

## EXAMINING ETHICS

TRANSCRIPT – KRISTA THOMASON: CAN NEGATIVE EMOTIONS MAKE LIFE GOOD?  
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I'm Alex Richardson, and I'm excited to welcome you to a brand new season of Examining Ethics, a show designed to bring insights from the cutting edge of moral philosophy and ethics education to the rest of us. From time to time, we all experience negative emotions like anger, spite, or even contempt. Many thinkers throughout history have attempted to push us away from these feelings in one way or another. But could bad emotions actually be good for us? My guest today and our first on this season of examining ethics is Krista Thomason, associate professor of philosophy at Swarthmore College and the author of a new book called *Dancing with the Devil, Why Bad Emotions Make Life Good*.

Krista Thomason, welcome to the show.

Hi, Alex. It's nice to see you. Nice to be here. It's great to have you.

Could you begin by telling us a little bit about your work in general? My research really falls into 2 big buckets. It is, both sort of the history of philosophy, and then my contemporary hat is, moral emotions, particularly the negative ones. So I've spent most of my career talking about our bad feelings. My first book was about shame, and now the second book introduces the rest of the negative emotions as the cast of characters.

Great. Why don't we start there? Your new book examines a complex and troubled relationship we have with our negative emotions, like anger and others. We might often think these are feelings which should be minimized or pushed against. What initially drove you to study the darker side of our emotional experiences?

It's it's funny because, you know, as much as I don't like to kind of ascribe to the view that philosophy is often you know, as Nietzsche puts it, philosophy is a confession. Right? I tend to think he's actually right about that. So he's certainly right about that in my case. So I jokingly say that I've spent the vast majority of my life being told that my feelings are wrong regardless of what they are. So they are you know, they're either I'm feeling too much of something. I'm feeling too little of something. The amount of times in my life I've been told to calm down is a really, yeah, is a really, really long list. So, I think some of my interest in emotions, kind of arose from having this experience of constantly having my emotions policed or dismissed. And it's funny because I think sometimes people get the idea that emotions are this sort of, taboo subject in philosophy. So I think a lot of people are like, oh, you know, those old dead guys, like, they don't care about feelings, and they never talk about any of

that stuff. And what's funny about that is I think that's actually a misconception. So if you read most of your classic philosophers in the canon, a good portion of them actually have a lot to say about our feelings. And I think partly they have a lot to say about them because they recognize what I think is in fact true, that our emotions pose what I call in the book a practical problem. It's a it's a problem about how to live. So we have these things. They're part of our psychology, and we don't always live with them particularly comfortably. And so I think, actually, many of the philosophers who were interested in trying to understand what a good life looks like were worried about emotions because they didn't quite see how to fit them into a good life. And that's particularly true of our negative emotions because many of our negative emotions seem to push us in directions that are, you know, antithetical to living well. They make us really miserable. They make us, you know, not nice to other people. And so it seems like these things are a real issue. And if we're gonna live a good life, then we've gotta address them somehow. And I think, actually, lots of philosophers are interested in that topic. They have a really wide variety of answers about it. But so I think they actually care a lot more about emotions than kind of the public perception of them would lead you to believe.

Let's stay on the matter of the stakes of this issue. Early on in your book, you frame up a kind of emotional double standard that a lot of people seem to hold when it comes to distinguishing our lighter and happier emotional states, like joy, from those negative ones that you emphasize. Can you say some more about what this understanding misses or gets wrong? Yeah.

Definitely. So my joke is always, I bet you've never been told that you need to manage your joy. Like, almost never. Right? It's almost never the case that anybody tells you that. I don't think so. Yep. Nobody ever says, well, when you feel joy, make sure you count to 10 and do some deep breathing. Right? Mhmm. But and yet we say that about yoga. Right? You get some yoga to manage your joy. And yet we say this kind of stuff about negative emotions all the time. We have this you know, there's this, like, all these metaphors out there about negative emotions being toxins, or they're like a cancer that's gonna eat you up from the inside. They're like a monster that's gonna grow inside of you if you don't do something about them. And I think that's a really strong tendency, I think, both in the history of philosophy, but also just in general. I think people have a real fear or even a real allergy to negative feelings. And so I I think we we tend to talk about them in these ways that they're, you know, they're these, like, kind of dangerous things that we need to tread around with caution or we need to manage them well in order to live a good life, but yet we never say the same thing about our positive emotions. Those never seem to be on the hook for, you know, making us like, taking us over and possessing us like demons. So I'm curious about why we have this view. Right? The both of those things, anger and joy, for example, belong in

