

The-Extended-Mind-Part-2

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SPEAKERS

Chris Casillas, Annie Murphy Paul



Chris Casillas 00:09

In the second episode of our three part interview with nationally renowned science writer, Annie Murphy Paul, where we discuss her book, *The Extended Mind*, join co-host, Chris Casillas, as we venture into the world of emotions at the bargaining table, and examine a novel, yet simple technique for translating potentially negative feelings into something more positive. Annie will also discuss the significance of movement in our thought processes, and how the simple act of moving together can break down barriers and reduce conflict. Finally, Annie and Chris look into the world of Zoom, to discuss more generally, the importance of gesture in our thought processes. And then more specifically, think about how that is impacted in the remote world, where parties are negotiating over various online platforms. We pick up the conversation between Annie and Chris, as they transition into talking about emotions at the bargaining table. I want to shift slightly to kind of talk a little bit about kind of emotions a bit, and there was this part in your book, you talked about this process of cognitive reappraisal, and, you know, emotions, as you might imagine, I'm sure you've been in some, well, we've all been in various negotiations throughout our life, that's, you know, part of our, part of the course I teach. But, you know, and emotion is always a part of that of that process, whether it's, you know, negotiating where to go to dinner with a loved one tonight, or, you know, a collective bargaining agreement. And, and, in, in our space, we kind of talk about tools and ways in which you can help try and manage those moments of high intensity emotion so that we don't get too far afield in kind of negative cycle of emotion where we can't kind of engage that more critical part of our minds and kind of think, creatively and try and solve those problems. And I was, as I was thinking about that, I also, you know, was reading this piece on cognitive reappraisal and thought there's some there's some important connections here with your work, and I wonder if you could talk about that for a bit.



Annie Murphy Paul 02:28

Sir, yeah, no, I can definitely see the the connection with negotiation, because what cognitive appraisal is about, is, well, let's, let's let me take a step back and talk about what we know now about how emotion is constructed, you know, when we experience an emotion, it feels to us like, just one big, you know, seamless package, but in fact, we're kind of, you know, we feel

we're angry, or we're nervous, or we're, you know, and just comes to us, like, as if it's a natural state of some kind. But what we're finding what scientists are finding is that we actually construct emotion out of the basic building blocks of our physical reactions to a situation. And when you think about it, the same physical reactions can be constructed into different emotions, depending on the context. So for example, you know, if I'm feeling nervous, before giving a speech, my hands might be sweating, my heart might be beating, I might have butterflies in my stomach. And I can, because of the situation I construe that as a nervous, but I might be feeling exactly the same physical sensations waiting in line to get on a roller coaster, in which case, I'm, I feel, wow, I'm excited. I, you know, I'm excited, I can't wait to do this, this is gonna be fun, which is, it's the same physical sensations, but it's different emotions that we've constructed. So once you understand that, and once you also have kind of developed the ability to tune into those physical sensations and kind of separate them out and and feel them in a granular way, then you can kind of get in on the ground floor and participate in the construction of your emotion. And this is going to sound kind of crazy, but I have tried this and it works. If you're feeling nervous before a negotiation, for example, or for me, it would be like speaking in front of a group. You can pay attention to those physical sensations, but reconsider them and this is what reappraisal is all about, reconstrue them into a sort of congruent, but different emotion. So a lot of times when we're feeling agitated, like that, you know, worked up before a negotiation or speech, we might tell ourselves, "Calm down, you know, calm down," that might be our impulse, but the body is responding to real events in the world. It's preparing us for a challenge or a threat and so that doesn't really work. Because you know, you can tell it again, it's like the brain trying to tell the body and the body knows better. So what you need to do instead is kind of work with the actual sensations that you are feeling, but but construe them in a different way, and say to yourself, instead of saying to yourself, I'm so nervous, I'm so nervous about this, you can say, I'm excited, I'm really excited about this, I'm psyched, you know, my body is preparing me for this, not for this, to ward off this threat, but to embrace and take on this challenge. And as I say, I've done this now before I give a talk, and it really works. And the reason it works is that it's completely what you're saying to yourself is completely congruent with what you're actually feeling, you're not trying to suppress anything, you're just putting a different spin on what you're actually feeling you're working with your body, and sort of directing it in a positive, positive direction.



