

In this modern world of endless social media scrolling and heightened divisions, do you ever find yourself intentionally looking for something to be angry about? Perhaps you click into Twitter with the intention of seeing what the other side has to say and fully expect to get riled up about it before you've even seen it. Many of us have found ourselves caught in this outrageous entertainment cycle. And I have so many questions about it. Are we addicted to outrage? What purpose does outrage serve? Is this type of anger pro social, or are we merely feeding into a self serving neurobiological brain loop when we go looking for injustices? What biases underpin our perceptions? And what can we do to step out of the divisive outrage cycle into empathic awareness? We'll address all of these questions and more in this episode.

Hello, and welcome. If you like what you hear today, remember to subscribe and leave a review on iTunes.

Today we're talking about outrage is entertainment. This is a denser and longer episode than has been typical for the podcast so far, but I hope you stick with it because I do think it's an important one and one that's very relevant to today's climate of outrage.

My curiosity with outrage I first started because a couple years ago, I noticed myself going through a period where I'd somewhat unconsciously look for things to be outraged by on social media. The process typically went like this, I would click into Twitter or Facebook and scroll through posts, almost hoping to find something that challenged my perspective, or at least expecting it. So I wouldn't take outward action with this sort of outrage or anger, I would feel if I did find something. But I would then step away from the computer or my phone and internally that anger or frustration would then proceed to run amok and wreak havoc in my mind. And in my heart. One day, just before I clicked into Twitter, I heard this sort of intuitive and questioning whisper, have you noticed you're looking for things to be mad about? And have you thought about why? What purpose is this serving? Are you consciously choosing this for yourself? Or is the mind just taking you for a ride? Because it often does that? This certainly wasn't the first time I found myself in this pattern. But it was the first time I'd really stopped to question it. I'd noticed so many other people around me engaging in similar patterns as well. And so I think I just sort of normalized it like, Isn't this something that we as humans do, we sort of look for things to get riled up about, especially if we're feeling maybe a bit bored or lost or apathetic or just in a rotten mood.

But as I sat there, and really considered it, I felt this sort of sinking pang in my gut. And to me, that's always a metaphorical stop sign from my higher self, that's kind of saying like, Hey, hold on, let's take a moment reflect, look a little bit deeper, and not just go on with this sort of mind derived pattern that we've gotten ourselves

into.

So I stopped, I reversed that a Twitter didn't go into it, and then open the Notes app on my phone, and I began to jot down paragraphs and paragraphs of hypotheses, questions and theories about what I was experiencing that moment, and really started to unravel the pattern and to look for similarities between what was the state that was triggering me to go into this? What did I feel as I was doing it? And what did I feel after? And I got really curious about it. And from there, it sort of just spiraled into this curiosity that's been with me for the last couple of years. And I've gathered and collected research about it throughout that time.

My point in sharing all this is to say that, as with so many of the topics I write about, and discuss this one was also inspired by my own desire to shift a pattern of behavior within me that wasn't serving my highest good. I really believe that our ability to effectively change these unwanted patterns became the second we honestly and humbly recognize there's a problem. So the moment that we acknowledge that sort of thorn in our thinking, if you will, from there, we can then get curious about why it's there so that we can both allow the thorn to work itself out and to do our best to ensure it doesn't grow back. I'll actually dig a little deeper into that metaphor later in the episode.

I will say this is a trickier topic to navigate. And so because of this, and before we dive further into it, I'm going to go over a few sort of gentle ground rules for listening today. Take them or leave them as you see fit. So number one, do your best to focus on your personal experience and try not to let the mind wander off into the sort of othering thoughts. So for example, you're thinking, you know, oh, yeah, my Great Uncle Ben is a real An outrage addict on Facebook or whoever it might be, because I'm sure we all have those people in our lives that we could call to mind. But in other words, own yourself and focus on what you can personally change within to contribute to the greater good without, and make the solution your point of intention rather than the problem. This is really challenging, so just do your best. Number two, if you listen to this entire episode, and can only see room for improvement and other people and not yourself, I'd encourage you to either humbly and compassionately look harder, or I like to congratulate you, because you must have come to earth is one of the Enlightened few, in which case, you're probably not listening to this podcast. But for the rest of us, though, there's always more self reflection to be done and growth to be had. And it's only possible to make changes in the future if we're willing to honestly and compassionately reflect on our past. And the final thing I want to mention is that if there's something I mentioned here that you disagree with, or doesn't make sense, do let me know, I've detailed all of the most pertinent research articles, books and resources that I used to create this episode in the show notes. So be sure to look

there. But my research certainly was not exhaustive. Meaning it's completely possible that I missed something or a whole bunch of some things. So just let me know if I did. And I hope to add to this conversation down the road, because there is just so much to unpack, and there are so many different fields that address this topic in different ways and offer us different perspectives as to the why behind it, as well as resolutions and things to help overcome it.