the same category. Right? They're both feelings, and yet we attribute these kind of, like, semi magical properties to negative emotions that we would never attribute to positive emotions. I think that sort of makes that puts, negative emotions almost in this, like, special category of they require some kind of, like, special attention in order for us to figure out how to live with them in a way that our positive emotions don't. Apparently, it's super easy for us to figure out how to live with those. No problems there. But negative emotions are seen as, like, the real target of this kind of practical problem. There's something we have to do something about or, you know, or else something terrible is gonna happen. So I think that sort of that feeds into this idea that negative emotions are like the target of this special kind of attention that they need to be managed, controlled, or even gotten rid of in order for us to to live well.

That's really interesting. I wonder if you think we've made any progress in our treatment of positive emotions. We've had a few turbulent years between the COVID pandemic and various social and political messes. And a lot of folks are now talking about the impact of a kind of magical thinking. The sort of, oh, well, if we just look on the bright side, everything will be fine angle. There's a discussion in social psychology, and now increasingly in pop culture too, about the phenomenon of so called toxic positivity. Are we getting to a place where we're learning to manage our positive emotions too?

Yeah. That's a really good question. Yeah. I think toxic positivity is really interesting because I feel like it's sort of a step in the right direction in the sense that I think people are kind of realizing they're realizing that there's a certain sort of rhetoric around positivity that can be both really powerful and also really damaging. So it's oftentimes, I think about toxic positivity is that it kind of, forces people or pushes people into, you know, just kind of, like, grinning and bearing it, or or even, just the idea that you you sort of are never allowed to experience any kind of negativity in your life. I think people are sort of starting to become really suspicious of that. And I think that's probably for the best. I guess the not to be a downer about it, but I'm not sure that it's going sort of as far as it as it could in part because I think there's the the question then becomes, like, what's the next step after we realize that this is a thing? So after we realize toxic positivity is a thing, then what happens after that? The rhetoric I think you hear frequently is this notion of, you probably heard this phrase, people who said, it's okay to not be okay. Sure. That sort of line. Right? So at one point, you're like, yeah. Good. That seems like progress. Like, that seems like a good thing. I guess my question though is, in saying things like that, are we ultimately still then saying that that means having negative emotions is not being okay? So the idea of, like, oh, it's not it's okay to not be okay. You're still saying having negative feelings is being not okay. And that's the kind of thing that I wanna

say, wait a minute. I don't actually wanna say that having negative emotions is somehow not being okay. Like, that's kind of the thing I wanna resist is the idea that actually having negative emotions is totally okay. Like, you're okay in having negative emotions. So I think my on the one hand, I'm really glad that toxic positivity is a is a thing that people could name, and it's a and it's a phenomenon that people recognize. I think on the other hand, I'm a little bit wary that, you know, this the positivity has a real power over people and a real hold, and I feel like it has these ways of reinserting itself. So I'm even concerned that, like, the rhetoric around toxic positivity isn't doing what it needs to do in order to actually, like, get us over this hurdle.

One of the things that I was really struck by early on in the book was this really useful framing device, the story of Anna Julia Cooper. As that example shows, there's often a gap in our emotional lives between what we think we should feel sort of in our most rational parts and what we actually feel in the highly emotional parts of us that the ancients were so concerned with. How should we navigate this kind of gap when it comes to more difficult to process or even maybe more difficult to feel emotions like anger.

Mhmm. Yeah. Definitely. So Anna Julia Cooper, you know, a fantastic philosopher, 19th century philosopher, one of the leading voices in, black feminism. In one of her essays in her famous work, *A Voice from the South*, she has this fantastic story where she talks about traveling the US by train. And she makes a point to say that the white conductors would frequently help white women with their luggage, or they would help, you know, the white women get off of the train and onto the platform. And then when she would try to get off of the train, nobody would help her. In fact, many of the conductors would pointedly turn their backs on her as a way of kind of ignoring her. And so she had to get her own luggage and get her get herself off the train. And she describes her reaction to this, and she has this beautiful poetic description of her anger, which she both at the same time sees as completely justified and thinks that it is, you know, it's the most poignant rage, and it is absolutely justified for her to sort of register this disrespect and to be angry about it. She thinks she has every right to be angry. But then at the same time, she has this this kind of fear that the fact that she's responding to this with a certain kind of rage is actually proving the conductors right, that she's not, quote, really a lady after all, because real ladies wouldn't get mad the way that she's getting mad. And so then she has this, like, weird mix of she doesn't describe it as shame, but a little bit of, like, embarrassment or shame about her anger while at the same time thinking that it's justified. So what I love about Cooper's description is I think it really captures the complex layers of our emotional life. And I wish that we still described our emotional life in these, like, really complex ways the way that she does. But it but it illustrates really, I think, really well this sort

