

Episode 1: The Truth About Fear and Why We Experience it with Buddhist Teacher David Nichtern

[00:00:00] **Molly Carroll:** Hello. Good morning, David. I'm so grateful. You're here with me today. Molly.

[00:00:06] **David Nichtern:** Thank you for having me on your first podcast. I'm excited

[00:00:10] **Molly Carroll:** podcast ever. I'm I feel so lucky that I get to be with a renowned Buddhist teacher. His presence alone is making me feel much calmer having this be my first podcast, but I want to welcome my cracking open community to the amazing David David Nichtern, who is known for so much different success.

[00:00:31] **Molly Carroll:** He was nominated for Emmys and Grammys. And he's worked with musicians like Jerry Garcia and Stevie Wonder, Christian and Michael Doolittle and Paul Simon, just to name a few. And if that wasn't enough success for this amazing man, he's also known as a highly regarded meditation teacher and the founder of Dharma Moon.

[00:00:54] **Molly Carroll:** And he's had successful businesses, has been writing for the New York Times and Huffington Post. So there's a lot for us to go today, a lot for us to share today. So I'm so excited to crack open with you, David. So thank you so much for being with me.

[00:01:09] **David Nichtern:** Thank you for having me. And, you know, I've spent a lot of times with comedians in my life, so I've cracked up, but I don't know if I've cracked open with anybody before, so I'm looking forward

[00:01:20] **Molly Carroll:** to it.

[00:01:21] **Molly Carroll:** Well, get ready. One of my favorite sayings and my husband is to say that Molly can learn and get more out of someone in an elevator that I've known for 20 years. So, so let's just see where we go, huh.

[00:01:32] **David Nichtern:** But I always do. And what can she learn from somebody who she's been with for 20 years, then that must be interesting

[00:01:38] **Molly Carroll:** cracking and cracking.

[00:01:40] **Molly Carroll:** Cracking is the beautiful thing that I love about life. So well, you know, I've thought a lot about you and I've been, you know, sitting with you and reading about you this past few weeks. And you know, what I would love to hear just to begin with is like, you know, around you is how did this all leave home?

[00:01:55] **David Nichtern:** So when you say this all you mean, you know what I think of as kind of maybe. Not totally unique about me, but I think you know, characteristic of me is of blending of influences of different things, which is, I think that might be what you're referring

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to is which culminated me writing a book called creativity, spirituality, and making a buck, which is really, uh, me trying to sum up my own.

[00:02:20] **David Nichtern:** For the benefit of others who might be on a similar journey, which is, I think what we do, right? You, you look at your own experience and you see, well, what's a value that might be a value to other people. Um, so for me, it was a blending of different aspects of life that each one very singularly important to me.

[00:02:37] **David Nichtern:** So I've had a very full-on career in music. Um, I I've studied Buddhism really deeply and been studying and teaching it for, uh, actually. 50 years. I know that sounds like insane to say,

[00:02:52] **Molly Carroll:** no, I did the math this morning. I did the math. I was like, it started in the seventies,

[00:02:56] **David Nichtern:** 1970, you know, so, um, and there is also a feeling at this time in my life of wanting to kind of sum it up a little bit, you know, and sort of see what the.

[00:03:08] **David Nichtern:** What it all looked like together on one, on one, on one page. So that's what that book is sort of semi autobiographical, but it's also a journey that is laid out for the benefit of other similar people out there, which I think there's a lot of us out there who are blending creative expression with, uh, some kind of spiritual practice with livelihood.

[00:03:29] **David Nichtern:** Uh it's uh, it's it's not addressed all that often. But as a, nobody was really talking about creativity and livelihood. And when I was in the music world, nobody was really talking about meditating. You know, it was, it was now it's more common that people are looking for the, the integration. So that's really what I'm

[00:03:47] **Molly Carroll:** about.

[00:03:48] **Molly Carroll:** Well, and that's one of my, there's so much I adore about you and, and just even reading about you and watching videos and things this week preparing for this podcast. But one of my favorite things about you, because even as a therapist, I see this, there's not one way for him. There's many paths. And I think one of the greatest aspects of a teacher is to be able to open up themselves and the students in learning about the different paths.

[00:04:12] **Molly Carroll:** And you kind of have presented a very unique path that I haven't. Seen or heard a lot about and Buddhist teachers, which I, I really appreciate. And that is around, you know, your meditation practice, having some essence of creativity and making a buck. Yeah. Having your livelihood. I often say, how am I going to pay for my kids' sports and organic food?

[00:04:32] **Molly Carroll:** You know, you got to make a buck somewhere. Right. So I really, I really appreciate that. So can you tell me a little bit about how you came to this place? Have you always been there or was it, was this the way you were raised with creativity?

