



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Episode #18: Creative Contrarians

Please note: This is an unedited transcript, provided as a courtesy, and reflects the actual conversation as closely as possible. Please forgive any typographical or grammatical errors.

- Martha Beck: [Intro Music] Welcome to Bewildered. I'm Martha Beck, here with Rowan Mangan. At this crazy moment in history a lot of people are feeling bewildered, but that actually may be a sign we're on track. Human culture teaches us to come to consensus, but nature — our own true nature — helps us come to our senses. Rowan and I believe that the best way to figure it all out is by going through bewilderment into be-wild-erment. That's why we're here. [Music fades]
- Martha Beck: Ello', this is Marty. I fooled you by saying it in Australian.
- Rowan Mangan: And I'm Ro and I fooled you by saying it in very bad American. American. It's okay that you can't be a very bad Murican'. Just Murican'. Just Murican'. All right. Well if you haven't guessed you have arrived in another episode of Bewildered, the podcast for people trying to figure it out. I have been trying to figure it out of late by taking lots and lots and lots of psychedelic mushrooms because I hear that it helps me see into the mind of God. Anyway, Marty has got on speed dial or something and she managed to cut out the middle man and speak straight to the source.
- Martha Beck: That's true. And of course the first thing God did was mail me a whole lot of psychedelic mushrooms.
- Rowan Mangan: Nice.
- Martha Beck: Well, yes, of course. Yes. Once united with the mind of God, what you can do is request a lot of psychedelic mushrooms and it does help. Terence McKenna famously said that God is a mushroom.
- Rowan Mangan: That's a really helpful image of God to hold in my mind actually.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Right. It's like, my God is not the God or the angry bearded man in the clouds. It's great big fungus. Probably closer. But anyway, here's the thing. This is what you realize when you have joined with the mind of God is that God is way high. God is totally baked. And if you doubt me, study our natural world. It's like - a moose. I'm going to make a deer, put a huge nose on it. And it's like, "Oh, camel, I'm going to put lumps of fat." This camel, this animal will gain weight but only in its back, just huge wads of fat on its back because God is super duper high.
- Rowan Mangan: I think that checks out completely.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Also, I read online that camel hump is delicious and prized as a delicacy.
- Rowan Mangan: Could you take the hump off a camel and the camel would be okay?
- Martha Beck: No. You could take the hump off a camel. I do not think the camel would be okay.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah. Well there's that then. That's a depressing start to the episode.
- Martha Beck: Oh, it's just all good cheer. All mushrooms and camel hump here. Yeah, we've come to the festive time.
- Rowan Mangan: That sounds like a recipe.
- Martha Beck: It is. My holiday recipe, camel hump with psychedelic mushrooms. Yeah. It's the mind of God, Ro. You can't argue with that.
- Rowan Mangan: The mind of God sounds delicious. Then I switched to Hannibal Lecter eating brains in front of the people whose brains he's eating. If there was a camel Hannibal Lecter, he might eat the hump. I'm sorry guys.
- Martha Beck: This is terrible. Could I just say that on behalf of the camels listening out there, I am literally shaking with rage that we are so callously just talking about hump eating and hump eating would be a super duper Olympic event, if they would add that in place.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. Well, let me tell you what I am actually trying to figure out before we go any further down this terrible, terrible rabbit hole. Okay. So, I have been trying to figure out how much of my brain can I reasonably outsource to the cloud. Do you have to remember anything anymore if you have access to some device that has an app for all the components of your brain that you used to keep locally?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: I have such a device. It is called Rowan Mangan.

Rowan Mangan: Not for long, not for long.

Martha Beck: Marty, did you remember to breathe? No.

Rowan Mangan: So, this is my thinking. Okay, this is a story in which I don't come out looking very good but hey, I'm okay with it. So I went to the gym yesterday and I'm trying to get back into my fitness after my leisurely time of being a new mom and now I'm ready to be strong and fit again and excited about it. Now in Australia, I don't know, maybe not. Don't @ me, you guys, I don't know if this is true. It seems to me that in Australia in the past, I've been able to walk into a gym many, many times where I [inaudible 00:05:16] joined gyms and said, "Hey, could you guys write me a program?" And they'd have a little piece of cardboard. And on that little piece of cardboard, they'd write, do this machine, do this many reps, this many sets, da, da, da, and then I would have it and I would walk around and I would do -

In America this seems to be a bizarre request, a bizarre request. Oh my gosh. I cannot seem to get this little piece of cardboard without someone trying to measure the hydration of my cells or some crap. It's really intense. But anyway, so finally I did a lot of very sweet talking and I ended up with this beautiful man called Brandon helping me to, he ended up being able to find a pen and a piece of paper after about 10 minutes of negotiating. But here's the thing, I have this brain that doesn't really understand that I have a body and doesn't know how to move it in space at all. And so, if you say to me, on this machine, pull your arms together up by your nose to your nipple height. Apparently, that's a really important height, nipple height. And he couldn't look at me.

