

# The Great Simplification

---

PLEASE NOTE: This transcript has been auto-generated and has not been fully proofed by ISEOF. If you have any questions please reach out to us at [info@thegreatsimplification.com](mailto:info@thegreatsimplification.com).

[00:00:00] **Krista Tippett**: We are called by the magnitude, the existential magnitude of the challenges before us to really expand our imaginations and the analysis we apply when we ask a question like, What is the impact here? What matters? What you and I are talking about here doesn't lend itself to measuring in terms of something so reductive as a number or a monetary value.

Whether we just develop the capacity and the vocabulary and the stamina and the ways of speaking together to ask those questions and then live by the answers that they yield, it's the difference between merely surviving or the possibility of flourishing.

[00:00:54] **Nate Hagens**: Joining me today is Krista Tippett, the host of On Being podcast. Krista is also a Peabody award winning broadcaster, a national humanity medalist, and a New York Times bestselling author emerging from all that. In 2003, she piloted her idea for On Being, which was a with the National Public Radio to fill the gap she saw for intelligent public conversation about the religious, spiritual, and moral aspects of modern human life.

Later in 2013, she and her team turned on being into an independent nonprofit production. Krista is currently at work on a new book about moral imagination and the human challenges and promises of the 21st century. I've talked about how true change for The Great Simplification must come from an inner shift in values.

That is exactly Krista's point too. In some ways we've converged on The Great Simplification from vastly different perspectives, but ultimately we must each do our own individual inner work to find a pathway forward for humanity. By generally updating how we measure success instead of valuing things through numbers and dollars and growth.

Krista and I both think we can only do this when we work on ourselves and live into the questions, many of which are unanswerable. Krista speaks about a necessary maturing of our species in order to meet what The Great Simplification will require of us. I hope you enjoy and are inspired by this conversation with Krista Tippett.

# The Great Simplification

---

Krista Tippett, great to see you, welcome.

[00:02:40] **Krista Tippett:** Thank you, Nate.

[00:02:41] **Nate Hagens:** So you have hosted a hugely successful show on NPR, On Being, covering the intersection of spirituality and science. It's taken me a while to realize this, but the core themes of your show, for example, what does it mean to be human, how do we want to live, and who will we be to each other, are really at the end of the day also At the root of our coming energy and economic transition, we don't so much face an energy transition as a transition in our relationships, values and what it means to be part of humanity during this time.

So let's start with this. What was your thought process leading up to the focus on these topics and these questions as the conversation of our time?

[00:03:33] **Krista Tippett:** I don't know how much of this history you know, but I originally pitched a program for public radio, as I like to say, at the turn of the century about 24 years ago about You know, it ended up being called Speaking of Faith, but what I was really interested in is this part of life, which we use many words to describe, a place where religion, spirit, spiritual life, you know, interior life, moral imagination, all of these things reside in us.

And the conversations we have about religion in the public sphere are very diminished, right? So I wanted to open that up. And what I started to realize over five or six or seven years, which is when we changed the title of the show to On Being, is that in this culture, when you say you're going to talk about these things, people assume that you're talking about answers and beliefs.

And also, we're just in general, so skilled at arguments and opinions. And I realized that what I was interested in tracing, even when I was talking with somebody who was profoundly religious, what I'm interested in the animating questions that gave rise to these traditions. And they, you know, they do start with, They are actually the ancient, enduring human questions.

What does it mean to be human? How do we want to live? And I think for me, an evolution has been in more recent years, and maybe this parallels your realizations, that, In this century the question of what it means to be human is really

# The Great Simplification

---

inextricable from the question of who we will be to each other, and I believe that question of who we will be to each other, and this is me saying what you just said in my language whether we rise to that challenge in our In how we stand before all of our crises and all of our reckonings will really, for me, be the difference between whether we survive or whether we have a possibility of flourishing.

[00:05:38] **Nate Hagens:** When I saw you speak last month in person, it struck me that we are saying a lot of the same things, just using different language. And that was quite a, an aha moment for me. So, so when I saw you speak, you mentioned the poet Rilke as someone who inspired you to focus on the questions. as opposed to the solutions.

Can you unpack that a little bit?

[00:06:02] **Krista Tippett:** I spent a lot of time in Germany in my 20s in a different world, you know, in the Cold War years. And so I've I've been in conversation with Rilke for a long time inside myself and what also has become more meaningful to me as we lived into this age we inhabit now, is that he also was writing from the last young century, which had so much tumult ahead, which was already fermenting.

And, What he identified, you know, he, in these letters that he wrote to they're called letters to a young poet, but actually the young man he was writing to was a military officer who wanted to be a poet, and he remained a military officer. So a human being. In those letters, he coined this he exhorted this young man to learn to love the questions.

And so he said, don't try to rush to answers that you couldn't yet live in the Learn to hold and love the questions themselves. And then perhaps you will live your way into the answers and What has come to me in our time, but I feel like the wisdom there that, that is so important in a culture like ours, which is so desperate to rush to fixes and closure and answers.

And we, we waste so much time when we rush to fixes and answers. that, that, that do not meet the complexity of what is before us. And I think what Rilke was saying, what I understand now is when to rush to an answer would be to deny the gravity

# The Great Simplification

---

of the question before us, then what we're called to do is hold and love and inhabit that question itself and have it be our teacher and our guide.

And I just feel like, You know, any of the areas that you mentioned you know, all of the realms of our life of being human and our life together, whether they are political or social or economic or spiritual we're pretty much living vast, aching, open questions right now. We have very few answers.

[00:08:16] **Nate Hagens:** Had you told me that, or had I heard you say what you just said a couple, three years ago I kind of would have, it would have been over my head, but since I was in India, and since I've been reflecting about the predicament we're in, it totally makes sense to me. It doesn't make sense that Bioakomolafi says the world is urgent, we must slow down until you actually feel what you just said.

And I do think the questions are hugely important. So, let me ask you this obviously you've done hundreds, thousands of interviews. Were you ever trained in that or did you just self train? And where I'm going with this is we have these unanswerable questions for society. What does it mean to be human during these times?

But you also ask your guests questions and you craft the language. And did you change that over time or how do you craft your questions in your interviews?

[00:09:14] **Krista Tippett:** I wasn't trained in it. I, it is something I learned and you know, I would say sometimes, I don't know, are you a science fiction person?

[00:09:28] **Nate Hagens:** I am. I love science fiction.

Okay.

[00:09:30] **Krista Tippett:** So sometimes I say that I think about my interview preparation model as the Vulcan mind milk interview preparation. So what I mean by that is What I try to do when I prepare is actually see how much I can dig in to understand not just what somebody knows, but how they think, so that when I get into conversation with them, we're thinking alongside each other, and maybe they even put words around something that they've never quite put words around in that

# The Great Simplification

---

way before, and then that's a moment of discovery and revelation, and then everybody listening gets to participate in that.

What I came to understand over time about how that changes my questions is that, you know, if I'm thinking about an interview I'm going to do, I obviously have questions I think I might ask, things I am curious about. But what I find is if I dig in to understand how somebody thinks, what I end up with are questions that are going to be interesting to them, and not necessarily what feels obvious to me.

