



# BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK  
AND ROWAN MANGAN

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## Episode #26: Brainwashed into Happy

*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 feelings 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-er-ment. That's why we're here. [Music fades] Hi, I'm Martha Beck!

Rowan Mangan: And I'm Rowan Mangan. And this is another episode of Bewildered, the podcast for people trying to figure it out. I've been trying to figure it out just this morning, by rolling down the hill outside our house. I found Marty waiting for me at the bottom of the hill, because she'd figured it out coming down much more quickly somehow.

Martha Beck: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. And I found that if you roll fast enough, the centrifugal force presses your under-brain all into your neocortex, so that all the knowledge you've accumulated throughout hundreds of millions of years of evolution is suddenly in the neocortex, and it's all right there. Easy-peasy, everybody go try.

Rowan Mangan: Okay. I have nothing to say to that.

Martha Beck: Well, then what are you really trying to figure out?

Rowan Mangan: All right, this week, Marty, I am trying to figure out the mysteries of the maternal instinct. So, I had an episode recently that I never even told you and Karen about, with our daughter Lila. And-

Martha Beck: Do tell.

Rowan Mangan: ... I didn't tell you about it because I didn't want to scare you, but I think it was quite a powerful demonstration of what the maternal instinct can be.

Martha Beck: Now I am scared.

Rowan Mangan: You should be.



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- Martha Beck: You're going to stab us in our beds in case we're bad for the girl.
- Rowan Mangan: Just in case, because you can't be too careful. So, I was running the bath for Lila, as I do every night. Lila and I go upstairs and it's time for her bath, usually because she has rubbed fish or some vegetable matter or something very intensely into her scalp and hair.
- Martha Beck: It's the way she does every meal, when she's done with her food, even though there's still food on the plate, she picks up the plate and wears it as a hat, upside down.
- Rowan Mangan: There's also some vigorous rubbing, the rubbing's not only incidental.
- Martha Beck: Oh yeah. No, the rubbing is very forceful.
- Rowan Mangan: I feel like every night I just say, "I guess we're not going to skip the bath tonight then."
- Martha Beck: No.
- Rowan Mangan: So we're up there, I'm running the bath. She finds this very exciting, this whole thing. And so, I put the bath on, I put some bubble bath in there. And I took a moment to relieve my bladder. Lila was in with me, she likes to grab her bath toys and put them into the bath. And so I was just taking a moment, she's putting them in the bath, and then she still had all her clothes on and everything, and all of a sudden she was in the bath, she just went, she leaned over. And our child is tall for her age, all her dimensions are strong.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: So, she's suddenly in the bath, she's just gone right in. And I was horrified. And so I came running over, and the maternal instinct just kicked in, Marty. And it was, before I even knew it, she was out of the bath, she barely had time to react, she was just blinking. And the water was still cold, I should have said that. The water's still cold, so she's fully clothed, sitting in cold water, without warning I pull her out, I pull all her clothes off, I hug her, I hold her. And that's, I think at about the point where I realized that my maternal instinct was so strong. You know how they say it can override all kinds of physical limitations?
- Martha Beck: You could pick up a car apparently.



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- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. And so for me, what happened was I suddenly stopped and took a deep breath, and I was satisfied that our child was safe. And I realized that my maternal instinct had overcome the instinct that would usually tell you, "Stop peeing, because you're now standing up and running away from the toilet. This is no time..." And so, Marty, I mean, this was bad, I mean, it was intense. I had peed on my pants, I had peed on the floor, I had peed on Lila quite a lot. It had just been happening the whole time. And I just wondered, "Why must all the circuitry go to that?" It wouldn't have taken that many neurons to go, "Oh, we won't be needing to finish that pee now."
- Martha Beck: No wonder the dogs have been trying to move out of the house.
- Rowan Mangan: God, it was so bad.
- Martha Beck: Oh my God. You told me, when I went in there one day, that almost everything in there had been peed on, but I made assumptions that the pee-er in question was tall for her age, but shorter than you.
- Rowan Mangan: Usually it's her. In this instance, I confess, it was not her. Oh dear.
- Martha Beck: That is frightening, I am frightened.
- Rowan Mangan: Thank you. What are you trying to figure out?
- Martha Beck: Okay, I just remembered a story. Your mother, the beautiful and wonderful Paula Keogh was here visiting us. And one time I heard Paula and Ro talking about-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my word.
- Martha Beck: ... a friend who had come to see Paula. And they had a rather fractious relationship.
- Rowan Mangan: Mom's going to kill you for telling this story, but go on.
- Martha Beck: And they were talking about different things, and the name Christie came up, which I thought was the friend. And then Ro said, "Yeah, and then that awful thing happened." And Paula said, "Oh yeah." They just winced, both of them. And I said, "What happened?" And Paula said, "I woke up in bed, and she was peeing on my face." And I was like, "Australia is even stranger than I thought." And I said, "She was peeing on your face?" And she said, "Well, she was pregnant."
- Rowan Mangan: We've all done strange things.



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- Martha Beck: Right. I have this image, I mean, you have it in your mind as well, somebody waking up to find a pregnant woman peeing on you.
- Rowan Mangan: Crouching over your face.
- Martha Beck: Turns out Christie was the cat, they had switched subjects of story, as people who know each other are want to do, without telling me that it was different. And it did give me quite the brisk period of elevated heart rate just thinking about it. Anyway, that's not why I'm trying to figure out, I figured that out already.
- Rowan Mangan: What are you trying to figure out?
- Martha Beck: I'm trying to figure out what is going on with the lovely and talented country singer Faith Hill.
- Rowan Mangan: I couldn't tell you, I don't know anything about her.
- Martha Beck: I'm not really familiar with her music. She is talented and lovely, but I was raised thinking that was Satan's music. Everything that wasn't classical or hymns was Satan's music. Anyway, I recently heard a Faith Hill song, it's called My Wild Frontier, and it begins, "How do I feel? Well, I feel so alone, like a sad armadillo through the desert I roam."
- Rowan Mangan: So come back to this, line one was?
- Martha Beck: "How do I feel? Well, I feel so alone."
- Rowan Mangan: Look, to me, that's a pretty good start to a country song.
- Martha Beck: It is, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Like, "All right. Yeah, I feel so alone. I'm so lonesome, I'm out on the plains-
- Martha Beck: I was fine with that.
- Rowan Mangan: ... I'm a cowboy of some sort."
- Martha Beck: It's when the metaphor came in of this sad armadillo.
- Rowan Mangan: So, "How do I feel? I feel so alone." And then?
- Martha Beck: "Like a sad-
- Rowan Mangan: Sad armadillo.



