

Mel May
Mel Interview 13

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 22 interview with Mel that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/k4xnY8GBA-4>. In brown are conversations about the Descriptive Experience Sampling process that took place during the interview. In green are Russ's comments, and in blue are Julian's comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process inserted after the interview. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt
JBK = Julian Bass-Krueger
Mel = Mel May

0:00 RTH: Everybody else is ready?

0:01 JBK: It's recording. Should we get into beep number 1?

SAMPLE 13.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

0:05 Mel: Yep. Um, okay. So this, uh, I did this yesterday afternoon. So the first beep went off at 12:32 PM and I've written, "The back of my neck was itchy and kind of tingly, almost like lots of little pin pricks in the nape of my neck. This was in my awareness as I copied and pasted a code on my laptop screen. But there were no thoughts *per se*. I was just sort of on I autopilot doing the mechanics required while looking at my laptop."

0:36 JBK: Okay. So there's this back-of-the-neck itchy, tingly pin prickly thing. [Mel: Yep.] And the nape, is that like a, the whole, just the whole back of your neck? Or a, a specific, like a,

0:50 Mel: Probably like a, a palm's width, like right at the base of your neck in between your shoulder blades.

0:57 JBK: Okay. Palm's width at the base. Between shoulder blades—so going down a bit lower than the neck? Or just, um,

1:05 Mel: No, just like in terms of that distance [indicates with hands a width that seems about 15cm].

1:05 Julian comments: I'm not sure what this means. This seems larger than the palm width's pain. It's more of a hand's length than a palm's width. Is she talking about the distance from this pain to her shoulder blades?

1:08 JBK: Okay. That distance,

- 1:09 Mel: But yeah, right at the bottom of your neck.
- 1:12 JBK: Okay. And it's this, does it have, is it like clearly within a sharp area? Or is it kind of diffuse where it starts and ends?
- 1:23 Mel: Yeah, no, I wouldn't say sharp. I would say sort of, yeah. Diffuse is a really lovely word. It was like a localized area, but it wasn't like, y'know [gestures on her and] It was just that...
- 1:23 Julian comments: Here she gestures to the pain region on her hand. And she does use the full length of her hand. So this changes my understanding somewhat. It's a wider region than I thought at first. And I'd think this region *would* only fit at bottom of neck/upper shoulders, somewhat between the shoulder blades.
There is the option that it is on the narrow neck portion but feels like it's wider than that area (going back to our discussions of sensations not constrained to the physical body). But I don't think that's the case here.
- 1:34 JBK: And it's itchy, tingly pin prickly. Is it, is it unpleasant at this moment?
- 1:34 Russ comments: "Is it unpleasant" is a problematic question because "is it" asks, or seems to ask, or might be asking about a general categorization or state (pleasant vs. unpleasant), rather than a specific description of experienced phenomena. Inserting the phrase "at this moment" doesn't solve the problem.
JBK could have asked "Is this tingly, pin-prick-y pleasant, or unpleasant, or neutral—just pin-prick-y? Or my question doesn't make sense or doesn't apply?" That would focus on the sensation, not the state. But unless the answer came immediately and with a sense of conviction, I would still discount it as being likely a meta-account rather than a description.
- 1:44 Mel: Uh... I almost can't recall to be honest. Uh, I think like a little.
- 1:44 Russ comments: The hesitation/uncertainty is evidence that 1:34 is an unhelpful question: It doesn't help her to describe the experience, and it does encourage her to speculate.
- 1:54 JBK: Okay.
- 1:54 Mel: I wouldn't use the word painful, but I wouldn't say it was like enjoyable.
- 1:59 JBK: Okay. Um, could, uh, okay, let me, let me see. Is there, is there more to say about how it feels, like this itchy tingly and prickly-ness of it?
- 2:16 Mel: Um... it was... I dunno, it wasn't, um, like *extreme* or like an overwhelming pain or itchiness, but it was certainly enough that it was defin-, like, it was definitely part of my awareness. Um, [JBK: Mm-Hmm.] but it wasn't like, y'know, an overwhelming emotion where it was like, uh, yeah, painful or anything. Um, I don't really know how

else to describe it other than sort of what I said: itchy tingly, almost like pin prickly, um, I guess like surface-level-y as opposed to like muscular.