Martha Beck: At least for Brandon, the boy man.

Rowan Mangan: He couldn't look at me when he said it. He said, "Where your breasts might be."

Martha Beck: Can I just say that as you age that you're going to have to adjust that. You're going to be bringing your elbows together right around your knees.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So we kept having to have this conversation where he had the piece of paper and the pen and I would try and use these weights machines and he would be like, "To your nose, to your nipples together, up." And then he would have these really random analogies to try and help me remember. He goes, "It's like you're holding a bunch of flowers." And I'm like, why would I be holding a really heavy bunch of flowers."

So Brandon had the piece of paper. I'm trying to use the machines. And I kept saying to him, "Could you write down, bring hands together, bring hands up or down." And he's like, "You'll remember." And I'm saying, "No, seriously dude, I am this stupid. I cannot remember. I need you to take a picture of the machine. I won't know what it is." Anyway, luckily I'm completely unshamable about being useless in the gym.

Martha Beck: Listen to our "Unshamable" episode.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. That's a little callback. I kept saying to him, "There must be an app. There must be an app." I'm looking at him trying to write. He's a young man. He doesn't write, he doesn't know from writing. It's not part of his history.

Martha Beck: He was holding the pencil in his hoof.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, it was bonkers. So I thought, I bet there's an app where you can have, here's the machine, here's the photo of the machine so you can't make a mistake about which machine. And then here are your little notes. Maybe I could even voice record them. Hang on. I'm just having a brilliant business idea.

Martha Beck: Whoa.

Rowan Mangan: So in short Marty, I'm trying to figure out, can we just have an app for everything and is there some way that I don't have to go to the gym?

Martha Beck: Yeah. There's probably an app that calls your trainer. You hire a trainer then there's an app that calls your trainer - maybe 23 hours before every workout and says, "I'm sorry, I can't make it." That is in fact would fit most people's lifestyle I think much better than the apps that are like, you can do it. No, cancel.

Rowan Mangan: I remember canceling a social engagement once because I had a sore knee and I just decided, let's be honest. My knee hurts. I don't want to get up. So I canceled. And that seems like a really good excuse for the gym.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: On the other hand, I once canceled a lunch date because I was in labor and the other person was deeply offended.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: And I literally, I was teaching an art class at the time and a student asked me, "Are you going to be teaching next semester?" And I said, "No, I'm going to be having a baby next semester." And he said, "Yeah, but that's only one day."

Rowan Mangan: Interesting.

Martha Beck: So yeah, the Brandon boy, man, you just send them a different excuse on your app every day, twice a week, whatever, I am in labor.

Rowan Mangan: Still in labor.

Martha Beck: Still in labor. I am holding a bunch of flowers. I cannot make it. My knee hurts. He also said to you, by your own account, you'll want to wear high heels.

Rowan Mangan: Poor boy. He had his inner little notepad ready of things to say to women who aren't trying to get super buff. And let me tell you this man was easy on the eye. Can I just say that. He was easy on the eye.

Martha Beck: Boy-man is the term I think we settled on.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, he's lovely. Hi Brandon. Thank you for treating me like someone who may, at some point in her life wear high heels. "Your calves are going to look so good after you use this machine you'll want to wear high heels." And I was just like, all right.

Martha Beck: I tried that and my feet went, "Who are you trying to kid? You're a lesbian. Look now you need foot surgery. You should never have even tried."

Rowan Mangan: To all lesbians who wear high heels, "Hey, we're not trying to generalize you out of your lovely high heels."

Martha Beck: I was a lipstick lesbian. I was in high heels night and day but then my feet got all weird.

