



What Makes Us Happy?

Dr. Keith Witt and Corey deVos

[00:00:00] **Corey deVos:** Dr. Keith. So good to see you.

[00:00:01] **Keith Witt:** Good to see you. As always, Corey, looking forward to this conversation today, actually, as usual.

[00:00:07] **Corey deVos:** What's fascinating about this discussion today we're gonna have Keith, is that, we've had this conversation in multiple different kinds of ways, you know, over the years together. In other words, so many of the discussions that we've had together sort of build up to some of the major questions that we're gonna be asking and talking about today.

And just to let everyone know what we're doing today, so we're basically responding to a series of articles that we've seen over the last four to six weeks from Jonathan Haidt and David Brooks, who are, I think, some of our favorite kind of quasi-integral thinkers that are out there, you know, integral certainly in terms of their cognitive capacities. I don't think either of them are really familiar with Ken Wilber's work or anything like that. And, and of course they don't need to be, right? They're just sort of natural teal thinkers.

And the two articles in particular that we are responding to today are, the first one is called "The Self-Destructive Effects of Progressive Sadness" by David Brooks. And the other one is "Why the Mental Health of Liberal Girls Sank First and Fastest" by Jonathan Haidt. This is such a critical conversation, Keith, and again, one that we've sort of lamented on several times in the past, where we are just seeing this drop of mental health, of happiness, of resilience in particularly young people in this country.

And there's all sorts of factors... you know, this is, I think, one of those truly, truly "wicked problems". You know, multifaceted, multivalent problem, where you can't point to any single factor alone. But fortunately, I think integral equips us with this sort of cross paradigmatic capacity to be able to point to, okay, well we're not gonna pin this on any one or two factors, but, you know, certainly six factors or so is gonna give us a lot more insight.

And hopefully gives us something, you know, sort of actionable, right? Because it's one thing to talk about these problems and to, you know, throw it on a whiteboard somewhere and kind of create a little flow charts for where these problems are coming

from. But then the question becomes, what do we actually do about this? Right? How do we actually steer this battleship in a different direction, so that we can improve the overall quality of life, the happiness of these young people, and of everyone else who is participating in this society. Because we are definitely seeing a very concerning slide.

[00:02:31] **Keith Witt:** That's right.

[00:02:32] **Corey deVos:** And it's not a sustainable slide by any means. So I'm really, really looking forward to getting into some of these perspectives with you and hearing what you have to say.

[00:02:40] **Keith Witt:** Well, great, let's dive into it. When you sent me those articles, first of all, whenever you send articles from somebody that I respect, I'm even more stoked. It really was a rabbit hole, and as I went deeper and deeper, I began to kind of examine my own biases about all this.

So first of all, let's just put the parameters over what the phenomena is people are talking about. Starting the year 2000, the rate of anxiety and depression in teenagers started going up. In 2012, something happened that hasn't happened demographically in over a hundred years. There was a sharp uptick on depression and anxiety with teenagers, that continued, and it didn't accelerate that much more during the pandemic. Something happened during that interval that changed things. And Jonathan Haidt, when he was doing the research, found 55 studies that correlated this with the advent of, cell phones that are connected to the internet. And 11 studies that didn't find a correlation.

So the preponderance of data said something happened that increased the levels of anxiety and depression. And there's a lot of other things going on with this particular generation. Jean Twenge, the woman who 's a great cohort researcher, she wrote the Narcissism Epidemic and Generation Me, wrote a book called iGen specifically about this population, which she studied exhaustively. And she's a good scientist, so it always warms my heart to read data from a good scientist.

[00:04:27] **Corey deVos:** Amen.

[00:04:28] **Keith Witt:** So this depression anxiety is correlated with suicidality. For instance, 60% of teenage girls report having been depressed in the last month, and their mothers, 60% of their mothers report having been depressed. 25% of them had a suicide plan. Not that they'd do it, but they were thinking about it and they had a plan. Progressives more depressed than conservatives, self-declared. So a progressive, boy was more depressed than a conservative girl, even though the girls are, going up.

And there were other variables going on with this group that pulled, judgements, moral statements and all kinds of stuff. In fact, there's two phenomena. There's the phenomena of this generation and what it looks like and what's going on with it, and then there's the phenomena of people reacting to it. Conservatives, of course are reacting to it by saying we should ban cell phones, you know, before 16. They're focusing on the green aspects of this cohort, saying that they are wimps, you know, they're blah, blah, okay.

Progressives look at it and they go, we're not taking good enough care of our kids, we need to take better care of them. And there's some kind of problem going on that we need to address. We need to get these kids psychotherapy and that kind of stuff. And I was doing that too. I had a conversation with Jeff Salzman, who is always a good reality slap in the face to me because, you know, whenever I get on a soapbox, Jeff very gently with good humor, kicks that soapbox, you know, out from under me. And I really love it when you do that, Jeff. If you ever listen to this, I love you so much. And I realized I wasn't looking at this from the larger standpoint. So yeah, there's a lot of suffering.

Now what's this about? One thing that it's about is that this generation, when the iPhones hit, that level of connectivity was co-opted by the culture to change the way the whole culture processed information. And there was a flattening of the curve of credibility. The hierarchy of credibility. Like when I was a kid, if I saw Walter Cronkite say something and read it in the LA Times, and somebody, you know, gave me a call and said, "Hey, you know, they're all full of it, there's something else going on," I go, "you know, that's not what Walter Cronkite in the LA Times says, you know, where's your data?"

But now that we have the algorithms that came in around 2009 that feed us what we want, a blog from the guy down the street has as much credibility as a well-researched

article from The New York Times.

[00:07:09] **Corey deVos:** Yep.

[00:07:09] **Keith Witt:** There's a a flattening of credibility, the hierarchy of credibility.

[00:07:13] **Corey deVos:** I call them "enfoldment mechanisms" Keith, where basically we no longer have any curation of all of this information that we are inundated with. We don't have anyone between us anymore saying "this is more true than that, this is more important to pay attention to than that", and so therefore we've lost a sense of sort of proportionality when it comes to all this data.

[00:07:32] **Keith Witt:** Especially because people are oriented towards the present moment and so they're not orienting in terms of what they know about the world. For instance, the popularity of Nazi things in the Far Right probably is driven by the fact that the people that are consuming it don't really have knowledge about the Holocaust. And there's enough of the people that they like who says, well, you can deny the Holocaust. They go, "okay, well I'll deny it." Like I have a friend, used to be a very progressive guy, this guy, I quoted him an article from the New York Times. He said, "I don't believe anything in New York Times." But he'll believe some stuff on Fox News.

So there's a flattening in the curve of credibility, but also there's frictionless spread of data. The retweets, that going back and forth, okay? You can just push something out. And for every emotional word or moral word that you use in a message, the virality of that message goes up 20%. Again, think about that for a second. So what that does is it means that moral grandstanding, taking a position of dismissing somebody else, ad hominem attacks on whoever it is, and presenting the other side as completely wrong, really gets a lot of attention. It's exciting. It's exciting drama.

Now, I know we all like to watch dramas on TV and everything. But just think for a moment. A drama is just a victim, a persecutor, and a rescuer going around chasing their tails always and nothing gets done. Okay? That's a drama. A drama is not problem solving. Problem solving is "here's this issue, here's what's positive, here's what's negative, here's my idea, your idea, let's solve a problem. Let's solve the problem of our

apparent. disconnection and create a little bit of connection.