3:09 JBK: Okay. So

3:11 Mel: Like skin sort of depth.

3:14 JBK: Skin depth. Um, do you have more questions to ask about this neck sensation, Russ, before we move on to ...

3:23 RTH: Nope. I'm ready to go on.

3:24 JBK: Okay. And so you're copy/pasting something and looking at your laptop.

3:30 Mel: Yep.

3:30 JBK: Is this just fact of universe you're skillfully doing this, [Mel: Yeah I] but you're not directly experiencing it? Kind of like, you might not be directly experiencing feeling the chair under you all the time?

3:43 Mel: Uh, yeah, I think so. Yeah. I mean, like, slightly more than feeling the chair under me. Like it was a little more part of my awareness than sitting on the chair—like, I didn't even note that. But it was very mechanical, like very, something I would describe as autopilot. Um, yeah, it feels like one of those fact-of-the-matter-y sort of things, um,

4:05 JBK: Ok. But still a little bit more than *totally not even there*, not even registering at all.

4:10 Mel: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

4:12 JBK: Okay. And, and the part that's there, is it more about the visual, seeing what's being copy/pasted? Or the action that's doing? Or is It's hard to even say because it's so barely there.

4:27 Mel: I, I think if I was gonna say something, it would be the visual element, but, um, yeah, like barely there.

4:35 JBK: Okay. Do you have questions about that, Russ?

4:42 RTH: Nope.

4:43 JBK: Then I'm, I'm good on this sample.

4:46 RTH: Me too. Number, number 2.

SAMPLE 13.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

4:47 Mel: Okay. Uh, 12:51. Uh, I've got in quotation marks, [reads] "'What do I have at three' was the exact phrase in my head, um, as a concept, and all at once, sort of like a spark

of confusion had come across me. Um, and then..." (apologies, but I'm in the business of sharing everything that's relevant here. I wrote) "... I also kind of needed to pee, and so this physical sensation was part of my awareness, like a dull, bloated feeling in my bladder. I was looking off into the distance in my living room, but wasn't looking at anything specific. So there wasn't anything visual, particularly, part of my awareness. It was that phrase and then that sort of bloated feeling."

4:47 Julian comments: Mel mentioned confusion in this description, and we never returned to that. That doesn't necessarily mean that a confused feeling was present, but it would have been good to explore.

Russ comments: (part of the thing-ify series) I think it is risky to think of Mel as having "mentioned confusion." She mentioned, in apposition to "a concept, and all at once," a (substantially subjunctified) process "sort of like a spark of confusion" that is as much or more spark as confusion.

5:35 RTH: And which is more central to you: the bloated feeling or the phrase?

5:39 Mel: Definitely the phrase, yeah.

5:43 RTH: 60—40, 90—10, 99—1?

5:43 Mel: Uh, maybe even like 70—30. Yeah.

5:47 RTH: Okay. Well, let's start with the phrase. And is the phrase there in words or is that in concepts?

5:55 Mel: Oh, I would, no, a concept, but, uh, that, that's, ooh, that's really tricky for me to say because, uh, I'll tell you why, because it, it was that distinct phrase [emphasizes with hands], but like that phrase as a concept almost, y'know? It's not, it's not a phrase I'm hearing or I'm not seeing the words or, yeah, like, I haven't said that to myself, but it was, I was clearly thinking of that phrase, as a, as a concept, not as like the words themselves. Does that make sense?

6:29 RTH: Well, let me ask it in a different way. So would it have, would, would it be okay to say that it would've been equivalent is "what's, what's my appointment at three o'clock?" Would, would that have been an adequate way of saying it? Or *not* an adequate way of saying it?

6:43 Mel: Uh, no, cuz it was really specifically *that phrase* that I said, "what do I have at three?" That was definitely it. Yeah.

6:58 RTH: So *phrase* for me is an ambiguous term [Mel: Yeah.] that I like to try to sort through. So, and so the question is, is this like [coughs] (excuse me) a concept that is so tightly conceptualized that it *has to be* those words, or do I experience those words themselves?

7:19 Mel: The first one.

7:23 RTH: So it's *not* that, it's *not* that it's the *words*, but it's the concepts that have basically no other way of articulating that [Mel: Yes] than that.

7:31 Mel: Yeah.