Rowan Mangan: I don't know how much of that was the direct consequence of also being a lesbian?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Yeah, I think I've offended lesbians really, really seriously.
- Rowan Mangan: I think you've offended lesbians. I think you've offended lipstick.
- Martha Beck: Boy-men.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah.
- Martha Beck: Basically, I've offended lipstick. God. Okay, I'm going to need more therapy. Please don't hurt me people in the world. I don't mean any harm. I'm just a moron.
- Rowan Mangan: She's so sweet.
- Martha Beck: I'm shaking with rage at myself.
- Rowan Mangan: We have this ongoing joke about shaking with rage because it was one of those things that people say. We get in fights on the internet because someone has said something a little bit thoughtless or that doesn't conform to your personal view of the world so you have to write I'm literally shaking with rage.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. You write, "You can do it." And they're like, "Don't you know that praise doesn't lead to better consequences. You're just supposed to pat me on the back or something." I'm shaking with rage.
- Rowan Mangan: You guys don't realize, I shouldn't say guys shaking with rage. Don't realize this but Marty just had a little bit of a passive aggressive takedown of me in that past line because we are in the midst of some very intense reading on parenting together in our morning communion times with our beloved Karen and I copped some flack this morning for daring to suggest that praise. Well, I didn't suggest it, I just read it off the damn page. Someone else did a lot of research.
- Martha Beck: It was the mind of God. It was not your say so.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So there you go.
- Martha Beck: My praise doesn't work.
- Rowan Mangan: Marty for God's sake tell me what you're trying to figure out.
- Martha Beck: Only if you praise me afterward.
- Rowan Mangan: I shan't.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: Well that makes me feel even more motivated. You guys know that I meditate. I was a Chinese studies major. I was into Buddhism before it was a thing which was 5,000 years ago or whatever. 2,500. I don't know. I've forgotten when Buddha lived now. Gosh. Anyway. All right. So the whole thing is you try to achieve non-attachment because the whole world is always impermanent. Everything's always changing. And the moment you attach to things as they are, you are in suffering because they never stop changing. My favorite thing is to go in nature and look at the seasons change. It's all impermanence. I'm not attached. Well, when we moved to this house, we inherited because the person who lived in the house last was a biology teacher. God bless him. One of the great men of our time I feel.

Rowan Mangan: I agree.

Martha Beck: I love the way he loved nature and he loves fish so he put in a fish pond. We have a fish pond on our property that we have to take care of and I was like, "What? I never thought I would live with fish." But I do.

Rowan Mangan: You sure do.

Martha Beck: Yeah. So there were these three monstrous fish and we named them Washington, Hamilton and Lafayette, right?

Rowan Mangan: No, we named them Hamilton and Lafayette and-

Martha Beck: Hercules Mulligan.

Rowan Mangan: Hercules Mulligan. There you go. That's why they never come when I call. I get the name wrong.

Martha Beck: Okay. And then there was one who he was an accidental fish. He slipped into the pool while it was being made. He was the color of mud and we called him Mud-blood and I know that's a swear in Harry Potter.

Rowan Mangan: It's racist. Yeah.

Martha Beck: Shoot.

Rowan Mangan: And also Harry Potter has been canceled.

Martha Beck: Oh shoot.

Rowan Mangan: Or at least J.K. Rowling. I don't know. I can't follow it. But anyway, we really, really, really shouldn't have said mud blood but we did.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: We called him Mud-blood.

Rowan Mangan: We called him Mud-blood.

Martha Beck: He looked like mud and you could not see him. Okay. So then one day I go out and there are all these little fingerlings, these little tiny coy fish. So apparently two of the bigger fish had spawned and made little fish. But what they mostly do because they're not really intellectual giants of Darwinian evolution, they eat their babies. We give them food and then they eat their babies – really? And yet as you live with something and check to see if it survived the winter when the pond was frozen solid, I found out all kinds of things. Do you know for example fish don't like rain. They don't like rain. They go under rocks when it's raining like freaking rain. They live in water. They don't like rain.

And then the other thing that really knocked me out is they lie down to sleep. I identify so much more. As soon as I saw them slowly drift to the bottom and just lie there on the bottom and sleep I was like, "These are my people." And so I began to love them. And three of their fingerlings made it through being eaten to make it through to the next spring and then they ate two of those but one survived and he was two inches long when I first saw him. And he's beautiful. He's got an orange stripe on his head and then these cream-colored flanks so I called him Creamsicle. It's not part of the historical naming trend but it matched his appearance.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: Okay. So they're swimming around in there and Creamsicle gets to be 4, 5, 6 inches long. It's looking like he's almost out of danger from his kin, right?

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. As long as we forget about the great blue herons.

Martha Beck: The great blue herons. So the guys that come to help us to make sure we are taking care of our fish have said over and over again, there is nothing more visible from the skies to a great blue heron than an orange and white fish.

Rowan Mangan: Just to reinforce what you said about not Darwin's greatest moment, right? Not that it was Darwin's fault.

Martha Beck: I'm going to address this fish as a traffic cone. I'm going to make it a luminous in orange so that it can just be eaten by everything that even exists in nature. Anyway.

Rowan Mangan: So you were saying that, ooh, I don't even know.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: I came to love these fish and I was rooting for Creamsicle. We all were.

Rowan Mangan: Sure.

Martha Beck: Because he was tiny and then he was pursued by his parents with cannibalistic attachment and then he survived. So I was trying to not be attached to him. I tried not to be attached. But then one day we were standing in the kitchen, which has a window looking over the pond, and we looked out and we saw a great blue heron standing in the pond, holy crap you guys.

