate my intention and my mind wanders. Well am I angry with myself, am I judgmental, or can I be ... kind of just accept that that's what happens and then slowly bring my attention back to my focus in a safe space." Is probably a great way to start but the broader aspiration, I think, is eventually you'll be able to do that in a heated situation or immediately after some sort of negative or intense event. And that's really where the payoff will occur is with real life stressors because that's really where our sense of how things are going happens. Not just, "Oh I had a great meditation session. So it doesn't matter that someone said they hated me at work."
- NF: Trust me, the person at work is going to affect you more, but you won't ... but it's so overwhelming to get ... when you get upset that unless you have at least an inkling towards some sort of regulatory habit, you're just going to fall back into what we do by default. Which is often blame, judgment, ruminate, replay, rehash, and then that's back into that sort of spin cycle of either simulating suffering, anticipating future suffering, trying to avoid it, and all that stuff. So sorry, I would just say, I would recommend that people try to dip a toe into some sort of guided practice to begin with and see whether it feels meaningful or even fun.

- NF: It might not be the most pleasurable thing you've ever done, but does it feel, "Oh, something's happening here. I'm even noticing, I thought I had control over my mind and I don't, or I'm noticing there are bits of stillness if I can just sit still and keep my focus for a few minutes." And there's actually something really amazing about that. And if you dip a toe into practice and you get nothing out of it, I think there's lots of other ways to try to cultivate awareness or change one's habits. So it's a matter of just exploring what has a good fit with the individual.
- CD: Right. And I think one of the takeaways I got from the talk that I listened to you from the Mind & Life Institute [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyKeyLcoP1g>] from you is, you talked about some experience you had where someone was leading you through a [Qigong] practice and had you hold your hands out or something. They said, "How does that make you feel?" And you said, "I don't know." But I think that that sort of touches on being more comfortable with the uncomfortable. Right? But maybe when you're starting out with meditation, it's, it feels foreign and it's not something ... it's a hard to quiet our minds and it's ... that that can be uncomfortable.
- NF: Yeah, I think that can be something both threatening, but also delightful in some ways of trying on the idea that you really have no idea what's going on.
- CD: I didn't have this on my questions but I ... and you don't have to answer it, but I was curious, what is your meditation practice? Or do you make a point of you meditate every day? But again, you don't have to answer this-
- NF: Yeah, that's okay.
- CD: If you don't want to.
- NF: So my formal practice is pretty limited and weak these days, but I have a lot of hacks that I've built in as someone with two younger kids and full-time job. I'm the only one who's busy, of course, but ... so excuses. But I'm usually doing some sort of intention setting practice in the morning. And I conditioned that to my bathroom routines. So I feel the colds of the floor on my feet and I remember, "Oh, I'm supposed to think of a value for the day, something I'd like to manifest in the day." And then I will purposely not check my phone or do certain things until I've already made contact with my family in some way because I'm already thinking about the three, or sometimes 15 emails that people sent me between 10:00 PM and now.
- NF: So I try to set up sort of structures in terms of when it's permissible for me to attend to work and when I want to be attending to family and in a lot of that is conditioned based on things in my environment, in my regular routine. And in the evenings I try to still do a brief practice before bed, which is sort of derived from these kinds of mindfulness traditions. So I will try to scan and check in with my body and let my mental claptrap die down a little bit. And then I might spend a bit of time if I'm not too tired, letting my mind range freely and just noticing where it goes once I have a bit of that calm. But really in terms of formal practice, that might be on average 10 minutes a day.

NF: But I would say the other thing that's really changed for me over years now of trying to have these sort of contemplative practices is realizing when something's running me, if that makes sense. So when my mind is just racing and I've never really planned to be focused on something. So I keep going back to a past event that was upsetting, or I keep focusing on a problem even though I'm not in a situation to solve it. Like, I really want to finish this data analysis, but I'm on a bus. And I'll start to notice, you keep trying to solve a problem that you can't solve right now. And then that might trigger me to start attending more to just sensory events, whether in my body or what's around me. And if I can force myself to do that or coax myself into doing that for five or 10 minutes, a lot of times that spin cycle kind of winds down.

So I just find myself calming down. And so that becomes more of an ad hoc regulatory response to realizing that I'm caught up in a narrative that is either disempowering or upsetting and not constructive. Not that we should never think about upsetting things, but when you're thinking about an upsetting thing and there's nothing to do about it, it ... from an emotions-evolution perspective, it's really important that we pay attention to negative things because negative things can, historically, they could end your life or injure you in some way. So if you miss a threat signal, it can be really dangerous. Whereas you miss a juicy banana or something, there might be other bananas, you can probably survive a bit longer. So our brains are kind of skewed to prioritize negative information. It's always available for us to pick up on something negative in a day.