But If I ask you something that's really interesting to you, then you're really in conversation and not responding and it's interactive. And it's intimate and it's revelatory for everybody. So, yeah, but you know what I just described to you was just absolutely evolved over 20 years.

[00:10:55] **Nate Hagens:** I, as you know, have a list of questions that I want to ask you because I think they're relevant, but I'm not sure just thinking about it.

What question would be interesting to you? I don't know how to do that sort of prep, but I've got a bunch here. So

[00:11:10] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah, no, it's a whole different way of thinking your way into it. And at this point for me, it's muscle memory, but it You know I can't even tell you exactly how I set that set off down that path.

[00:11:20] **Nate Hagens:** So on, on this theme what do you think are some of the sorts of questions that are foundational to our industrial ongoing ecological damage post COVID? Capitalist, or not post capitalist, late stage capitalist society. And how could we alter the questions themselves to perhaps create awareness and a change of consciousness and alter people's values who listened to the questions?

[00:11:52] **Krista Tippett:** I mean, obviously that's a huge thing to ponder. I find myself these days a lot looking for what is life giving in contrast to what is death dealing. What is humanizing in contrast to what is dehumanizing? I think even though those might sound, they might sound abstract, but, you know, the question of whether this is life giving or death dealing, if you apply it to a specific situation, pretty quickly gets quite specific and tangible.

# The Great Simplification

---

I think we have to Totally re, I mean, we have ways we have very, we're in deep grooves of well worn ways of how we ask and apply the question of what matters, right? Of how we measure what matters. And we tend to do that in You know, you could say the most simplistic ways, right?

Like, we like to measure impact or value in terms of numbers and, right, numbers and dollars. And I think that we are called by the magnitude, the existential magnitude of the, all the challenges before us. The fact that that getting a lot of these wrong is the difference between life and death.

We're called to really expand our imaginations and the analysis we apply when we ask a question like, you know, what is the impact here? What matters? How do we measure it? What are we measuring? And a lot of what we, what you and I are talking about here doesn't lend itself to measuring in terms of something so reductive as a number.

or monetary value. But I think those, you know, again, whether we just develop the capacity and the vocabulary and the stamina and the ways of speaking together, at least enough of us speaking together in these ways to ask those questions and then live by the answers that they yield. I'm, you know, again, I'm going to say it's the difference between merely surviving or the possibility of flourishing.

[00:14:33] **Nate Hagens:** So when I saw you speak at Bioneers, you mentioned the importance of generative inquiries and you were kind of, when we've spoken in the past you're not dismissive, but you're cautious about people using too negative or too doomy, certain language. So let me ask you this. If we consider a spectrum and nihilism and certainty and everything's gonna be a Mad Max on one end, and then in the middle, we've got some generative, interesting, alive questions that you mentioned, but on the far end of the spectrum, we could go too far and get to a point of toxic positivity where we, Brooke, no reality discussions about how tumultuous and chaotic our world is.

What do you think about that? Where's the sweet spot?

[00:15:30] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah, well, I talk, yeah, generative to me and generativity is useful. Useful vocabulary and, and and I bring it forth a lot really intentionally,

# The Great Simplification

---

and I do so because we are just incredibly fluent in the language of what is destructive, catastrophic, dangerous and what I'm about is not not, not idealistic.

You know, I'm not, I don't do wishful thinking. I don't think I do idealism. I don't actually like the word optimism. I do believe that hope is a muscle that we must flex. But to me, it's a very, it's a fierce hope and hope looks reality in the face and works with what is. And to the extent that it says that we can do better than this and understand it has to, you have to throw your life behind that, your mind and your life.

It's not an idea. So for h, invoking what is generative is really just inviting us to take as seriously as we take what is destructive and failing to, to, to actually attend to the fuller picture. And you and I know, I, and you know, You are a very astute analyst of of, of ways, you know, ways in which of our crises, right?

And and you also know, because you also have visibility to this, precisely because you are so thoughtful and a leader in articulating all that, you also know, as I do, there is also this abundance of creativity and social courage. Now. Because of the way our world is structured, it's all too siloed, right?

It's not all in conversation, right? This picture of what is failing doesn't sync up with all the innovation and all the will and all the social creativity that is rising up to meet it. So that is a crisis, you know, in and of itself. But all of it is true. And what is, I don't want to even say what is going right, but I'm, I want to say like the, you know, You know, like this phrase of Lincoln, right?

The better angels of our nature. It's interesting how a phrase like that, we all know what that is talking about, right? Like that, again, that could sound like poetry. It, you know, we all know what that's invoking. There's a reality to that. There's a fundamental reality to that. And there's a fundamental reality to the generative story of our time.

And I just want us to work with the full set of reality and data. And it's harder than it sounds like it should be for us to see and act that way, especially when we are. Living in a world of danger. We are. That's true.

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:18:45] **Nate Hagens:** So, so on that thread you emphasize the importance of living the questions.

So what does this mean to you? And have you practiced living the questions in your own life?

[00:18:57] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah. Yes. And I wanted to, I'm glad you brought, I'm glad you circled back to that because You know, holding the questions is not about saying, okay, well, I'm, there aren't any answers. I'm going to, I'm going to sit back and enjoy life or put my head in the sand.

It's not about being passive. It's not about being inactive. It's not about giving up. It's not about being in denial. It is also an active way of being. Yeah. It is about letting the questions be companions and guides and teachers on the way to discerning deeply, meaningfully, substantively, what is my best effort here.

I think everybody I know in every field of endeavor or every Organization and institution is in a kind of existential crisis, right? Like we're just not the forms that we inherited just don't quite make sense. We know that that all of this tumult in our world that somehow we're not, we're also not structured to meet it.

And So in some ways, I feel like without calling it that, a lot of us even collectively, communally, are living the questions of what we don't know how to do, like of where we kind of know, or a sense that the way it's functioning now isn't the way, isn't, isn't life giving and isn't sustainable, and yet, We can't quite see how we get to where we want to be.

And so you have all this kind of experimentation and innovation all over the place but none of it adds up to an answer. It's searching. I really, a word that I love from spiritual tradition is discernment. I think, That is also active, right? But it's like being in discernment about something is a different state from what I think really Americans get trained to do, which is to get mobilized and come up with an action plan and skip over the why.

And the how the deep how, you know, and also the question of who are we going to be and who are we going to be to each other as we enact this change?

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:21:26] **Nate Hagens:** So one of the core goals of this channel is I'm not. Trying to be prescriptive because I really don't know what to do. I have some general directions, but I'm trying to change the initial conditions of the future.

Do you have evidence or an inkling or some anecdotes or feedback that you in your efforts have changed the initial conditions and that people are thinking the deep How and you know, who we're going to be to each other. And have you changed the initial conditions of kind of the foundational population that listens to your show?

[00:22:05] **Krista Tippett:** When I talk about that discernment step, something even more elemental than that is the inner work that I think is essential if our outer activism will be

And actually amount to transformation as opposed to mere change. I think that this is an important thing for us to be thinking about in this generation, and I mean in this generation of our species because across time and the 60s, activism is a great example of this. You know, there's a well worn path of great idealism that rises up of activism, of big ideas about changing the world, followed by total.

exhaustion, and depletion, and in fact, Moral decline and cynicism. And the cynicism and apathy that kind of followed the sixties generation has really is really haunting us, right? Like those that created the conditions that are so So the deteriorating now that, that don't allow us to rise to this moment.