So problem solving is not as sexy or as exciting or as interesting. Drama is much more interesting. And now the news, history, all that kind of stuff is all tied up with this drama stuff.

And they did a study, a really interesting study. They had an AI say when there was any kind of a charged word on a retweet or on sending something out, ask the question, "do you really wanna send that?" When they did that, the amount of times that people sent it went down 30 or 40%. So they added a little bit of friction to the passing on of information.

Now there's also the social comparison stuff that happens with teenagers, that happens with likes and all that other stuff, and kids get obsessed with it. And Facebook, there was another study done with colleges where they could measure the level of distress, anxiety, depression before and after Facebook. In every college, when Facebook was initiated, anxiety and depression went up. Now we know that social comparison makes us unhappy. Social connection makes us happy. Social comparison makes us unhappy. In fact, when a couple starts doing that, they're generally on the road to betrayal and separation.

[00:10:42] **Corey deVos:** Hmm.

[00:10:43] **Keith Witt:** So that huge dose of social comparison happened. Plus 2012, there's the Russian agency that was sending out lots and lots of inflammatory things and then seeing how many got retweeted and then zeroing in, the industry of alarm and false news and all that other stuff got pumped up. It got taken over, mostly by the right, but somewhat by the left. And this whole thing about going for drama rather than problem solving is becoming more and more and more of a normalized part of the culture.

Now here's what's happening with kids. Kids are not wanting to grow up as much. iGen, were born somewhere between 1995 and say 2008. They're getting their licenses later, they're having sex later, they're drinking later. Parents have to force 'em to get driver's licenses. They're not getting allowances. They ask mom and dad for money. They're not

working as much, and when they do work, they work fewer hours. They're postponing growing up. So adolescence, rather than a prelude to adulthood, has become more an extension of childhood. And so as they go about this, they're not having the experiences that previous generations had, having to try adult stuff as teenagers. And there's advantages and disadvantages to that.

My generation, where there was an average of four children in a family and basically "get out of the house, I'll see you at dinner time" was the standard. I'm talking about seven, six and seven when that happened. Okay? Unthinkable now. Now there's an average of two children, and parents are all over their kids all the time. Now, the good news about that is these kids are well loved and their interiors are visible to a lot of parents. The bad news about it is that the trials and ordeals of development that previous generations had, generation is being protected.

And the iGen generation is obsessed with two things, one with security. They're worried about getting jobs, they're worried about dealing with the world. They're anxious about it. And the other one is with equality. They don't like what they see, of the unfairness in the world. I mean, you can see the greenness of this. They're a generation where they're more scared of the world, but they don't like the world being unfair. They don't like the world being insecure for them, and they're in an environment where all these moral words and emotional words come with so many messages that the world is presented as a much more dangerous place to them. The world arguably, that I grew up in in 1960s and 70s was way more dangerous than this world.

[00:13:21] **Corey deVos:** Hmm.

[00:13:22] **Keith Witt:** But what would I know? I mean, my mom told me one time she said you know, guys like to pick up kids and, you know, torture 'em and have sex with them and kill 'em. Well, that kind of scared the hell out of me, but, you know what? Some guy tried to get me to get in his car and I ran away. You know, like it really worked. It's like, no man, I'm too smart for that.

[00:13:43] **Corey deVos:** Keith, this is something I've talked to Ken before about how when information starts moving differently, as we've seen from sort of the classic media age to the internet, and particularly the social media age, what it actually does is it

changes our direct perceptions of reality.

[00:13:58] **Keith Witt:** That's right.

[00:13:59] **Corey deVos:** And so we enact reality quite differently. So even though we do, objectively speaking, live in a safer world with less overall violence, it's been kind of ticking up in recent years, but generally there's been a pretty sharp decline of, of things like gun violence, for example, over the decades, even though that is happening objectively, subjectively we are being exposed to the bad news more frequently than ever. So I often use the metaphor of like, you know, if you live in a small town that let's say 20 years ago on average, there were eight murders in your town. You only heard of three of them. Right? So that's gonna give you a particular perception of what the crime rate of your surrounding area is. These days, let's say that crime rate dropped down from eight people a year to five people a year, nearly a 50%, decrease. But people are hearing every single case, right? So in their perception, they're seeing more murders, even though objectively there are fewer of them. So that makes them feel like they're living in a more dangerous world than ever.

So simply changing the way information moves in the world directly influences how we perceive and enact that world, and the types of narratives that we begin to spin up for ourselves about that world.

[00:15:16] **Keith Witt:** Yes, and even more, say with social media, it's easier to do violence to someone that you've objectified. So somebody who's a person in front of you, it's harder to objectify someone who's on the other end of a tweet, or the other end of a, of a text or an email. And the average teenager spends two hours a day texting, six hours a day on screens. That's not counting homework. And so there's a certain level of emotional violence that gets normalized. And you know, kids are scared of it, as they should be, like we're all scared of stuff like that. And this is devastating to somebody to have somebody unfriend them, or something like that.

Now, here's the other side of this. You know,, you said in the beginning of the show, what do we do about this? Well, so I do psychotherapy all week, Monday through Thursday, and I work with kids, parents, and families of all ages. for instance, this last week I was very concerned about a child that was just conceived about four weeks ago.

[00:16:19] **Corey deVos:** Hmm.

[00:16:19] **Keith Witt:** And I'm trying really hard to give that child a good chance to have a good gestation. But also, I was working with a 17 year old this week. And also with parents of school-aged kids, or of college kids. And so, in each one of these sessions, the developmental status of everybody really matters, and they're all fitting into this culture. And the teenagers that I work with are doing really well in this culture. If your parents can find you a mentor that can help you have an integral understanding at 16, 17, and 18, of yourself and of the world, can help you have a spiritual orientation by having some transcendent experiences, can guide you into your initial relationships, it's exciting. It's somewhat enchanting. And so those kids are doing really well. The college kids and the high school kids. And in general, I'm noticing way more psychological sophistication in teenagers.

Now, green is the sensitive self. So there's a lot of forces affecting colleges this way. Here's one. The amount of English majors has gone down 30, 40, 50% across the country, the humanities, because kids are scared of not getting a job. So they're less likely to major in Russian literature and more likely to major in business. Now does that mean the liberal education is a dead thing? No. It's just another reflection of how the culture is adjusting. And how are these knowledge areas going to be integrated into people's lives in the future? And that's a challenge for colleges that they're picking up on, which I think is a cool thing. The other side, of course, is this trigger warnings thing, and you know, safe spaces in colleges where somehow kids that have been protected so much feel like the world needs to protect them from stuff, rather than they need to become more resilient with the world.

[00:18:15] **Corey deVos:** That's right. And we'll get into that more in a bit.

[00:18:17] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, and then that turns into a few extremists being able to yell down a speaker and then get away with it.

[00:18:24] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:18:25] **Keith Witt:** Now I personally think that if you go into a class and somebody's speaking and you yell them down, there should be a consequence for that. Something

that's uncomfortable enough that people are disincentivized from doing that. You're talking to a guy who closed down freeways and, you know, protested against the war in a series of you know colorful and bizarre ways for years and years. But, you know, this isn't the same thing. If you don't wanna listen to somebody talk, go someplace else.

[00:18:53] **Corey deVos:** Yep.

[00:18:53] **Keith Witt:** But that dynamic is not a popular one in schools. Why? Because colleges are competing for students. Students are more consumers now than students. Colleges want their money, so they wanna appeal to them, and then the students then are saying, "Hey, you know, make it more comfortable for me."

[00:19:12] **Corey deVos:** Right.