Rowan Mangan: Oh my God.

Martha Beck: It was like do, do, do, do, do, do, a shark. It's so funny. Great blue herons, I've seen them, they're the most beautiful birds. They're huge. They have these massive wings. They're gloriously colored and I would've given a pint of blood to see one in any other setting. But once you come to love your fish and a heron is standing there, it literally is like there's a murderer in the house with the kids. So Ro is like, "There's a heron." And so I ran outside and I just started blurting, "You have got to leave. Leave my fish children alone. You leave. You will leave me now."

And then I came back in the house and I said, "I think I, I, I scared him away before he got any of them." And Ro was white as a sheet and she looked at me and she said, "Marty, that heron was swallowing." And we were just like, "This sepulcher of doom came down around us." And so we went out and we looked and there were the three huge fish too big to go down a heron's throat. And then there were no Mud-blood and there were no Creamsicle. It were a sad day.

Rowan Mangan: Sad, sad, sad day.

Martha Beck: And we went out and looked for days. I'd go out and stare at the others and throw him food. And no Mud-blood, no Creamsicle. And I was like, "It's okay. Impermanence, detachment, meditate till it's all right." And I thought I had achieved this detachment from the lives of fish. And then one day I was just sitting in meditation, when we got a text from Karen on our mutual thread and it said simply "Creamsicle lives!".

Rowan Mangan: She's usually not that poetic by nature. It's not her way to wax literary. But on that day, Jefferson lives style.