Chris Casillas 05:53

Yeah, it's like a reframe, or a redirection of, of that physical experience into something that's, that's potentially more positive, and that you look forward to, even though you're still experiencing that, those feelings, you're associating it with something more positive. That yeah, that's, that's a great tip, I, um, I think it's something that our listeners could really utilize, it seems like it requires a little bit of practice to be able to kind of really hone in on separating out those things, and reorienting, but it does seem like a very practical tip. Let's talk a little bit about about movement and gesture, if you don't mind, in a, there was several sections of your book on that movement and exercise and how that impacts our cognitive function. And if you could just imagine with me for a moment here to kind of set the scene, you know, of a typical kind of contract negotiation. A lot of times, we're kind of, you know, stuck at a bargaining table with chairs around. And, you know, these can be very long sessions, you know, I've both as a, I'm a neutral mediator now, but you know, in my prior life as an advocate, as well, you know, sometimes it's 12, 14, 16 hours sitting in that room, you know, when you've got to get a deal in place, like if there's a strike in place, or something, you know, high stakes environment, and people are kind of just stuck to these physical spaces. And I wonder if you could speak maybe just to kind of this idea of incorporating movement into our, into our

processes as we're trying to kind of solve in our world, these kind of complex contracts and kind of figure out how to bring the sides together, and what benefits you might see from that, from that physical movement?

A

Annie Murphy Paul 07:48

Yeah, yeah, well, that's the idea of 12 or, or 14 or 16 hours that are sitting at a table is, that is really daunting, because, you know, if you look at our evolutionary history, as human beings, we really evolved to think and move at the same time, you know, we have in our modern culture, this idea, we separate them, we think that if we need to do real work, real thinking that we need to sit, sit, sit down, and stay still, but that's really not what we're wired to do as human beings for a couple of different reasons. One is that it takes a fair amount of mental bandwidth just to inhibit our urge to move, you know, we're really wired to move unless we're at rest. And so we're using up some of that mental bandwidth, just keeping ourselves still so I don't know, if there are opportunities for people to get up, walk around stretch, you know, because that would be really helpful in terms of, you know, relieving that that need to inhibit the move, the need to move and also in terms of the signal it sends to our brains about whether we're at rest, and and sort of in the acquiescent kind of mode or whether we're in an action mode, because when we sit down, that that sends a signal to our brains that we're that we're at rest, and I think a lot of us not so much at the negotiating table, but maybe at our desks when we're working, you can have that mid afternoon drowsy feeling coming over you you know because you're you're really sending the signal to your body that you're at rest rather than at work or doing doing an important task. So as much as possible if we can bring movement into our workday into our thinking processes, the better you know, I talked about exchanging a coffee break for a movement break, you know, taking 20 minutes if we have a break to take a really brisk walk around the block you know, and not to think in terms of saving movement and physical activity for like after hours. We so often do that like well, we'll sit at our desk all day but then go for a workout after at the gym after work, the more we can bring move movement, and it can even be small movements, micro movements, like people tend to move more just in terms of shifting their weight or moving their arms around when they're standing than when they're sitting. So again, I don't know, I don't know what kind of message that would send if you stood up in the middle of your, of your negotiation. But maybe you could say like, let's take a stretch break, or let's, let's take a walk around the block, you know, there's really interesting research that I think might be relevant here, which is that when people move in a synchronous way, when they move in the same way at the same time, and that can even be just taking a walk together, because human beings tend to synchronize their steps, when they walk, that tends to blur a little bit, the boundaries between people that are usually so strong and so firm, we start to feel like this person is similar to me, this person is of a like mind, this person is not so different from me. And so there's research to show that walking with someone with whom you're having a conflict, or a disagreement actually makes you more motivated to resolve your your conflict and more able to do so he makes makes both parties more cooperative. So I don't, I don't know, again, if it's possible to take a walk around the block with the people you're talking to, or walk around the building or whatever. But if you could, that would be a very beneficial thing to do.

C

Chris Casillas 11:22

Yeah, that's so, that's so fascinating. And I'm, I think, in some, it's not a norm, I would say in our industry, but at the same time, I think it's something that people could easily incorporate

into what they do. Even if it's just kind of walking, you know, a couple blocks to get a cup of coffee together with your, the person you're negotiating against, is it the, is it just the, I love the kind of synchronous aspect of, is that what really kind of draws, because we've we feel so when we're in those conflict positions, it's like me and them, and it's like us versus them, and it, and part of the breakdown in it that we see sometimes is, is a result of that phenomenon. And so what you're talking about here is just kind of the way just kind of syncing up with our walking in and of itself can kind of break down some of those barriers, am I thinking about that right?