7:32 RTH: Okay. And, and that concept then, I think you said, is not voiced, or not seen or not whatever, but somehow directly present to you.

7:42 Mel: Yes. Yes. And this is, this is really integral to this. This is, yeah. Uhm, [pause] I can't remember what I was gonna say. Sorry.

7:56 JBK: I, I have one more question on that.

7:59 Mel: Yeah.

7:59 JBK: So in distinguishing between, if it's the concept that's so tight that those are the words, and between there being words. [Mel: Yeah.] Like even considering that words could be there, but not like, you're not like hearing them in your head, or they're not like you're not seeing a word. [Mel: Yeah.] The idea that a word could be there but not heard or seen or anything else, but the word could still be there. Between those possibilities. Would you still go more with the concept or more with the, the concept one?

7:59 Russ comments: "The idea that a word could be there but not heard or seen or anything else, but the word could still be there" is a risky move in a DES interview because it confuses, or at least does not adequately keep separate, Mel's experienced phenomenon from a philosophical/explanatory theory. It is indeed theoretically possible that a word *could* "be there" (whatever that means) without being "heard or seen or anything else." But we do *not* want Mel (or JBK) to be engaged in or influenced by such a theoretical possibility. The question for DES is whether or not Mel *experienced words at the moment of the beep*. What goes on behind the scenes is another matter entirely.

Julian comments: I don't know about "philosophical/explanatory theory". I was going off of other DES samples with words present but not innerly spoken or heard. My reason for asking this was it seemed Mel didn't understand RTH's 6:58 question with her 7:19 reply. Between the option of experiencing the concept or experiencing the words, Mel chose the concept, quickly and definitively. But it seemed like Mel thought that experiencing the words meant innerly hearing or speaking them. I think if she had the option of words present (but not innerly spoken/heard) she would mulled over the question more. She might have come to the same conclusion, but I at least wanted to present it as an option.

Russ comments: I agree with Julian's concern that Mel might not have adequately understood RTH's 6:58 question, and that RTH did not adequately present the words-present option.

- 8:30 RTH: So I, I think that's a great question, but I wanna make sure that it's asked in an even handed way.
- 8:30 Russ comments: RTH is in a difficult position. He would like to stand back and allow JBK to ask questions his own way, and then amplify / correct / reconfigure those questions in response to Mel's replies. But he would also like the questioning help Mel apprehend her experience without raising confusing distractions. Sometimes those desirabilities conflict. Here, RTH tries to take the let's-help-Mel approach.
- 8:35 Mel: [There are very loud hammering/construction sounds near Mel] Oh, sorry. That's a big [inaudible]
- 8:43 JBK: I don't prefer any of those options by the way, that, that I just listed.
- 8:47 Mel: Um, yeah. Can you rephrase? Wait. So I'll tell you my confusion with, I sort of understand what you're saying, Julian, but I think I am like at a point where I'm struggling to understand enough of a difference between the two things to be able to answer that.
- 9:04 JBK: Okay. Russ, do you want to give it a shot? Because I think you understand what I'm trying to ask.
- 9:09 RTH: So the, the question I think Julian is asking, which is a good, which is a good question, which is one step beyond where I was asking before, [Mel: Yep.] and in a good way. And, and the, the question is, are the *words* there? "What do I have at three?" Or is the *concept* there, even though that the word, the words aren't—we understand that the words aren't spoken or seen [Mel: Yep.] or whatever, but the words could still possibly be there. Or the concept could be there without actually any direct apprehension of the words. [to Julian] Is that a fair ask, asking of...?
- 9:45 JBK: Yeah.
- 9:46 Mel: Oh yeah, sorry. Um, I think...[construction noises] It's hard for me to say, I think. I think the words are there... but I don't know. I, my hesitation in trying to answer it is cuz I don't... like, I find it really difficult to, um, how do I experience the words if I can't, like grab at them with any of those things, y'know? So like what gives me comfort is like, well, I'm not *hearing* the words and I'm not *saying* the words, and all of that sort of thing, but like, there were words there. So it's, they're, they're, they're, it's a *concept* with some element of those words. But if you're now giving me the option of trying to consider like, that concept without, like— I find I find that really hard. I'm like, I don't know.
- 10:58 RTH: [construction noises] So I, I guess the, I think this is the same question as I was trying to ask when, but maybe I didn't, I asked it in a little too heavy-handed way. So is there any other phrasing that would be just as good? Like, "do I have anything at three?"
- 11:14 Mel: Yeah, no, no. On this occasion, it was really specifically the words that I gave you. Yep.