I mean, I, and I've talked to a lot of, you know, some of the people who were civil rights elders and around the civil rights elders, you know, of those generations. And one of my, one of my really important teachers and, and let me just say one more thing about that. You know, somebody who's another good friend to me is Isabel Wilkerson, who I think has done such important work, you know, on, With her cast work on, you know, even saying is racism a big enough word for what we're talking about and really looking deeply at the human experience across space and time.

And what is it in us that takes different forms in valuing different lives differently and devaluing some lives. And one of the things that Isabel and I have talked about is how You know, in that the generation of the 1960s on race and other

# The Great Simplification

---

things had this really deep faith that if you change the laws, you change the society.

And the truth is that laws can be undone. And it is only really when we change ourselves that, that there is ongoing transformation. Yeah, again, as opposed to mere change. And the challenges and reckonings before us are existential and they demand nothing less than transformation.

And that needs transformed human beings.

[00:24:45] **Nate Hagens**: Can we change our laws to be commensurate with what's going to be required in coming decades without changing ourselves first, at least a little bit?

[00:24:56] **Krista Tippett**: I think we have to be doing both at the same time. And I think that just, that needs, I think, so, you know, back to your question for me.

I think what my work. And what that does is it helps people be working on themselves as they are doing. And what, you know, whatever else they're doing, whatever else their contribution is. Also, in this century where everything, you know, everything you and I are talking about, everything, everybody listening is working on, we have no illusions that we probably in our lifetimes, we'll see whatever resolution is going to look like, right?

How this is going to end. There was an illusion in the late 20th century that you could be working or changing the world and you would see a change in front of you and you would take credit for it and get awards for that. Even 21 year olds right now, you know, that I talked to they understand that whatever they do is the work of the rest of their lifetimes and that they do it you know, a lot of, there's an, there is a beautiful, you know, what did Jonas Salk say?

Are we being good ancestors? I think there are more and more people, modern people, thinking like that. Understanding that whatever, the best we do and offer up, the best service we give, you know, whatever our intelligence or gifts it is to bring We're offering them up to people we may never know, to a world we may never see.

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:26:15] **Nate Hagens:** I wonder when Jonas Salk said that, if he meant only ancestors to humans, because our actions now make us de facto ancestors to lots of other creatures on this planet. Yes,

[00:26:27] **Krista Tippett:** and That's a consciousness shift.

[00:26:31] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah.

[00:26:31] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah.

[00:26:32] **Nate Hagens:** So on that theme as I mentioned, you've been active in journalism and podcasting for many decades, most recently covering the issue of religion and spirituality.

What have you learned covering what ostensibly is kind of a contentious topic?

[00:26:50] **Krista Tippett:** The way it gets, it's gotten covered And the way religion has been, has entered the public and political sphere has been contentious. Religion and religious traditions and practices as a part of human societies have been elemental and they've had You know, it's been good, bad, and ugly, the whole spectrum, because it's all

[00:27:14] **Nate Hagens:** these human beings.

No, that's a good clarificate, clarifying point. Yeah.

[00:27:17] **Krista Tippett:** So what I wanted to do was actually shine a light on how this part of life actually works, and the richness and breadth of it, and diversity and depth, and, you know, the intellectual and aesthetic aspects of it, which, And really, actually, I feel like when religion enters politics and when when it enters public life even the, really the spiritual dimensions of it misrepresented or fall away entirely.

So, but if you think about this as I do, as the part of the human enterprise, where across time and generations Human beings have really followed these questions that you and I started out with, because religions have never just been about talking about God or the divine or what is transcendent.

# The Great Simplification

---

It's, this has been the place also where we pursued, like, what does it mean to be human and what does it mean to lead a worthy life? And who will we be to each other? And put ritual around that and text and teaching and song, you know, and arts. And contemplative practice. That and these have also been the places for primary places for moral deliberation.

Something, if you ask me, You know, I'm answering this question really differently now than I would have imagined 20 years ago, but what I've watched happen in the U. S., but I, you know, and this is an uneven picture, this is not true everywhere, but in, in the U. S. And to a different, in a different way in Europe, In northern Europe you've had the fact that these, that religious identity used to be inherited, just fall away in a very short period of time.

I think that religious tradition is going to have to be remade just like All of our disciplines, just like politics and economics and prisons and schools and everything we do is going to have to be remade. I am something that concerns me and is a big question for me right now in our world is if these have been the repositories where people just got some kind of moral formation and some kind of moral vocabulary, even if they rejected it, they had something to work with, right?

Right. And in a very short period of time, you have people who are really being raised in kind of a vacuum that's very unusual in the history of our species, at a moment when there are so many, where every, all of these crises that we face have, have huge moral deliberation attached to them, right? In terms of how we come out of it, who will be what we want.

And so we're poor, we're a bit impoverished in our ability to Be articulate and speak together in that way. That feels like its own kind of crisis to me.

[00:30:34] **Nate Hagens:** My temple is the forest where I have contemplation and bird song and nature's art. But I agree with you that some grounding like that. Whether it's a church or a synagogue or a temple or a forest grounds us in a way that our frenetic supernormal stimuli smorgasbord culture doesn't allow us that space.

# The Great Simplification

---

So the further we get from that ancient tether, and I don't believe in the stories so much in religion, but I do believe in the benefits that groups congregating, singing, sharing meals and uniting has on our psyche.

[00:31:22] **Krista Tippett:** You know, whatever you think of sacred text and call it stories or poetry, and it is all those things.

It's wise about the fact that stories and poetry are a way that we have made meaning and transmitted meaning and somehow I don't feel like this can just abandon us. This capacity for moral imagination. Because that's what I'm interested in. That's what we need. We need moral imagination. And religion has not always, right, that's not always what got what gets transmitted.

But it, it carries some of the seeds that are not carried in other places in our common life. So I'm very curious to see how this will arise, where it will arise, because I believe that it will.

[00:32:08] **Nate Hagens:** Do you have suggestions on how we might better foster moral imagination? Obviously, one big suggestion would be listen to the On Being podcast.

[00:32:18] **Krista Tippett:** That's right. Listen to our podcast. I mean, you know, just what you just said about contemplative practice, about silence, like, again, you know, I think the 20th century would have just said silence is over. It's not productive. You know, what is time is money, right? You know, Ben Franklin. I mean, that's the American faith.

But you know, if you don't have a capacity to quite apart from the fact that Being at home inside yourself is being healthy. If you don't have a capacity uh, a tolerance even for getting quiet, for settling your mind, for having a sense of spaciousness to reality and And I would say even having these little inklings of how time really works because it actually is not about, you know, clocks.

That's also what we've done with, we've turned time into a bully and we turned it into productivity. But, you know, that move of discernment, there's no space for discernment if you're on a clock.

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:33:28] **Nate Hagens:** So it gets back to slowing down again.

[00:33:31] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah, slowing down, and I want to say trying to inhabit time as it really is.