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- Martha Beck: ... armadillo through the desert I roam."
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. So I'm not from America. Can you tell me a little bit, and I know I'm asking the right person here, can you tell me a little bit about armadillos?
- Martha Beck: Well, I can, as a matter of fact.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, no duh.
- Martha Beck: I know certain things anyway. I knew that for example, they're the only animal besides humans that can catch leprosy. Also, that they always give birth to identical quadruplets.
- Rowan Mangan: Really?
- Martha Beck: Yeah, which makes you wonder, what did Eve Armadillo do to piss off God Armadillo? Because in the Bible, Eve takes the fruit and then God says, "In pain shall thou bring forth children all the days of thy life," or something like that. And then I just wonder what Eve Armadillo must have eaten for God Armadillo was like, "Now you've done that, they're coming in groups of four and you can't tell them apart," it's going to be really-
- Rowan Mangan: Must have been crème caramel or something [crosstalk 00:09:08].
- Martha Beck: Of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Rowan Mangan: I'm like, "Crème caramel of the knowledge of good and evil." Ooh, there's a recipe idea.
- Martha Beck: Anyway, so I went, but what I was wondering was like, "How does a sad armadillo roam?"
- Rowan Mangan: And I don't mean to be, but how do you know it's sad?
- Martha Beck: She says it's a sad armadillo, through the desert she roams.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I guess she's sad.
- Martha Beck: She must know. So I went in and I Googled to find what armadillos do when they're sad. And by the way, it's quite a treasure trove in there, there was like, the first thing people had Googled is, "What good are armadillos?" I'm like, "For their own sake. What good are you? Anyway, and then the next one was, "Can armadillos climb steps?" And I'm like-



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- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God.
- Martha Beck: Someone's crouched in their bedroom, afraid. And then it said, "What makes armadillos scream?" And-
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: ... the answer was... Oh, they said, "Why do armadillos scream?" And the answer was to express their fear and pain.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And I looked it up and they go like... Like that, they make that sound.
- Rowan Mangan: Do they do it while they're roaming the desert, do they?
- Martha Beck: That's apparently true, yeah. So now here's the deal you guys, by her own admission, this amazingly talented and beautiful woman-
- Rowan Mangan: Stipulated.
- Martha Beck: ... has literally been roaming through the desert like... Because she's so sad, possibly because she's carrying either leprosy or identical quadruplets, or-
- Rowan Mangan: Both.
- Martha Beck: ... both, and nobody's done anything.
- Rowan Mangan: Jesus.
- Martha Beck: I mean, if that's not a cry for help-
- Rowan Mangan: No, that's... I mean, all country music is a cry for help, but this really takes it to the next level.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And-
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: ... maybe they tried to help and she just rolled into a ball, I don't know.
- Rowan Mangan: I had to Google armadillos just so that I could really get the picture in my head. They're a funny little guys, aren't they?



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- Martha Beck: So I just picture Faith Hill out there, and they look like they're wearing little high heels, so I picture her roaming through the desert in high heels, "Oh no, leprosy." I just think someone should have done something.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I completely agree. I'm so glad you're bringing this to our attention.
- Martha Beck: Thank you.
- Rowan Mangan: It's time. Good God.
- Martha Beck: It's time someone did something.
- Rowan Mangan: It is time.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, right.
- Rowan Mangan: I am so sorry, Marty, that you've been through this, I had no idea.
- Martha Beck: I know, it's been a rough ride. Yeah, no kidding.
- Rowan Mangan: So listen, I wanted to say that one of the things we've been noticing on Bewildered, as our wonderful peeps leave us reviews, and sometimes they chat with me on Instagram, and I hear a lot of, "Where's Karen?"
- Martha Beck: True that.
- Rowan Mangan: Our beloved Karen who we talked about in the episode of... Do you remember...?
- Martha Beck: The one about us? [crosstalk 00:12:05].
- Rowan Mangan: I actually don't remember which one, but you should listen to them all. So Karen is our beloved, and she prefers not to podcast, it's not really her bag, but nevertheless, we thought we'll bring the spirit of Karen in to Bewildered as a semi-regular item.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, because Karen is an absolute genius at the conversational pivot-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yes.
- Martha Beck: ... and many other quirks that you will not find in any other human being. And-



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- Rowan Mangan: This is the sign language for Karen.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Do American sign language for pivot, you make a little duck with your hand and then turn it.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, so she's famous for this. Somebody will come to her and say like, "Oh my gosh, I'm grieving the loss of all my loved ones." And she will say, this literally happened, "How do chickens sleep?" So, this is Karen, you have to experience her. And since we can't get her to come and podcast with us, we just thought we'd have a Karen-ism of the episode every time.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: She's always said something delightful.
- Rowan Mangan: So we have Wine Time every afternoon, we don't necessarily-
- Martha Beck: We don't always drink.
- Rowan Mangan: We don't always drink, but it is the time where wine might be had, and-
- Martha Beck: My son with Down's syndrome named it Wine Time. So-
- Rowan Mangan: That's right.
- Martha Beck: ... that is what it is.
- Rowan Mangan: So we commune, and Karen usually turns up for Wine Time with an agenda. Is that fair?
- Martha Beck: Oh, I think that's fair to say, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: She's been basting it all day.
- Rowan Mangan: So Karen will read something or watch something or learn something in some way.
- Martha Beck: Oh, constantly, she's always feeding the brain.
- Rowan Mangan: Often they're the details of obscure murders.



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- Martha Beck: Very, very often, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: But in this case, we got this non sequitur at Wine Time last week. Karen pops up and says, "You know-
- Martha Beck: Without preamble.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh no, God no, no preamble. In fact, we were probably talking about something completely different.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And she says, can I say it?
- Martha Beck: Please do.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. This is what she said... She didn't say that. Even when I was preparing this, I couldn't say it without laughing. She goes, "I read this article about the Dutch. And I didn't know this, but apparently they are quite frank." And then she was done.
- Martha Beck: That's it?
- Rowan Mangan: That's it.
- Martha Beck: That's the whole thing? She's been waiting all day to present her "thought du jour". And it's, yeah, "The Dutch are quite frank."
- Rowan Mangan: You heard it here first.
- Martha Beck: I did not know that.
- Rowan Mangan: No.
- Martha Beck: Actually I did. I've had Dutch clients, they are frank beyond belief.
- Rowan Mangan: Are they quite frank?
- Martha Beck: Quite. I think that's quite accurate. She did us all at service.
- Rowan Mangan: So there you go, there's little glimpse into Karen Gerdes, our beloved.
- Martha Beck: Karenism of the week.
- Rowan Mangan: Karenism of the week.