All right. So now on to the rest of the show. It's probably no secret to any of us that the last many years have been breeding grounds for all sorts of outrage, no matter which side we found ourselves on, all sides seem to be outraged. And yet the thing about outrage is that it really depletes us to the core. It's a metabolically and energetically demanding emotion. I found myself so curious about this, because if we're going to expend precious energy on being persistently disgruntled and angry, essentially, it better be serving some higher purpose or greater good. But is it? And if it isn't, what purpose does outrage serve internally or externally? And why are we so drawn to it almost to the point of addiction? If being mad and judgmental, were effective ways to elicit positive change, then we teach our kids to be mad and judgmental, but we actually do just the opposite. And yet somehow we rationalize our own outrage as if being angry and judgmental and cruel towards others is somehow justified for certain topics, or certain groups of people, particularly those groups that we perceive as the other. And this is all relative, right? So no matter where we find ourselves, there's always this sort of collective other. And it changes based on different topics, different beliefs, different perspectives, right, but there's always that sort of outgroup, and I'll be talking about or I'll be using the terminology in group and outgroup throughout this conversation. So that's something to keep in mind. In-group would be the group that you identify with, and out-group would be the group that you don't identify with.

Let's take a closer look now because there's actually a term for this experience, and it's called moral outrage. So moral outrage is defined as feelings of anger directed at a third party for violating a moral standard of justice or fairness. This outrage is often expressed by a bystander on behalf of the victim of that perceived injustice. And because of this moral outrage has historically been sort of described as a pro social emotion that's reflected a desire to restore justice by fighting on behalf of the victimized or marginalized party. However, what's so interesting is that more recently, and especially with the introduction of social media, this sort of altruistic portrayal of outrage has been called into question by the research. And there's been research that's demonstrated that moral outrage can also be a self serving method of defending or bolstering one's own moral standing, as opposed to an authentic desire for justice. That's a lot to unpack. So let's just take a closer look and just take this bit by bit.

There's a quote from a 2017 research study that reads as follows, quote, moral outrage is not merely a concern with justice alone, it is also an attempt by individuals to appear virtuous to others and to reduce their own guilt and quote, so is moral outrage. Good. Is it bad is it somewhere in between? As I dug into the trenches of research, I noticed that there seem to be two distinct subtypes of moral outrage. Although to be totally fair about this, I didn't see these two types differentiated in the literature. So please take my assessment with a grain of salt. But there were patterns that I was noticing in terms of either being pro social or more self serving.

So here is my take. The first type is unifying moral outrage. Ah, and the second type is divisive moral outrage. And I think those are two really important distinctions to make. So unifying moral outrage is anchored in empathy. It spurs us to internally take outward supportive action, and our efforts are directed towards compassionate and genuine pro social support of those groups or people who are perceived as being unjustly affected. On the other hand, though divisive moral outrage is sort of anchored in contempt. Feelings of contempt have been shown to be related to the dehumanization of members of the out group, whatever it may be. And because of this, our efforts when we engage in divisive moral outrage are directed at destroying or demeaning those people or groups who are perceived as committing the injustice, whether that's through internal thoughts or sort of ruminating on our feelings, or we actually go and take outward actions and express this outrage at the outgroup or just sort of put it out there for the general population to observe and absorb. With divisive moral outrage then our focus is on the perceived other as opposed to those who directly experienced the injustice. So divisive moral outrage can lead to either outward actions or inward rumination, as I just mentioned. And an important note is that outward outrage actions... say that 10 times fast... aren't necessarily displayed in public forums, they may be taken out into the real world and brought to life in conversations with family members or friends. Furthermore, divisive outrage that we do express online or in a public forum doesn't have to appear all that angry. So passive, aggressive outrage fueled expressions can be equally as divisive and polarizing. And I'm sure we can all bring to mind examples of this from our own experience, whether it's us expressing it or it's observing it from someone else expressing it.