NF: And if we don't have any intentionality around it, for most of us, we will end up skewing a bit negative. Research on memory and things like that has confirmed that unless you're in the late stages of life, if you think your demise is imminent, that's the only time that the skew naturally tends towards positive. I've got limited time anyway, I don't want to obsess over the bad stuff, but why wait until you get a terminal diagnosis or something like that to try to play with those attentional biases? So it's natural and it can feel obligatory, but work needs to be put in, to counter our evolutionarily inherited predispositions.

CD: Is there such a thing as being too mindful?

NF: I think so. I mean, mindfulness is sort of an umbrella term for a lot of different practices as well as this idea of being aware of what's happening. It's really an interesting question. I think in one way, trying to use the practice instructions and taking them very literally even when they're not a good fit for the person, is a big area that's starting to expand and become discovered in the contemplative research field. And this is particularly important in cases where people have past traumas. So often we develop strong associations with different stimuli, often feelings within our own body that are linked to the trauma.

So if you're trying to be a really good student and your teacher says you need to spend time in the feeling of your breath in your chest. And that's the exact same feeling that's linked to having a panic attack or that time that this horrible thing happened in the past and you just try to be a good student, you're like, "Okay, I'm just going to go there.

NF: Going to go there and pick up that sensation." And it keeps queuing this trauma memory that you just don't have the capacity really to unpack or the energy to unpack at that time. Then you could say, well, just trying to be a good mindfulness practitioner, it might actually be harmful and lead to dissociation, depersonalization, or deeper entrenchment of the trauma.

It's sort of like... it's a tool and if we really want to believe it's a powerful tool that can change the way your mind works, you have to use it correctly, the same way that you'd want to use a medication correctly. So we can't have it both ways. You can't assume, oh, this is this really powerful technology for reinventing the self, but it couldn't possibly do harm. Everything has an extreme.

CD: Is yoga ... could it be considered a form of meditation because you're sort of focused on your breathing and holding the poses?

NF: Yeah, I mean I've had the exact same question and actually we've just finished a pilot study at Harvard with Sara Lazar as my collaborator and Bo Forbes and some other people ... where we really wanted to ask the question, what is it like to go to a gym yoga class compared to going to some place where it's a bit more seen as a meditation or contemplative practice. So we actually ran two different groups. When one is a very accomplished while certified gym yoga instructor teaching the classes, and the other people are treated in what's called integrative yoga therapeutics where you're ... it's really about cultivating awareness and having the right attitudes and all of this intentionality and exploration, as opposed to performance. And so we just finished running, it took us a while because we're doing this on a shoestring and don't have a major grant for it.

NF: And so we just finished our fourth wave of this stuff. We have enough people I think to analyze the data now. And their prediction actually is that both forms of yoga are going to be quite good for you. Any sort of practice, I think would be good for you and in some ways in terms of immediate stress relief, maybe that's sweated out. Like can you get your body into this pose yoga, might actually be superior, but in terms of the accrual of stress and also just the growth of awareness and connection to the body and things like that, there's probably quite a big difference, if that's explicitly part of the curriculum as opposed to, well if you just stretch a lot, you'll gain that awareness.

The prediction is that you won't. You'll be looking from outside in and just like, is my chin close enough to my knee right now or not? And why is everyone else so skinny and beautiful and I'm *this*? All that stuff, as opposed to it being from the inside out. I think there are ways to model that and we're exploring it in a bunch of different ways now. So yeah, again, yoga is an umbrella term. It could be a profoundly contemplative experience, it could be a fashion show, and it probably is both those things and everything in between, depending on what you bring to the practice, what the teacher's like and what the group you're practicing with is like.

[interlude music fades in]

CD: Coming up: Norman talks about a eureka moment from one of his studies involving student mental health and the impact of his work.

[interlude music fades out]

CD: Have you come across any findings in particular over the course of your research that really sort of threw you for a loop or surprised you?

NF: I think every couple of years, well, every study the data doesn't look how I want it to look like, as a 'welcome to science' kind of thing. But yeah, there's been some really interesting challenges we're dealing with even now in looking a lot at undergraduate mental health. And people actively resent being made to do things to take care of themselves. But it seems like half of ... when we make the undergrads do diary entries about something they can do in the next 24 hours, totally open-ended, they can pick it, they hate it. And so when I actually started doing this research, I thought, I've actually harmed these poor students. They actually seem like they're more stressed. But when I looked at their daily experience scores, which were also recording, so not just the retrospective report on 'how was that for you? Did you feel better?'