[00:33:38] **Nate Hagens:** What does that mean?

[00:33:40] **Krista Tippett:** We have this sense of hurry and deadlines. Just think about that language, deadline. Do you know what

[00:33:46] **Nate Hagens:** I mean? I never thought about it until you just said it. Think

[00:33:48] **Krista Tippett:** about it. Yeah. The way we live.

[00:33:51] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah.

[00:33:52] **Krista Tippett:** Um, time is you know, as Einstein said, it's relative. Now that's a hard, you know, it's not being true to the physics to think that's a simple idea but it is.

It's not a linear progression. What did Einstein say? That it is a stubbornly persistent illusion that our bodies create for us because they really want to have a sense of momentum and moving forward and just having order to it all, right? Like, we really, and I get that because reality is so complex and time is so complex and our bodies need to have a sense of order and progression and sense But in fact, and I think this is so helpful right now with all these huge, I don't want to keep overusing the word crises, like crises, reckonings, possibilities, shifts, tectonic shifts that we're in the middle of, it is actually true, as we know, in our personal lives, as we know in our families, and as we can see in history, which is always all around us, you know, that the past is always ricocheting into the present, the future is making itself felt even just in our bodies.

It's a much more creative, generous, elastic thing. And then we've been given to believe. And if we can, and you know, transformation, for example. So again, so, you know, one of my great teachers, I almost mentioned him a minute ago is John Paul Lederach, who's, who works on conflict transformation.

# The Great Simplification

---

And he's really He's one of these people who like every discipline has these giants who, if everybody in the field knows them and worships them, and if you're outside the field, you've never heard of them, right? So John Paul is one of these people in the field of conflict resolution. But he stopped talking about, he stopped, he says now, any conflict can be resolved But if you don't transform the conditions, and this gets to your calling, right?

If you don't transform the conditions that gave rise to the conflict, it will reinvent itself. And so, and he stopped at some point when he realized that he won't take on any project where people aren't willing to devote a minimum of 10 years because that's what it takes. And he's been working, you know, in Columbia for 30 years on this fragile, but stunning transformation that's happening there and in Northern Ireland and in South Africa.

So I think the way we've been, you know, like what in the West and America, like we think, well, if you can resolve the conflict this year, we do it. Right. But think about the difference between spending the 10 years or the 30 years to something that is enduring and transformative and where the conditions themselves have been transformed and something truly new In the long view is possible.

That's what we have to be working for in our time. And so the, you know, it's not being passive and patient to step back and say we're, we're, we are taking a different time horizon because we are truly investing in the future and not our sense of accomplishment tomorrow.

[00:37:08] [Nate Hagens](#): Let me ask you this.

I've noticed I've been doing this two and a half years and I've actually been transformed by my guests, by the conversations I've had with people that there are facts, but there's a call it spiritual or fierce hope or some pro future emergence in the Thank you. 130 odd guests that I've had on the show.

Have you been transformed beyond your coaches that you mentioned, but the actual conversations, I mean, you've talked to the Dalai Lama and other people. Has it changed you and your inner being?

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:37:47] **Krista Tippett**: Yeah, absolutely. This wonderful civil rights elder, Vincent Harding, who I interviewed before he died, you know, he helped King write his Vietnam speech, and he was really there at the formulation of the philosophy of nonviolence in the civil rights movement, which was more than a philosophy, right?

It was a, It was actually an incredibly pragmatic and successful enacted strategy. And he taught, he used to talk about live human signposts, right? And I feel like what, you know, what you get to see and what I get to see and what we get to engage are these live human signposts. that show us that that hope is not just an idealistic wishful thought, but that there is a way of living and being.

And you know, one of the things I think I'm also always out looking for wisdom as opposed to mere knowledge. I mean, a wise person can be knowledgeable. They can be accomplished, but I think that the definition of a wise life, if we all, if any of us think of the wise people we've known, is it as a, Is what we think about is the effect that life has had on other lives around it.

Right. And so when you find these live human signposts, you also find these ripples and these worlds where you just get this glimpse of how we could be living.

[00:39:16] **Nate Hagens**: I understand that. I've seen that. So, so further on that question in your time interviewing people, lots of people, are there any things you've come across that felt Immediately or over time, like deep truths about our world that have fundamentally altered the way you move through life.

[00:39:39] **Krista Tippett**: You know, let me start with the notion of deep truth. Because in physics Niels Bohr was the one who gave, who articulated this so wonderfully that the definition of a deep truth as opposed to a trivial, dealing in trivialities is that its opposite is also likely true.

So the world is going to hell and going to hell in a handbasket. There's never been a more creative, thrilling time to be alive. Right? I mean, I feel like it's actually nonsensical, but. You know, I believe in God. God is an, you know, the whole idea of God, it's an absurdity. I think my conversations with physicists, I think where my mind goes with that about deep truth is actually very embodied and it's all about physicality, right?

# The Great Simplification

---

So I think the things that I learned that I think we and in, in in the West, in the post enlightenment West, it to some extent are relearning. I mean, it's not like people haven't known these things, but it's all, so, you know, it's like how, what we're learning about how vitality functions, you know, what we're learning about how We've always looked at a forest and for the longest time you know, forestry was about cutting down the old growth trees because we had this idea of competition and individuality.

And so we, you know, we had this very simplistic, like we were very focused on what was obvious and what our eyes could see. And we thought that the taller trees were blocking the light from the younger trees, like it's a competition for sunlight. And we, you know, now we're learning that what is happening below the ground, right?

Like what was happening below our level, below the ground of what we could see is this magnificent, like, universe that is so completely antithetical to all of the values that led us to cut down the taller trees. Or what we're learning about our brains and our bodies, how these ideas we've had about, you know, these compartments we've had for mind and emotion and spirit.

And it's just all so utterly interactive and symbiotic, right? Like that I'm actually made of more, probably at any given moment, I might in my body have more non human, more microbial cells than human cells, right? So I feel like everything we're learning about how reality works, how vitality functions is, is so fascinating and so different from the way we structured the world, the human world, the built world.

[00:42:55] **Nate Hagens:** So building on Niels Bohr's definition of deep truths have an opposite. So one might say that We potentially are nearing the end of a species or at least a civilization because of all the chaos. But the opposite of that is, and I'm gonna pose this as a question to you, is it possible that we are finally growing up as a species, like you mentioned the change in viewing the old growth tree cutting and the soil and there is an acceleration of a recognition of the interconnect.

This of everything on earth and the ecological science. And we are the first generation of our species at this 11th hour to be able to figure all this out and have it impact us in an embodied way. Do you have any thoughts on that?

# The Great Simplification

---

[00:43:45] **Krista Tippett:** I guess what I feel like for the rest of my time, I want to help cultivate and nourish is this idea of wholeness.

I feel like especially in the 20th century, we felt so grown up, you know, especially in this country. I mean, we had figured it out. We were the pinnacle. We would save the world. And, you know, I think the enlightenment, right? I mean, I mean, modern science in the last few hundred years, it's like, you know, there was this idea in the 20th century that there were just a few more things to figure out in physics, and then we would have cracked it.

We would have cracked the code of how the universe works.