Modern news media is particularly good at subjectively inflaming topics in a way that incites divisive moral outrage. This is so important to remember and to notice, because they weaponize certain topics in a way that were triggered to outrage just by hearing a simple word or phrase or label or name. We're sort of programmed or trained to be hyper aroused by certain words, because of the way things are portrayed by the media.

Depending on our natural disposition, as well as the content of the

triggering topic at hand and our feelings about it, we likely tend towards one type of outrage over the other. So either divisive or unifying. But I think it's probably safe to say that we've all engaged in both types at one point or another. For the purpose of this conversation, though, we're going to be solely focusing on the divisive type, because that is the non pro social or severely less pro social type of moral outrage.

The ironic and sort of hypocritical to be quite honest thing about divisive moral outrage is that we're essentially trying to access the positive by way of directing negative emotional states at other people were essentially bundling non moral behavior in a moral facade, if that makes sense. There's actually a social psychology phenomenon known as the moral self licensing effect that seems to be at play here. So in moral self licensing, we essentially justify bad behavior by calling to mind past or future good behavior. And it's this way of reducing or acquiescing to cognitive dissonance so we can make ourselves feel better about something we do or say that we would consider to be immoral by bringing to mind future or past moral behavior.

An important question to answer here is, is this type of outrage purpose well, and what purpose is it serving? Of course, outreach can feel purposeful when it's channeled at a goal. For instance, when we're attempting to convince others that our beliefs or our perspectives are right or morally sound, and that their beliefs or perspectives are wrong or immoral, we can definitely get locked into truly believing that we're attempting to do good there. But, and I come back to this is doing bad to the other group in the name of doing good to our group really doing good. And this is the sort of philosophical question.

Research from 2021 suggests that moral outrage expressions in online networks serve in group reputation functions while at the same time hindering discourse between groups. So when individuals Express moral emotions that negatively depicted the out group or the other they were perceived by those out group members as less open minded and less worthy of political conversation. This research did specifically look at politics, but of course, outreach is not limited to political conversations and discussions. In other words, expressing moral outrage strengthens in group belonging and acceptance, but it comes at the cost of intensifying divisions and therefore seems to be more self serving than beneficial to the collective.

Something else I want to mention and this is getting back to this idea of contempt. But research conducted by psychologist John Gottman has shown that contempt is absolutely devastating to relationships. And this is because when we show contempt for someone else's opinions or thoughts or actions, were essentially saying you your thoughts and your views are beneath me, it's a very condescending sort of anger or

frustration. This really begs the question, then, if this type of moral outrage is only enhancing divisions, why are we so drawn to it? Why are we addicted to it essentially? And why are we fooled into believing that unity could ever possibly be an outcome when we express such harsh judgments for other people?

With all of these questions in mind, I dove deep into the research, and I scoured the realms of social psychology, kinesiology, neurobiology, spirituality and ethics. And I ended up sort of coming out with even more questions than when I started. And truly, I think I could keep researching this for years to come and still not know at all, there is just so much to grasp here. But the essence of what I discovered really pointed me to four distinct variables that seem to be intersecting to support our collective addiction to divisive moral outrage. I will go ahead and list them out now. And then we're going to dive deeper into an explanation for each of them. Number one, outreach is both internally rewarding and stimulating, which keeps us coming back for more. Number two, social media increases both accessibility to topics to be outraged about. So in other words, it offers this trigger material, and our ability to express that outrage. It gives us a platform, social media also rewards us for expressing our moral outrage in a highly addictive manner. Number three, there are inherent cognitive biases that enhance our natural tendency towards divisive us them thinking, these biases tend to keep us locked in and completely unaware of our own ignorance, because they essentially lead us to believe that we're always on the right side of the argument, and that there is always another side that is wrong. So no matter where we find ourselves, we always find ourselves on the right side because of these biases at play. And number four, because the ego requires identification and separation to exist. It's constantly working to keep itself alive by clinging to our identities, and especially those that keep us separated from others.