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- Martha Beck: Okay. So what is our topic though, our actual topic that we're going to bewilder the folks about?
- Rowan Mangan: So the cool thing that happened this week is that we were batting around ideas, Marty, and we came up with a completely original topic that no one had ever thought about before.
- Martha Beck: So we did.
- Rowan Mangan: It's so cool, it's called "happy washing".
- Martha Beck: And you do it by putting someone in a bathtub and then peeing all over the room.
- Rowan Mangan: How dare you.
- Martha Beck: Sorry.
- Rowan Mangan: That's called a golden shower, and you know that perfectly well.
- We'll be right back with more Bewildered. I have a favor to ask. You might not know this, but ratings and reviews are like gold in the podcasting universe. They get podcasts in front of more faces, more eyes, more ears, all the bits that you could have a podcast in front of, that's what they do. So it would help us enormously if you would consider going over to your favorite podcasting app, especially if it's Apple, and giving us a few stars, maybe even five, maybe even six, if you can find a way to hack the system, I wouldn't complain. And a review would also be wonderful, we read them all and love them. So thank you very much in advance. Let's just go out there and bewilder the world.
- So happy washing is like brainwashing, and it's when people try to force you into a state of happiness or performative happiness. So you're-
- Martha Beck: It's like when you're Zooming, the way we are Zooming now, you're going on Zoom to do a meeting or something, and you have to clean the portion of your house that is going to be on the camera.
- Rowan Mangan: The background.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, you have to clean the background. And you don't show people what's a mess basically.



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Rowan Mangan: Right. So there can be mess all around the back, this is a Marty's metaphor, which I think is brilliant, it's like the, "I don't want you to see how I live."

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: And the thing that's worse is not just that people do it because they don't want their mess to show, but that there's a cultural assumption that you should do it, don't air your dirty laundry in public, right?

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: Everybody assumes you've got it, that's fine, but not in public.

Rowan Mangan: But it's more than, "You have to be super happy."

Martha Beck: Yeah, especially in America.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: For reasons we will discuss later, sociological reasons.

Rowan Mangan: So anyway, we were talking about this completely original idea that we'd had for a while. And then I started thinking, "This sounds familiar."

Martha Beck: Yeah. Ro said, "Wait a second, we're talking about something that literally everyone discusses online, it's called toxic positivity." And we weren't original anymore, but the phrase happy washing-

Rowan Mangan: It's much better.

Martha Beck: ... it's simpler.

Rowan Mangan: I mean, I don't want to, but it is better.

Martha Beck: It's easier to say than toxic positivity, like, "What's he doing?" "He's engaging in toxic positivity." He's happy washing.

Rowan Mangan: He's happy washing.

Martha Beck: There you go. See, it just rolls off the tongue.



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- Rowan Mangan: It's great. The psychology group defines toxic positivity as the excessive and ineffective overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations. The process of toxic positivity results in the denial, minimization and invalidation of the authentic human emotional experience. So yeah, what we've been talking about, but with a less silly name.
- Martha Beck: Yes.
- Rowan Mangan: Or more silly name, depending.
- Martha Beck: So along with the silly name we thought, "Well, let's dig in. Let's see where we can go with our usual Bewildered, beWILDered structure." Because as y'all know, in this podcast we help people from bewilderment, "Oh, why am I happy washing?" To beWILDerment, to our wild, true nature to see what's under there if we take the culture away.
- Rowan Mangan: That's right. And, Marty, what would you say the culture says about happy washing?
- Martha Beck: Oh my gosh. I mean, this is why everybody talks about it online, it's constant. And you've probably heard of, I had one friend whose mother always said, "I never want to hear another yip out of you. I don't want to hear a yip out of you." Or, I had in a different relationship that I had earlier in my life-
- Rowan Mangan: No.
- Martha Beck: Yes, I used to hear often the phrase buck up.
- Rowan Mangan: Buck up is a good one.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, sometimes while I was actively in surgery.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. Well, I mean, and the worst one to me, the most toxic one to me is, "It could be worse."
- Martha Beck: I just-
- Rowan Mangan: Of course it could be worse.
- Martha Beck: It could be, yeah, let's find the ways in which it could be worse, you could get leprosy and have identical quadruplets. Yeah, there's cheer up, there's-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah, don't complain.



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Martha Beck: ... turn that frown upside down. Go to the sunny side of the street.

Rowan Mangan: I hate it. It is toxic. I mean, I can feel these lovely, bright, sunny words coming out of your mouth, and my whole body just going, "Oh my God, it's poisonous."

Martha Beck: I mean, it's so obviously poisonous, and yet it's something we take and pass on in our families. And everybody has a family culture that, most family cultures have some version of this, if only for the reason that children are very difficult and adults don't want to hear them cry anymore.

Rowan Mangan: Right.

Martha Beck: So some families just totally ignore any sign that anyone isn't happy.

Rowan Mangan: Right.

Martha Beck: Some people get punished for showing, "Don't you cry, or I'll give you a reason to cry." That was in my family, "Stop crying, or I'll give you a reason to cry."

Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's [crosstalk 00:20:51].

Martha Beck: I'm like, "What, world hunger isn't enough?" I'm crying about-

Rowan Mangan: "I've just read Einstein again, Mother. And I'm concerned about his ninth paragraph on special relativity."

Martha Beck: "You're sad about nuclear war? I'm going to punch you in the face for that." Anyway, go on. Sorry, I'm getting, "This sounds like my therapy." Go on.

Rowan Mangan: So that's that family culture of, "Everything's fine. Everything's fine." And I think it can be, I mean, I think it's damaging, not just to state the obvious, but if you are a little impressionable person, I mean the only thing that could be worse is one of your primary caregivers peeing on you after you've just gone through a very traumatic situation.

Martha Beck: "Stop crying about getting peed on, or I'll give you something to cry about."

Rowan Mangan: Or, "Stop crying about falling in the bath and nearly drowning. I'll give you something to cry about, here it is." I'm never going to get tired of that story, dear.