Their daily reports actually showed that their stress level was about half that of people who weren't doing the diary entries. So the narrative around it was, 'you made me do more work and I don't like being made to do extra work. I can take care of myself. Thank you.' And the reality was they were benefiting from these practices in their own daily reports. But retrospective memory is very skewed towards ... big picture, local events, intense events. And we lose that granularity often. So it creates these really interesting paradoxes if we want people to take more care of themselves or here in speaking up at, you know, UTM undergraduates not being so stressed out over exams as a paradigm. You might have to upset people a little bit or goad them a little bit, force them, coerce them, incentivize them to change their habits.

NF: Because when you're stressed, like I said, you just want to fall back in habit. And so that's kind of surprising because my late theory would be, well if I tell you something that ... you say you're stressed and I say do this, you won't be stressed. You'll be like, "Great. And I'll go do it." But that's not actually ... the reality is, yeah, if I wasn't so stressed I would do that thing that would reduce my stress. So then, okay, because there's this really interesting puzzle. So when's the right time to intervene? When's the right time to learn a new habit? Even if you're really stressing, you're forced to do something extra that turns out to be beneficial. Should we make people do that? So these are some of the research questions we're grappling with in the past couple of years.

Our preconceptions ... our hypotheses around whether something's going to work or not often have very little to do with the reality of the situation. And it takes some sort of evidence gathering to really understand whether something is effective for us as individuals or not. And that doesn't always require a lot of fancy stats. It could just be, yeah, I'm going to keep track of my mood. I'm going to keep track of my stress level for a while doing this versus not doing it. And then I'll decide for myself and my position is

- NF: if you tried ... got into your journal and it doesn't do anything, then the response, it might be to stop doing the journal, but not to stop doing something. So it's like, okay, you don't want to do the journal? Let's pick something else to experiment with. Let's try doing 10 minutes of stretching a day. Let's do 10-
- CD: The other thing I wanted to ask you was ... and I know you've touched on this a lot, but what do you feel is the biggest impact of your work?
- NF: Yeah. I think biggest impact of my work has been to try to formalize some of these perennial or ancient wisdom traditions in a way that they can be included in scientific discourse. So whereas before me, it was either I'm going to go do the hippie thing or go do meditation or become a yoga teacher, or I could do science. I think we're trying to reveal these are actually compatible systems. I just gave a colloquium at Western, I think a month or two ago where I tried to argue that cognitive neuroscience and traditional Buddhist philosophy are almost completely congruent twins, if you don't go all the way up to metaphysical reincarnation, but the idea that the mind is inherently conditioned. The conditioning's invisible to us. Is the neural model of how the brain works and it's also the Buddhist psychology model.
- Rather than saying I discovered something no one ever did before, it's more been translational that I could show and from a neural systems account that the transformations that were talked about in a contemplative practices actually could have a very well-defined empirical model that we can then test. And then maybe less successful thing that I'm trying to work on is the idea that the scientific tests can then go back and inform the contemplative community and say, I know you have this experience or belief, but it itself might be biased or contaminated. And when we actually test in a more impartial way, it turns out for instance that having more meditation practice doesn't really make you a better receiver of body signals. You just value that the signal you already have more.
- NF: So someone saying you really have to be able to feel every bit of your body might actually not be giving a very skillful meditation instruction, but that's coming back from you know, big science or something. So it's an interesting dynamic sort of being an intermediary between a contemplative and scientific communities. And I think that the biggest contribution I've had is to try to start to build some bridges there, where other people could also see themselves as having careers in those bridge kind of areas.
- CD: Thank you so much for coming in today to talk about your work.
- NF: Yeah, my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

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VIEW to the U podcast transcript
2020

CD: I would to thank my guest, Norman Farb for telling us about his wellbeing research in U of T Mississauga's Department of Psychology, and as the principal investigator at the Regulatory and Affective Dynamics lab at UTM.

I would to thank the office of the Vice Principal, Research for their support, and I would to thank Fatima Adil and *The Medium* at UTM for their recent interest and coverage of the podcast.

If you listen to this show through iTunes, please consider rating *VIEW to the U*, so that others can find the podcast.

And please for the season, if you have other burning questions for our long list of experts at UTM, send them my way. Details for getting in touch are on our website, on our SoundCloud page, or send them directly to car.demarco@utoronto.ca. Stay tuned!

Lastly, and as always, thank you to the musical director, Tim Lane for his tracks and support.

Thank you!

[theme music fades out]