[00:19:12] **Keith Witt:** And parents are calling up college professors and yelling at them for not giving their son or daughter, you know, an A in anthropology. And the college person is going, what? It's like that.

Now, I personally think that taking longer to grow up is a good thing. Okay? I like that people are waiting to have sex. I like that people are getting married later. I like that people are more mature when they have kids. I like it that people are having a couple of kids rather than four kids, and they get more attention. I like it that parents are all concerned with their kids' interiors. Now, we do need ordeals and we need to discover ourselves and we need life skills. And some high schools offer that. Some colleges offer that.

Which brings me to another thing. This is a problem. No child left behind, you know, Bush's signature legislation. You know, we need to remember that before Trump, Bush was the worst president ever, okay? I mean, he so was charming, 2 or \$3 trillion and millions of people all messed up and dying because of these unnecessary wars. No child left behind, horrible legislation. Why? It mandated testing. And now all across the country, all the teachers and principals had to teach their kids to pass these tests.

So what was suffering? First of all, there's three kinds of thinking. One is verbal sequential. You know, you read it, you outline it, you can take the test. You think in terms

of words,. Most of us are good at that. I'm really good at that. But then there's visual thinkers. There's visual objective thinkers, like people who can understand the plumbing of a house or the intricacy of a liver when they're doing surgery, or how do electrical circuits fit together? That's visual objective people. you ask them about something they remember, they have incredible detail. And we need more of those, those, but they're discriminated against in this teaching to the test thing. And then there's visual spatial people that can put together concepts and they like to think in terms of concepts.

I'm very much as visual spatial person. Ken's like that. Ken can put together a million concepts all, all at once.

[00:21:19] **Corey deVos:** You still with us Keith? Let's give Keith an opportunity to rejoin.

[00:21:23] **Keith Witt:** Okay, we're back. So I wanted to finish the point I was making. So, so what do schools take out? They take out things like music, dance, drama, the kinds of things that appeal to visual thinkers. Also, the best antidepressant ever discovered, infinitely better than any drug ever discovered, is regular exercise. So they used to force kids to exercise every day. I mean, it was like a little bit like prison, I gotta say, in the sixties. But everybody had to work out a little bit every day. So if you take a major antidepressant from a significant number of teenagers, some of them are gonna get more depressed.

[00:22:03] **Corey deVos:** That's that's right

[00:22:05] **Keith Witt:** Now we're talking about the wicked problem now of many, many, many things. But the other part of it, and I keep coming back to this because it, it made me really hopeful. I like the sensitivity, the greenness. I like feeling insecure in the world and wanting it to be more secure. I like not liking inequality and protesting against it. It's less violent and less narcissistic than what I went through with the boomers, with Boomeritis and stuff. And I'm hopeful, I'm really interested in how this cohort's gonna be 10 years from now.

[00:22:45] **Corey deVos:** Yeah.

[00:22:45] **Keith Witt:** You know, 15 years from now.

[00:22:46] **Corey deVos:** Well so I think the question here Keith, cuz I think you did a great job of talking about surfacing some of the factors that are just applying broadly to this entire generation. But then the question remains, okay so if all of these kids are dealing with these same sort of new sets of life conditions, why is it that it's affecting progressives differently than it's impacting conservatives? We're seeing a big split in terms of how these two sort of groups, identity groups, are metabolizing and adapting to these problems. One of the factors that you described, the one about exercise, well that actually I think makes a certain amount of sense, because you know the left tends to be clustered in urban environments whereas the right is more associated with rural environments, and therefore have more access to outdoors, and ,you know, probably do get more sunlight and more fresh air and are able to exert their bodies more frequently and more easily than you're able to in urban environments. So that would sort of make sense in terms of just the the geography of happiness and unhappiness, right? But I think there's any number of other factors we wanna look at that gives us a little bit more clarity as to like, why is it that these two groups are adapting or in some cases maladapting to these new sets of pressures and conditions that they're faced with.

[00:24:09] **Keith Witt:** Well, let's look at the, the top five characteristics associated with happiness according to the NORC survey out of Chicago.

[00:24:15] **Corey deVos:** Mm-hmm

[00:24:16] **Keith Witt:** Okay, number one is the quality of your primary relationship. Do you feel secure in it and that kind of stuff? Well, these kids , they're dating less, so their relationships have to do with their family.

[00:24:28] **Corey deVos:** Mm-hmm

[00:24:29] **Keith Witt:** And, conservatives, unlike progressives, value loyalty, authority, and, sanctity. And they're more likely to go to church.

[00:24:39] **Corey deVos:** Mm-hmm

[00:24:39] **Keith Witt:** They're more likely to have a fellowship. They're more likely to force their kids to do those kinds of things. And those kinds of things have been associated with more happiness. For instance, being a part of a religious assembly is associated with having more happiness. Having more friends, a more conservative environment is forcing people to have more face-to-face environments than, more progressive, Environment. And also in the United States, kids tend to share their parents' political orientation through leaving home.

[00:25:14] **Corey deVos:** Hmm

[00:25:15] **Keith Witt:** After leaving home, they start having variations, But, they basically will be more or less like their parents up until around 18. Now, this is unlike other countries. And so the stability, loyalty has to do with tradition, tradition loyalty, having structure. There's, fewer chores that iGens have to do. There's less demanded of them. And as we've seen again and again and again, the less you contribute, the more distressed You are. who feel good contributing.

[00:25:47] **Corey deVos:** Hmm

[00:25:49] **Keith Witt:** And even though there's community services required as part of high school, the kids all make fun of it. I mean, community service basically is a joke. But, you know, if you're working with your church or with your group or with your youth group or something to get something done, that feels meaningful, that's a boost of happiness.

[00:26:07] **Corey deVos:** Right, right.

[00:26:08] **Keith Witt:** So there's a lot of those variables, and this brings us back to an integral understanding. We do not wanna lose tradition.

[00:26:16] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:26:17] **Keith Witt:** There's a thing that they do at the university these days that drives me crazy. Before every meeting somebody has to do the lamp prayer. Let's talk

about, you know they're really sorry about the genocide of all the Indians and, you know, we're very respectful of the land. You know, I, worked for some people at a University. Well, right now that's just an empty ritual, like the Pledge of Allegiance, and people hate it. And so it's completely counterproductive.

But nobody can say this is not a good idea. I mean, sure I'm suitably distressed by the genocide of the Indians and all that stuff, and the sacredness of the land. But let's stop doing this thing cuz it's become an empty gesture. They're stuck in it. Okay. You can't question it. And I think this is where we're getting into the tyranny of progressive wokeness.

[00:27:05] **Corey deVos:** Yeah Yeah

[00:27:06] **Keith Witt:** That you can't challenge stuff. You know, I I don't wanna use different pronouns. I personally have no problem with it, but if somebody else doesn't wanna do it, that's their choice.

[00:27:15] **Corey deVos:** Yep

[00:27:15] **Keith Witt:** But then to have , that moral attack, that drama that comes out of it. There's a lot of studies that show that when kids get outraged at a university, and an administrator says, "let's talk about it" -- in other words, let's go away from the drama and solve some problems, the kids say, no, I don't wanna do it. They stay in the drama, okay? They stay in the moral demonstrations, cuz they've learned that's what I'm supposed to do and that's what gets me more retweets and stuff. Okay, now that's pathology.