of practical issue, the practical problem of emotional life that we're faced with, which is that at the same time, we have these, frankly, mixed feelings about our own emotions, particularly about our negative ones. And we can we can recognize that the on the one hand that we sort of, like, they they're telling us something. Right? And then at the same time, we can sort of, like, question ourselves and feel things about our feelings. Right? So we have this really ourselves and feel things about our feelings. Right? So we have this really complicated relationship, to our emotions in that way. Let's turn to a bit of a larger philosophical and historical context here.

A lot of thinkers have argued that we ought to at least distance ourselves from negative emotions. Others argue that we should actively suppress them. You call thinkers like this the emotional saints and work to differentiate your view from theirs. How do you respond to this sort of saint like view about emotions?

It's funny because I think emotional sainthood is one of those things that, it shows up in a variety of different guises. And I think people recognize it in its kind of, like, clearest form when we're talking about the folks who think, oh, negative emotions are a problem, and, you know, they should we should get rid of them. And these are the folks that I call the controlled emotions. And so there's lots of people in this category. Stoicism is having such a moment right now. It is so popular. The new stoics. Yeah. Right? Like, Ryan Holiday. Like, I saw his book I saw his book in the I went to the Nobel Peace Prize Museum last week, and I saw his book in the, like, bookstore, and I was like, oh my gosh. Look at him. He's right there. Yep.

They're in airports.

Yeah. They're in airports. They're everywhere. And, yeah, so they're the they're one of the kind of classic versions of the controlled emotion saints who think that, you know, look and to their credit to the stoic's credit, they actually make less of a distinction between positive and negative emotions than we often do. So they typically don't do the thing we do, which is make negative emotions out to be the bad guy, but positive emotions are fine. Your controlled emotion saints actually think most emotions are a problem. They're, like, fundamentally irrational in certain ways. And so they anything that disturbs that, you know, that peace of mind that you're supposed to be trying to achieve, especially for the stoics, anything positive or negative emotions doesn't matter. Both of them are a problem. So I think people recognize the that kind of emotional sainthood where it's, you know, we'd be better off the the basic sort of tagline of the of the controlled emotion sense is we'd be better off if we either didn't feel these feelings much or didn't feel them at all. And that's, I think, the kind of, like, super recognizable version of emotional sainthood. I think the slightly less recognizable version of emotional sainthood is the folks that I call the cultivated emotion

saints. So these are actually gonna be people like Aristotle, I think, is in this camp. Confucius is also in this camp. These are the folks who will say, no. No. It's not that we have to get rid of negative emotions necessarily. They can be valuable. They can be important. They have roles to play. It's just that we have to sort of cultivate them so that they're refined in the right way, so that we always feel them appropriately, so that they never kind of get out of hand, and they always do their little job that they're meant to do, and they do it well, and they don't sort of, like, get too far outside of the barn. Right? That's kind of the that's the sort of, like, what you might think of as a more relaxed view of emotional sainthood. So, like, I argue against both of these views. Okay. Both of these views are wrong. What's funny about it is I think I have a slight it's weirdly I have some more in common with the stoics and with, and with Gandhi, for example, who I think of as a controlled emotion saint. Because I think they actually have, like, a the right sort of idea about negative emotions, which is that they're actually like really related to our self concern. So we care about ourselves, and that's kind of why, you know, we feel these feelings. And I think the difference is that your controlled emotion saints think, yes, And it would be so much better if we cared less about ourselves. We should definitely care less about ourselves. And then we wouldn't feel these feelings. Whereas I wanna say, actually, it's okay for you to care about yourself. Like self concern is fine. It's not a big deal. And it's okay. And being concerned about yourself means you're gonna continue to be liable to these feelings. And that's okay. And you should do that. So my my disagree weirdly, my disagreement with sort of Gandhi and the stoics and the controlled emotion saints is in some ways less deep than my disagreement with with the cultivated emotion saints, which you would think is kind of funny because they they seem like they're offering the more, like, conciliatory...