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[00:04:47] **David Nichtern:** Spirituality question is, as you know, we, um, we talk about karma in the Buddhist world.

[00:04:53] **David Nichtern:** That word is kind of used and abused in the popular vernacular, but it really means, you know, How did events organize themselves? How did we come to be in the situation that we're in? You know, you wake up on a beautiful morning out there and, uh, the west coast there where you are, you know, and the sun is shining and flowers are blooming and, and you feel miserably depressed.

[00:05:16] **David Nichtern:** How did that happen? How did we get there? So th the Karma's a big deal in the Buddhist. Um, but as well, I wrote a whole book on it called awakening from the daydream and that's um, really, how did we get here as a really interesting question? Because there's two answers to it. One is no idea. We really don't know.

[00:05:38] **David Nichtern:** It's like we wake up in the. If you ask people like it's Thursday at 3:00 PM, do you remember how you got here? They might not even remember how they got into that room. Right? It's like, so there's this Apparitional quality to reality that it's just a, kind of a losery quality that it just appears, you know?

[00:05:54] **David Nichtern:** And then there's this really strong, personal history that we have, which is. Personal group, family society, human global cosmic level of, of history. And so, um, we're all, uh, I think part of being human as we're sort of scratching on ourselves in a way to figure out how we got here and what, what are we supposed to.

[00:06:16] **David Nichtern:** You you

[00:06:16] **Molly Carroll:** saying that David reminds me of two things that I would love to touch on the first one is a quote I read that you wrote or someone wrote about you. I think she wrote it that I loved. And it's the principle of joining heaven and earth, a classical paradigm and Asian thought heaven is the pure realm of the mind or consciousness in Buddhist terms.

[00:06:34] **Molly Carroll:** And earth is the realm of relative reality, which is subject to subject to impermanence. If people have too much heaven, they have vision, but they don't know what to do with it. If they're too mirrored in the earth, they have no vision, no direction, no kind of ultimate sense of what they're doing and why I love this quote so much is because what you're touching on is so much, what I've learned as a therapist is that we need these dual poet polarities.

[00:07:05] **Molly Carroll:** We need heaven and we need earth, earth to ground us earth to get our to-do list done. And yet this heaven is integration of heaven. To connect us to something bigger than ourselves or consciousness or whatever you want to call it. God, whatever your verbiage is. So when you say that this sense of kind of scratching this, it.

[00:07:28] **Molly Carroll:** You know, like waking up and it's like, how, how do you teach? How do you help people kind of connect to both their heaven and earth?

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[00:07:37] **David Nichtern:** Well, you know, it's, it's of course there's so many modalities out there now and maybe more than ever, you know, it's, uh, there's all these. Spiritual traditions of the world are present in the United States.

[00:07:49] **David Nichtern:** Right now you could take a workshop tomorrow on anything ranging from soup ism to shamanism, to, uh, esoteric Christianity, to Buddhism. So, um, and we have added our own sort of Western culture, which is sort of more scientific and analytic and, uh, you know, psychiatric therapy. So. How, what do we utilize? So I utilize the Buddhas method because it's, it just, it jived with my way of thinking.

[00:08:20] **David Nichtern:** That's what you do. You go like, well, this resonated for me. So here's what the Buddha started with. Where does it hurt? The good doctor? You know, you go to the doctor and the doctor says, well, where does it hurt? They don't say, tell me how great you're feeling. You don't go to your doctor and say, you know, uh, boy, I have so much energy and, um, I feel vibrant and then they go, yes.

[00:08:45] **David Nichtern:** And you go. Yeah. But my knee is killing me. You know? So Buddha started like that. It's called the first noble truth. It's weird. W what's this? What is the suffering going on? And then what is the source of that? So. And then liberating it and liberating it through a method or a sort of progression, which is called the eightfold path so that you have a way of working with your life situation.

[00:09:08] **David Nichtern:** And it's just the most ordinary stuff it's work. It is mindfulness of speech. It is, uh, how to, how to hold your mind, you know, in, in a, in a present mindful way. Uh, just working directly along with the energy of, of, of life is the whole path, but where does it fit? Um, is I'm sure is that therapists don't you ask people that you must,

[00:09:29] **Molly Carroll:** right.

[00:09:30] **Molly Carroll:** I ask people all the time, or I say, where's your heart right now? Or where were you? You know, where are you? Where are you in pain? Or where are you in pleasure? You know, I totally agree with that. And so you saying that makes me think about you David and your life, and you're in New York city and it's the seventies.