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- Martha Beck: Anyway-
- Rowan Mangan: And I think that what happens, especially when that's baked into a culture, like a family culture-
- Martha Beck: Deeply.
- Rowan Mangan: ... is that, because it's a lie it has to create a distance, because you're not telling the truth and there's no intimacy then, right?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: So it's one of the worst cultural consequences of creating a culture, because there's so much separation between people in that.
- Martha Beck: In the interests of creating group harmony, you basically destroy intimacy.
- Rowan Mangan: Right. Oh, that's so interesting, isn't it?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Like, "Sit down and shut up. We all hate each other, we don't know each other, but by God-
- Martha Beck: Yeah, but we're all smiling at each other.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: All the stuff of so many TV dramas is right there, isn't it?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God, right. So what was your TV drama, what was your culture growing up in your family?
- Martha Beck: I was raised in Utah Valley, which is the heart of Utah State, which is also known as Happy Valley.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God.
- Martha Beck: Because it is-



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- Rowan Mangan: Literally you mean they call it that?
- Martha Beck: Yeah, it's literally called Happy Valley.
- Rowan Mangan: With no irony?
- Martha Beck: No irony.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, wow.
- Martha Beck: No, irony is not a thing in Happy Valley. And-
- Rowan Mangan: That's a great line.
- Martha Beck: ... it's because by population it's the Mormonist place in the world. And happy washing is major in Mormon cultures, as far as I remember it back in the day, long ago, that everyone has to be dressed in shiny bows. The big thing is, everybody has to be like The Sound of Music, what was that family? The von Trapps.
- Rowan Mangan: The von Trapps.
- Martha Beck: They all have to sing together, they all have to wear the same things made out of the mother by the same curtains for no money, and everybody's happy all the time because we have the true church and we're going to heaven. Anyway, so yeah, it's very strong happy-washing culture, which I totally bought because it was everybody around me and I was like, "All right."
- Rowan Mangan: Alright. So you believed that the happiness was true, or you didn't think to wonder if it was true.
- Martha Beck: I knew the happiness wasn't true.
- Rowan Mangan: All right.
- Martha Beck: I wanted to kill myself.
- Rowan Mangan: No, sure. But other people's, did you know that other people's happiness was pretend?
- Martha Beck: I assumed they were faking it too, but they were faking it better than I was.
- Rowan Mangan: That's probably the case.



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- Martha Beck: It's funny, it never occurred to me that they were really happy, I couldn't imagine that. But then at 17 I went to college, I don't know if I've mentioned this-
- Rowan Mangan: I don't think you have. I mean, it was a long way away, I guess.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, it was in a culture where you get a lot of pressure to happy wash in a different way.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's interesting. So what do you mean?
- Martha Beck: So, I went to Harvard, and I remember reading this story about, one of the presidents of Harvard was a professor. And a student brought in a paper late, and he said, "I'm sorry I didn't get this to you yesterday, I was feeling really awful." And supposedly the professor said, "I think, young man, you will find that most of the people who've accomplished anything significant were feeling pretty awful." So it's like you don't show weakness. And then I had kids, and I was trying to be a Mormon mom and a Harvard mom, and there were no other Harvard moms among the student body, I didn't know anybody else who had kids. And I would just hang in there as long as I could, happy washing like a freaking maniac, and then completely implode for days on end. Yeah, basically it was not a fun life, but I pretended it was.
- Rowan Mangan: So is there really, at Harvard there's a culture of pretending to be happy?
- Martha Beck: Not happy, but completely unruffled.
- Rowan Mangan: Unruffled? Okay, yeah.
- Martha Beck: So in its own way, "Do I have any problems? No. Was that hard for me? God no. Are you kidding? It was so easy, no." Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Gotcha.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, you don't show weakness.
- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: And there are different textures and shades of happy washing for every different cultural group, I would think.



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- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I'm sure. It's funny for me, I feel like I didn't really have that. Most of my childhood, I think I've said this before, but the cultural group was me and my mom. So it was just like that, it's harder to build a really strong culture when there's only two people. Well, I don't know. Is that true?
- Martha Beck: I don't think so. I think that if somebody's very domineering and narcissistic, they can create a very strong culture, but that is the opposite of your mother.
- Rowan Mangan: That was not our situation.
- Martha Beck: Your mother is forgiving for people who pee on her face in her sleep.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah, I mean, that was so mean.
- Martha Beck: She was pregnant.
- Rowan Mangan: She was pregnant. We've all been there. Oh, because I told the pee story, that's why you told the pee story. I was like, "This is all about urine. We should just call this the urine episode."
- Martha Beck: So, I think your mother is a very genuine person, and watching her with Lila, I can imagine her with you as a baby, she's very welcoming of whatever the kid is feeling.
- Rowan Mangan: She was also a hippie and very much in that '80s kind of, she studied naturopathy, and she wanted me to call her Paula instead of Mom, that didn't go well long term. So there's this like authenticity, a value of authenticity.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And so I didn't really have that as a kid, but I do have a friend who has that toxic positivity, it's always, "It could be worse." And there's something so undermining about it. I mean, I think for her it's probably a protective mechanism of some sort, but God, it's annoying. Oh, it's so annoying. It's so annoying, "And it's so annoying, I just feel really annoyed."
- Martha Beck: "You get to feel annoyed, [crosstalk 00:27:43]."
- Rowan Mangan: "Oh, be happy."



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- Martha Beck: So what happened to you when you go about the world and you're not a happy washer? Because you really are unusual that way, I think that's why we get on.
- Rowan Mangan: In the world. So, two things. So I think that in Australia, you're talking about the Harvard version of happy washing. I think in Australia, maybe the version, I'd love to hear from Aussies if they think this is true, is easy-going washing.
- Martha Beck: So you're laid back and groovy.
- Rowan Mangan: Laid-back washing, yeah, just don't get so worked up about things. So I could do that, and to me that's more passive and neutral. So if I was going to work or whatever, and I wasn't happy, I wouldn't perform happy, but I would perform neutral and unfazed. And as a highly anxious human being, that was a performance. Well, I don't mind, I haven't really thought about it.
- Martha Beck: Cool and groovy.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, cool and groovy. But the whole thing is that 1950s Little Boxes on the Hillside.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, that song, I was going to say that everybody, they're all made out of ticky-tacky and they all look just the same.
- Rowan Mangan: And that's an American thing. I think the happy washing, the toxic positivity, even though I have a friend who does it back home, I think it is quite an... Well, I don't know.
- Martha Beck: I think it hit a peak in the 1950s after World War II, because one of the things that I learned was that they discovered PTSD and memory repression and trauma, a lot about trauma psychology because of the soldiers coming back from World War II. And they'd have things like, they wouldn't be physically injured, but they'd be paralyzed, and then they'd remember the battle and be able to move again. And so they made a lot of progress, and they actually filmed some of it. I've seen the films, it's black and white, and it's really amazing stuff. Well, that was all suppressed by the government, because it was a good war and we won, and nobody had a bad time over there.
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: And then it's all, "Let's have war games, and it's all fun." Then people went to Vietnam and they were like, "Well, this is not fun."
- Rowan Mangan: Right.