[00:27:45] **Corey deVos:** Mm-hmm

[00:27:46] **Keith Witt:** That causes problems. But seeing that, what I want is, and I don't know if we'll see it, I want the administrators to say, "if there's a problem, let's adjust it and make some progress. But let's get off of moral grandstanding. Let's get off of cancel culture."

[00:28:01] **Corey deVos:** Cancel culture being being an example of extreme fragility that we see on the left. Which again, is a point that I want to get into soon when we start looking at the polarity of fragility and resilience and the need to integrate that polarity into something like a more integral anti-fragility.

[00:28:18] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, and what we want. is sensitive, but not fragile.

[00:28:21] **Corey deVos:** That's right

[00:28:21] **Keith Witt:** Because sensitive but not fragile is "I'll feel the pain, but I'm not fragile, I have resources to do something with that, to grow and to solve problems.

[00:28:30] **Corey deVos:** Mm-hmm

[00:28:31] **Keith Witt:** Fragile is, "oh no, you know, I feel the pain, somebody has to come protect me and heal me from it. Maybe mom can." You know, kids check their iPhones 80 times a day on average, and a lot of college students are on the phone to mom and dad all the time. Okay? Now, the cool thing about that is that there is guidance and they're asking adult guidance, and those relationships I think, will make them grow better ultimately. Downside about that is you can solve problems on your own, and solving problems is exciting and wonderful and necessary. Getting caught up in a dead end of outrage is horrible. So what are we gonna do about that?

So, go on. let's move into anti-fragile. That's what we want. We all wanna be anti-fragile.

[00:29:16] **Corey deVos:** Yeah so so I've got a couple things I wanna share real quick. First one is referring to something that you were just saying Keith, about the fact that we have had all of these previous happiness strategies as we sort of grow through these different stages of development. And one of the big problems that we see, one of the dysfunctions that we see occurring, is when we move from one stage to the next, and we embrace a new set of happiness strategies, but we leave behind the various kinds of happiness strategies that worked for us previously. And work for other people who are still at those other stages, which of course everyone is. People exist at these stages, you know, some people grow to a certain stage and hang out there for the rest of their lives, and that is perfectly okay. I just wanna remind everyone again that, that when

we're talking about stages of development, this isn't a question of inferior or superior or anything like that. It's really, you know, how suitable are you, or is this stage, to different kinds of complexity? Right? And there's different kinds of complexity, and not everyone is dealing with the same kinds of complexity at all times.

So I wanna share this real quick. I'm gonna share my screen. So the first thing I wanna do is share this index of happiness strategies. And we can look at these different strategies from Magenta all the way up to Turquoise. So at the magenta stage, happiness strategies often revolve around superstition, rituals and magical thinking. People may engage in various activities to appease spirits or seek protection from the unknown. Rituals and ceremonies, performing rituals to connect with nature or spirits. Storytelling, sharing and listening to myths and legends that bring a sense of meaning and wonder. Engaging with nature, exploring the natural world and connecting with the environment. Now when we leave the magenta stage, obviously we leave sort of the surface structures, right? We're not necessarily trying to connect with spirits or, you know, things like that, but we still can maintain rituals, ceremonies, storytelling, a relationship with nature. It's just saying that this stuff comes online at Magenta, and is translated in a particular way at Magenta, but there's pieces of this that we can, and really should, continue to carry with us as we continue to develop.

[00:31:25] **Keith Witt:** Include and transcend.

[00:31:27] **Corey deVos:** That's right. And then we get to the red stage, where happiness strategies are centered on asserting power, control, and self-expression. People seek to fulfill their desires and achieve personal gratification by pursuing personal goals, striving for success and recognition in various aspects of life. Exercising power and control, establishing dominance in social or professional settings. Indulging in pleasure, seeking enjoyment and satisfaction through various experiences. Again there are healthy versions of this that we can and should take with us as we continue our journey through these stages.

At the amber stage happiness strategies are often based on conforming to social norms, traditions, and religious beliefs. People find happiness in belonging to a group and following shared rules. We see this particular dynamic on both the left and the right today. This is where a lot of wokism comes from actually, it's an ethnocentric articulation of progressive values, you know, is one way to frame that. So the strategies here are

engaging in religious practices, participating in religious ceremonies or rituals that bring a sense of meaning and purpose. Upholding traditions, following cultural customs and practices to maintain a connection with one's heritage. Building a community, establishing and nurturing relationships with others who share similar values and beliefs. The Amber stage is a huge source of belongingness.

[00:32:44] **Keith Witt:** Oh man, doesn't that sound good? Doesn't that sound attractive?

[00:32:47] **Corey deVos:** Exactly.

[00:32:48] **Keith Witt:** To have a group of people where we could do ceremony together and we can be connected together?

[00:32:53] **Corey deVos:** Exactly

[00:32:54] **Keith Witt:** How many of us have a satisfying experience of that? I really want that part of Amber for all of us.

[00:33:00] **Corey deVos:** Hundred percent. A hundred percent. And then here we make this transition between amber and orange, which is actually a bit of a leap for a lot of people. You know, one of the things that Jonathan Haidt likes to point out is that, you know, on the left we often see more openness to new experiences, but a higher rate of neuroticism and a lot of that neuroticism starts here at the orange self-authoring stage, because suddenly you have to exchange two different sources of meaning. You know when you're at amber, your source of meaning is sort of being handed down to you from your community or your religion or, you know, whatever sort of that ethnocentric kind of group is. Whatever that code of your group is, that becomes a source of meaning. But then we move to the next stage which is orange, which is a self authoring stage where basically we're told there is no meaning, except for the meaning that you can create for yourself. And honestly that's a lot of pressure! It's hard to create meaning for yourself every day in an ongoing way, without becoming completely neurotic.

[00:34:00] **Keith Witt:** Especially in teenagers who are having to self-author a new identity now don't have the same structure that they had before to guide them to

alternative identities. It creates a lot of anxiety.

[00:34:13] **Corey deVos:** That's right That's right. So at Orange, happiness strategies are focused on achieving personal goals, success, and material wealth. People strive for progress and self-improvement. Setting and pursuing goals, establishing clear objectives in various areas of life and working towards them. Embracing personal growth, continuously learning, developing skills, and seeking self-improvement. Material success, accumulating wealth and possessions as a measure of achievement and happiness. Now again, some of us might look at this, some of us who have already grown through the orange stage, and we might look at this list and be like, "wow there's some excesses there that, you know, I'm really glad that I left behind." And totally fair enough. But there's also a sort of an underlying spirit here. There's a deep structure to all of right these. So it's no longer that we want to accumulate wealth and possessions, you know, as a token of our success or as like bragging rights or something like that, but at the same time, don't we all crave comfort? Don't we all wanna maximize comfort? Don't we all wanna live in the nicest possible house, for example? You know, we want to have nice things, It makes us feel good to have nice things. Now I think we can dislodge ourselves from sort of, you know, extracting an entire identity out of those nice things, but it's not like these things aren't nice to have once you move past the Orange stage.

[00:35:30] **Keith Witt:** Don't we wanna feel autonomous?

[00:35:32] **Corey deVos:** Yes.

[00:35:33] **Keith Witt:** Don't we wanna feel like we are not at the mercy of a boss.

[00:35:36] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:35:36] **Keith Witt:** Right. Or we're not the mercy of a larger group. Don't We wanna feel like that we can have our own identity, that we can be the top of our own personal hierarchy, that we can do what we feel is right and be our own moral authority, particularly when you're involved with merit-based hierarchies in a sense of wanting to have operancy in the world. That's solid orange.

[00:35:57] **Corey deVos:** A hundred percent.