[00:09:50] **David Nichtern:** Resonated, you know, does it hurt? Where does it hurt? I'm from a Jewish family in New York. That's a whole thing. Right. And when you said, where does it hurt? I, my first thought was because it's also, there's a humor attached to it and there's a sort of long history of suffering. Right. Um, so when you say.

[00:10:14] **David Nichtern:** You go bald? How much time do you have?

[00:10:16] **Molly Carroll:** I was like, can we do for another podcast on that? Right?

[00:10:20] **David Nichtern:** Yeah. I mean, you know, I think if I just told you from the inside of my own life, um, there's a lot of, um, areas in which things didn't seem to be working out. Exactly. You know, and, um, uh, not what you hope for and not what you expected.

[00:10:43] **David Nichtern:** Um, so, and then I also look back and I go, oh, there's just this sweet quality to the whole thing, which I experienced a lot. These days that tenderness the

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sweetness, the poignancy of, you know, I get pictures of my granddaughter on Instagram and, you know, Uh, you'd think, well, gee, how hard is it to make this person happy?

[00:11:03] **David Nichtern:** Just send them a picture of his granddaughter on Instagram. So, you know, the life in the human world as these, these both qualities. But for me, the, the suffering part I would say was, um, you know, And not, not to be doctrinal about it, but there's a Buddhist thing where the pain comes from is not getting what you want and getting what you don't want are the two major.

[00:11:27] **David Nichtern:** So in terms of getting what I didn't want, I would say one of my main anchors in terms of really understanding, um, uh, suffering is within the family. I come from. I come from an era in which Ozzie and Harriet was on television. My three sons, people had nuclear families. They were living in the suburbs, everybody, the dad went so going off to work, the mom was a happy housewife.

[00:11:51] **David Nichtern:** Uh, the kids were going to school. There was little jokes going on. I kind of grew up in that era, which was the fifties. You know, I was born in 1948. So the fifties and my dad was a doctor. Um, my mom at that time was, you know, was not working. She was helping him out and helping to raise the family. And then at a certain point, the energy in my family shifted.

[00:12:15] **David Nichtern:** Uh, and, and, and then a lot of challenges came up that were very, very, uh, pressing on a teenage boy who was having his own journey going on, which it's hard enough to be a teenager in New York, right. In the first place, you know, but my family kind of. Uh, in my, in my teen years and then, and, and with, uh, you know, looking at how much pain my parents were in, uh, was, you know, was a challenging thing for, for somebody who's coming into their own, uh, you know, individual sovereignty.

[00:12:50] **David Nichtern:** Uh, so, uh, I had, you know, had a lot of, um, a lot, I had to deal with a lot of, uh, extremely. Um, painful, uh, interpersonal dynamics in my own family. So I would say that was something that really cranked up the sensitivity level.

[00:13:10] **Molly Carroll:** Can I ask you another question about that? I just think what you're speaking right now, people feel, and I think what happens, David is people will look at you or look at your Wikipedia page and think he's got it.

[00:13:22] **Molly Carroll:** He's gives us. We're now Buddhist teacher. He's calm. He's successful. He's played with all these famous musicians and we get into the comparing mind. But I think what you're sharing with us now is so helpful for people because it was that what you said was crumbling. I heard cracking, right? Cause I go to this cracking open case.

[00:13:42] **Molly Carroll:** Yeah. Your family was kind of cracking open and you're this adolescent going through the individuation process. Not to mention

[00:13:50] **David Nichtern:** puberty puberty for God's

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[00:13:52] **Molly Carroll:** sake, right. In an era of, you know, my three sons and leave it to beaver. Right. And, and how did you, what did that look like? I mean, did it crumble more for you?

[00:14:03] **Molly Carroll:** Did you go more towards crumbling? Did you go more towards, you know, disassociation or avoidance? Like where did you go in those moments in Manhattan, in your apartment? You know, it's so

[00:14:13] **David Nichtern:** funny because, you know, we. Can scan through space and time. Right. And you can like, I'm just going right back there. Uh, and it's, you can bring increasing vividness to memory.

[00:14:26] **David Nichtern:** Um, so, um, I'm back there now. And as soon as you said that I'm playing the game. I think, I think my creativity was, uh, a tremendous resource and my friends at the time were bluegrass musicians in New York. And we had this special kind of music, which is bluegrass in New York. Hello. That's like, That's from Kentucky.

[00:14:50] **Molly Carroll:** I was thinking the same state. I said, that's Kentucky. That's not New York

[00:14:53] **David Nichtern:** city, but Ross, it was a special little treasure that we found. And, um, I was in bands throughout high school and college and playing music was my, um, you know, I'm not going to say I was dissociating into the music, but I was, um, uh, maybe, uh, And I don't really even think escaping, but it was an area of enjoyment of discovery of, um, you know, kind of, and it's still to this day when I work with people.