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- Martha Beck: And I think there was a backlash in the '60s because people were like, "Wait, wait, wait." And you see all the movies, the whole hippie movement of the '60s that was part of what created your mother, was actually a backlash against the intense happy washing, I think that emerged from that war.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I think that's true. That's so interesting, that Vietnam was really a reckoning about happy washing.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. [crosstalk 00:30:26].
- Rowan Mangan: And I mean, the Vietnam War was not just a referendum on toxic positivity.
- Martha Beck: It's not bombing everyone in the world, it's that you have to be chewable. It could have been worse.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I tell a thing that I saw once in a truck stop? A biker gang came rolling in. And you know how they have the patches on their leather jackets?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And the guy standing in front of me in line had a big patch, they were clearly Vietnam vets, with the long beards and everything. And he just said, "Shit, we were winning when I left." I love him so much, I think about-
- Martha Beck: Do you know-
- Rowan Mangan: ... that all the time.
- Martha Beck: ... that this huge percentage of returning Vietnam veterans to the US bought motorcycles. And one psychologist that I really respect, thinks it's because the motorcycle allows you to shake, and physical shaking is what heals trauma in animals that have been through near-death situations.
- Rowan Mangan: So cool.
- Martha Beck: So yeah, they're trying to shake it out of themselves. And then they're like, "Yeah, But I'm still tough."
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: It's a different version of a happy washing, the biker-gang happy washing.



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Rowan Mangan: Also, I mean, this is off topic, but also like there's a reckoning with masculinity-

Martha Beck: Oh, for sure.

Rowan Mangan: ... and the need to be, after war, to be among the people that you were in the war with, and that can relate to you, the gang is an expression of that.

Martha Beck: Because you don't have to tell them what happened, and you're not allowed to tell anybody else.

Rowan Mangan: Exactly, yeah.

Martha Beck: Because it's completely, we know instinctively that it is soul murder to say, "I feel fine," when you're in emotional anguish, or physical anguish for that matter.

Rowan Mangan: What a cruel thing to do to yourself to tell that lie.

Martha Beck: Yeah, it's horrific. And basically my entire career got started when I started telling people I thought that wasn't a great idea.

Rowan Mangan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Martha Beck: And still, I mean, last week I coached this dude who was brilliant and is wildly successful and everything. And he was like, "Okay. Well, I have all these projects in the works, which one should I do?" And I was like, "Do what feels good, and do the part of it that feels good. And if it feels bad, then don't." He was like, "Oh." And he literally said out loud, "That's such a different way of thinking." And I'm like, "Armadillos know this, they're out there. Do they keep it in? No. When they're sad they express it. And when something feels bad, they don't do it." Every animal but humans is true to its nature when it comes to suffering and the lack of suffering.

Rowan Mangan: That Faith Hill song is telling the story of happy washing. She's-

Martha Beck: Well, it's telling the story of a backlash against happy washing-

Rowan Mangan: That's true.

Martha Beck: ... because she is so lonely that, like in a sad armadillo through the desert she roams, is actually her expressing both through the roaming and through the screaming. That's why no one's done anything for her, because everybody pretends that it's not real. They don't know that this is literally true.



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- Rowan Mangan: But she probably feels better by having expressed the armadillo, like the screaming and the roaming, maybe she doesn't feel, although it's in the present tense, isn't it? Oh, we've got to dig deeper.
- Martha Beck: I don't know. Also, the question does arise, can she climb steps?
- Rowan Mangan: I've always wondered that.
- Martha Beck: Because things could go wrong.
- Rowan Mangan: I feel like we're getting off topic.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. So you were just saying, the problem is actually not just that the culture does this, but that we start to believe it.
- Rowan Mangan: Right. So it seems to me that if you are forcibly happy washing those around you, probably through no fault of your own, probably because the family culture you grew up in... Oh, by the way, I want to say something else about family cultures.
- Martha Beck: Yes.
- Rowan Mangan: Glennon Doyle on her podcast said the most brilliant thing about how with children and raising children, when the kid comes in the room and you've been fighting, and they go, "What's wrong?" And you say nothing-
- Martha Beck: Nothing.
- Rowan Mangan: ... that is gaslighting your kids, and it's fucking them up.
- Martha Beck: Yes. Explicit tag on this episode.
- Rowan Mangan: But it is, and that's the right word. So there you go. Anyway, yes. So when you, through no fault of your own probably, start happy washing those around you, you are ultimately going to start doing that to yourself.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: So not disallowing your own negative feelings. Forget about talking about it, feeling it might become-



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- Martha Beck: Oh, let me tell you, almost everyone I've ever coached, and I've coached hundreds and hundreds of people one on one, they all do it. I mean, everybody's happy washing to the point where it becomes brainwash. And the culture can sit back and twiddle its thumbs because we're doing it to ourselves, and at that point, cool.
- Rowan Mangan: Isn't it amazing what we'll do?
- Martha Beck: Oh my gosh, that socialized part of us. And it really does, it pulls us way far away.
- Rowan Mangan: And what that does is that it creates a schism that's between the truth and the story, the same thing, but that schism is now inside us.
- Martha Beck: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I once wrote it in a book that the prisons are full of men who need to grieve and are only allowed to rage, and the psychiatrist office that are full of women who need to rage and are only allowed to grieve.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God, that's really good.
- Martha Beck: Oh, thank you very much, I was super proud of it. So there's a gender component to it, for sure. And in my life with all the strange kinds of happy washing coming from different directions, it took me into profound depression. So when I was 18, I ended up in a therapist's office, and he said something I'd never heard anyone say before, "What are you feeling?" People would say, "How you doing? How you feeling? How's it feel?" But they never said, "What are you feeling?" And just, it pulled me up short, and I immediately started to, like tears just spouted out of my head. I wasn't making any noise, but I was like, "I'm fine." And he said, "Then why are you crying?" And basically changed the entire course of my life in five minutes.
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And so, I stopped happy washing quite so much.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, because I mean, that shit is worse than self-destructive, right?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.



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- Rowan Mangan: I mean, like I was saying, there's a real cruelty there that's created through that denial, and I'm sure that it's cyclical. So in the same way, where if you were brought up doing that, you'll end up doing it to yourself, I'm sure that it can go the other way, where if you're experiencing that break in yourself, between, "What are you feeling?" and, "Great," then you're going to be cruel to others, ultimately-
- Martha Beck: Well, I mean, because-
- Rowan Mangan: ... by doing the same thing.
- Martha Beck: ... you sense the line. It's like you have some belief that tells you you're supposed to not eat for a month at a time, and someone comes in and says, "I haven't eaten since breakfast, I'm hungry." And you just look at them and go, "I'll show you hungry." Because you're repressing something natural to you, when somebody else is expressing, and it's the part of you that's been repressed. It has a cruel dictator, it's a very cruel dictator. And if it's holding sway inside your own head, it will lash out at other people, there's no way around it.
- Rowan Mangan: That's really interesting, because when we talked about shame, one of the things that came up was that if someone's shaming you, attempting to shame you, it's because they're shaming themselves a lot, it has to be that way. And this is a similar thing, isn't it?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: That if someone's happy washing you, you know it's because they're not allowing their own negative feelings-
- Martha Beck: Definitely.
- Rowan Mangan: ... to come through.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Absolutely, yeah. And we come by it honestly in this country. Can I talk about sociology? I just-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I wish you would. I mean, first of all, where did you learn about sociology, Martha?
- Martha Beck: I think I just picked it up in the mean streets of Harvard.