So now let's take a closer look at each of these. So let's go back to number one. Consuming and expressing outrage is internally rewarding and stimulating. There is both a brain basis for this and also a more spiritual or energetic basis for this. Let's first look at this from the brain based perspective. So to put it a bit bluntly, the brain is addicted to outrage because outrage is dramatic and drama releases feel good neuro chemicals. But more specifically, when we internally experience or consume drama, endorphins are released that suppress pain and induce a pleasurable numbing effect. In other words, consuming drama in any form triggers the same mechanisms and circuitry in the brain as opiates or heroin. Now, I'm not saying it's to the degree of those things, but it is triggering the same circuitry, which is important to know. Is it any wonder then why we're addicted to those hits of drama and subsequent outrage? And is it any wonder why we're more drawn to search for outrage or drama when we're feeling out of sorts or unfulfilled with ourselves?

When we externally Express moral outrage, dopamine is released, punishing a perceived evil doer releases dopamine in the brain. If you'd like to learn more about dopamine, there is an episode called instant gratification versus enduring satisfaction that gets into this. Research has shown that unfortunately, that high or cathartic effect of expressing outrage online actually makes us feel worse in the long run. Now let's take a look at this from an energetic or spiritual perspective. So when we chart the vibrational frequency of emotional states, anger is a higher frequency emotion than things like fear, grief, apathy, guilt, and shame. So in this sense, moving from one of those emotional states to anger or outrage is actually vibrationally and energetically productive in a sentence. Perhaps we reach for anger to sort of pull us out of apathy or sadness or boredom, depending on your knowledge of kinesiology and energetic states and frequencies. This may seem a little bit obscure. But, and there is a really great book that I can recommend called power versus force that I will drop into the show notes and I'll also link to a chart that map up out the various vibrational frequencies of emotions.

Of course, when we look at the greater scheme of emotions, anger is still quite low. And it's considered to be a very contracting emotion, meaning that anger limits our consciousness instead of expanding it. And this is because anger relies on an exertion of external force, as opposed to sort of summoning authentic internal power. Alright, so back to issue number two now, social media, social media increases both our accessibility to topics to be outraged about and our ability to express that outrage in an online platform. It also rewards us for expressing our moral outrage in a way that is highly addictive and reinforcing.

So it's no secret that social media is architected to grab our individual attention. Essentially, our time and attention are highly valuable currencies. And these platforms know how to get us to spend a study published in 2021 revealed that outgroup or othering language so outgroup language is the strongest predictor of social media engagement. So engagement, meaning things like reactions, comments, repost, retweets, whatever it might be, to phrase this much more simply, and clearly, posts that involve a person from one group hating or judging another group are the most engaging. And we know that social media platforms tend to reward engagement. So posts that are more engaging end up getting pushed out to get more eyes on them. This finding suggests that social media may actually be incentivizing content that expresses outgroup animosity, whether intentionally or unintentionally, I'm not going to make any judgment calls there. Furthermore, it was found that for every moral and emotional word that people use in a tweet, the rate of retweeting from other people is increased by 15 to 20%. That is significant. So if using just one moral emotional word has that significant of an increase on the likelihood that our outrage will be shared, you can really start to imagine how quickly that likelihood multiplies for Tweets that contain

a whole basket full of moral or emotional language.

Again, all of this is particularly unsettling when we really start to think about the context of social media algorithms that prioritize highly engaging posts are these AI driven decisions actually helping to prioritize posts that include outgroup animosity, and therefore perpetuating divisions, or at least the perception of divisions. Another contributing factor to the current outrage culture is that the two dimensional nature of online interactions reduces our empathic distress. This means that we can inflict interpersonal judgment or harm with less intrapersonal, guilt or distress. So we can do things to others that harm them, hurt them, judge them, whatever it may be, without experiencing the same level of distress that we would if we did this in person, we're sort of absolved from that sensation of guilt.

The last aspect of the social media arm of this problem is that we're positively reinforced in the form of likes, shares, comments, etc. When we express divisive moral outrage online. We're also reinforced for consuming outrage as we scroll. But this isn't just any type of positive reinforcement. And I want to be really clear about that. Because these hits and feedback tidbits are delivered in an unpredictable manner, meaning they're inconsistent, or they're occasional. So in other words, when we express outrage, or attempt to find it online, we know will eventually be rewarded. But we're unsure when or how often in behavioral psychology, this is known as variable ratio, or intermittent reinforcement. And it's one of the most addictive forms of reinforcement with a high potential to be exploited. In super straightforward speak. Social media is essentially akin to gambling in terms of how it reinforces us for using it, we essentially take many bets, each time we post or each time we scroll. And even if we don't receive reinforcement for everything we post or every time we go and just scroll, we maintain the hopefulness that will eventually be reinforced because the reinforcement can essentially come at any time. And thus we keep posting, we keep scrolling, we keep checking, it's sort of that habitual loop.