Martha Beck: Yeah. Creamsicle lives. And I felt such joy in my heart and it did leap up into the heavens and I realized I am so far from being Zen-like and unattached, it's pathetic.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: The Buddha is just looking down at you and just shaking with rage.
- Martha Beck: Which is really terrifying because actually the Buddha is a mushroom. When a mushroom is shaking at you from the heavens, you just don't really know what's going on. It's very, very frightening.
- Rowan Mangan: If I were a deity and I were going to appear as a mushroom, I'd definitely be one of those red ones with the white spots.
- Martha Beck: Those are the ones that make reindeer crazy. Did you know that, the reason we have the red and white Christmas decorations and the reindeer that are on Santa's flying sleigh, it's because back in old Viking times, they'd go out and look for these mushrooms and get high as kites but then the snow would come and they couldn't find them anymore, but the reindeer can smell them so they would dig them out and they would eat these mushrooms and get totally soused and they would stagger around with their eyes twirling. And the people, I am not kidding you, would go gather the urine of these reindeer because it was full of hallucinogens, psychedelics. And then they would drink reindeer piss, and then think that their sleighs were flying through the night with flashing reindeer noses and whatnot.
- Rowan Mangan: How do you gather reindeer urine?
- Martha Beck: I would imagine -
- Rowan Mangan: Asking for a friend.
- Martha Beck: I would imagine that it would involve a mixing bowl and some clever footwork. Remember though, the reindeer is high so it'll be like, "Why are you Paisley, dude?" So you can get in there with the mixing bowl. But the other thing if you're really serious is some really good wrestling training. Because I think you just go directly to the source. You just wrestle that thing down to the ground and just plug in. Wait for it to pee.
- Rowan Mangan: This is so much fun. And I actually think it would almost be easier to just let them fly around the world and deliver toys to every child on earth than to try and get home with that pee.
- Martha Beck: Actually they would just fly around to the Viking huts and pee in a cup. That's why you leave the cup out. It's not milk and cookies people. It's reindeer piss.
- Rowan Mangan: And that's where random drug testing came from children.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Have a Merry Christmas.
- Rowan Mangan: I don't know what we are talking about, but I just think this is a really beautiful note to end on.
- Martha Beck: I think so too. So today Ro is another special day when we do listen to the peoples. It's a Bewild files episode.
- Rowan Mangan: Bewild files. And it's a very, very exciting one for us because for the first time we have been able to harness the power of sound. In the past there's been things written down by you and sometimes we've talked about them, but we've never heard your voices. I'm going to go out on a limb and say, there's more than one of you out there. And so because people followed me on Instagram at rowan_mangan and they followed the beautiful instructions that I wrote out at -
- Martha Beck: Talk about trying to figure it out.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I know, right? This is amazing. Physically anyone who managed to get through those instructions and get that voice file to us has already figured everything out that they could possibly need to. So yes, follow me on Instagram. And today we are going to do the Bewild files.
- Martha Beck: Now you may or may not know that Bewild files are responses to our question, "What are you trying to figure out?" And we got several responses and we don't have time for all of them. Some of them are so awesome. I want to do whole episodes on them in the future and we couldn't do it as quickly as we do on the Bewild files. But we're so excited because we're trying this new thing now and our first question, our first Bewild file is from Danielle and over to you, Danielle.
- Danielle: I am trying to figure out why I have such a competitive nature. Even when I approach a door and it says push, there's something in me like a devilish monster that just wants me to yank that door and see if I could get through the door by pulling it. Even though it says as clear as day to push. Okay. Thank you. Bye.
- Martha Beck: Who has not dealt with this one?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. We feel you Danielle.
- Martha Beck: Although I wouldn't say it's a competitive nature. I think it would be classified by humorless school principles around the world as oppositional defiant disorder.
- Rowan Mangan: I just think she's a contrarian. Because I think it's the same thing.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Oh, I like that. Contrarian, it's very interesting because if you don't have contrarians in any population, everybody goes crazy. Every primitive culture has people in it who are designated as the clowns or whatever and they do everything backwards. They ride their horses backwards. They go without warm clothes in the winter and they dress up.
- Rowan Mangan: And during the holidays everyone's like, "She's a real character."
- Martha Beck: It's really true. It's kind of a divine balance that they're trying to keep. I don't know.
- Rowan Mangan: Danielle, do you ride your horse backwards? We need to know this before we can go on.
- Martha Beck: That's true because we won't know which way you're facing but. There's always a contrarian in every group. And I think in Shakespeare, the fool is the contrarian who says the opposite of what the king is thinking. He's the countercultural element.
- Rowan Mangan: There you go.
- Martha Beck: That's the thing is this whole leaving culture back to nature. That is what she's doing. She's not being competitive.
- Rowan Mangan: She's a holy fool.
- Martha Beck: She's countercultural. It's amazing. And I think just as every population has contrarians in it, don't we all have an inner contrarian?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I'm thinking about Danielle as this contrarian in society demonstrating, stopping us all from going mad, by just whenever there's a door that says push she's just there going "uuuggghh".
- Martha Beck: She's expressing it for all of us. There is that far side cartoon of a kid going to school for the gifted and he's leaning on the door and it clearly says pull. But see, Danielle knows, she's read the sign. It's not ignorance. It's not stupidity. It's defiance. I feel this way. I notice when I am going to do something defiant. There's a certain level of exhaustion and frustration I can get to if I'm dealing with the culture too much and I need to do something defiant. And so I will do things like I'll just take my clothes off and throw them on the floor and not put them in the laundry or hang them up.
- Rowan Mangan: You just take your clothes off at the train station?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: I did this in someone else's house, a stranger. That's real defiance for you.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: But I'm like, "No, I will throw my clothes on the floor. Watch me throw them on the floor." Since I usually hang them up, it gives me great joy and any aberration from my normal pattern I'm like, "I'm just going to do this."
- Rowan Mangan: Because in a way we make our own culture, don't we? By just the rules that we impose on our day. That's our own little culture. And so we can be the holy fool and the contrarian in our own lives just by breaking those rules sometimes, right?
- Martha Beck: That sounds like a life coach prescription.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: What do you do that's defiant?
- Rowan Mangan: What I do. And I actually think that everyone should really take this on as a strategy in their lives because it's really good. So you know when someone lets you into traffic and they give you that little signal that says, I'm going to let you in, I'm not going to bash into you. So then instead of just giving them the very manly and the -
- Martha Beck: Tip of a hat, wave of a hand.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Flat hand. Yeah, that's good. We understand each other. What I like to do is, I might've even said this on this podcast before, but anyway, I look into their eyes just for a second and mouth words that could not be mistaken for anything other than, "I love you" because I do in that moment, it's a true statement, but it really unsettles people. And I think in that moment, I'm stopping the society from breaking down.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And she's caused more than one traffic accident I can tell you.
- Rowan Mangan: More than one marriage.
- Martha Beck: Wait, you have more than one marriage. You should know that. Go listen to episode. You're marrying people just because they'll let you into traffic.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. I would do so much more than marry them.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: That's a really low bar for me I'll tell you.
- Rowan Mangan: No, I rarely experienced gratitude at the level of when someone lets me into traffic.
- Martha Beck: It's true.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I'm starting to get emotional just thinking about it.
- Martha Beck: So that's an interesting thing, that you can actually try being aberrantly good instead of aberrantly bad and just disconcerting the crap out of people.
- Rowan Mangan: I think I'd be disconcerted if I walked past Danielle trying to pull that door. I think that we should all just embrace it. Don't worry Danielle. You're not being competitive. You're just being a contrarian and serving a really important role in the community.
- Martha Beck: And probably keeping yourself mentally well.
- Rowan Mangan: 100%.
- Martha Beck: Good job Danielle.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Onward.
- Martha Beck: Okay. Our next Bewild file comes from Mary and here she is.
- Mary: Hi friends. A few weeks back, you were talking about how in our culture, we've set it up so that if you do something that feels good, that it must be bad and vice versa. And I was wondering if you had a theory as to why that is because I have a friend who's struggling with all kinds of feelings of unworthiness that stemmed from still thinking that you were born evil and full of sin. It doesn't seem any way useful or protective. So I was wondering what your thoughts were on the matter.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. Original sin, Marty, no pressure.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: No. I think it's like this. The culture wants to control us. And when people live according to their nature, when you come to your senses instead of coming to consensus, you feel good almost all the time. And my whole coaching thing is do what feels good. And people are like, "What? What? This is blowing my mind." I'm like, "No, no, no, no, slow down. Here's the deal." You're paying me a huge chunk of change to tell you if it feels bad, maybe stop doing it. If it feels really good, maybe do that. And they've never heard this. It's the most counterintuitive. And I think it's because to get us away from our true nature and control us means if you're happy, you're doing something wrong. It's the way of interrupting our true nature because we're meant to feel happy all the times.
- Rowan Mangan: Right. But I think what Mary's asking is why we have this brain blip that makes us feel guilty when we do something that feels good even if it's not cultural, outside of cultural prescription, what is that about where, oh, this is... Even that term guilty pleasure. What are your guilty pleasures? What? Why are they guilty?
- Martha Beck: I actually think that you can't dis-aggregate what is your own shame and fear that you're going to be attacked and what is an actual pressure from the culture so you just put a blanket of everything that feels good must be bad and I should be very careful about it. Because once you've been hurt badly a few times as a little kid for doing something that is absolutely just part of your nature, you generalize to, oh my God - When I fall on my own inclinations, I get in trouble. I better not ever, ever do it. And then you grow up and create a doctrine of original sin.
- Rowan Mangan: Because it's that fear of being shamed, which we talked about in the last podcast which we saw was a horrifying prospect to be shamed by the culture.
- Martha Beck: Oh yeah, an outcast. I think just as little kids we're just like, oh, I'm not supposed to pee on the floor. Okay, you're mad at me for that. When the reindeer do it, you love it. And that's a perfectly natural thing to do, but you can carry a pretty big scar from the way adults interact with you because you're so innocent. And then your innocence becomes a source of shame for you and you paint your entire innocence with the brush of shame and sin.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It's something like that, isn't it? But it's also - what makes Danielle want to pull on the door that says push, there is something in us that backwards sizes things sometimes. I wonder if there's part of that as well that's like, in the same way that it says, if it feels good, it must be bad. Why do we say if it's bad it must be good. Why are we creating virtue out of pain by the same token? Are we just trying to pull on the door that says push?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Yeah. I think there's a part of us that kicks back before it can be extinguished. Right at the end when they finally got you in the cultural trap of being this soulless machine. The soul, ironically enough, kicks back. And I remember when I was Mormon and there's a line in the Mormon scripture that says "The natural man is an enemy to God" and women are even worse. And so I grew up believing that because I was told to read this fricking book every day of my life literally and it made no sense to me, but I did it. And so you were literally told, anything that is natural to you, is original sin, as an enemy to God, is offending the people or whatever it is and your soul finally says no. And then you erupt, you leave your religion of origin and write a book about it, makes everybody really mad at you. And that happens to everybody not just me.
- Rowan Mangan: No, I love that though because I think, and don't @ me but I think that churches are a really clear example of how culture works because churches, in the broadest sense, are in a way institutionalized, culture put behind glass and turned into a .com or whatever. And so you can see exaggerated in the example of the church, what people are given anyway and original sin is the same, it's the same thing, but it's again institutionalized or codified version of what socialization is in family, right?
- Martha Beck: Can I tell them about this game that I've been playing called, "Are you mad?"
- Rowan Mangan: Yes. Please do.
- Martha Beck: Because I realized recently that I have all these triggers about what happened in my family growing up is what's still happening. And for example my mother primarily made cleaning motions and growing up in a tiny house with 10 people, she had nine children, eight of whom survived and she was tired. So when she cleaned up, she was getting a surge of energy and it was coming from rage. So now if anyone starts to do housework, I'm like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." And I run around trying to do things to please them, "Look, here's a bunch of flowers. You'll want to wear high heels. I'll clean it, I'll clean it."
- Rowan Mangan: It's very confusing.
- Martha Beck: It's my personal religion. I believe that everyone is an angry God, but I have to say yesterday, Ro asked me a question as I accidentally submerged my wonderful soft plush bathrobe, which is the only thing I wear most of the time in the kitchen sink while I was doing the dishes and she asked for something and I was like, "Oh yeah, it's over there." And she was like, "Are you mad?"
- Rowan Mangan: She seemed mad you guys. She seemed super mad.