[00:35:58] **Keith Witt:** And we want that.

[00:35:59] **Corey deVos:** A hundred percent. No, beautifully said Keith. Thank you. Then we get to the green stage, where happiness strategies are oriented towards empathy, inclusion, and social justice. People seek to build strong relationships and contribute to the wellbeing of others. Some strategies here are engaging in activism, advocating for social justice and environmental causes, fostering community, building meaningful connections with diverse groups of people. We can actually see I think here a sort of an alignment with green and amber here. Both of them are about creating community, and this might be one of the reasons why we often see this backslide from healthy green observations of reality, to unhealthy expressions of wokeness, which tend to get, you know, very fragile, very group-centric, et cetera.

[00:36:46] **Keith Witt:** And very in group, out group. We're being attacked by them. We need to attack them, kind of a closet Amber, really.

[00:36:52] **Corey deVos:** Exactly. That's exactly right. And then the third strategy is practicing empathy and compassion, actively listening and understanding other people's perspectives and emotions. Which again, we're gonna get back to this in just a moment, through a different lens of the polarity lens. So, you know, stay tuned for that. At the Teal Integral Visionary Stage, happiness strategies are based on integrating and transcending previous stages, focusing on personal growth and holistic wellbeing. It's built right into the definition here, right? Like the teal strategy is not separate from all the strategies that have emerged at these prior waves, in fact what we're doing is we are coordinating, we're reinterpreting and retranslating those previous happiness strategies in ways that work for us now at this stage of our development. This includes integrating multiple perspectives, embracing different worldviews to create more inclusive and balanced understanding of the world. I mean, let me ask my audience, everyone who's watching right now, doesn't it feel good when you're able to bring different perspectives together, especially perspectives that are typically seen as conflicting with each other or contradicting with each other, there's something about the teal mind that can bring these both online simultaneously, and we can see it, we can enact it as a polarity, or you know, as any number of ways of reconciling sort of these kinds of conflicts. And when we do, in our own minds and in our own hearts, it feels good, it's a source of happiness

to feel reality reintegrating. Right? There's also mindfulness and meditation, cultivating inner peace and self-awareness through mindfulness practices. And then personal transformation, continuously reflecting on one's experiences beliefs and values to grow and evolve So here again just like green and amber had that harmonic between them, we can see some harmonizing here between teal and orange. They're both interested in personal development for example, they just have sort of different interpretations of what that means.

[00:38:49] **Keith Witt:** And if this chart went further into Turquoise...

[00:38:52] **Corey deVos:** Hey, it does!

[00:38:53] **Keith Witt:** Well, there you go! Go to turquoise!

[00:38:55] **Corey deVos:** So at turquoise stage happiness strategies revolve around the interconnectedness of all beings, and the pursuit of collective wellbeing. I often say Keith that the teal stage is where we begin to understand "self as instrument", and we wanna fine tune our instrument as well as we possibly can, but at the turquoise stage is when we start playing that instrument within a much larger symphony of experience. The symphony of the world, the symphony of the universe.

[00:39:22] **Keith Witt:** At Turquoise we suffer. If we don't do that.

[00:39:24] **Corey deVos:** That's right. That's right, there's an abundance drive.

[00:39:27] **Keith Witt:** And if we do it, we feel pleasure. We feel God's pleasure.

[00:39:29] **Corey deVos:** A hundred percent. So here we have deep ecological awareness, recognizing the interdependence of all living beings and working towards environmental sustainability. Here's a resonance with green, right? Global consciousness, cultivating a sense of responsibility and care for the wellbeing of all people and the planet. Oh, that can almost sound like wokeness, except turquoise sort of enacts that a little differently.

[00:39:52] **Keith Witt:** It also sounds a little bit like Jesus Christ.

[00:39:54] **Corey deVos:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:39:55] **Keith Witt:** Love your brother.

[00:39:56] **Corey deVos:** That's right, that's right. And then speaking of whom, transpersonal experiences, engaging in practices that encourage a connection with the transcendent such as meditation or contemplative prayer. So these are examples of different strategies that again, this doesn't apply more to the right or more to the left, these are happiness strategies that are available to all of us at certain, you know stages of our own growth and development.

And I wanna be careful here because oftentimes when we talk about the left versus the right, there's some shorthand that we can do. It can be tempting to say, "oh, well the left is all, you know, Orange to Green." We hear Ken say this oftentimes for example. "While the right is predominantly amber to orange." And there might be some truth to that when we look at ... when we look at sort of the center of gravity of the discourse of the left and the right. That is not to say there are not just countless, countless exceptions to that rule. For example wokeness which we'll get to in a little bit, wokeness is really primarily an amber expression of green views and values that many of the people who are participating with in woke culture, are not capable of actually sort of thinking up on their own. They can't show the math for these pluralistic values that they are trying to enforce in very absolutistic and rigid sort of ways So this is not a matter of like, "oh the left is world-centric and the right is ethnocentric". Not at all. However the discourse can oftentimes, you know, its center of gravity can often be sort of pegged at some of these stages.

Which then Keith brings us to the second graphic And I think that this one is critical cuz this one does get us into some of the typological differences between the left and the right, and we can see some stage elements factoring in here too.

[00:41:42] **Keith Witt:** I love this second one.

[00:41:43] **Corey deVos:** So this is towards an anti-fragile society.

[00:41:47] **Keith Witt:** Now let's explain anti-fragile, you know, so let's give people a definition because not everybody knows what that means.

[00:41:54] **Corey deVos:** That's right. And let me just say from the beginning that I think anti-fragile is one of the most unfortunately named qualities out there. I really don't like the idea...

[00:42:04] **Keith Witt:** It's two negative words, talking about something really great.

[00:42:07] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:42:07] **Keith Witt:** When it comes to marketing, he did a horrible job when he wrote that

[00:42:10] **Corey deVos:** book.

Yeah no, I totally agree. That said, the concept itself is tremendously valuable. I just I wish I had a different name to it. But since this is sort of the term that's in the zeitgeist, right?

Let me just frame it this way. So we can often talk about two different sort of poles in this polarity. We can talk about something like fragility, and we can talk about something like resilience. Now, when you first hear those words you might enact them and sort of place judgments on them. You might say "well it's obviously better to be resilient than it is to be fragile, who wants to be fragile?" And yet, think about the stuff in your home. The most fragile stuff in your home tends to be the most beautiful. Right? Whereas the most resilient stuff, like the stuff you can pick up and throw against the concrete wall and it's not gonna break, it tends to be, you know, not so much on the beautiful side. So there are clearly important qualities that we want to integrate when it comes to fragility and resilience. And this polarity map I think helps surface some of these qualities.

So let's go through it. Let's go through it. So the way polarity maps work is we have the fragility on one pole, we have resilience on the other pole. The top "quadrants" -- these aren't quadrants like Ken Wilber's quadrants, but the top quadrants are showing the positive qualities associated with both of these. And then the bottom quadrants are showing the negative qualities that are associated with both of these.

So the positive side of fragility is sensitivity, being more attuned to changes in the environment. Adaptability, the ability to make changes or adjustments based on the situation. Empathy, recognizing and understanding the needs and the feelings of others. And then the positive sides of resilience are strength, the ability to withstand stress and adversity. Stability, consistent and predictable behavior or responses, and confidence, belief in oneself and one's abilities leading to greater self-assurance.

So again, these positive qualities are the qualities that we want to integrate together into a healthy anti-fragility polarity. When they are not integrated with each other, they disintegrate from each other.