11:20 RTH: Okay. So where I'm coming down on, on the end of this is, this is somewhere between a concept and a word, and we're not exactly sure where. We, it's, it's definitely not a clearly articulated word. [Mel: Yeah.] But it doesn't seem fair to say that there aren't any words at all either.

11:20 Russ comments: Mel has been very consistent since her opening salvo: 4:47 "'What do I have at three' was the exact phrase in my head, um, as a concept"; 5:55 "I was clearly thinking of that phrase as a, as a concept, not as like the words themselves."

Across DES participants, all these are possible:

1. Inner speaking (words experienced as spoken); similarly for hearing or seeing
2. Words present (but not innerly spoken, heard, or seen)
3. An immediately apprehended, specific thought is present without word or other symbols (DES calls this *unsymbolized thinking*)
4. A sense of thinking, a gist, is present (DES calls this cognitive awareness)

These are not necessarily distinct, separate categories. Mel's sample 13.2 seems to be an instance of #3 unsymbolized thinking, possibly a bit in the direction of #2.

What makes these distinctions difficult is the widely held presupposition that there is nothing between #1 and #4.

Julian is right: even in RTH's restating, he did not distinguish option #2 clearly enough.

11:39 Mel: Yeah, that's really true to my experience a lot.

11:46 RTH: Okay. Which is okay with me if it's okay. Julian, you want to ask any more about that?

11:49 JBK: No, I'm good on this one.

11:51 RTH: And then I've got to pee.

11:53 Mel: Sorry. [laughs]

11:54 RTH: And, and, and what is that experience?

11:57 Mel: Uh, yeah, so I, I use the word dull. I think maybe in reference to it being like that sort of 30% of my awareness or whatever. Um, and it was just like a, I guess like a localized awareness, um, in sort of like my bladder region. So it was just like that dull awareness of that area, and it's kind of a, and that awareness manifests itself in like a, a bloated sort of sensation.

12:25 RTH: And, and is that present in, before the footlights of your consciousness? At least like 30% ish or whatever? So it's not like I'm, when, when I look back, the... The question is: *is it* just when I look back at the moment of the beep, *well, I gotta pee*, so that must've been there? Or is it...?

12:42 Mel: No, I definitely felt it before this. Yeah.

12:44 RTH: Okay. And is this an internal thing? Surface of my body, inside my body?

12:49 Mel: Oh, no. Deep internal. Yeah.

12:53 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm happy with that. [Mel laughs and says: Sorry!] I don't think we need to push [laughs] too much farther into that unless Julian's got a particular...

13:04 JBK: Maybe one other question. Like, uh, when you say a bladder size region, is that a very specifically constrained region? Or is it broader?

13:14 Mel: No, I would say like similar to the neck thing where it's like diffused was a nice word, like sort of that area [gestures the size of her fist] and then that, yeah.

13:24 JBK: Okay. Then I'm good. Good on that.

SAMPLE 13.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

13:28 Mel: Um, okay, next one went off at 1:16 PM and I have written "Nothing. I was sitting looking into the distance in my lounge room, but not really taking anything in or thinking about anything.'

13:44 JBK: Okay. So there's nothing. You're sitting, you're looking. As a fact of the universe, your eyes are pointing in a certain direction.

13:54 Mel: Yeah.

13:55 JBK: Um, is that *at all* registering? Or no.

14:00 Mel: Uh, I would say like, not, like beyond like fact of the matter, sort of.

14:10 JBK: Okay.

14:11 Mel: Like, I'm not taking anything in that I'm seeing. Like, y'know, when we've spoken about like seeing and looking or listening and hearing sort of thing. Like I would put it in that category of like, I'm looking, but I'm not like seeing or whatever.

14:25 JBK: Okay. Looking, you're not, you are not noticing anything. You're not thinking about anything. You're not hearing anything.

14:32 Mel: Nothing's like registering.

14:34 JBK: Nothing's registering.

14:36 Mel: Yeah.

14:37 JBK: Um, then mm. [pause] Would you... [pause] Okay, I'm, I'm, I'm good on this one.