Before we go on to the third issue, I want to mention that 99 one role that's very hard to convey an audio format, but it's 90 dash nine dash one role. So I don't know if you've heard of this, but it was coined by those who study social networks and online communities. To summarize the finding that in any social network or online community, 1% of the users generate 90% of the content. 9% of the users create the other 10% of the content and the other 90% of people are predominantly silent observers Interestingly, too, is the fact that almost all of the 9% Group's content is in reaction to the 90% of content that the 1% group created. I hope this all makes sense. That's a whole mouthful and a lot to take in. This is just something to keep in mind as we scroll, post, create, and react because it helps us better understand the validity of the narrative that we're seeing

online.

With all of this in mind, let's move on to the third issue. There are inherent cognitive biases that enhance our natural tendency towards us them thinking. And these biases tend to keep us locked in and unaware of our own sort of ignorance, because they essentially lead us to believe that we're always on the right side of the argument that we're always in the right and that we're always the well informed, well intentioned party. In other words, because of inherent biases, we rarely step back to evaluate the validity of our beliefs and perspectives. We don't often stop to think about how we came to believe the things we believe and why we're so attached to these beliefs, the mind simply goes ahead and fills that in for us, and tells us that the reason we're attached to our beliefs is because they're right, of course. But are they? And can we all be right? Even when we're in sharp disagreement with one another? I don't know. That's a question, right? That's a sort of philosophical debate that we won't get into today. This particular area is a real doozy in terms of the limitless nature of the research. So when I started outlining this episode, I had written down at nearly 15, separate belief based biases that could potentially offer a basis for understanding here, talking about all of them would have been way too convoluted and confusing, and maybe even boring too. So I had selected the ones that seem to be most applicable and useful in terms of understanding of why we feel so justified in our outrage.

The first one I'd like to discuss is naive realism. And to quickly clarify, this is naive realism in the social psychology sense, not as much the philosophical sense. So naive realism is the false belief that each of us has, that tends to lead us to believe that we see the world as it really is. And anyone who disagrees with us is uninformed, or irrational, or maybe self serving or just totally biased. This is what describes the human tendency to believe that we perceive the social world as it actually is without bias. So in other words, the mind tricks us into believing that we generally tend to be objective in our perceptions, and that people who have different perceptions than us must be uninformed or crazy or have self serving motives. So what is the problem with this type of thinking? This thought based phenomenon leads us to process information regarding conflict related issues in a way that's selective, biased and distorted. Because of this, it also inhibits our ability to accept new ideas or change our mind because we simply believe we're right and that others are wrong. So we're very dismissive of others perspectives or opinions. As you might imagine, this doesn't bode well for the peacemaking process between polarized groups either, but who's affected by naive realism.

So we are all subjected to this bias and experience it regularly. Interestingly, there was a study that was conducted in 2020, that found that subjective socio economic status or SSS for short and political naive realism specifically to be positively correlated. So

meaning that the higher RSS is, the more likely we are to think that our political beliefs are right, and that those on the other side are uninformed, biased or selfish. This finding was observed regardless of political party identification, meaning it was observed across all individuals. So how do we overcome this bias? Simply being aware that this bias exists, and that we're all susceptible to it has been shown to lead to one more acceptance of perspectives that challenge our own, to enhanced openness, and three, increased self awareness about the bias itself. Similar to this bias would be the false consensus effect in which we see our own behavioral choices and judgments is common and appropriate while viewing alternative responses as deviant or inappropriate.