So fragility that has become disintegrated from resilience has the qualities of vulnerability, there's a susceptibility to damage or harm, particularly from external factors. We'll get into this quality a little bit more in just a minute. Instability, the tendency to change or fluctuate leading to unpredictability. An insecurity, a lack of confidence or assurance causing anxiety and fear. So we might call these negative qualities of fragility "brokenness", right? But then on the resilience side, the negative qualities there, when resilience has been totally decoupled and disintegrated from fragility, we have rigidity, an unwillingness to change or adapt or consider new perspectives. Insensitivity, a lack of responsiveness to the changes in the environment or the needs of others. Complacency, self-satisfaction leading to a lack of motivation for improvement or growth.

All of these might be described not as brokenness, but as brittleness. Brittleness is a quality that super hard materials have, where they can chip, ironically right? We're talking about resilience, and yet resilience can be tremendously brittle when it's not tempered fragility

So again, the goal here is to integrate the very very best qualities of fragility and of resilience. However, I think Keith the way we're seeing this kind of stratification in our culture,

in education and our different sort of political cultures, et cetera, is that the left really really focuses on fragility, both positive qualities and negative qualities, and the right really focuses on resilience, both positive qualities and negative qualities. And in fact, the majority of the culture wars that I see are typically a war between those two bottom quadrants. You have all the worst elements of fragility against all the worst elements of resilience, and then that becomes the new discourse within which all of these conversations are now taking place.

[00:46:21] **Keith Witt:** Remember, if you're going with drama instead of problem solving, the left will identify with the top left, and will identify the conservatives by the bottom.

[00:46:31] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:46:32] **Keith Witt:** And the conservatives will identify with the top, and identify progressives at the bottom.

[00:46:37] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:46:38] **Keith Witt:** Now this is where the psychology of it comes in. These are actually memory systems that we're looking at. You know, this is how our unconscious is organized to give us data, to give us stories and impulses and so on, about moving forward. In the unhealthy side of it, we have defenses to cause us to dissociate and not self-observe ourselves engaging in that kind of stuff. And so these memory systems will then give us things to do, and we have this dissociative, defensive stuff to not observe it. So what happens to the other side? The other side attacks us. Instead of saying what's valid about that attack, where I would actually look at where my blind spot is, I feel like I have to counterattack. And this is the dynamic of the drama, of why you add a moral outrage, moral grandstanding. It's more entertaining, but it doesn't get anything done.

[00:47:32] **Corey deVos:** Right.

[00:47:32] **Keith Witt:** It's not solving problems. So what I wanna find in the other person, and therapists are biased toward, you wanna find somebody's strengths in their position, and then you go from an integral perspective, "alright, how can those strengths

be better and be stronger? Where are those blind spots? How can those blind spots be turned into little illuminations that cause this person to grow?" And when they grow, what happens is this not just you have ideas, your unconscious changes, so you're less likely to go to the drama, more likely to go to the problem solving.

And one thing about the spiral is that every level up gives us a little bit more capacity to self-observe. We can still have blind spots, It's harder and harder to maintain them, particularly at Teal and Turquoise.

[00:48:18] **Corey deVos:** Right.

[00:48:18] **Keith Witt:** And that's a good thing.

[00:48:19] **Corey deVos:** Right. Yeah Keith that that's important to point out, is that because this is a polarity, both of these poles exist at every stage.

[00:48:27] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:48:27] **Corey deVos:** There are red versions of of fragility and resilience, There are amber versions of fragility and resilience. For example, a lot of the reactions that we see on the right to things, you know, the moral panics that we see, we're in the midst of one right now around transgenderism. This could be seen as a symptom of fragility that is enacted at the Amber stage. Now I might argue that that's actually more like "brittleness" than it is 'fragility', it's sort of a resistance to change. But the point being, this polarity exists at all stages and certain stages will naturally emphasize one over the other. Amber on the whole is going to more often than not emphasize resilience values more than fragility values. Green on the whole is more often going to emphasize fragility values over resilience values.

And then when it comes to like applying this map to Jonathan Haidt's work, for example, Jonathan Haidt loves to talk about something that we love talking about, which is how we can have an internal locus of control, which is generally regarded as a positive thing

[00:49:31] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, that's resilience.

[00:49:33] **Corey deVos:** Exactly. Versus an external locus of control which we often enact as a

negative

thing, which causes suffering. The internal locus of control, the healthy internal locus of control we're gonna see in the upper right quadrant in this polarity map. The external locus of control which is unhealthy, we're gonna see in the lower left quadrant of this polarity map. So one is a healthy expression of resilience, the other is an unhealthy expression of fragility, all of which allows us to see how we have to kind of trace this figure eight infinity sign through these different poles, so that when we start moving just a little bit too far, we start feeling some maybe hyper resiliency for example that's making us feel brittle, or making us feel unmovable, or you know sort of calcified. Well, that is an invitation to kind of swing back over to the left. Is I think how how an exactly

[00:50:26] **Keith Witt:** Yeah that's counterdependent. Now also remember, let's not forget, that the most dangerous part of this whole thing is unhealthy red. The unhealthy red leaders, the unhealthy red people use all this stuff consciously.

[00:50:45] **Corey deVos:** Mmm

[00:50:47] **Keith Witt:** Murdoch. Use all this stuff consciously to, either for a political agenda or for economic agenda, or for a vengeance agenda. Putin, another good example. And you know, 15 to 19% of the population can't self-observe. And what I mean by healthy, if you get a psychopath that is really, really effective, basically they cause all the damage. And until at every single level, there's some version of discerning between authenticity and, manipulation, you're gonna be vulnerable in your blind spots.

[00:51:22] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:51:22] **Keith Witt:** And so that's part of what Integral is all about. Integral wants people to be aware of their blind spots so that you can feel the difference between the

healthy and unhealthy versions at every stage. Cuz if you don't, you are manipulable.

[00:51:36] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:51:37] **Keith Witt:** And mass formation psychosis is the most obvious and most dangerous form of that, and we've seen a lot of that in the last 10 years.

[00:51:42] **Corey deVos:** That's right. Yeah that's critical Keith, well said. Well and I think that that actually brings us to sort of the next part of our conversation here, which is okay so we've just sort of given the lay of the land, we've we've thrown some of the factors that are contributing to this increasing unhappiness particularly on the left, and we've noticed many of the reasons for it...

[00:52:00] **Keith Witt:** We can see that kids are less happy, more anxious, more depressed.

[00:52:02] **Corey deVos:** That's right. So what do we do about it? This becomes the question, so what do we do about it? And I wanna hear you riff, but before you do it I wanna kind of seed the garden a little bit. Because there's a quote here that was in Jonathan Haidt's article, which made me immediately think of you. So this was a quote from a journalist named Matt Yglesias, and he says,

"I am increasingly convinced that there are tremendously negative long-term consequences, especially for young people, coming from this reliance on the language of harm and accusations that things one finds offensive are 'deeply problematic' or even violent. Just about everything researchers understand about resilience and mental wellbeing suggest that people who feel like they are the chief architects of their own life, to mix metaphors, that they captain their own ship, not that they are simply being tossed around by an uncontrollable ocean, these people are vastly better off than people whose default position is victimization, hurt, and a sense that life simply happens to them, and they have no control over their response."

This reminds me of a string of conversations you and I had about the importance of creating a coherent life story that makes you captain of your own ship.