[00:15:23] **David Nichtern:** And if they're, if they, if they're musicians, I have a real sweet, sweet spot for them. Any musician, even when they're professional amateur, I don't care if somebody's, you know, playing with music and enjoying that aspect, it's been such a valuable and important part of mine.

[00:15:38] **Molly Carroll:** You know, you make me think about, um, when you, I had babies and they will be tantruming if I just took out the ch boom, boom, boom, boom, wait a little ukulele.

[00:15:51] **Molly Carroll:** They stop. It calms the system. Right? So I see this teenager, David, and it's like, the house is crumbling and mom and dad are going through their thing or whatever. And you go into the cell. It's almost kind of like, you know, I know Buddhists don't believe the self, right? The separation of self, but maybe you were going into a place of the soul even, or to a place of healing versus escapism.

[00:16:18] **Molly Carroll:** I, I heard healing music

[00:16:20] **David Nichtern:** only to my own personal expression. So, uh, this whole thing about the self and Buddhists is largely misunderstood. Uh, there is obvious. Anybody who has two eyes in two years would say there's an individual track going on. Whether that tracks to a permanent entity called a soul or a self or Ottman, and the original tradition is a

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separate issue, uh, worth exploring, you know, but of course there's an individual journey going on that we call the relative truth.

[00:16:52] **David Nichtern:** That's what we call it. That's all. It's just the relative situation. And in my relative journey, I was tasting. You know, the sorrow of mist, communications of negative emotions piling up with people and kind of at a vulnerable age, being really, uh, getting a full face full of that. Not from a book or a movie, but in my own house I saw, wow.

[00:17:23] **David Nichtern:** There's some really intense, dark possibilities with people trying to love each other. Two people got together because they loved each other are now like the mortal enemies. My parents became mortal enemies. And, and so the, um, and it's not because, uh it's because they loved it. That's that that to me is the irony of interpersonal dynamics is people are trying to connect.

[00:17:51] **David Nichtern:** They're trying to, um, be happy. Um, and like my friend Krishna DAS says sometimes it's just a bad aim. The, the gun is loaded full of ammunition, but they don't know where to shoot.

[00:18:05] **Molly Carroll:** Oh, that's beautiful. That is so true. So you're sitting, so you're, so you're, it's for your story. You're sitting in this apartment, your parents are fighting as volatile.

[00:18:15] **Molly Carroll:** They love each other, but you can tell, you know, I don't mean to assume, but I'm guessing the marriage dissolved, maybe they got divorced. You were, you, you went on your path, right? You went on to Columbia for college, studying music.

[00:18:30] **David Nichtern:** No, I didn't study music. Actually music was always my own thing. I never thought, oh, I'll be a professional musician because my father was a doctor in, in, in, you know, there's a joke in the Jewish world.

[00:18:43] **David Nichtern:** In New York, the Jewish mother says, um, the doctor was too, when I was pregnant with the lawyer, you know, there was expectation that you would. Uh, also because we came from families that had, you know, were immigrants and stuff. The fact that my father had gotten to be, you know, everybody, you know, uh, you know, thought this was a great accomplishment achievement.

[00:19:09] **David Nichtern:** So I went into Columbia college thinking I was going to be a doctor. I was a pre-medical student. And then I. A couple of things to knock me off that track. Uh, one was, we were in an advanced biology class and you had to kill the frog. Oh yeah. You had to kill the frog. Okay. Well, I don't know if I want to kill a frog bare hands.

[00:19:34] **David Nichtern:** You, you had to snap its neck against the table. So you could have its organs fresh as you dissected it. Yeah. Learned about it. Uh, and that was a very vivid, a moment for me. And the other was organic chemistry. I just couldn't figure it out. I'm a pretty smart guy, but I just didn't know which end of it was up.

[00:19:50] **David Nichtern:** So then I had an English minor, you know, that was my minor, literally. And then I switched. I dropped out in my junior year of the medical thing. So that

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was a big turning point of like, gosh, I'm not going to be a doctor. Um, and then I was an English major. And then when I graduated from, from college, I thought, oops, uh, what am I gonna do for money?

[00:20:10] **David Nichtern:** And I just had always been a musician and I just started getting jobs, playing music. So it was kind of.

[00:20:16] **Molly Carroll:** Well, you say it's kind of an accident, but I think we've mentioned a lot of the, your father's success of being a doctor, but you also had this mother that was amazing and a creative

[00:20:29] **David Nichtern:** and my mother's side of the family.