The next bias that we'll explore is the negativity bias, otherwise known as positive negative asymmetry. As humans, we have a tendency to one register negative stimuli more easily and potently than positive stimuli, and to dwell on negative events longer than positive events. This is because negative experiences produce a significantly stronger response in the cerebral cortex than positive or neutral stimuli. And it's the same reason that the five to one ratio exists if you've heard of that. So this is the idea that it takes five positives to balance out one negative in interpersonal relationships. This ends up circling back to social media a little bit but because the negative grabs our attention more than the positive and because our attention is an invaluable commodity, Do all media platforms, negative news and negative posts often end up being algorithmically prioritized over positive ones. Something that's also of interest here is that studies have shown that negative news is more likely to be perceived as truthful than positive news. For most of us today, we no longer require the intensity of this bias to survive. And so we can work to sort of soften it by intentionally appreciating positives. research has actually shown that we can work to overcome the negativity bias with a regular gratitude practice. So we have to work harder to see the positive than we do the negative right. And unintentional gratitude practice is a powerful way to restore this balance in our perspective, I want to clarify here that this isn't spiritual bypassing, and it's certainly not toxic positivity, this is merely an effort to counteract our inherent biological tendency to notice the negative. So that may have served us extraordinarily well as a survival mechanism when we were being chased by tigers. But if our basic safety needs are being met in the here, and now then we can proactively work to bring balance to this bias without fear of it impacting our survival and our well being.

The final bias we're going to discuss is something known as the region beta paradox. It's also known as the peculiar longevity of things not so bad. So the region beta paradox is the observed phenomenon that we tend to recover more effectively and more fully from more intense and distressing emotional experiences than from less distressing experiences. It's paradoxical, of course, because we'd expect just the

opposite. So it's theorized that this occurs because intense emotional states reach this threshold in which they trigger a psychological defense process that reduces distress in the brain. However, less intense emotional states or experiences failed to reach that threshold required to trigger those defenses, and thus fail to elicit the same attenuation of distress. Simply put, when really devastating things happen to us, the brain engages highly effective recovery mechanisms to help us process heal and integrate these experiences. However, those same recovery mechanisms aren't triggered for less upsetting experiences. So the less upsetting experiences end up sticking around a lot longer. And those are the ones that endure. A study conducted in 2004 revealed that participants recovered faster from insults directed directly at them than from witnessing and assaults being directed at someone else, which is very interesting. So the region beta paradox also explains why bystanders to a crime often become more upset than the victims of the crime themselves. Because being a bystander isn't enough to hit that threshold that triggers the brain's healing process. Of course, this is all dependent on the nature and the content of those experiences. But this is in general how it seems to occur. My thought here is that perhaps this is part of the reason why we can harbor such persistent outrage for those who challenge our beliefs from this sort of distanced perspective. So these aren't personal slights, and yet they endure in a way that feels incredibly personal and important because they're not effectively processed by the brain.

Now, let's move on to the fourth and final issue that seems to be at play here, which is the ego. If you listened to the episode on the ego, then you'll have a better understanding of this, but you can always listen to that afterwards to gain more clarity into what it is and how it affects us. But the basic idea is this because the ego requires identities to exist, it's constantly working to survive by clinging to our many identities, especially those that keep us distinctly separated from others. In the words of Eckhart Tolle a quote, that conceptual I cannot survive without the conceptual other, the others are most other when I see them as my enemies and quote, and so to strengthen the boundaries of itself versus others, the ego criticizes, complains and condemns this really allows it to feel both superior and well defined in the more defined the ego is, the more real it believes itself to be. Here's the thing, even in cases where someone's behavior is objectively abhorrent, just truly terrible. With awareness, we can choose to step out of the egos typical response pattern of disgust or outrage, whatever it may be. Instead, we can choose to recognize that the other person's behavior is merely a reflection of their own unconscious egoic trappings. And I know this is difficult, but when we choose this path of conscious non-reaction, we not only soften the ego within us, we also soften the burden of this sort of collective ego. I'm going to leave it at that with regards to this topic of the ego but if you haven't already listened to the episode titled ego 101, be sure to give that a listen if this

is confusing in any way at all.

The first way to begin to overcome outrage is to recognize that it is indeed a problem, right? So let's quickly review what I think are the three biggest consequences of divisive moral outrage, whether it's being outwardly expressed, or inwardly ruminated upon.

One again, we sort of returned to this dilemma of is doing bad to the other in the name of doing good to ourselves or another, really doing good, the mind can make all of its usual attempts to rationalize moral hypocrisy. And yet personally, my heart and my soul just cannot get on board with this idea. And if our attempts to better the world are in reality, only further dividing it or adding to the collective suffering, then we need to do some heavy self reflection and work to release this addiction to outrage so that we can adopt a more effective approach to bringing unity.