The moderate view. Yeah.

Yeah. There's the moderate view. I argue against them as well, in part because I think this kind of notion of your emotions always having to be appropriate, gets us kind of back into this question that we were talking about earlier about, well, when you're policing your own feelings, like, how do you know that it's your sort of, you know, the the dichotomy is always like, well, the rational judgment knows better, and it's the thing that keeps the emotion under control and doing the job that it's supposed to do. And that's what you use to refine your emotion. Right? My emotion and my judgment need to line up, and that's when that's when they're doing the right thing. True. And I wanna say, listen, that that presupposes that your emotion is usually wrong, and your judgment's usually right.

I wonder what you think the costs of a strong sort of saint like or suppression based view are. Given your criticisms, what do you think the risks are of trying to too far suppress or maybe even eliminate

negative emotions? What stands to be lost?

Let me start with, I think, a thing that I think that's really tempting, but I think is actually not the problem. Right? So I think the I think the tempting views I think people have a kind of, like, ventilation mode of of, you know, thinking about negative emotions. Like, oh, if you bottle it up, then it's just gonna explode bigger. Right? I think that's a very common...

It's catharsis...

Yeah. It's cathartic. Right? And so I think it's I think that's a very common way of thinking, like, that's the danger. Right? I don't think that's the danger. I think the bigger danger is things. 1, I think it's self alienating. So I think at the end of the day, the thing about the the sort of strong version of sainthood is that, you really, they really are asking you to distance yourself from yourself and to think less about yourself and to care less about yourself. But I ultimately think that's asking you to become more detached from yourself and your life and your concerns. And I think there's something to be lost about I think you're not valuing yourself. Right? And I and I actually think there's something kind of lamentable about this notion that you should keep yourself and your own concerns about your own life kind of at arms distance. That seems that seems like a very odd, to say the least, psychological state to be in. It's just sort of like, well, you can only care, but don't care too much. You know? And and even the advice that you see from some of the stoics, I think, is falling exactly into that category where it's like, you know, remind yourself Epictetus is like, remind yourself that your wife and child are human and they're gonna die, and then you won't be so upset about it. And I kind of wanna go, guys, like, I just think that's not good advice to give. I don't actually think you should live your life sort of at arm's length from yourself. That's self alienating. So I think there's that. I think there's also an issue that I I really do I very much buy the idea that your emotions tell you things. And sometimes they tell you things before you know them or before you're ready to know them. And I think that there's a real element of self exploration and self knowledge that they provide that I think the more we sort of distance ourselves from them, we're gonna not have access to that.

I wanna try to differentiate a little bit between negative emotions. Folks might have an easy time with this notion from your book and elsewhere that something like anger can be righteous and even constructive sometimes, but I think they might have a harder time with something like spite or schadenfreude An interesting insight from your book is that negative emotions can serve valuable purposes So I wonder if you might walk our listeners through an instance where feeling something like spite could be productive.

So it's interesting because I think yeah. I think you're totally right. I think people sort of see the, like, the candidacy of anger as, like, oh, no. That can be sort of good and valuable. I think one of the things I wanna resist a little bit is the idea that in order for an emotion to be negative emotion to be valuable, it's gotta somehow link up to moral stuff. Right? It has to be, it's gotta be a righteous anger. It has to be anger about injustice or something like that. Right? Whereas, like, my anger that my lawnmower won't start is somehow, like, not good. Right? Like, that's unproductive anger. So I wanna sort of, like, back away from this idea. And I think I think partly it's it goes to kind of the way we don't value our emotions is that, you know, the idea that they have to well, in order for us to keep it around, they got to be productive. They got to be do they got to be doing something. They got to be earning their keep. So spite, right, is the thing that I think, people get wrong about spite is that it's somehow always petty, and it's always kind of counterproductive or always mean spirited, something like that. And I and as someone who is, like, definitely would describe myself as a spiteful person, I think actually most of the time what's happening with spite if you think about, well, like, when are the cases when we typically feel spite? I think almost always or not always, but frequently, we tend to feel spite anytime we have this sense that people are kind of lording themselves over us. My favorite example is my mom, you know, telling me that, you know, you need to eat healthy and therefore you shouldn't have dessert. Right? Like the minute she's gonna do that, but like desserts coming to the table, please trust me. Like, even if I care about my own health, it doesn't matter. Like the more bossy you are about it Not today. The more not today I don't. And so, so I think the thing about spite is that it's this kind of, like it's an emotion of of sort of self defense, I sometimes call it, because it is, it's a way of kind of saying, look. You're stepping over my boundaries here. Like, you're trying to tell me how to live. You're trying to tell me what to do. And that doesn't have to be, you know, sort of someone, like, really explicitly saying, like, you know, you shouldn't it's not it's not always my mom telling me not to order dessert. But sometimes it's your, like my favorite example is, you know, everybody's had this person in their lives, maybe a neighbor or something, who, like, thinks of themselves as a handyman, but actually, like, you know, is really confident in their own skills about being a handyman. And then it's like, sometimes they do these projects and you're like, oh, and it and it messes up. Right? And there's a little party that's like yeah. That's what I mean, that's more Schadenfreude. Right? Where you're like, told you. But, there's a I think there's a anytime we sort of have this sense that people are kind of trying to butt into our business or tell us how to live, I think emotions like Spieden and Schadenfreude are sort of part of that response. And that's just all that is is, I think, right, spite and Schadenfreude are emotions that show us that we value our own independence. And we don't care for it much when people try to boss us around. And so those feelings are just kind of like that reaffirmation. Do you know what? Hey. It's my life