[00:20:31] **David Nichtern:** So if you look at, you know, uh, some people would say that our, our, uh, destiny or direction in life is to unify, integrate, harmonize the energy of our two parents. Which is, you know, you go right back to Freud wherever you want to go with that. But obviously the father represents one lineage and the mother another.

[00:20:53] **David Nichtern:** So my father was a healer. He was a doctor. He was always interested in and he was also always interested in working with children. He was a pediatrician and a child psychiatrist, and my mom was, and again, this was a sign of the times. My mother was a quote unquote. Very ill-equipped for that, for that role, actually, we had, we had a housekeeper, um, you know, my mom was always a very intelligent woman.

[00:21:20] **David Nichtern:** She should have been like these days, she would have been a career person like that from day one. Um, so this was a transition. So when we grew up a little bit, she started looking around for, to fulfill herself and she went over to the Phoenix theater, uh, in, in, um, in Manhattan and just worked as an assistant there.

[00:21:39] **David Nichtern:** And then she got hooked on the. And then she just, she propelled herself through, and this is not at the beginning. This is in her forties. And she became first a, you know, um, uh, a casting director. Produce some place. And then she produced a major hits on Broadway and I, and in fact, my first job as a professional musician was working in, in the band of a musical that she produced on Broadway called Jimmy shine.

[00:22:11] **David Nichtern:** And it was starring Dustin Hoff. And, and this is me right out of college. And my uncle Irv, who was another major influence, great musician was the music director and piano player. So that was the other side. I have those two sides. I've thought about that a lot. You know, the healing side on the music side, we were very well-represented in my, in the way it was brought up.

[00:22:31] **Molly Carroll:** And I love, I love the story of your mother, but one of the other stories you've told me that I think is so important, especially for all the women that are listening to this podcast. Is the where your mother propelled to. And the article in the New York times, if you would share a little bit of that story, I think it would resonate with a lot of the women.

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[00:22:54] **David Nichtern:** That's funny. Yeah. The women are so far past this right now and you know, I'm, I, I'm thinking of writing a book called in one ear and out the other, oh, I love that title, but it's been used already. Unfortunately. That's what it's like being a songwriter. You go ups and the other one's been taken already.

[00:23:13] **David Nichtern:** But I almost feel like I grew up in a different time domain, um, than we're in now. And, um, so several iterations later, but my mother in her time, this was not common for a woman to take on this kind of, um, it was the very, very beginning of women's liberation, you know, which is old news already in a certain extent to a certain extent.

[00:23:36] **David Nichtern:** Um, and so she shows up as this major, bro. Uh, hit theater producer and they write an article about it in the New York times, which was, um, before the internet, the New York times was a big deal. You know, maybe it's still a little bit of a big deal, but, but she, they talk about her winning a Tony award. She actually won a Tony for producing on Broadway.

[00:24:02] **David Nichtern:** Um, and they have a picture of her with an apron on and a big pot. I remember the pot and she's like stirring a pot like this. No, by the way, she also produces hit Broadway shows. Can you imagine if somebody did that now? It would be like, it wouldn't even be offensive. It would be incomplete.

[00:24:19] **Molly Carroll:** Exactly. And it never went.

[00:24:21] **Molly Carroll:** No, it's not the truth. I mean, it's like there, you know, it says it's not, it's not the whole picture, you know,

[00:24:28] **David Nichtern:** and the whole picture. And in her case, it was not even part of the picture because she really wasn't much of a cook. Uh, you know, we had somebody who cooked most of the food. Uh, she, she was always a kind of a business person too.

[00:24:45] **David Nichtern:** I get a lot of my business skills, not from my dad, but from my. And it, I end up working, you know, this, but I work with a lot of women in my business world. I'm very comfortable working with business with women in business. But I think it's because of my mom was such a good business that she was sharp as attack.

[00:25:02] **David Nichtern:** Wow.

[00:25:03] **Molly Carroll:** So I love where we are now. It's like, you've shared a little bit of us if like your childhood and kind of, you know, what you went through, what drew you to music? What drew you to Buddhism? What drew you to business? You know, all these different areas and from all this, you know, I mentioned the beginning, you've had this success, you've worked with amazing artists and they've been luckily been able to work with you.

[00:25:28] **Molly Carroll:** You've had successful businesses, two published books, a deep, deep meditation practice. And here you are today. Can I say right? 73, you already said, okay.

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73. And what I want so much about this podcast to be is around what you're cracking open moments in your life. What have they taught you? How have you grown?

[00:25:58] **Molly Carroll:** Like, you know, it's almost kind of like if there were three or four or five things that you could share with people, like, look, you know, sitting in this space of all of this life, this beautiful life.