[00:44:25] **Nate Hagens:** Little did we know that we were on the backs of the carbon pulse at the time. Oh my gosh. Keep going. Yeah, so

[00:44:31] **Krista Tippett:** So much we weren't. And, you know, so, you know, so much the. The ethos of modernity has been really separation kind of in the name of something very of this dignity of individual in individualism and individual happiness.

And and everything we did was about separation. So, you know, Like even in medicine, even, you know, when I talked about the interactivity of our bodies, the reason that comes as such a surprise is because modern medicine was about taking things apart. And, you know, we now are seeing organs, naming things as organs that we didn't see because we decided that organs were these things you could put on a slab and cut up and dissect and The entire, all, you know, medicine and all of our disciplines was, you know, turned into these subcategories that then stopped speaking to each other.

And then I started thinking, you know, that's actually what, that's what toddlers do. Like, that is actually how we learn. You know, we take things apart, we put them back together. And so I think for a few hundred years, And that's, it's simplistic in a way to say that of, you know, the, how our intelligence and science and scholarship was applied.

But at some level, I think that we've been in the taking things apart phase, even if we did that in really sophisticated ways. And now, we're we did a lot of damage to

# The Great Simplification

---

ourselves because we didn't just take things apart. We built a whole world around that as actually a value. And so if we're going to grow up in this century we, we really, right, like, you know, we really have to start.

putting things back together in very deep ways.

[00:46:22] **Nate Hagens:** We have not yet lived up to our namesake, Homo sapiens, wise man. I know. No.

[00:46:28] **Krista Tippett:** Creatures who are wise.

[00:46:30] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah. So, getting to the modern day, how have you on being and in your work navigated addressing important topics and conversations which are polarizing or divisive, which are acceleratingly polarizing and divisive due to social media and soon AI is going to play a role in that.

How have you navigated that?

[00:46:58] **Krista Tippett:** We spent a lot of time and a certain amount of experimentation. Actually, kind of after 2011, when which is not a milestone. Most people remember after Gabrielle Giffords was shot in 2011, which was, you know, she was an American Congresswoman. And I think I started realizing then I started just being really attentive to the polarization and the dehumanization that was happening.

And one of the things I, you know, I would say the last few years, both kind of post the 2016 election and through the pandemic. And now, you know, there are a lot of things going on at once, right? So there, there is polarization, there is division. I feel like in these more recent years, there's Below that, there is a distressed nervous system at a species level, which to me, the wars and, you know, the kind of metastasized hatred and violence are in part.

Manifestations of human distress, right? So I do, and when that's what you're working with better dialogue is not an answer, right? Like then I think there's some work there's work to do and just calming our communal nervous system and one person at a time. And so, So I'm just kind of letting you into my thought process.

# The Great Simplification

---

So I think there are a couple of things going on. They're inter, they're interconnected. They're enmeshed. I think that nervous system piece for me is more the crisis now. But When you're working with people who are not totally living out of their amygdalas, which I think about 50 percent of us are, and maybe most of us some of the time where it is really too much to ask, right?

It is too much to ask of a person living out of that fear place, which our bodies, you know, again, I want to always give credit to how our body, how this part of us, which is the animal part of us, which is part of the natural world, which is there to keep us safe, right? Our bodies really are working so hard to keep us safe.

But when we gets ratcheted up so that all you when you are totally motivated by this fear of danger, then you stop being able to rise to your higher human capacities.

[00:49:46] **Nate Hagens:** I totally agree with that. And you're like the ninth person that is mentioned. We need to calm our nervous systems down including my coach.

And that's why I went to India. So let me ask you this for the moment set aside our ecological and economic overshoot problems and our political problems, what sort of pathways could we heal our depleted nervous systems and our over anxiety and some of the things you've just mentioned? If we could do it in the coming decades, what sort of practices or institutions could heal broad swaths of society who act out of their amygdalas, et cetera?

[00:50:31] **Krista Tippett:** It's a big question. I mean, I think just to, to return to something that you brought up a while ago that we touched on The ability to get quiet and to get settled in this, in our age, is something you have to work for. That's unnatural. I mean, you know, when I was growing up, when you're standing in a line, you're standing in a line, you know, and you might stand in a line for hours or, you know, Little

[00:51:02] **Nate Hagens:** did we know that wasn't bad for us.

[00:51:04] **Krista Tippett:** Little did we know it wasn't bad for us. So now you had to seize time and space, carve out the possibility of silence. So, you know, that is an endangered species. So we have to make that, I think we have to work to make

# The Great Simplification

---

that more possible for ourselves for children. I think something really important that's connected to that but not exactly the same as just, just naming this.

And, you know, I have actually talked to people who work with the nervous system. There is actually agency that comes with just naming something. So just naming and, and letting it kind of creating space for people to name this. And I'm not, you know, You could say that we're talking a lot about mental health crisis, right?

So on the one hand, we're talking all the time about mental health crisis, but that's different from this, right? From just saying it is hard to be alive right now. It is a stressful time to be, I'm not giving myself a diagnosis when I say that. I'm saying as a species, it is a stressful time to be alive.

It is excruciatingly complex. There are all kinds of. really good reasons to live in fear. And I think this individualism, this separation that is such a core value in American society becomes just critically problematic in a situation like this because what we also need as we start naming this is we need to be there for each other.

You know, I like to say that the vert, the great virtues and hope is a great virtue, right? I mean, in religious tradition and philosophical traditions you know, virtues like hospitality patience All of these qualities are implicated in the things you and I have been talking about, standing before the crises.

None of those things are supposed to be something you do as an individual, like you, you know, you armor up with hope, patience, and hospitality. These things are supposed to be held and cultivated and supported in community. And so, you know, I want to say none of us can be hopeful alone now. And that's not how our bodies work.

And it's not how these virtues work. So I also think, you know, again, this flies in the face of how I've been trained. We have to really very intentionally surround ourselves with people who say like, I'm, I may have days, weeks, years where I'm not going to feel hopeful, and, you know, this word accompaniment is another important word to me.

So how do we accompany each other in also holding, you know, resilience sometimes when, you know, on behalf of each other? And I guess the final thing I

# The Great Simplification

---

want to say is, Some of us, and I think you and I probably count, I mean, I have my certainly fair share of despairing days, and I'm sure you do too some of us have some more solid ground under our feet.

I mean, my nervous system is distressed but I've also got a lot of I've, I've got a lot of support and I have more awareness and more care in terms of these things. And so, you know, you don't need everyone, you don't need 100 percent of the population to be engaged for real change and transformation to happen.

And I think those of us who are able to engage our higher cognitive faculties, which is no small feat these days have a certain kind of responsibility. And again, not as saviors or lone warriors, like, but together, like that we have to we need to step up and we need to step out. And that also means that we who are safer Also need to be the ones to step out into these kind of messy, ugly places.

I don't think any of us is called to put ourselves in physical harm. There's, you know, there are extreme places of violence that where you might be endangered and in moving, you know, in being present to that. But there's a much, much bigger space of people who might disturb or offend or unsettle us, but who have some curiosity alongside their convictions, like who, if they are invited to step forward as human beings, as opposed to representatives of their position or their identity would be so glad to engage that.