and I get to do what I want. Now that doesn't justify every single, you know, response that you might like, any kind of every single spiteful action that you wanna do. I'm not so much interested in kind of, you know, defending every spiteful action. I'm more interested in defending the feeling. Right? It's like, is it okay for me to feel spite in this case? Yeah. Of course, it is. Why? Because you care about yourself and you care about your life.

So I'm a child of the early nineties. So I'm an avowed Richard Scarry, lowly worm stan. As it turns out though, the worm isn't so lowly in your book. There's a super accessible explanatory metaphor of weeds and worms as forces that we have to contend with as we go about the everyday business of tending our gardens. This is kinda crucial to the overall argument, which, spoiler alert, isn't about gardening. Can you tell us about this analogy and what it means for the project of living a good life?

So I, I love this metaphor, and the reason I love it is because you see it everywhere when people talk about negative emotions. It's the weeds metaphor. Right? So you imagine your life as a garden, and, you know, people will say the negative emotions, they're the weeds. And if you don't pull them up or you don't manage them or you don't keep them small, they're gonna take over and they're gonna spoil the whole garden. And you see it absolutely everywhere. This rhetoric gets everywhere, all over negative emotion. So I use that at the beginning of the book, and I say, look, this is the common way of thinking about negative emotions. My job in the book is to try to get people to stop thinking of the negative emotions as the weeds. I want you to start thinking of your negative emotions as the worms in the garden. Why? Because the worms are actually part and parcel of what makes the garden as beautiful as it is. Right? So one of my this is like an it I never in a 1000000 years would have told you that, like, a Darwin book, a very, like, a Charles Darwin book that is, like, not Origin of the Species, that is not any of the ones that he it's one of the his, like, later works. Deeper Darwin cut. Real deep cut, Darwin deep cut on vegetable mold and worms, turns out to be one of my favorite things.

Terrific.

It is, and it's he does all these, like, fascinating experiments where he shows that worms actually have more intelligence than people realize, and he makes this argument that they're actually really important in terms of cultivating the soil, which is now a view I think people have and share, but people had this view. So he, you know, he goes he does all this work to sort of show, like, this is the worms actually play a really important role in making the soil rich enough. And so I think this is the perfect metaphor for negative emotions. Right? If we wouldn't if we didn't have them, it would mean we didn't care about ourselves in our lives, and we wouldn't have rich

enough soil to sort of have anything grow in. And so if you wanna have a life that matters to you, that's meaningful, that you value, that means you're gonna have negative emotions as a part of that life in the same way that if you wanna have a gorgeous garden, you're gonna have to make friends with the worms that live there.

So this metaphor comes up again in the conclusion. Right? In the last bit of the book, you argue that we should learn not only to tolerate worms in our garden, but to positively love them. What's the best way to do this in your view? What advice would you give listeners toward getting more comfortable with not only expressing, but in the first instance, feeling negative emotions?