A

Annie Murphy Paul 12:18

You are, and what's so fascinating to me is that even in our modern world, you know, with all our modern technology, and everything, we're still kind of Stone Age creatures, you know, our brains have not changed very much. And the power of synchronous movement is really this ancient, primal kind of biological hack in a way, you know, and you see all kinds of organizations employing it like militaries have their are their armies marched together, or, in many religious ceremonies, people make the same motions at the same time. And there is something very powerful about synchronous movement that just taps into this old older conserved part of our brain and tells us this, this person is moving in the same way at the same time as me, they're kind of they're like me, they're, they're maybe almost a part of me, like, we're part of together a part of something larger. And that has effects on how we how willing we are to cooperate with them, how, how how, sort of warmly we feel towards them. And so any opportunity we can take to move together, or even do things like share a meal together, you know, that there's even some synchronized movement in that, because we're all kind of making the same movements and chewing and swallowing and all these things, you know, and of course, food has such a powerful, symbolic meaning all to itself. So the more we can see each other as humans, fellow humans who are like us, instead of opponents who are so different, you know, then the more able we'll be to sort of think together with them.

C

Chris Casillas 13:58

Yeah. Wow. It just, you know, I think we always forget, you know, in modern society, you know, most of our evolutionary history has been one in which, you know, we've been moving in more small tribal groups across the plains of Africa, or Asia or Europe or, you know, and that's where a lot of our brain evolution comes from, in our body evolution. And we just forget that and, you know, get caught up in the moment of our little slice of, of history here in modern society, so yeah. As part of that too, I want to kind of, you know, integrate that a little bit into our thinking about how we are negotiating these days, this last two years of the pandemic over zoom. And there's been a lot of discussion and about this and kind of the impacts on on on all sorts of different environments, but our world as well. And, you know, I find myself struggling a little bit because you talked a lot about kind of the using hand gestures and kind of speaking there with our hands, I was joking, that's the Italian part of me just constantly have to kind of use those as part of my, you know, verbalizing things, but, you know, thinking about how that translates into this remote space and, and those gestures, wondered if you have any kind of thoughts or observations or if you've seen any kind of work around this in terms of kind of the importance of those gestures, and how we might translate that into the virtual world.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 15:32

Yeah, you know, gestures are so important, not only as a means of communication, but as a, as part of our own thinking processes. You know, we're so focused in our culture on verbal expression on language that we forget that there's this whole other channel of communication and, and thinking going on that is, is enacted through our gestures. And we we especially kind of lose touch with that when we're sitting at our desks, when we're in these boxes on the screen, we both may gesture less ourselves, because we're sitting, we're not sort of conversing in that way that is face to face in a way that would really sort of elicit lots of gestures, we are content to be kind of that, that face in a box. And then we're often seeing others that way too, and not seeing their gestures, not seeing the full body kind of expression that's that that may or may not be going on. So what I taught what I tell people, in terms of communicating over Zoom is, and I'm not doing it right now, I'm sorry, I should move your camera farther away from you so that your gestures are visible to the other person. And as much as you can give yourself some space and some room to gesture because as I'm saying, This is what is so fascinating to me about gesture. It's not just a communication vehicle, it actually is part of our own thinking processes. And when people are inhibited from gesturing, they think less cogently, they, they speak less fluidly, they are less able to explain complicated concepts, and they're less a they're less able to come up with solutions. And a lot of us are that's an in an experimental setting where people are told not to gesture, but a lot of us are sort of self inhibiting our gestures because we're we're sitting you know, in front of our screen, and we're not, we're not engaging the full arsenal of, of our thinking processes when we're not actively using our hands.

C

Chris Casillas 17:36

I'll have to give that one some more thought about how to incorporate that because that's just, it's always bugged me about zoom where I can't I don't feel like I'm making those connections. And I think those are some really good kind of practical tips to think about. Well, unfortunately, that's all the time we have for today. But please join us for our final episode, episode three where Annie will talk about the physical spaces in which we bargain and in particular, highlighting the importance of connecting with nature during this process. She also discussed the Home Team Advantage and some really useful tips on thinking creatively and helping us generate new ideas at the bargaining table.