[00:26:11] **David Nichtern:** Yeah. Sweet. Thank you for asking. It's so nice to be asked, something like that. And I think, um, it bodes well for your podcast. You know, that people get to share that when we spoke previously to this, I said, oh, this is an I'm going to resonate with what your husband Adam said, which is that you have a gift for, for being receptive to people's emotions.

[00:26:35] **David Nichtern:** Um, you know, and that's, um, there's the outer story and there's the inner

[00:26:39] **Molly Carroll:** story. So it's the greatest teachings, you know, that's the greatest teachings.

[00:26:44] **David Nichtern:** Well, we say that the outer story comes and goes. Yeah. It, well, you know, I don't, I don't, it also nutritious, like when you say shell, like a lobster, that's not the part you eat, but I think you eat the outer story too.

[00:26:58] **David Nichtern:** It'd be more like a soft shell

[00:27:00] **Molly Carroll:** crab. That's a good idea. Yeah. What could I say? That's a good one to think about. What can I say? That's a good outer we eat out or in the inner. Yeah.

[00:27:07] **David Nichtern:** So, so, um, but, but coming back to your question about, um, cracking open is. We have a way of talking about this in the tradition I come from, which is, um, it's interesting in the Shambala teachings, they talk about the cocoon, which is a, a kind of a metaphor for, but a kind of softer fuzzier metaphor for the shell that you're talking about and what it's made of as habitual patterns and what those are generated by primarily is fear.

[00:27:43] **David Nichtern:** So I think if. Said one thing to anybody I'd say don't be afraid or, uh, ex you know, there's a book my teacher wrote called smile at fear. How do you engage fear as a kind of a transformational or, uh, not a boundary limiting experience? You know, like you hit the wall of fear and you go, I can't go any further and maybe explore fear would be the thing.

[00:28:13] **David Nichtern:** So. When, when I think about what I've been afraid of in my life and w w and I, of course, you know, I work with a lot of students and I look with a lot of people. One-to-one, um, what I think what most of us are afraid of is being embarrass. Not weird under the, you know, of course we're afraid of dying and getting beaten up and, and, um, we might have physical anxieties.

[00:28:42] **David Nichtern:** We might be afraid of losing others, but it's so day to day, moment by moment. As I watch people's behavior, I go, oh, you're doing that because you're afraid to be embarrassed. You don't want to just show up as naked.

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[00:28:56] **Molly Carroll:** Well, and I think what you're saying is underneath embarrassment is really being seen for who they are.

[00:29:02] **Molly Carroll:** Truly being seen. And that's, that's scary

[00:29:06] **David Nichtern:** w scared, but it's also so fabulous, you know, it's like, yeah, people love that. Everybody's looking for that

[00:29:12] **Molly Carroll:** always. Right? Always that's all anyone wants, like you could sit on this podcast and talk Buddhism the whole time, David, and there'd be, people would learn a lot.

[00:29:21] **Molly Carroll:** The people want to know who you are in that cocoon.

[00:29:24] **David Nichtern:** Right? Well, so, but coming back to the notion of the cocoon, the first thing we do is make friends. Hmm, that's an interesting thing. We don't get out the scissors or the, you know, when your image of the cracking of the Nutcracker, we go, like let's soften into it a little bit.

[00:29:40] **David Nichtern:** First. Let's make friends with, with our fear, with who we are. And, and so there's some kind of gentle touch, you know, um, then it can, if you have too much aggression towards the cocoon, right. Uh, then it's, it's hard to, to, um, to go. Right. So a lot of people, for example, the meditation, they just want to crack open.

[00:30:04] **David Nichtern:** They want to get to the thing they want to stabilize. So we have a softer, we're kind of a more kinder, gentler approach it's cracking.

[00:30:12] **Molly Carroll:** No, and I love that. And I actually, I w w when my favorite part about cracking open is if you actually watch a chick. Yeah. Coming out of his shell, it takes its time. It doesn't rush.

[00:30:24] **Molly Carroll:** Yeah, it does a little Peck and then kind of comes back into the womb and then packs a little more and comes back into the womb. And that's kind of here. I hear what you're saying. So AME your metaphor of the cocoon and being compassionate towards yourself and softening into your fear. Is there anything you're even still afraid?

[00:30:46] **Molly Carroll:** Oh, sure. Are there still fears you're facing today and how do you soften into this? What are those fears and how do you like just a daily fear and how do you soften into those two to kind

[00:30:58] **David Nichtern:** of, for example, you know, I'm 73 friends are dropping off two years ago. I lost one of my lifetime best friends.

[00:31:10] **David Nichtern:** Somebody I had intimacy with, cause we played music together in a way that was probably, um, only a couple of other people in my life. You know, we were reading each other's minds and, and, and so that was a very special friend and he, um, you know, I actually fixed him up with his wife. So, um, uh, you know, there was a long, long arc there and, um, it became.