Yeah. That's a great question. And I I wish I had even more advice on how to do that. I think probably step number 1 is we've gotta be comfortable actually just feeling them. And it's that sounds really straightforward and simple. I think it's actually one of the hardest things to do. I think it's incredibly hard if you've ever tried it. If you're sitting there and you identifying yourself and you think, god, I'm really envious actually, right now, to say that out loud is way harder than it sounds. So I think one of the I think like, step number 1 is being willing to say, you know what, I feel envy, and then stop. Because I think our tendency is actually not to stop. Right? Our tendency is to say, I feel envy, but blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and to try to either justify or explain away, or I know I shouldn't feel like that. So there's always a comma on the I feel envy, and then something follows. And I think what we need to start doing is saying, I feel envy, period, and just quit, and let yourself feel it. And so once you sort of see, like, look, these are actually things that are part of the the attachment that I have to my own life and that that my own life is valuable to me and it's important to me how it goes, then they start not it's not so much about, you know, they're this, like, thing that's preventing me from living a good life. No. Actually, they're the thing that's making my good life possible because they're part of what it means for me to care about how my life goes in the first place.

I'm gonna end with a question you likely get pretty often. Not to put too obvious a point on it, but emotions like anger and contempt in particular are really rife in public life right now. It seems like every day that I'm seeing commentary from folks decrying a crisis of civility, or a breakdown in the way that we talk to each other. But I imagine that you have a pretty unique take here. How might your framework help us think about what the bounds of political discourse look like? Particularly when we think about the practical problem of negative emotions, that is, what those emotions actually drive us to do? I wonder how you think about this, given some of the flirtations we're seeing now with things like political violence.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. So, yeah, this is definitely a question I get.

This is definitely a question I think I'm still thinking about.

So I think all are.

Yeah. I think we all are. Yeah. So here here's the here's the narrative I think that you hear. We're experiencing more of these emotions. They're leading us to do these terrible things or have these terrible views. And so the problem is the emotions themselves. Right? They they're the things that are causing the problem. They're the bad guys. They're the villains. I actually think that's in some ways backwards. I think the emotions your negative emotions in these cases are actually the victims. I think what you see in the ugliness in politics these days is not people experiencing negative emotions and then doing terrible things with them. It's that people have developed world views and ideologies because of a huge variety of reasons. And then they're using the negative emotions to build, to upkeep, and to reify those ideologies. What's happening is we're kind of using our you know, the way I sometimes the way I I put it in the book is if you've got someone who is, you know, who feels angry about how their life was, their life hasn't gone the way they wanted it to go, and they're there's a, you know, they don't have sort of one particular person to blame, or they really wanna resist blaming themselves because that requires a lot of self knowledge and, you know, maybe admitting that you've done some things that you're not proud of or that you haven't tried as hard as you want to in your life or that you haven't accomplished what you sought out to accomplish. It's much harder to sort of face the fact that you're failing at something. It's a little bit easier to think that somebody else is responsible for that thing. Somebody in that situation might easily start looking around trying to find some villain in their lives to sort of say, like, this is, you know, this is the person. It's your fault that I'm like this, or it's your fault that I'm not you're getting opportunities that I'm not getting, and you're the bad guy here. Right? And I think what ends up happening is you then feel a kind of sense of indignation about that. You feel that you're sort of being slighted or insulted. And then when you have that sense that someone's attacking your sort of sense of self, then anger comes to the forefront to defend it. Right? I think that's one of anger's roles is to sort of defend our sense of self when our sense of self is attacked or threatened. And so then what happens is you then take that anger and feed it back into that ideology. Right? Back into that sort of story that you're telling, that narrative you're telling. And now you're saying, like, yeah. I'm angry, and I have every right to be angry. And the more that goes, right, the more anger the the more threat you you talk yourself into, the more self threat you talk yourself into, the more anger is gonna keep coming to the surface and keep jumping in to sort of do its job and do its defending. So in my mind, I think what's happening there is, like, people are using their negative emotions to build these identities for themselves, to build these narratives for themselves, and to sort of perpetuate all this

ideology that's then leading into these, like, ugly political situations where we're antagonizing our enemies, where we're sort of, you know, where we're being hateful to other people, where we're engaging in various forms of political violence. Mhmm. And it's but it's the ideology, I think, that's kind of doing the work, and the emotions are just unfortunately being used as kind of mortar to build the fortress rather than them being the ones that are sort of, like, fueling the fire, if that makes sense.

Krista Thomason, it's been a pleasure talking with you. Again, for our listeners, the book is *Dancing with the Devil, Why Bad Emotions Make Life Good*, available now from Oxford University Press. Thanks for coming on the show.

Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me.

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