So I think some of us, yeah, I think there are all these callings, there are lots of callings to create and fight and build, you know, take, tear down and rebuild. But, you know, to be a calmer of fear is an incredible civilizational calling now. To be a bridge person for those of us who are able to have a, you know, one foot in, in two different worlds that are speaking to each other and be that conduit.

These human callings.

[00:56:25] **Nate Hagens:** Well, I don't listen to podcasts much partially because I'm too busy, and partially I don't really have the attention span, but of the 12 or 15 I've listened to, 4 or 5 of them were yours and they had a calming effect on me, so in the lack of cultural institutions in this individual role.

# The Great Simplification

---

time is money culture, maybe on being and the billions of downloads, maybe that is acting also as a way to quiet people's nervous systems in our culture in a way that our institutions couldn't.

[00:57:03] **Krista Tippett:** Well, I would be very happy about that. That would be impact to me. That would be plenty of impact.

I don't know that you would see

[00:57:09] **Nate Hagens:** that though. I don't know that you would get that knowledge. But I think there's no data.

[00:57:14] **Krista Tippett:** It's not a data point.

[00:57:15] **Nate Hagens:** Right. Yeah. Exactly. So speaking of on being affiliation with NPR, NPR recently suffered from significant funding gaps, downsizing efforts, cancellation of popular shows and accusation of bias not speaking of NPR in particular, but do you think Unbiased public media is a thing of the past, especially with respect to our ongoing and accelerating crises that, that we've been talking about.

[00:57:48] **Krista Tippett:** I think the pretense of objectivity is a thing of the past. And I think it was a, it was an illusion that somehow in the very homogeneous world of the 20th century You know, it was a noble attempt. And I was trained by journalists who believed that they were objective and who were striving at every moment to be objective.

But, you know, when we were talking a minute ago about what are the deep truths, I mean, another deep truth that is scientifically Like I mean, science has also had to acknowledge that there's no such thing as objectivity, that, and that not only are you not objective as a, as an observer, you are, you become a participant and you change things, right?

So I, I think the world and our understanding of reality has just outgrown that value around which the institution of journalism revolved as we've inherited it revolved. And so the whole thing is in disarray. And the question is what follows it,

# The Great Simplification

---

right? How does it, and right now we're in this messy period where what was is in tatters, but there's no sense of what, will follow.

And, you know, you can analyze the crisis of journalism and media in so many ways. You can analyze the issues of the business model, right? I mean, you can, you know, you can come at it in so many ways. But I, you know, so I want to, I just one thing I want to throw out here. It's like I'm thinking a lot about the difference between facts and truth.

And there is a difference. And one thing I think that went wrong That I don't think gets named with with journalism. And this was a, this was also one of the, this was part of the, this ideal of objectivity is that if you could just get the facts straight and present them. Like, that was your job, you know, and that the facts would be persuasive.

And the assumption behind that is that human beings are rational creatures. Right. And we're not.

[01:00:07] **Nate Hagens:** Right.

[01:00:09] **Krista Tippett:** We're not. But we have to live in reality, right? So we have to create. New ways of being that work with irrational beings, right? I mean, this is also our entire economic system is, you know, the whole, you know, capitalism in the 20th century also assumed that, you know, not that everybody was a rational economic actor in every minute, but that basically the whole balanced in, you know, people making decisions based on that it would all balance out to the good of the whole.

There's just no truth in that. And You know, facts alone were never enough. Never convey truth. This is a huge factor in this total breakdown of trust. And then this isolating and dangerous phenomenon of entire swaths of the population working with different sets of facts, right? Because Truth is not just about the facts you're working with.

It's about how information or ideas are metabolized in a human life. And, you know, through the mind, through the emotions, through the body, whether trust is present. What precedes, you know, what ground they landed on in a human person. And so

# The Great Simplification

---

somehow what we have to find our way back to, and it's not going to be objective journalism is how do we speak about truth?

[01:01:36] **Nate Hagens:** Two follow up questions to that. One can a human being have fertile enough ground to take in facts or truth if their nervous system is untethered? Number one. And number two, as a journalist, how worried are you or what are your thoughts about artificial intelligence impact on facts and truth and marketing to the brainstem in a way that's not in our best interest, but is in the interest of whoever is operating the A.

I.

[01:02:10] **Krista Tippett:** It's true at the best of times that we are not rational creatures. And when we are living out of fear, all bets are off in terms of what we're taking in and how we're metabolizing it and what we're going to do with it. I don't easily catastrophize, right? I think AI has a lot to teach us. I think we could take AI, As a challenge to get a whole new level of clarity about what actually makes us special as human beings, about what intelligence is and thinking a lot these days about how about embodied intelligence, which I think is the better part of human intelligence.

[01:02:57] **Nate Hagens:** Can you briefly define that?

[01:03:00] **Krista Tippett:** All the things that we know and intuit. You know, there's so much, there's incredible language, like how we've always, you know, what we call gut instinct, right? Knew it in my gut. And now we're learning that the gut is, you know, now it's being called the second brain.

[01:03:17] **Nate Hagens:** Right?

[01:03:17] **Krista Tippett:** Right. In this new science.

[01:03:19] **Nate Hagens:** That's where most of our serotonin is generated. That's where

[01:03:21] **Krista Tippett:** most of our serotonin is. I, okay. I'm fascinated by that. I'm fascinated with how, in language, we've carried knowledge that science, you know,

# The Great Simplification

---

all these centuries then later, shows us what we were talking about. I find that absolutely fascinating.

And somehow that gives me hope. I feel like we know things, and we may even be living things that we don't know we know. You know, our emotional intel, right? The intelligence of relationship, the intelligence of that question of who will be to each other. It's about care, right? And care has its corollary and vitality in the natural world.

It's mutuality. It's reciprocity. It's in the forest, you know, When all the nutrients flow in this direction because that's where the nutrients, that's where the nutrients are needed that is intelligence, right? The intelligence of love which is actually not soft. It is actually the hardest thing we do.

It is not about feeling. It's about acts. It's about action. Yeah. And all the different kinds of love, right? I'm not just, you know, we've so focused on like romantic love, but just, and I'm, and I know practical love, right? And the Greek in the biblical Greek there, you know, in, in Greek there, in other languages, aside from English, there's so many different words for love and, you know, there is Eros, but there's also philia.

There's friendship, there's agape, which is practical love. And these are the things that make the world go around, right? These are the things that, that are present when conflict is resolved, when human beings become whole, more whole, when healing happens, and also when creativity happens, even social creativity.

So none of that is It's available to AI. And maybe AI relieves us of the illusion that we've had that our brain, that our cognitive and computational powers are the most powerful things about us. Because in fact, we look pretty puny, like those things look pretty puny now compared to this mega brain that is a large language model.

I'd

[01:05:44] **Nate Hagens:** like to think that my own embodied intelligence would feel the truth of AI's impacts on me, but I don't know that's true. It may trick me into

# The Great Simplification

---

finding out the things that I like and tweaking my emotions some way. I'm quite worried about it.

[01:06:03] **Krista Tippett:** I'm worried about it too, but I guess I just, I also, I'm really being cognizant of the fact that the reason it may trick us is because it is a student of us.

