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Could she introduce us to Sharon Salzberg?

Confirm pronunciation: ah-MEE-shah JHAH?

Introduction:

Amishi Jha is Director of Contemplative Neuroscience and Professor of Psychology at the University of Miami. She received her Ph.D in Cognitive Neuroscience from the University of California–Davis. Her work has been featured at [TED](#), [NATO](#), the [World Economic Forum](#), the [Pentagon](#), and the [UK Parliament](#). Today we're discussing her national bestseller, [Peak Mind](#): which explores her research on how attention can be trained for optimal performance and well-being.

Missing 50% of our lives?

At end of book you say: **"the battle for your attention is the battle for the resources to live your life. ... It is a battle—but it's one you can win, over and over."**

Key culprits here? Mind-wandering? Rumination? Mental time travel?

That a lot of what we describe as "not paying attention" is actually our attention doing what it does, but just not focused? "I want to make one thing crystal clear: **there is nothing wrong with your attention.** In fact, it's working so well, and so on cue, that computer programs can predict how it will respond. We're in a crisis because our attention works so well."

At various points, you point to the ways in which we can make sense of a lot of what our brain does from the perspective of **evolutionary human development?** Help us with that.

You believe that this is **a perennial problem, and not just a problem driven by contemporary technology?**

Military and stress of military deployment as one of your primary test cases?

Solution: is really possible? "Don't waste your energy trying to get better at fighting the pull on your attention. You cannot win that fight. **Instead, cultivate the capacity and skill to position your mind so you don't have to fight.**"

You describe attention as a **super-power. Hyperbole?**

12 minutes of mindfulness meditation a day? Really?

Define mindfulness meditation: "paying attention to present-moment experience without conceptual elaboration or emotional reactivity."

"Cognitive push-up." "Bad meditation is good meditation." Kelly McGonigal at Stanford, I think said that...

Not to make you "feel better"?

In same way that aerobic exercise – the indispensable importance of exercising the heart – came to the public consciousness decades ago, we need a similar public move with regard to brain and mental health and exercise? "why aren't we getting the same kind of science-backed guidance on how to keep our minds fit?"

Versus "positivity"? **Negative effects.** "tactics like positivity or suppression are not merely ineffective during periods of high stress and high demand—they can be actively damaging."

Discuss **suppression of emotion** as also unhelpful? How this undercuts our attention.

Three Attention Systems:

Flashlight = focus

Floodlight = notice

Juggler = plan & manage our behavior

Need to learn to appropriately attend to all three?

"Default mode network" – what is this, why important? What can be done?

Working memory – discuss how this is significant

Multi-tasking as a waste. "To get more done, monotask—don't multitask. Task switching slows you down."

Making memories – or lack thereof – result of attention, or lack thereof?

Importance of boredom?

“Cognitive off-loading” when we’re overloaded?

Forgetfulness as a necessary skill??

Moderating emotions; choosing responses instead of reacting

The stories we tell ourselves; very helpful; discuss. Brains as simulation machines? Tell my students that we’re always telling ourselves some story about things which we’ve made up; might as well make up a helpful one; but perhaps you’re saying that even better is just observing the stories we tell ourselves?

“Decentering emphasizes a perspective in which the experiential “I” is not at the center. From a decentered perspective, it’s easier to determine how well our simulations represent reality. They are only a guess—one of many possible mental models. When you can step outside of a constrained mode of thinking, you’re able to recognize a story that’s not serving you and can drop it quickly and flexibly instead of remaining locked in.”

“There is a concept in Buddhism called the **“Second Arrow.”** It comes from a famous parable: the Buddha asked one of his students, “If you are struck by an arrow, does it hurt?” “Yes!” the student replied. “If you are struck by a second arrow,” the Buddha asked, “does it hurt even more?” “It does,” the student replied. The Buddha explained: In life, we can’t control whether we’re hit by an arrow or not. But the second arrow is our reaction to the first. The first arrow causes pain—the second arrow is our distress about that pain. I love this parable because it very simply encapsulates the connection between mindfulness and attention: The first arrow happens. There are arrows every day. But the second arrow—your response to the first—is what sucks up your attentional bandwidth.” I.e., **the difference between suffering and misery?**

Four practices: one, strengthen your cognitive focus (“Finding Your Flashlight”), body-centered awareness (“Body Scan”), meta-cognition which is awareness of where your awareness is focused (“River of Thought”), and ability to connect with the self and others (“Connection Practice”). **Discuss at least one at some length, the most basic. Others as time allows.**

You were born where Gandhi’s ashram was located? In what way, if any, do you have a sense that **Gandhi’s legacy** is at work in your work?

At end: her **father killed in a tragic accident** when she was a girl, and that **this experience lead you to your vocation?**

“Earlier, when I talked about trauma and triggers, I mentioned how many of us have experienced them. In my life, it was a car accident that had a big impact on me. It changed my life, because it took my father’s. Driving back from a family road trip to Yosemite National Park, a drunk driver slammed into our car, veering us off a cliff and onto a field below. My sister and I, aged thirteen and five, in the backseat, were spared

the worst of it; my mother on the passenger's side, less so. My father, in the driver's seat, was not. My memories from the accident are vivid but choppy. I remember the way the car moved just as I woke up into an unfolding nightmare. Then: the car on its side, the hissing of the engine, the slow realization that this was not merely a dream. I remember how quiet it was all around us. I could see a man on the cliff looking down and it struck me that he wasn't running to help. We later surmised that he was likely the driver. It had been a hit-and-run—at some point after I spotted him, he must have just left, because nobody called for help. In the distance, I could see a small house. I knew we needed to get to it, call an ambulance. I picked up my sister and carried her toward it, through the field. I was only a kid then, and I didn't know the first thing about how the brain worked, or how mindfulness could transform it. This fatal accident that took my father's life, and severely injured my mother, was an experience that shaped a great deal of my life, including my work as a neuroscientist."