Two, divisive moral outrage is not only damaging to the collective, it's also damaging to our individual mental well being and physical health. So whether we're expressing our outrage or bottling it up, experiencing outrage triggers cortisol overload in our systems, anger and outrage are metabolically demanding emotions that are processed in the body similar to the way we process stress. And so this cortisol increased that has other ramifications on our physical system and our overall well being. When we're caught in an outrage cycle, we can become emotionally imbalanced and physically distressed, both of which end up deteriorating our overall health.

And number three, spiritually speaking, outreach puts us in a contracting and shrinking energetic state. So instead of expanding and growing, we end up stuck and stagnant. And we're sort of in this position where we end up waiting for other people to change to fit our expectations, instead of initiating the changes that we seek from within. And then we end up digging our heels into this internally disharmonious state while we're waiting for the world to change, and this is a very disempowering place to be. So when we're in this place, we've outsourced the solution to our internal problems to external forces. And in making the collective other responsible for our problems, we've also given them the key to our happiness and our peace. But at the end of the day, whose responsibility is our anger, and I think this is a philosophical question, but it's also just a very practical one to ask ourselves.

From my perspective, our anger is our responsibility. It's no one else's. When we stop waiting for the world to conform to our views, our biases, our identities in our beliefs, we free ourselves to choose more intentional values based reactions, and we empower ourselves with the ability to heal from within. And I am not going to say that this is easy, because this is tough work, probably some of the toughest work we'll do in our lifetimes. But it is so important. And if we each

take responsibility to do this, imagine how that ripples out and affects the greater good.

On that note, now that we've really dug into the problem, I want to start talking about solutions, as I just mentioned, and as I'm sure you've gathered, this is a really complex problem. And for that reason, I found it's helpful to address it from a variety of angles. And so sort of picking all of these solutions and using them together in various situations, and as needed to really come at this from all the different perspectives that it needs to be addressed from. So we'll explore some solutions that are anchored in psychology and others that are more spiritually oriented.

One of the most straightforward methods to begin to overcome divisive outrage is to simply be aware of the biases that are at play. Simply being aware that these biases exist allows us to begin the process of correcting their undesirable effects. And again, there's research to support this. So with naive realism, when we recognize that this bias is at play, we tend to then work to soften it and self correct that bias. This is known as bias correction.

An equally important thing to work on in terms of solutions is to know our triggers when we know our hot button beliefs, and were very honest with ourselves about them. It gives us the space and the bandwidth to choose a different response when they're activated. So we can be internally stimulated by emotions like anger and outrage without allowing them to overcome us. In other words, we don't have to do anything with our anger or outrage, we can just observe it internally without engaging with it without arguing with it, and then allow it to filter through in its own time.

Often when we feel an intense emotion, there's just sort of this reflexive reaction to rid ourselves of the discomfort of feeling it so we'll try and numb it out. We might argue with it internally to try and rationalize it away. Or we end up acting on it and doing or saying something that's out of line with our inherent values. So Instead of trying to escape, we can work on processing our feelings by allowing them to be without doing anything more than observing. This is just that conscious awareness. And the great thing is that we can actually become curious about outrage from that distance instead of becoming lost to it by taking it so seriously all the time, there's research that suggests that the more we're able to regulate our adverse empathic responses, the more likely we're able to act prosocially, this is really fascinating to me. So in other words, one predictor of who actually acts in a unifying or pro social way is the ability to gain some detachment from that pain or that empathic pain that we're feeling for someone else. So essentially, we're riding rather than being submerged by the wave of empathy.

Oftentimes, emotional detachment is looked at as a negative thing. But

in this case, it's a really effective way to engage in Act pro socially. And that's because when we give ourselves this buffer, this emotional buffer from someone else's pain, we're able to actually take action and move forward with what we need to do. Because if we're completely consumed by their pain, we're just so overwhelmed that we're sort of in this fight or flight state in our brains and our emotional regulation systems are just completely overburdened and unable to respond in a way that's actually effective.

Something else that we can do to work through this is to be pragmatic instead of intuitive when we're triggered. So intuition is usually something that I'm a huge proponent of, but in this case, we're actually talking about intuition or being intuitive in the sense that it's sort of a gut reaction. It's that instinctual type of anger. In his book *Behave*, Robert Sapolsky notes that our intuitive instincts in us versus them moral dilemmas tend to lead us to act in selfish and divisive ways. So for instance, we are good, they are bad. His solution is that when we're making moral decisions, and us versus them scenarios, we need to keep our intuitions and our gut reactions as far away from us as possible. Specifically, he says, quote, instead, think, reason and question be deeply pragmatic and strategically utilitarian, take the perspective of the other group or person, try to think what they think try to feel what they feel, take a deep breath, and then do it all again, and quote, this can be so hard to do, which is why it's so important to know our triggers, because that creates that internal space to choose a different sort of reaction than what is instinctual in our brains.