Right. Right? Yeah. Right. And when we marvel at it we're marveling at ourselves. And I think, you know, some of the science that I'm very delighted by now is the science of awe. Have you followed this at all? No. He might be a great person for you to interview. Science of awe, like awe is this They've done these studies of, in many cultures and all the different ways all manifest, I think, so, you know, it, to me, there's something important about this as a companion to the quiet that you and I have talked about, the, to the settling and getting quiet because I think in our time of distress these, these contemplative technologies are finding people, you know, they're really there for the 21st century.

And they're often being used as kind of first aid, right? Like, I need to get through the day. And that's actually not what they were supposed to be most of the time. In their original crucible of the spiritual traditions. What I love about the science of awe is that it is saying this is this capacity we have as human beings to be in wonder, which is also a primary value of science.

I think, you know, Einstein said that the thing that unites science and religion and the arts at their best is the capacity for wonder. And what we're learning, what the science is learning. And so this happens in many ways. It happens in a, in the form of what they call collective effervescence, which is when, just when we're together with other human bodies, you know, and it can be at a sports activity or a worship service or just like, you know, and, you know, we're learning that when we get together with other human beings or, you know, dancing, like your breath starts to sync up your heart, you become this superorganism, right?

Like we haven't even begun to tap what that means, what that potential is. And it happens in music and it happens, as you said, in the forest, right? In the natural world. And what the science is showing is that this that ah, it doesn't just feel good. It has immunological benefits.

# The Great Simplification

---

It has like, like measurable health benefits. And it's a And the, and another form of awe that that they discovered all over the world is what they called moral beauty. So basically when you ask human beings all over the world, what they are in awe of, you ask them to talk about times that they've been in awe the most frequent answer to that question has to do with, with what they have seen other human beings do, right?

With the beauty of other human lives, with courage or sacrifice or love. That's not the story that the newspapers will tell us about our species today. It kind of comes back to like, what is the full story? That too is true. And so I think we have to You know, moving into something like, you know, and awe is something you can practice.

You can decide just that you're going to get more conscious of it when it happens. And, you know, Dacher Keltner, who's a scientist who works on it, who is really not a very, not a spiritual person in any kind of overt way. You know, he has something called awe walk. So, you know, it would just be you doing what you do in the forest, feeling what you feel in the forest and getting that much more conscious about it.

And really, isn't that what we're talking about with everything is that we, if we're going to grow up our species. This century. We are going to live more deeply, more fully into our consciousness.

[01:09:55] **Nate Hagens:** And does that start from a person, and a dozen people, and a hundred, and a thousand, and upwards? Does it start from the ground up, or is there an institutional vector that could set us on that path?

[01:10:09] **Krista Tippett:** So I'll give, I will give you an image that is important to me in thinking about impact. And also, I think you asked me a question about this that, you asked me recently, like, how can you know, like, how do we measure these things? So my, John Paul Lederach the conflict transformation person I mentioned, says tum, he has literally been there in many cultures, in many countries, across the last 40 years, where societies moved from you know from war from total conflict to to a transformed state where the conditions were transformed.

And what he says is always present. He says that what we focus on when we later tell the stories of these kinds of things is we focus on critical mass. Again, we, numbers, we see the numbers, right? The count of the bodies on the street, you

# The Great Simplification

---

know, the march on Washington. But he said that's critical mass, but he says what is always present.

before the critical mass, making it possible eventually, and after the critical mass, so that the change still suffuses. What comes next is what he calls critical yeast. And I like that's a metaphor from the natural world, right? And that he describes as small groups of people, of unlikely combinations of people in a new quality of relationship.

And he says that this starts very small and the quality of the relationship is really important. And then that at like yeast grows. And again, you have to have the right time horizon because it's not a five year plan. And I do, if I look at our world and if, you know, you and I are, I think you and I both see this very yeasty landscape.

Even as we see, even as, even how we found each other, right? You and I weren't talking a year ago, and now our work has been talking to each other. And I'm finding that happening everywhere. So that, that's a good enough way for me to think about, you know measuring impact and thinking about, thinking even about how something like collective consciousness shift will actually grow.

[01:12:27] **Nate Hagens:** Do you think we can find our way back as a culture? And what would you think it would take to enact true, potent, lasting, cultural change from this moment forward?

[01:12:39] **Krista Tippett:** As much as we want something completely new and renewed, it's going to be a whole new paradigm, right? All of the spheres are going to be different.

None of it is going to work the way things work now. And so we don't know, it's hard to say, like, I know we can get there if I don't know what it is. But the good news about that is that we it's calling forth our imagination and our courage and our creativity and our robust, active question, living of the questions of what it might be.

setting into motion what comes to us. And I am, I'm thinking so much about how in history. So, you know, when I just see what we're doing with the climate I'm going to

# The Great Simplification

---

say the climate apocalypse, right? Like, it's just so easy to tell the story that way. And it actually makes for great stories and it feels that way.

And there's truth to it. But if that's the way we tell the story, that's the story we're living and that's the story and we're writing that ending. That's the ending of the story we're writing. And it has been true across history in every sphere that things that were unimaginable came into being because somebody dared to see them.

and see them and walk towards them when most other people couldn't. So I think that's what those of us who have some courage and some stamina are called to do and call to do together, not as rugged individuals, but to pool our creativity, our imaginations, our ideas.

[01:14:24] **Nate Hagens:** While the world seems to be, at least in my sphere, converging on this story, and I, I feel what you, what you just said is true let me springboard from that into the closing questions that I ask all my guests, if you have a few more minutes You know, do you have any personal advice to the listeners and viewers of this show at this time of global upheaval and climate worry and our reptilian systems are activated during the time of what I call the human predicament?

What sort of advice would you offer?

[01:15:00] **Krista Tippett:** Something that compounds the sense of fear and despair and powerlessness that we can have is also that we live in this time of a saturation of media that is making very intimate and immediate the worst things that are happening at a civilizational level.

And and that, and that, that can just paralyze us. And so I feel like a lot of people wonder Understandably, you know, how could I possibly make a difference? What could I do? And I think that the, I think that the I think it's absolutely essential that and it, it sounds countercultural in the face of that to say that the interior work you do on getting grounded and settled inside yourself is a starting point for even having, Even, you know, with any depth, pondering that question of what I can do and that what we are all called to do, and I kind of take this from the spiritual traditions, but I think it is true wisdom.

# The Great Simplification

---

Like none of us is called to do, you know, we're called in the first instance to to be, to be healers and creatives in the world that we can see and touch. That's not a cop out, right? Like I can't do anything about the war in Gaza, right? I can't. I can feel, I can be in pain about it. But, and it can feel really yeah, it can feel really counterintuitive to say like that is going, all of those things are happening in the world.

What, yeah to, but to intentionally be present to the world that you can see and touch and ask the question there and live the question there, right? I, so I don't think I, I don't think I fully said this a little while ago. The whole thing about living the questions, I mean, I really do take this as a spiritual discipline and at, Multiple times in my life when I have had a question, and I think the question of what is my work to do in this world right now in this time ahead, I think you can literally assign yourself that question to live with, not to answer, but to live with.