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WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: I think we're all afraid that people are super mad at us.
- Rowan Mangan: Certainly everyone we know is scared. All the people we like are afraid the people [inaudible 00:37:32].
- Martha Beck: Right. And the rest of them are just shaking with rage right now.
- Rowan Mangan: I'm afraid of that.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. I am too. Please be nice to us. Okay. So I think that answers that question.
- Rowan Mangan: I think if we haven't made that abundantly clear then I don't know what we think.
- Martha Beck: We just did but eons of philosophy has failed to do. Detach people from their fear of original sin.
- Rowan Mangan: And no ads you guys.
- Martha Beck: There you go. So who do we got next ,Ro on the Bewild files?
- Rowan Mangan: Our next file comes from Tracy and here's what Tracy had to say.
- Tracy: I want to travel. I want to continue to drive my car sometimes. I want to have a life full of joy but I'm struggling with the whole climate change and my carbon footprint and how can I go have fun and do things in the world because I'm affecting other people with all of my actions. And I have a lot of children to worry about for the future and I don't want to just say screw it. I'm just going to do what I want - because it all matters and I know what I do affects everyone else in the world. So how do I keep doing the things I want to do joyfully?
- Rowan Mangan: I hear you so hard. This is such a big one for me Tracy and it's no joke either. It's not pretend, not that any of them are pretend. Sorry Danielle, keep pulling.
- Martha Beck: Natural sin is a fun pretend dilemma.
- Rowan Mangan: But oh geez. Yeah, what do you got Marty? How do we find joy when the world is burning?