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Rowan Mangan: The mean streets of Massachusetts.

Martha Beck: Of Cambridge, Massachusetts, yes. But actually, the biggest early scholar of... The biggest, I learned to talk good there too. One of the most powerful creators in the whole field of sociology was a German dude named Max Weber. And he went around analyzing cultures. And when he analyzed American culture in particular, he wrote a book called "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". And he believed that the whole culture was founded on this, the Calvinists, who came over from Europe, who believed that you were chosen for either damnation or salvation before you were born. And the whole life you're living is just, "I don't know what it's even for," but God will always favor the chosen. So, everybody tried to make their lives look really, really good to prove that they were chosen. But if you looked as good as the neighbor, that still didn't say you were chosen, because you had to be different from everybody else, you had to be better off than anyone.

Rowan Mangan: What does it matter whether you're chosen, or is it-

Martha Beck: I don't know. I mean, his whole point was that they were hoping they were the chosen, and they were trying to prove to themselves-

Rowan Mangan: Oh, to themselves. Okay, that makes sense.

Martha Beck: ... that they were the chosen. And as a result, you get this unbelievable competitiveness, where everyone is trying to look happier, richer, healthier, everything-

Rowan Mangan: Oh my God.

Martha Beck: ... than the rest of the people. And that's what he said was the whole foundation of American culture, and the capitalist system as it emerged in America.

Rowan Mangan: Okay, that's fascinating.

Martha Beck: Sociology, right?

Rowan Mangan: Oh, sociology.

Martha Beck: Yeah.



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- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, this is such a sublime to the ridiculous, but I was thinking about, in a very pop cultural sense there's that exists online with like wellness, and wellness influencers and mindfulness influencers and all that. And there was actually a thing that happened in the news very recently where, okay, I'm trying to think of how to keep this anonymous, but there's a company that specializes in-
- Martha Beck: Stuff.
- Rowan Mangan: Stuff, wellness stuff, often female-focused wellness stuff, and the person who runs it is a bit of a Hollywood person. And, oh God, vagina steamers. I mean, vagina steamers, it's a whole thing. I knew I was going to say vagina steamer, honest.
- Martha Beck: It goes along with urinating everywhere.
- Rowan Mangan: I know. I should be getting money from those people actually. Anyway.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. No.
- Rowan Mangan: Someone who used to work for that company came out and said that there was a very toxic wellness culture that she-
- Martha Beck: That's an oxymoron.
- Rowan Mangan: ... experience. Right, it's interesting, like all the cleansers, and it forced her to have a very weird relationship with her body as a result when she was working there.
- Martha Beck: Toxic wellness, I'm so healthy it's sick.
- Rowan Mangan: There was something interesting that was said on that which is, one of the examples was the chemicals in sunblock, that, "No, we won't have that." But coming from Australia and knowing what the sun can do to your skin and does to so many people's skin down there, so there's the toxic wellness is-
- Martha Beck: Oh, that's so interesting.
- Rowan Mangan: ... you end up with skin cancer because you won't use sun block. Sorry to bring it down to my level.



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- Martha Beck: No, every different culture has its own version. I mean, when I was in Japan, they explicitly say there's a convention called honne and tatemae. And honne is your true feeling, it means true sound. And tatemae is, it means what's built in front of it, it means a false facade. And it's very, very explicit. And I was told that, like I saw some people from a company drinking together, and one of them punched the other guy in the face. And I was so used to watching the Japanese be incredibly polite. And I said to a Japanese friend, "He just punched him in the face." He's like, "Yeah, they're both drunk, it's honne." And I was like, "What?" And he was like, "Tomorrow at work, they have to be tatemae." They will explode if they don't have honne at some point, they can't continue to work together. So what they all do is go out drinking together. And during that period, you show your true feelings so that you don't die from all the tatemae when you're not drinking.
- Rowan Mangan: That is so interesting.
- Martha Beck: I don't know if it's the same now, this was 20 years ago.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Well, I couldn't tell you, but it is so interesting because it makes me wonder about the role, like alcohol in so many cultures has either been, like in ours or whatever, ours in the very loosest sense, going back has been for a really long time. But in others where it's new, I remember reading something when I was at college about in Australian indigenous peoples that, it's so weird, once White culture came in and was enforced, and especially that British stiff upper lip thing, which was alien to them, what came in with it was alcohol, which allowed being authentic. It allowed you to be authentic. And it was the loophole in the culture where-
- Martha Beck: Wow.
- Rowan Mangan: ... you could act the way you really are. And someone was theorizing that that's part of the reason why alcohol has become such a big issue among first nations' peoples, because it's the only way to deal with trying to assimilate into this insane culture.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. That's, I mean, it certainly is part of Western European cultures, British culture, that everybody goes to the pub, everybody, yeah, you get a little-



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- Rowan Mangan: In Australia too, hugely. I was just talking to my friend at home about this, about the alcohol culture in Australia. And she said that when she came over and stayed with us for a while in California, and she said it really changed her feelings about it, just because in America it just has a different, it's less-
- Martha Beck: So what is it like in Australia?
- Rowan Mangan: I think there's social pressure to do it, and do it a lot, to drink and drink a lot.
- Martha Beck: So when you're drunk, do you get away with being more sloppy with your feelings or not being cool all the time?
- Rowan Mangan: That's a good question. I'm not sure. I think there's definitely a, yeah, it exaggerates - that loosen up, everyone is loose and laughing and having a good time and not taking things seriously. So I think that's what the alcohol enhances, and is meant to enhance, in that culture.
- Martha Beck: It's so fascinating, coming from Utah, where little did I know that Happy Valley had one of the highest alcoholism rates in the country.
- Rowan Mangan: Ditto.
- Martha Beck: And it did while I was living there, have the highest rate of antidepressants, also chocolate donuts per capita, more chocolate-donut eaters.
- Rowan Mangan: The antidepressants and the chocolate donuts make sense to me, but given that alcohol is expressly forbidden in... It really speaks to that, I'm trying to find the Japanese words, the honne and the tatemae, because you're not even in some sort of relationship with your religion, right?
- Martha Beck: Right.
- Rowan Mangan: You're in relationship with people to be seen to be in your religion. You know what I mean?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: You're happily drinking away behind closed doors, but the-