[00:53:18] **Keith Witt:** Yeah. And all the stuff that we've talked about, the hero's journey. Now, one thing that I've noticed as a practitioner throughout all these years and a teacher, is that people don't notice their superpowers. They just don't get it. They just don't get that we all have these superpowers. And once you see 'em, you can't not see 'em. I mean, that's the beauty of integral. Once you wake up, it's hard to go back to sleep about stuff.

[00:53:52] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[00:53:53] **Keith Witt:** And the idea that we, least my generation now, my job is to basically act as a mentor towards all the generations. That's been my life's purpose as a psychotherapist, and I've done more and more of it. Part of that is someone coming in not aware of their human superpowers, and me seeing them and saying, "look, these superpowers can be used for you to have a life that's worth living by your standards. And there's some universals, you know, we need relationship and we need security and we need to not be hurting other people and stuff, and there's a lot of wild variability. And whatever it that we're moved to want, or we don't like, we want to change, or we want to create, we have superpowers that can move us in those directions. The culture either supports us and inhibits us on this. You know, income inequality inhibits us, you know, extractive capitalism inhibits us. A free society liberates us, gives us room. And I can go on and on.

[00:54:57] **Corey deVos:** Particularly if you have achieved a stage of development that allows you to see these systemic problems in the first place. That's another critical factor here. Like the more dysfunction you see, the more dysfunction you're going to feel. You're going to internalize that, and then that becomes a part of your identity, and therefore a source of unhappiness.

[00:55:14] **Keith Witt:** Unless you are aware of your human superpower to grow, to manifest. You know, I wrote a book once called Mindful Manifestation, cuz it just, every system was a manifestation system. All the therapy systems, all the spiritual systems, they're all manifestation systems. I went, look, the reason that's there is because we all have the superpower to be able to manifest stuff. And when we do it with other people, then it's supercharged superpower.

[00:55:41] **Corey deVos:** Right. You know you know what reminds me Keith, just real brief, you know what it reminds me of is the movie The Matrix.

[00:55:46] **Keith Witt:** Oh yeah, of course.

[00:55:47] **Corey deVos:** Right? Where you have that sort of Faustian and choice between like, you know you can either stay in the in the matrix and be happy, right? Or you can see reality as it really is and never be happy again, ever. And that's your choice. You you can either live in the systemic dysfunction but be blissfully unaware of it, or you are confronted with the reality of how dysfunctional this thing is, and, you know, instead of having that nice juicy red steak you have to eat the gray muck that we create over in Zion.

[00:56:23] **Keith Witt:** So going back to your question, the conversations that I have with parents are about, first of all, who is each one of your children. As we know from types, quadrant levels, line states and types, each kid's different. So what's the combination of support and challenge that kid needs to grow optimally? It's different with every kid. So if I have a parent who can have that conversation with me, and we can arrange at every single level, starting basically with birth, to find out who that kid is and provide the appropriate level of support and challenge, that becomes a through line throughout development. And the fact that that's not widely known by all parents and all teachers and everybody in the world, is just one of the frustrating things about being in integral. Cuz you know, that's it.

[00:57:22] **Corey deVos:** That's, right

[00:57:22] **Keith Witt:** Now, after that there are almost an infinity of directions, but at least you're oriented. And the other part of that is, if I'm working with a parent, or even with a son or daughter working with their parents, you have to take into account the level of capacity that the other person has for communication, for self-observation, and for self-correction. And I told a parent earlier this week, I said, development is relentless. You know, you have a two-year-old and a four-year-old, so if you don't get this stuff, you only have one year, and now your two year old's three, and whatever happens in the critical period two years, you miss that, unless you give the kid what they need. And if you don't get what a three-year-old needs, you know, what? You only got a year to deal with that, and then you've missed that, and you've hit into the critical periods that four

year olds have, and five year olds have. And there's critical periods at all these different levels. So I want them to worry about that and go, okay, well, I wanna understand what it is for my kid. And okay, yes, and now we have the proper support of challenge, proper amount of support, and then the proper way of kind of looking at how is this child growing and what are the new challenges? And you can't do that unless you're doing all those things for yourself and for your own relationship. And you know, this is one of the reasons that I didn't just write one book. You know, I wrote 14 of them and I've only published 10 of 'em. Why? Because you can't talk about it all at once. You know, it's a cosmology, you have to focus in on different parts of it. And when you're working with an individual or if you're working with a group, you can kind of get more granular. Part of the problem, of course, is that schools are under attack, and teachers are under attack, and they're scared. Teachers are very much conformist a lot of times. Both my parents were public school teachers. They all just followed the rules, you know? But if they're scared of something, then they're not going to open up and teach to the extent that they want to teach, and that's gonna cause problems. But of course that's part of the dialectic now in the culture, and people are trying to stop teachers from teaching, but a lot of people are saying, no, let teachers teach. And that's a healthy. Conflict that needs to keep going until there's some kind resolution that works better for everybody.

And so part of my approach to this is I'm very hopeful, because I see these these conflicts happening. I see some people generating just more drama, but I see some people actually wanting to solve problems. And the people that? are trying to solve problems are doing a pretty damn fine job if you ask me. There are some teachers that are so gifted, it just blows my mind.

And so that's why I'm hopeful, that's what I think is gonna happen. more and more, because this iGen generation that's really unhappy, part of it is, there's a lot more involvement with parents and that's not a bad thing. Okay. A lot of iGens are very comfortable talking to adults. I mean, they'll have enjoyable conversations. You know why is that? Well, they've been talked to more, they've been included more. Um, there are moments that they have where they feel like psychological or intellectual equals with the people around them. And those are intoxicating moments, talking about happiness. You know, more of those you have the better you feel. And the more you recognize you have a superpower, you use it around something that you want, and you see that happen. Hmm. Now we got that internal motivation system going and we have internal locus of control happening, that's pretty great.

Now there's a lot of conflict around it. It's just a lot of problems everybody's having, and there's gonna be a lot of suffering.

[01:00:59] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[01:00:59] **Keith Witt:** Now, the good news about this is in the past, people were starving and killing each other a lot. So we're not starving as much in killing each other as much, or enslaving children or all the horrible things that people have done throughout the ages. But people are still suffering and we still need to take it seriously And grow through it.

[01:01:18] **Corey deVos:** So one of the notes that I took in preparation for this this show Keith was noticing how there are these different narratives about time, about history, and really about progress. So the left for example, the left often believes that we remain in many ways stuck in the past, that things are just as bad today as they ever have been. That things don't fundamentally change. What's interesting is on the right, we often find two opposing narratives that are different from the narrative on the left. On the right we'll often find an orange narrative, which

says no no no, things are constantly getting better, and in fact generally speaking it's better to be born in 2023 than any other time in human history, in terms of the amount of suffering that you will endure in your lifetime. And I agree with that, that's I would say a healthy orange sort of frame of progress.

[01:02:10] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, good..

[01:02:11] **Corey deVos:** The right also has another counter narrative too, which is the narrative of religion, right? Which is that, no, things are only ever getting worse. This is the fall, right? And we should all be aspiring to go backwards, because going forwards... this is why progressivism is evil, by the way, and Satanic and all that stuff, because going forward takes you farther away from God.