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WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: Okay. Well the bad news first. What we hear from scientists is that if we all did everything we're supposed to, if we all recycle, if we don't drive our cars, except when absolutely necessary, if we do all these things, we are still going to encounter an unsustainable human life experience on planet earth in the next few decades, right?

Rowan Mangan: Tune in next week for more uplifting, inspirational words from Martha Beck.

Martha Beck: But here's the other thing, many times in the history of humanity, people have gotten to a place where they thought this is the limit of what we can do. And what happened then was a flowering of creativity that brought the level of sustenance and quality of life up massively instead of it just leveling off. I always tell the factoid that in 1898, the president or the leader of the patent office in the US said to the President that they should close the patent office because by 1898, everything that could be invented had been invented. And since then nothing has been invented. Have you saddled up the horses for later Ro?

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, we're good to go. Just let me find that reindeer urine first.

Martha Beck: So here's the deal. There are these limitation zones and I used to do this when I taught business. I would have 92 students in a room and I would walk from one side of the room to the other and I'd say your assignment is to walk from this chair to this chair but you can't do it the way anybody else has done it. And I would walk between them and I'd say, "I just took the first way." And so then there would be different ways of walking and people would walk in spirals or they would skip or they would do and then they would get stuck and there would be no other ways. And then somebody would have a genius idea like get a rolling chair and push someone else across.

And then it was all about technology. We'll use all the chairs, we'll do all these things. And I kept making them go around and around hundreds of times. And there were these extinction zones where they didn't have ideas. And then these massive ideas that broke through the problem. I believe that we are at a point where people are going to start jumping the tracks of our creative limitations, and we're going to get a flowering of new ideas that I hope to God can fix this complete mess we're in.

Rowan Mangan: I'm reading this really, really cool book at the moment called, "The Extended Mind". We'll put the details in the show notes, but one of the things that was so interesting in the book is that for some decades, I don't know how many, if you look at IQ tests that were being done, they use Scandinavians because-