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- Martha Beck: When I was studying this in the '90s, that population had the lowest number of people per capita who drank at all, and one of the highest numbers of alcoholics per capita. So if you were drinking, you were drinking hard.
- Rowan Mangan: That's sad.
- Martha Beck: And then heroin became huge there too. So-
- Rowan Mangan: It was a sensation that swept the nation.
- Martha Beck: It's a Happy Valley special.
- Rowan Mangan: It's like Beatlemania all over again, "Have you heard heroin? It's huge."
- Martha Beck: It's so interesting. Anyway, we should do a whole 'nother thing on... It's so bizarre to me that people will say, "Oh yeah, he punched his wife, but he was drunk." And I'm like, in a place where no one uses that excuse-
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, right. That's interesting.
- Martha Beck: ... it's like, "That means he should be locked up even more, because he has access to alcohol and he punches people." And people are like, "Oh, it's fine, he was drunk." That's so weird.
- Rowan Mangan: That is so weird. And yet, when you first said it, I was like, "Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah."
- Martha Beck: It's like, "Oh, of course she ran over the lawnmower." And I'm like, "She was huffing paint. I mean, what are you going to do?" It was very bizarre to me.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's so interesting.
- Martha Beck: Anyway, in our own ways, we all learned that it is better to look good than to feel good, as Billy Crystal used to say on Saturday Night Live.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So we all have that.
- Rowan Mangan: All the cultures, it seems like, have that. So how do we come to our senses?



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- Martha Beck: Well, I'll tell you in a minute.
- Rowan Mangan: So I have to say, the eternal shortcut for coming to your senses, no matter what the topic of the day is, it's always what Marty says in *The Way of Integrity*, her latest book, instant New York Times Best Seller, Oprah's Book Club selection, no big deal. But she says integrity is, I mean, tell me if I've got it right, but it's like, feel what you really feel, know what you really know, say what you really mean, and do what you really want. Is that it?
- Martha Beck: That's it.
- Rowan Mangan: All right. So then, what's the cleanse, what's the juice cleanse for toxic positivity?
- Martha Beck: Well, it's exactly what you just said, but we've all been socialized not to do that. So this immediate objection comes up. You say to people, I say, "Feel what you really feel, know what you really know, say really mean, and do what you really want." And they say, "Well, if that happened, if I let down the cultural norm, there would be insanity, things would run amok." And in this case, it is that people would not behave well, everybody would be winging and complaining.
- Rowan Mangan: Peeing on each other with abandon.
- Martha Beck: Peeing on each, yeah. And it would be a total breakdown in the norm of how we respond to each other. And maybe, if we stopped pretending everything was fine, we just stomp off and do what we wanted for ourselves and not be there for other people, it would shatter the social contract, right?
- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: But actually, when you stop happy washing, let go of the culture, come all the way back to your true nature, and you find that your nature is inherently kind and generous toward other people.
- Rowan Mangan: That so makes so much sense, because today online, I just saw a little photo of a little boy. And there was a statue of a rabbit that was falling off something, it was trying to get back up, and the boy was trying to help that rabbit statue.
- Martha Beck: Oh.
- Rowan Mangan: And the whole thing, and you actually see this everywhere, is that children who haven't been as enculturated-



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. They did this great study, I think with six-month-olds, they were very, very young, not talking at all. And they did it with two puppets. They held up two puppets and let the baby choose which puppet, and the babies would randomly choose about the same, 50/50. Then they did these little dramas where one puppet was trying to climb up something, and the other puppet came and either helped it or knocked it down. And then they gave the babies the choice again, and they overwhelmingly preferred the helpful puppet.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So there's an innate, and this is what you've been saying too, that toddlers innately want to help. And I didn't know this with my older kids.
- Rowan Mangan: Sometimes they want to flail and scream.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Well, sometimes they're being peed on, but-
- Rowan Mangan: The cause of all tantrums is-
- Martha Beck: Like Lila's always trying to get in the garbage, the bin as you call it. And we'd have to pull her away screaming and yelling, until we figured out what was trying to help. And if you give her some trash and say, "Could you throw it away?" She's so happy.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Also, if she finds your glasses and wants to be helpful, she will also put those in the garbage.
- Martha Beck: She will throw them away, absolutely. And she takes dishes out of the dishwasher before they're clean and distributes them around to the family.
- Rowan Mangan: So helpfully though, you got to love her for it, she's really helpful.
- Martha Beck: And there was an incident the other day that happened in that same bathroom. This is absolutely the hotbed of nature versus culture. But remember, you were in there with her holding her, and you were barefoot, she was barefoot.
- Rowan Mangan: No, she was-
- Martha Beck: You were both barefoot.



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- Rowan Mangan: She had followed me in, we were both barefoot, and we'd gone from a carpeted space to a tiled space. And we had, because we're like, "La la natural," we have glass bottles, or had. I've phased them out a long time ago, won't get into who hasn't in the house. So there was this one glass bottle, and Lila got it and followed me in to be helpful, she was actually genuinely trying to put it back on the counter, or on the sink or whatever in the bathroom. And she wasn't quite tall enough to do that, and it fell and it smashed right in between her two feet, and my two feet were right around her two feet. So it shattered.
- Martha Beck: It smashed so hard that it drove shards of glass into the tops of their feet, both-
- Rowan Mangan: Not mine, Lila's. [crosstalk 00:52:38]. Soft feet.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. So she was terrified and in pain, and-
- Rowan Mangan: I was terrified because of the bare-feet situation and not knowing.
- Martha Beck: And I heard this smash. I didn't see what happened, but before I even knew what was happening, I had grabbed a pair of shoes that was nearby, and I was in the bathroom, putting the shoes on your feet, picking up Lila. And you were calming her and comforting her. And you immediately got to a safe place and started cleaning the glass out of her feet, I immediately started getting every single tiny shard of glass out. And then within about five minutes, we were all completely stable again.
- Rowan Mangan: That's true.
- Martha Beck: And it was a really good example to me of how kindness is not a thing you have to adopt when you're not distanced from your natural feelings, because our natures, it happened so fast in both of us, by nature went to help.
- Rowan Mangan: Have we talked before, I think we have actually, about how crisis can shock you out of all the cultural beliefs? Yeah, because it was that woman who had COVID, and she was like, "I just want to live like that all the time."
- Martha Beck: Right.