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[00:31:36] **David Nichtern:** You know, I had dinner with him, him and his wife, uh, and you know, life goes on and we have dinner and we go like, okay, everything's normal. And then he just had this little growth behind his ear and I said, oh, what's that going on? And he said, well, it's and long story short, it was a Mellon. That's what my mother died from.

[00:31:56] **David Nichtern:** I know from melanoma, what it is, and I remember the words, it's the most capricious and pernicious cancer. There is those two words together. So I thought, oh, an N it, they went through the usual journey that people go through with cancer and he, um, try to, to, um, you know, do his best to. Get medical treatment, whatever was available to him.

[00:32:24] **David Nichtern:** And he also had become a Buddhist. He become a Zen Buddhist. So he also knew that he could die. Buddhists are the people who every day think I could die right now. You know? And people say that, but it's different if you go. Like, I mean, literally right now people think, oh, well, in 20 years I'm going to die.

[00:32:41] **David Nichtern:** I'm going to age and I'm going to have my retirement first. Right. So the situation evolved very quickly with, with my friend, John, and, um, and then he, we gathered together knowing that he was going to be dying as, as a conscious community, as, as friends and family who were, um, many of them were Buddhists, how are we going to do this?

[00:33:06] **David Nichtern:** How's he going to do this? And he did it beautifully and kind of with a lot of things. Um, and, but it was so poignant. So I looked at his body wasting way and I've had other friends at my age who, you know, you start to lose part of your tribe more frequently. And every night I think, you know, if I have a little pain in my chest or something and go like this could be a heart attack.

[00:33:28] **David Nichtern:** Rhonda has had a stroke. All of a sudden he's on the floor looking up at the ceiling. I think very viscerally that this could happen to me anymore. With her well, without the, uh, with the pandemic, I was onto that before the pandemic, of course, that accelerated. So I think I have a certain fear of, of, um, now when I look at it, I think I might be more afraid of the kind of.

[00:33:52] **David Nichtern:** Invalid stature, you know, getting really sick and, you know, a friend of mine is in the hospital. His stomach's no good. So I, I think I don't want that kind of, uh, I have a fear of becoming kind of incontinent in, in, in, uh, you know, nonproductive, um, and in pain all the time. Yeah. The death itself has a slightly different twist.

[00:34:16] **David Nichtern:** I don't even know what that is on it. Certainly, even though I've studied it for 50 years personally. Can I tell you, I know exactly what happens at the moment of death? No. So that would be one thing. Another thing is finishing up things, you know, like, like having, getting mixed, I'm working on certain projects now that with the sense that they like, I'm making an album of music now called Panda moon.

[00:34:40] **David Nichtern:** And it's original music. It's sort of my kind of instrumental music that I compose and, um, I'm thinking, well, it's going to be my last record quite consciously.

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What do I want it to be like? Um, but that's not fear. There's a sense of completion that I, yeah, that's the word

[00:34:57] **Molly Carroll:** I was hearing completion. So I'm

[00:34:59] **David Nichtern:** afraid of not completing it.

[00:35:00] **David Nichtern:** Right. No feel complete.

[00:35:04] **Molly Carroll:** Thank you for sharing that because I think there's a lot of people that feel that way at any. They feel a bump in their chest or they, you know, as you get older, it gets more, more prominent. But I think that at any time, what you're teaching us is that it's there. And how do you soften into it?

[00:35:19] **Molly Carroll:** How do you have compassion towards it? And speaking of completion, I'd also love for you to share a little bit before we go about your next near newest movement, I would call it because I feel like when you talk about it's a movement of what you're creating called Dharma moon.

[00:35:35] **David Nichtern:** Yeah. Oh yeah. Um, before Damo moon started, I had written this book, creativity, spirituality, and making a buck and thinking, you know what?

[00:35:46] **David Nichtern:** Everybody's got their, their strong suit. That's my strong suit is integrating those elements. You got your great Buddhist teachers out there. You got your incredible creatives out there. You got your sharp as a tack business people out there. Who's doing all of that and putting it together in an interesting way.

[00:36:05] **David Nichtern:** So I thought that's really what I want to do. I don't want to just be a classical Buddhist teacher only. I don't want to just be, uh, you know, get my last licks in as a musician and money. It's like, I just want to have enough to do live the way I live, which is kind of, I call it, you know, upscale reasons.

[00:36:25] **David Nichtern:** I'm what people call restaurant rich. I want to be able to go to a restaurant, but I don't have any duration. You're going to have like millions of dollars when people go, you know, scaling. Business and you know, I go, well, that's good for you. And here's the part I like about the business. It sharpens people up.