14:56 RTH: Me too.

14:56 Russ comments: On reviewing the video, I think we were not careful enough to make sure we understood what *nothing* meant. We should have asked something like: “Do you mean that you have no more visual experience than you have backside experience of your chair?”

14:57 Mel: Uh,

14:58 RTH: Number... 4?

SAMPLE 13.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

15:00 Mel: Well, um, this one went off at 2:20 and much of the same. I’ve written “Nothing. I was on autopilot in between actions and I wasn’t thinking about anything or taking anything in particular in.”

15:17 RTH: And is there anything different between this beep and the previous one? [Mel: No.] Nothing at all? Is it just the same, [Mel: Yeah.] same deal? Okay. And my body is no doubt in a different position, and my eyes are aimed in a different direction, but that doesn’t matter to me.

15:33 Mel: Yeah. But in terms of awareness, it felt exactly the same.

15:37 RTH: Okay. Then I’m good.

15:39 Mel: Um, next one was two... Unless Julian, did you have anything?

15:43 JBK: Um, I, I kind of forgot to jot down the, which, the basic context, not that it’s so important for experience. But where, where were you for beep number 3 and number 4?

15:55 Mel: Uh, um, I was, so the first one, 3, I was in my living room, um, and sitting down. And then for 4, I was still in my living room, but I was like walking around, like I was caught in the middle of sort of walking through my living room.

16:16 JBK: Okay. So we can go to number 5.

16:19 Mel: Okay. Uh, number 5 was at 2:.... [construction noises] Sorry, can you hear this? New York things!

16:27 JBK: Somewhat. [laughs]

16:28 RTH: Sounds like a construction site somewhere.

16:30 Mel: And like, it shouldn’t be like, I’m in my new apartment and there hasn’t been any construction. Anyway, I apologize. I dunno what it...

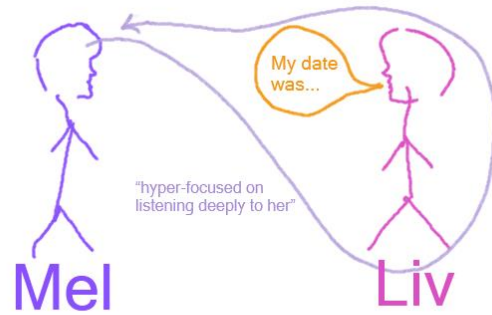
16:40 RTH: That is the life in the big city!

SAMPLE 13.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

- 16:43 Mel: It is! Sorry. I'm sure it'll be done soon. Um, okay. So 2:33 was the next one. And I've written, "I was listening to my friend Liv speak, um, and actively engaged in that. I can't recall the exact words she was saying, but I was hyper-focused on listening deeply to her."
- 17:05 JBK: Um, so you're listening to your friend Liv speak. You're, you're focused on her and what she's saying.
- 17:14 Mel: Yep.
- 17:15 JBK: You, you can't recall the words. Can you recall the, the topic? Or no?
- 17:21 Mel: Oh, I don't even think I can, I didn't write it at the time, and I don't think I can even remember.
- 17:27 JBK: Okay. You can't remember. Do you think, um, at, at the time of the beep was what she was talking about, like were you experiencing *that* in some way? Or was it, or you're not sure?
- 17:44 Mel: [construction noises] Wait, sorry, can you repeat that? I can't quite hear you.
- 17:48 JBK: Um, so you, you didn't write down, you don't remember what she was talking about, but at the moment of the beep, was that in, in your awareness, before the footlights? [inaudible]
- 18:01 Mel: As in what she was saying? Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think, um, I, I, when I was writing it down, I couldn't remember the exact like words that she was saying, so I noted that, but I didn't, I just didn't write down whatever we were talking about. I can't remember what, like, I dunno, probably a recent date she went on or something. But definitely the words that she was saying, or like the conversation that we were having was absolutely like the entirety of my awareness at that time. So like, yes, what she was talking about was absolutely part of my awareness.
- 18:39 JBK: So just, yeah, being focused on what she was talking about was your entirety of your awareness. You weren't hearing some other sounds wherever you were in the coffee shop or
- 18:39 Russ comments: Mel's opening salvo (16:43) described her experience as "hyper-focused on listening deeply to her." JBK's "focused on what she was talking about"

seems to RTH like it might miss the heart of Mel's experience. That will lead to RTH's upcoming line of questioning.