I mean, you can start today, you can write it down, you can have it as a contemplative practice and as a life practice to walk around with that question through the ordinary interactions and see what it. See what directions it points you in and see what it kind of turns you away from and don't rush it.

[01:17:24] **Nate Hagens:** Thank you. You mentioned earlier talking to a 21 year old. I don't know how often you talk to young people but how would you change that advice for people in their 20s listening to this show with 60 years ahead of them? What sort of advice would you have for young listeners?

[01:17:44] **Krista Tippett:** This is an in between time where we know the forms that we inherited that are failing us, and we cannot yet see what is the, what are the new forms that will be born, that we are the generation given to make up those new forms.

That's very stressful, and I think just naming that it's stressful and like owning that is, is actually important. And. I feel like every once in a while, she, we should we need to like give ourselves permission and, and space also to marvel at what there is to marvel at all that we're learning about our bodies and brains and about the universe and about how have I, you know, how the forest works and that we are the generation of our species that is re inventing, defining marriage and family and gender.

# The Great Simplification

---

I mean, if that were the only thing going on the root binary of the binary of all binaries because one thing that we have to outlive if we're going to grow up as a species, is this reductive binary thinking that, that puts us into these, you know, Simplistic opposing camps.

And I like to think that this remake this, it's, you know, telling the truth about gender is what we're doing. It's a very messy time, very messy, because it's so foundational and so complex. But it is also astonishing that we're taking this on. And so just, I do believe that this The generation of young people now are an evolutionary generation, and I do believe that if we come through this, it is with an evolution of consciousness.

So how extraordinary to be part of that. If you can just muster a sense of that wonder every once in a while, I think it will be fuel.

[01:19:33] **Nate Hagens:** Let me ask a bonus question just because it's you do you have any advice for young people who are specifically interested in careers in journalism and communication, you know, given the landscape of our current society?

[01:19:49] **Krista Tippett:** You know, I was talking to some, a young person recently who's talking about going to graduate school in journalism, and I said, it's such a, it's such a mess now. And like, podcasts, it's all so fluid and kind of a wild west. And so, I would say really spend a little bit of time observing before you rush into the river.

There's also like in every sphere, there's a lot of innovation happening that might not be obvious, but take some time looking for it. I mean, an organization that I'm really impressed by is something called the Solutions Journalism Network. And even they don't think that name is quite big enough, but it's really about you know, the theory of change of journalism that we inherited out of the 20th century was of mainstream journalism was if you shine a light on what is most important, Catastrophic and corrupt.

That will mobilize people to change it. Well, actually, that's not how our brains work. And it's just not true. It's just when in a 24 7 news cycle, it's just demoralizing,

# The Great Simplification

---

paralyzing all of us to have constant, the constant narrative of catastrophe. So there's a beautiful challenge now of, and a lot of people doing interesting work.

So look for them. On how to tell the fuller story of our time. And also, I think this is such a creative challenge, how to make the reality of goodness and integrity and dignity as riveting as what is catastrophic and corrupt and failing. How to make goodness as riveting as evil. It's really easy to make evil riveting.

[01:21:23] **Nate Hagens:** So in a sense with on being and your personality and who you are as a person, the facts and the science of your guest are perhaps the proximate thing you're offering to people, but ultimately you are highlighting goodness and acting as an example of the creativity and positive energy that we need more of in the world.

[01:21:48] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah, but what I draw off the complexity of goodness. It's just as interesting. There's a lot of drama. There's a lot, there's high drama.

[01:21:57] **Nate Hagens:** Tell me about it. Tell me about it. Trying

[01:21:59] **Krista Tippett:** to be a good human being. And we need to let that show.

[01:22:05] **Nate Hagens:** What do you care most about in the world, Krista?

[01:22:09] **Krista Tippett:** It's strangely counterintuitive to say that if I care about so much in the world, what I have to invest in at the same time that I do whatever I do about all of that, is how do I, what is my presence in the world?

What is the quality of my presence in the world? And that, I need to put, I need to put energy into that. I need to put nourishment into that. I need to give time to that. So that I can be truly listening and truly uh, you know, I want to be a healing presence. And sometimes that can be very simple, right?

Because we can be a healing presence in moments, I can be a healing presence in an interaction with a stranger at the checkout counter at a grocery store, right? And that matters.

# The Great Simplification

---

So I guess I'm just saying alongside the question, like what I care about is one question and how I show up for all of that is a question that I equally have to be living to be true to that care I feel.

[01:23:15] **Nate Hagens:** Final question, Krista Tippett, if you could wave a magic wand and there were no personal recourse to your decision, what is one thing you would do to improve human or planetary futures?

[01:23:27] **Krista Tippett:** Oh, get us all breathing together. I would. I would wish that some relief, you know, some magic relief from this fear place in us that that's the place that's defining so many of us and that we're living out of, that, you know, it could be a capacity, but not a home, not a mobilizer. But then if that happened, we'd all have to, we'd have to be worthy of it.

Right? And again, I'm going to say those of us who are less captive to it actually have more responsibility to be generous, to step forward towards what might seem ugly or baffling. Um, there's my show started or I was very inspired in this work and in the way I do interviews through this, by this community of Benedictine monks.

In the middle of Minnesota, St. John's Abbey, which is a very globally creative place, and they used to, I was inspired that they used to have these these big conversations about huge issues, and they would bring together, you know, a really interesting group of people, And they would spend the first day and a half just going around the room, and so they would take some big question.

It was usually a theological question, but I've done this with, you can do this with any question. Like I did it with a group of journalists, you know, the question would be, what is journalism for? Not like how do we reform it, but what is it for? So if we're even going to think about how to reform it, we have to think what purpose should it serve in our life together?

And it's a very different purpose, I think, than in the mid 20th century. And then you have everybody go around and answer the question through the story of your life. And what happens is the issue you go to deep places in the issue, but it is humanized and you stop being able to see anybody around the table as an identity or a position.

# The Great Simplification

---

You, you see this complexity and there's something in there. There's all, you know, human, we're all so fascinating and there's a lot of beauty in us and there's a lot of softness that we don't carry around on the outside. And if you start to see that in other people, there's all this possibility that opens up.

about what can happen between you and what can happen in the world. And I've, you know, I've wished like I wished after the 2016 election that we could have sat down the next day and, you know, split about 50 50 in terms of who voted and that instead of. Hashing through the election, like we could have sat down with somebody who voted in the other way and said, who did you vote for?

Answer the question through the story of your life. And we would not be able to describe the world in terms of red and blue.

[01:26:20] **Nate Hagens:** And the 2020 election and the 2024 election.

[01:26:24] **Krista Tippett:** Yeah, exactly.

[01:26:25] **Nate Hagens:** I agree. Thank you so much for your time today and for your decades of work in calming people's nervous system and and educating them on all the topics that you've done so wonderfully and i'll see you soon neighbor

[01:26:40] **Krista Tippett:** yeah thank you nate Thank you.

Thank you for your beautiful questions and your beautiful work.

[01:26:49] **Nate Hagens:** If you enjoyed or learned from this episode of The Great Simplification, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform and visit [thegreatsimplification.com](https://thegreatsimplification.com) for more information on future releases. This show is hosted by Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and curated by Leslie Batlutz and Lizzie Sirianni.