Now, we're going to get into some of the more spiritual types of solutions. And one of the more spiritually oriented solutions to outrage is to essentially remove your inner Thorn, which I referenced at the beginning of the episode as well. If you've read Michael A. Singer's book, *The Untethered Soul*, then you'll probably recognize this idea from there. So in the book singer gives this example of having a thorn stuck in your arm that's directly touching a nerve. So the thorn of course, is a metaphor for our triggers, or hot button beliefs, our pain points, etc. Of course, when the thorn is attached, it's incredibly painful. So because of this singer notes that we have two options. One, since it's so disturbing to touch the thorn, we simply make sure that nothing ever touches it. Or two, we allow the thorn to work itself out in its own time without protecting it. If we choose option one, we end up building our entire life around the thorn, because we avoid people places in situations that could potentially brush up against or aggravate the thorn, because it's so painful. The thorn then runs our entire life, it affects all of our decisions. Of course, we can trick ourselves into believing that the problem is solved because we've architected our life in such a way that the thorn is never touched. And yet, the harsh reality is that we've actually devoted our entire life to the thorn. On the other hand, if we choose the second option, and we allow the thorn to work

itself out in its own time, we completely free ourselves from the thorn singer solution is that to free ourselves from our inner thorns or pain points or triggers, we simply stop playing with them, we stop avoiding triggers, we stop arguing with the thorns, we stop overcompensating and we simply allow them to naturally work their way out. Taking this approach means that we can allow ourselves to feel disturbed when our inner thorns are touched, essentially, or activated. And we simply observe those feelings for what they are, we can notice that we've noticed the pain of that inner thorn being activated and then from within this intentional space, we can allow the feelings to pass through us in their own time, instead of numbing them out, avoiding them or reacting to them. To quote Singer here, quote, we normally attempt to solve our inner disturbances by protecting ourselves, real transformation begins when you embrace your problems as agents for growth. End quote. Of course, always easier said than done. But it's absolutely a worthy endeavor because it truly is effective if we're able to humble ourselves and open ourselves up to these types of solutions.

The last solution I want to mention is simply to send out love and gratitude when we're started to feelings about rage. And I know that this might sound like a little out there or fluffy, or maybe even like we're glossing over problems, but I promise it's powerful. And there's a time and a place for this sort of solution to I think we need to really layer all of these solutions together to get a comprehensive approach to working towards reducing outrage and enhancing unity consciousness. So there is research that demonstrated that when we prime our minds with gratitude, moral hypocrisy is reduced and pro social behavior is increased. So in other words, when we intentionally invoke feelings of gratitude in general, and this is not even necessarily for our perceived adversaries or for the situation at hand, but when we pride ourselves with gratitude, we then later act in ways that are significantly more morally consistent and pro social than had we not primed our minds with gratitude. Research also suggests that we're more sympathetic towards identifiable people than towards random or general groups of people. So keeping this in mind, a gratitude practice that I found to be particularly powerful when it comes to dissolving these sorts of frustrations or feelings is to put my hands over my heart, close my eyes, and then visualize sending a genuine loving energy to someone whose words or behavior have triggered something within me. If you try this yourself, you can also then go on to mentally thank that person who's activated those emotions within you for their ability to teach you in a way that is far more powerful than if someone had simply held up a mirror to you and essentially mirrored back the exact perspectives or feelings that you share.

Our greatest life teachers don't mirror back to us what we already believe this is a hard reality to accept, but it is so true. Our greatest teachers offer us windows into new and differing perceptions.

If all we see are mirrors, we're not called forward to evolve, change, grow and expand. And that's kind of the whole point of life.

I will leave it here because I know this has been an extraordinarily dense episode. I do hope that it's provoked some insights or inspirations within your mind. Again, all of the resources that I use to create this episode are going to be linked in the show notes, so be sure to take a look there if you're curious and wanting to dive into the research on your own. Thank you so much for listening.

I hope these ideas have sparked something within you or at the very least have reminded you that you always have a choice.

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