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- Rowan Mangan: And it's that same sort of thing of just, in that moment when you suddenly realize, "Okay, this is truly the response here, and this is truly the authentic way I feel." And yeah, it all happens. And it's so interesting, because the trendy line in parenting right now, which I love, I think it's brilliant, is all about you allow, and this is especially with toddlers, allowing the feelings while putting boundaries around the behavior. So all the feelings are okay, and happy washing is bullshit.
- Martha Beck: Right.
- Rowan Mangan: And so we're taught to, "Oh, it can feel sad when someone takes your toy away. You can be frustrated when this... It can be scary when a bottle smashes." And we have so many moments, Marty, don't we, where we're like, "Oh, that's a parenting principle that we should apply more broadly in life".
- Martha Beck: Yes. And we actually do that. I want to make a little caveat before we go into that though. And that is that some people express a lot of negativity and sadness and pain and everything, but they do it manipulatively.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, so you're talking about people who aren't happy washing, but-
- Martha Beck: They actually are-
- Rowan Mangan: ... they're not being authentic either?
- Martha Beck: They're faking the opposite. And this is one of the major tells of a psychopath. And they believe that probably one out of every 25 people may be born with psychopathy. So in that case, what psychopaths feel overwhelmingly is self-pity, and they use, "I'm not okay," to manipulate other people.
- Rowan Mangan: Interesting.
- Martha Beck: So I just want to say, there's an instinctive repulsion that we feel when someone is faking negativity. So be very alert for that, you'll-
- Rowan Mangan: That's true.



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- Martha Beck: ...feel it in your gut, you won't want to go help. I've seen this in so many groups I've worked with. And also, if you notice no reciprocity in a relationship, no give and take, they want to whine to you, but you never whine to them at all, be very, very careful, get away if you can't. It should feel reciprocal, healthy and genuinely fulfilling to connect with someone about something negative in a true way.
- Rowan Mangan: Right. And I also find-
- Martha Beck: So just be careful.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, be careful. But also one thing that can really help with that is, in good households they put a little sign on the fence, out the front, that just says "Beware of the Psycho". And if you just always keep an eye out for that before you go into the house, it can be another really good way to spot-
- Martha Beck: The psychopath.
- Rowan Mangan: ...the psychopath.
- Martha Beck: Well, you never know which one it is, so-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's so true.
- Martha Beck: ... that's a whole 'nother episode. Anyway, I just want to talk about how, my God, we do this, and it's because you were raised without much happy washing. And so you would be, like when I wasn't-
- Rowan Mangan: Not much washing at all, now that I think about it.
- Martha Beck: You have to deal with your mother after this. But you can actually create a culture. At first I didn't know what was happening, because you would say to me, "Why are you acting happy when you're not?" And I didn't even realize as I was happy washing.
- Rowan Mangan: Freaked me out.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And I would never complain. And then you would say, "Oh, I feel bad." And I would try to fix it so that you'd be happy.
- Rowan Mangan: It was more than that actually, I can remember both you and Karen being in this reflexive, "No you don't. No." And there was this tendency to contradict-
- Martha Beck: Everything's fine.



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Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: It was really weird.

Martha Beck: And actually, you talked us out of it. So we created a culture where there's no happy washing, but no fixing and no pity either.

Rowan Mangan: Wasn't there a book that you read about that once?

Martha Beck: Oh. So there's a book that's about burnout by Amelia and Emily Nagoski, these twins who are, they're both very accomplished in their own right. And they wrote this book on burnout, and they did a really good TED talk on creating a bubble of love where you can have all this genuineness. Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Thank you, because I had really needed you to mention their names so that I could do my segue that I have prepared now, which is completely unrelated to this podcast, but I love it so much that I'm going to tell it. So you said Emily and Amelia Nagoski, and I thought, "Emily and Amy are the names of the Indigo Girls," the band, the Indigo Girls. And immediately into my head popped a story that our beloved Karen told us about probably her inaugural foray into gay stuff back in the day, was that someone took her to a women's music festival, one of those outdoor marquees and stuff. And so, the Indigo Girls were playing. Yeah. See, that's the link. And the Indigo Girls were on stage playing, and suddenly the stage literally collapsed, or part of the stage collapsed.

Everyone was fine, but the stage was collapsed. And Karen said, "From the crowd strode, here, there, everywhere, not in one group, but just as though organically arising, the lesbians stepped forth with their belts of tools. And they, in real time, quite quickly just rebuilt the stage and the show went on." Isn't that a great story about-

Martha Beck: That is great.

Rowan Mangan: ... Emily and Amelia?

Martha Beck: And it actually pertains, if only metaphorically-

Rowan Mangan: Really?



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- Martha Beck: ... because what you're saying is, "Let whatever collapse, and we will step forward automatically to fix it. We have that capacity. So go ahead, break down a little, that can [crosstalk 00:59:48]."
- Rowan Mangan: But aren't we saying don't fix it?
- Martha Beck: Yeah, you're right. I went back [inaudible 00:59:52] fixed it. So forget I just said that, in fact-
- Rowan Mangan: It's not a metaphor, it's just a funny story, done.
- Martha Beck: So make an agreement, if you feel like you want to-
- Rowan Mangan: I don't want to.
- Martha Beck: ... because it's worked... But it has worked for us, we have this mutual agreement that we can express our negative feelings, not to manipulate and not to get anyone to fix us, but simply to be understood.
- Rowan Mangan: There's something that I've seen online, it's just a Tweet that everyone shared, and still are sharing, because it's someone saying, "The most profound lesson that I've learned in friendship is to ask the question, do you want me to help solve this, or are you just venting?" And to understand the difference, because it is so pervasive in the culture, and yet it's our little nature that just wants someone to say, "Oh, that sucks."
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And I used to try to psychologize and fix you and everything, and you finally taught me the Australian way, which is to listen to somebody complaining and then go, "That sucks, mate." So yeah, I have a no fixing necessary, no pity is required, but openness about everything and compassion toward it all.
- Rowan Mangan: And also, you didn't used to complain, and I didn't like that, because I complained freely, and I wanted it to be equal.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: So I had to encourage you for quite a long time to start complaining.
- Martha Beck: Oh my God, everybody, it's awesome. Complaining is wonderful, it's the best. So that's what I would encourage everyone to do-
- Rowan Mangan: There you go.



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- Martha Beck: ... go and get in touch with yourself, stop happy washing, get grubby.
- Rowan Mangan: And don't happy wash yourself.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Wash yourself, but don't happy wash yourself-
- Martha Beck: But don't happy wash yourself. And stay wild.
- 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. We're also on Instagram. Our handle is @bewilderedpodcast. You can follow us to get updates, hear funny snippets and outtakes, and chat with other fans of the show.

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