[00:36:41] **David Nichtern:** It makes them more realistic. A lot of spiritual people are not good at it because they're not realistic enough. And so that's not complete enough for me. Right. So, um, Dharma, moon emerged, and with the pandemic, creativity, spirituality, and making a buck, what happened was we started taking our trainings online.

[00:37:00] **David Nichtern:** We went virtual a year ago. Um, I had not taught, I taught one-to-one virtually, but every other program I ever taught was live in a room with people and all of a sudden it's like, that's gone. So now we're gonna, um, see, do we want to go virtual in that? And we did. And the program sold. What was interesting and they became global.

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[00:37:20] **David Nichtern:** So we're all of a sudden having a hundred people in a teacher training program. And some of them are in Australia and Japan and Europe and Canada and, uh, south America. And I think this is so cool. This is so cool. And we had a community of people coming together who wanted to share more than just a Dharma they're they're like creatives.

[00:37:42] **David Nichtern:** Uh, their magnet, you know, life draws like, so people are starting to work on pro little projects together and going like, oh, you got, I got a demo or over here, I just thought, why don't we create an umbrella for that community too? Germinate and grow. I had a record label already called DAMA moon. I thought it was a perfect name for this community.

[00:38:01] **David Nichtern:** So we started building it nine months later. I have 20 people working for me from being basically kind of at the end of, uh, uh, of arc and, and, you know, it's kind of, um, Mind boggling to me that I'm starting a new venture at this point, that is probably has the potential to be by far the biggest adventure that we've gone on so far.

[00:38:23] **David Nichtern:** So, so diamond moon is a global community and a mindfulness based education platform. We are going to, we already, you can just go to Dharma, moon.com. That's, that's easiest way to find out what's going on with it, but it's growing very rapidly and, and, and basically fulfilling all these aspects of what people like you and I are interested in joining like-minded people together, um, through, through the virtual.

[00:38:48] **Molly Carroll:** And now I would actually encourage everyone to go check it out because every time I'm on it, I learned something every time I'm on it, even just looking at the, the first image makes me feel calmer, looking at the image of the sky. So I would encourage everyone to look at it and to join it. You could take a class, you could start a community, you could have a connection.

[00:39:07] **Molly Carroll:** I kept thinking it was kind of like, you know, I don't want, I hope that's okay to say, but like the Facebook of connection, a deeper connection of real connection. That's the different thing. I think that's so important about us to know about where David is taking us all. Now. You know, we started off in the beginning of like a child growing up in New York city and, you know, finding his way to Buddhism, to, to business and to creativity.

[00:39:32] **Molly Carroll:** And he's bringing all of them together. You're bringing them all together in such a beautiful way of service. Deep deep service. So as we come full close in this moment, I'd love to hear them being that my podcast is called cracking open and we're cracking open to every experience. What do you, what do you want to, what's the last thing you want to share with us around your deepest teachings around the cracking open and in going beneath the shell and into the heart?

[00:39:58] **David Nichtern:** Well, you know, here's what we say first thought, best thought a lot in my truck. Just go for that first thought. So I, I operate on the premise led. So when you said cracking open, you know, we could take that very personally and think, oh God, um, you know, like something that was under a lot of pressure is now released, you know?

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[00:40:16] **David Nichtern:** So it makes that kind of a sound, you know, but when, when you said, I thought of my chest cracking open and, uh, and birds flying out of it and flying to every corner. Because that when we crack open, it's also when we can really express ourselves and connect, that's a part of it that, you know, somehow it seems very important to me right.

[00:40:37] **David Nichtern:** At this point. So I don't want to hold anything back at this point, where am I going to put it? Where am I going to hold it? But the idea of sharing with people is like, you know, really a big deal for me right now. And particularly younger people, because that's how you. Then goes, it goes in cycles. Um, and I would like to pass through, I had some brilliant teachers in my life really did.

[00:40:59] **David Nichtern:** They made a big difference in my life. So I'd like to pass along some of that, um, to the next, the next gang coming along. Also, I make a rule of it. We have to have fun or we're not doing it.

[00:41:14] **David Nichtern:** I'll crack open, but I want to have some fun doing it. There

[00:41:17] **Molly Carroll:** you go. There you go. David, what a gift it has been to be with you. Thank you for all your wisdom and your heart. Thank you for all your generosity and your spirits and your service. We are all better for it. So thank you so much. We're so grateful to have you

[00:41:32] **David Nichtern:** here.

[00:41:34] **David Nichtern:** Thank you. And good luck with it.

[00:41:36] **Molly Carroll:** Thank you.