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Scandinavians never go anywhere.
- Rowan Mangan: Scandinavians are just the best. Let's face it.
- Martha Beck: Oh my God. Our Scandinavian listeners are shaking with rage.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, you will be in a minute. So their IQ tests showed that IQs were gradually going up every year and have done for a while. Now, two or three years ago, they stopped, they leveled off. We hit a plateau and people are like, "Well, there is a limit. There is a limit to how brilliant we can be." I don't want to be the first to say it but, hey I'm not, it's in a book. So what this book is all about is how do we extend past the limits of the mind to where the next leap will be. And so what it says to me is that as far as your example of people grabbing the chair and going across the room, what's next that we can bring into this moment of we're stuck. We're stuck with our brains but we have got technologies that are flowering, we've got each other. There's just so many possibilities for how we can solve this problem.
- Martha Beck: That's an interesting point but I would say we are stuck in our brains. And I hear what you're saying that if you link together all the people - Did you know that plants have intelligence but instead of a brain, they have root tips. All their root tips put together constitute a brain that can learn.
- Rowan Mangan: Well I do know that because I live with you.
- Martha Beck: And for us, we've got one brain and we remember things and we have to reproduce them, but for a plant it has many, many sources of information coming from each of its root tips and each of the tips is one little facet of a brain. So the internet functions like the brain of a plant. And what I hear you saying is if we can go on and beyond the extensions or beyond the limits of our individual minds and create an extended network of ideas and information, we can be more intelligent. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Is that in the book?
- Rowan Mangan: Yes, very much so, but don't get caught up on the internet as the mechanism.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Oh yeah. We're all, as my friend Jill Bolte Taylor says, "We're all neurons in a neural network." I would add one thing. I think we have to go beyond the limits of our cultural minds because that's mainly in the left hemisphere of the brain. That's where language mostly lives. That's where the sense of control lives and Jill has much - We talk about this all the time. Now on the right side of the brain, which is less used in our culture, we have non-verbal intensely curious, instead of afraid - where the left side of the brain wants to control everything. The right side of the brain feels unified with everything. On the left side, we have fear and control and on the right side, we have curiosity and creativity.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So if you can unfetter your consciousness from the left side of your brain where consciousness has been pushing it and go into the right side, you can have some really wild ideas that have massive implications for how we live in the world.
- Rowan Mangan: And Tracy, to Marty's point I also want to say that there's good science as well that says, it's very hard if not impossible to access your creativity from a state of fear. So when we worry about our carbon footprint and our kids and all these sorts of things, we're actually making it impossible to be part of this neural network that's going to solve the problem. So it seems to me that joy is a space from which our creativity comes. And so you could totally invert your question and say, we owe it to the world to stay in our joy as much as possible, even with that knowledge and just encourage our own creativity, encourage our own right brain stuff that we can do and that that's where it's going to come from. Is that right Marty? Is that fair to say?
- Martha Beck: I agree with that. So it's not just about subtracting the things that are bad like driving your car. It's about challenging yourself to do something wildly good. Not just good as in I recycle and I do, do those things if you can and if it's not sapping all your joy. But in addition, say I challenged myself to solve these problems in a way that is beyond anything that we've seen so far. And then watch a bunch of Ted Talks. There are people doing this all over the place. Look, I made chairs out of mushrooms now.
- Rowan Mangan: Mushrooms.
- Martha Beck: But seriously, there's this great Ted Talk on how mushrooms can be used to make every form of furniture in your house.
- Rowan Mangan: But don't sit down and, oh, watch the Ted Talks and do my homework. Be in your joy, be in your joy.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: I enjoy watching Ted Talks.

Rowan Mangan: Okay but you just handed out homework and I'm saying, you don't know what Tracy's joy is. And she's saying she wants to be in her joy and I'm trying to give her permission to be in her joy.

Martha Beck: And that's the thing, if you do see these ingenious people that come up with great ideas, they were doing it from a space of joyful creativity. They weren't doing it with guns to their head. There's a lot of science that shows that when you put pressure on someone to be creative, even if you pay them, if the pressure is positive, look what wonderful things will happen. The ability to join different neurons from different parts of the brain and create those flashes of wild insight, it goes way, way down. So you have to be playful to do, it's called a far transfer for two parts of the brain to bring two very unlike things together and pop out a brand new idea. You have to be in a state of play for that to happen.

Rowan Mangan: And if everything that we're saying is bullshit, and here we are in 40 years watching the world literally burn before us. It's not we're going to say, "Well, at least we were really guilty and worried about it." We'll probably say, "Well, we had some joy."

Martha Beck: At least we were miserable. Yeah. No, it's absolutely true. If you want to create something in the world, live in the space of that thing. So live in a space of your greatest happiness and your greatest contribution to the world and see what comes out of it. Because the only chance we have, I believe, is either another mass extinction, which we're pretty much already in the middle of or human creativity.

Rowan Mangan: So what my mum always says is, live as if the revolution happened. Whenever the ideals that you had seems to have fallen on their knees and the world is run by maniacs, and we're not doing enough to solve the climate crisis, live as if the revolution had happened, live as if we saved the world. Why not?

Martha Beck: I love that. Pull the push doors.

Rowan Mangan: Pull the push doors for God's sake.

Martha Beck: So that's what we have time for this episode Rowan and all the others. Thank you so, so much for sending in your question, we love it. Don't forget to rate and review us, especially on Apple things and stay wild.



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WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan:

We hope you're enjoying Bewildered. If you're in the USA and want to be notified when a new episode comes out, text the word 'WILD' to 570-873-0144. For more of us, Martha's on Instagram, [themarhabeck](#). She's on Facebook, [The Martha Beck](#), and she's on Twitter, [marthabeck](#). Her website is, [MarthaBeck.com](#). And me, I too am on Instagram, [Rowan_Mangan](#). I'm on Facebook as [Rowan Mangan](#). And I'm on Twitter as [RowanMangan](#). Bewildered is produced by Scott Forster with support from the brilliant team at MBI.