So we have these three very, very different sort of readings on history and on progress. And you know, I think the integral reading is very similar to what you just said. The integral reading is something like, yes, we totally agree that society is constantly

improving and constantly moving closer and closer towards greater freedom, greater equality, greater equity, and there's never been a better time to be alive than there is today. I agree with all of that. And yet, let's integrate healthy Green, there are still many inertias from the past that are nonetheless still with us, and continue to generate suffering for us today. We absolutely want to sort of debug that out of our society, and therefore we still have work to do in order to continue bending the future towards greater goodness, greater equity, greater justice. That to me feels like an anti-fragile integral response that is able to account for the many ways that things have gotten better and continue to get better, while also acknowledging, yes there is some really fucked up stuff back there in our history that we are still carrying with us, that we're still inflicting on each other, and guess what guys? We can do both. We can have a narrative of ongoing progress, and in fact the way we actualize that progress is by participating with that progress.

[01:03:55] **Keith Witt:** And this is what I wanna close with, because this is my favorite part of this whole thing. Okay. At least, you know, at least from my part of it. Anytime that a university has put out a course in happiness, it's been oversubscribed. Okay? I've talked to professors who've done this, I've talked to a guy who did this at Yale, I think, I presented with him in Portugal. And then I've seen studies on it. So, happiness is doing this kind of stuff. Okay? So, I like it that colleges have happiness as a course. I'd like high schools to have happiness courses too. I'd actually like elementary schools to have happiness courses. Because to be happy, you kind of need to embrace these kinds of things and move in these kinds of directions, and there are specific ways of doing it at every level that really help. For instance, the principle of mediation. You know, mediating means we'll have mutual understanding until we both feel like we're understood and respected by the other person. And then we'll come up with one concrete step forward, and then we'll see if we do it, and then we'll check back. That process is the mediation process. Well, it's being done at elementary schools, and they're wildly successful getting, you know, elementary school, concrete operational kids, to do this.

[01:05:13] **Corey deVos:** Yeah.

[01:05:14] **Keith Witt:** This is the kind of stuff that makes me happy. You know, talking about happiness.

[01:05:19] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[01:05:19] **Keith Witt:** This is the kinda stuff that makes me go, this is so much more fun and better than a lot of the other stuff. Eventually it's gonna suck everybody into doing more and more of it.

[01:05:28] **Corey deVos:** Yep

[01:05:28] **Keith Witt:** Now that being said, if someone's depressed, find somebody to talk to. If someone's anxious, find somebody to talk to, adjust your lifestyle to take care of all that stuff. Of course, of course, of course. And as Ken always says, if you step back far enough, evolution looks pretty darn good.

[01:05:45] **Corey deVos:** That's right, or as Jeff says, it's beautiful but it ain't always pretty.

[01:05:49] **Keith Witt:** So on that note...

[01:05:51] **Corey deVos:** Well I have one more thing I want to sign us off with Keith, just my final thoughts here. Because, you know, when I read both David Brooks' and Jonathan Haidt's articles, which which were challenging, right? I mean, this is again surfacing some really... none of us wanna see people so miserable.

[01:06:06] **Keith Witt:** Well you have a daughter.

[01:06:08] **Corey deVos:** She's she's growing up in the midst of all this. That's right, that's right. So when I read that, I felt the gravity of what they were communicating. And I found this uplifting current as well. In Jonathan Haidt's article, I was uplifted by the fact that he was so precisely able to name the process that got us into this mess, and therefore the process that we can rewind to get ourselves out. And he frames it as reverse cognitive behavioral therapy. That our institutions have been inflicting a reverse CBT on us that has trained us to believe that we are more fragile and therefore to be harmed by books, teachers, and speakers, and words. Which, you know, these folks are being learned was actually a form of violence. Well no, the triumph of history is that

words represent a much better form of "violence" than violence, right? We have uplifted from brutal force-based violence to nouspheric... like a disagreement is not a violence act.

[01:07:08] **Keith Witt:** Yeah I'd rather you tell me you think I'm an asshole than punch me in the head.

[01:07:11] **Corey deVos:** That's right, that's right.

[01:07:12] **Keith Witt:** I've had both of those things happen, and I'll let you know, like it's a lot better when someone just calls you a name. And I agree. I agree with Jonathan Haidt. And he's a college professor, so he's kind of been at ground zero seeing this stuff happening throughout his career, he's really on top of it.

[01:07:27] **Corey deVos:** Yep. Well, and the second thing he says, I came out of this sort of reverse CBT, and this is one I think we wanna hold carefully, and in fact we could probably wrap an entire show around, Keith, is he says,

"They came to believe that their emotions, especially their anxieties, were reliable guides to reality."

The reason I wanna revisit this is because, you know, one of the phrases that I've heard that I find just fascinating is that anxiety is the only emotion that never lies. And what that means is, if you feel anxiety, that is pointing to something real in an experience that is traumatic or just cannot be digested. So whenever there's anxiety, we want to pay attention, because it's not lying. There is some underlying trauma there that needs to be resolved. We don't wanna lose ourselves in anxiety, though.

[01:08:13] **Keith Witt:** Let's do either the next show or the one after that on specifically this.

[01:08:16] **Corey deVos:** That would be fantastic.

[01:08:18] **Keith Witt:** Because this is a huge, big deal. This is one of the reasons I wrote Shadow Light. This is why defensive states are misunderstood, and I've been teaching about an integral understanding of defensive states forever. This is a really big deal.

[01:08:31] **Corey deVos:** Yeah it is.

[01:08:32] **Keith Witt:** So this will be continued!

[01:08:33] **Corey deVos:** That's right. And then his third one, real briefly, is that, "we've come to see society as comprised of victims and oppressors," which is Green language, "good people and bad people," which is amber language. So again, this is being simultaneously enacted as green and as amber, which gives us both sort of the pluralistic movement on the left, as well as the sort of absolutist woke movement on the left. So to finish up this thought right here, what makes me optimistic about Jonathan Haidt's framing here is that we used a dysfunctional kind of CBT to get ourselves into this situation, which means we can use something like cognitive behavioral therapy to pull ourselves out. That makes me hopeful. That makes me very hopeful.

Then the second piece of optimism that I got from David Brooks, I'm just gonna read what he said here, these two paragraphs, cuz I find this tremendously optimistic.

David Brook says, "I say that liberal sadness was maladaptive because the mindset didn't increase people's sense of agency." Again, "it was maladaptive because the mindset did not increase people's sense of agency. It decreased it. Trying to pass legislation grounds your thought in reality, and can lead to real change. But when you treat politics as an emotional display, you end up making yourself, and everyone else, feel afflicted and powerless.

I share the widespread sense that the woke era is winding down." Amen, brother. "Things are calming down. I hope people are coming to the same corny conclusion that I have: if you want healthy politics, encourage people to have confidence in their ability to make a difference. Don't undermine that confidence." And I fully agree with David Brooks here.

[01:10:19] **Keith Witt:** Yeah, going back to superpowers.

[01:10:21] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[01:10:22] **Keith Witt:** Making a differences is the superpower.

[01:10:23] **Corey deVos:** That's right. That's right.

[01:10:27] **Keith Witt:** So now we can declare victory!

[01:10:28] **Corey deVos:** Now we can declare victory. We solved the unhappiness epidemic in our society.

[01:10:34] **Keith Witt:** Yeah. Well, we'll especially more about that last piece.

[01:10:37] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[01:10:38] **Keith Witt:** I think that's really a big deal.

[01:10:39] **Corey deVos:** That's right.

[01:10:40] **Keith Witt:** And on a personal level, it marks everyone's hero's journey. When you hit the dark night of the soul, you don't feel strong, you need to have faith that strength is there inside you. And that with the right courage, that you can reach out. And when you reach out, there's other people there reaching back to help. And that's true for all of us. And I think that's a beautiful thing about being a person.