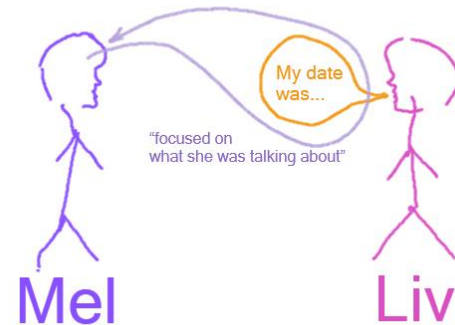
Here's a schematic of the difference RTH will try to discriminate.



18:49 Mel: No, nothing. No.

18:52 JBK: No. And, um... [pause] Russ, do you have any questions about this one?

19:07 RTH: Yeah, I, I'd like to see whether there's a distinction between focusing on the conversation, which sort of abstracts the conversation away from.... Is her name Liv or Lynn?



19:20 Mel: Yeah, Liv.

19:23 RTH: So the, so the question is: Am I aimed at the conversation? Or am I just aimed at Liv and she's talking and, and I'm absorbed in this, I'm absorbed in this, but without a particular direction at the con- conversation? I'm, I'm, I'm understanding that I'm *understanding* the conversation, I'm *comprehending*; that's part of the deal. [Mel: Yeah.] But the question is, is it *just* about the conversation? Or is, is it I am just absorbed in this scene and this scene is involving Liv talking about whatever it is that she's talking about?

19:58 Mel: Um... I think the latter if I understand the distinction well enough. Uh,

20:11 RTH: So the difference is, let's, let's say she's talking about the, the election. And so the question is, is your in, is your experience aimed at the election [Mel: Oh yeah.] theme, *or* is it aimed at I'm absorbing this whole deal? It happens that at this time, it's, it's about the elec- election, but it's not, it's not that the *election* is the central thing to me, it's the, it, whatever it is that's here, it happens to *be* the election, but it's Liv and...

20:38 Mel: I understand. I understand. No, definitely. Like the, the present moment. The scene was the thing. Yeah. That's interesting.

20:51 RTH: Then I'm good. That is how I understood what you said on in the opening salvo, by the way. [Mel: Okay.]

21:00 RTH: Number, onto number 6.

SAMPLE 13.6 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

- 21:02 Mel: 6. Oh! We're speeding through today. Um, 3:05 PM. I've written, "I read a text that said 'Feel better' and was sort of absorbing that. I was looking at my phone on the kitchen bench and taking in that phrase. Uh, also feel I was a little startled by this beep, and therefore couldn't quite remember more broadly if anything else was present in my awareness.
- 21:38 RTH: [pause] So is this about the, the reading "feel better"? Is that, is that where your [Mel: Yeah.] experience is aimed? And somebody has written that to you?
- 21:53 Mel: Yeah, so a text, sent me that text.
- 21:56 RTH: And, and, and is that part of your experience that texter or the, that she's, she is conveying that to me? Or is that—it's *a fact*—but what I'm just at this moment, I'm just into the concept *feel better*.
- 22:09 Mel: No, I don't think so. I think it was like the, the phrase and those words and like that as a concept, but not tied to that person [inaudible] me well wishes. Yeah.
- 22:26 RTH: Okay. And, and is the reading, does the reading itself have any characteristics?
- 22:33 Mel: Uh, I always find this challenging. Um, like the characteristics of the reading are that like my eyes are pointed down at my phone and I, they see those words and I'm like absorbing those words, but I can't give you any more description than that's how the reading happens.
- 22:57 RTH: I don't say to myself, [Mel: No.] quote, "feel better" unquote. I don't *hear* my voice saying, or I don't hear the *writer's* voice saying, [Mel: No.] There's nothing like that. And yet *somehow* I am taking in these exact words.
- 23:15 Mel: Yeah, yeah.
- 23:20 RTH: Which is sort of the distinction that I was making, or that we were making, in the previous beep, or whenever that, whenever that was. *This* was, is about the words, not about the situation or whatever.
- 23:20 Russ comments: He refers to sample 13.5, the distinction between "hyper-focused on listening deeply to her" and "focused on what she was talking about." See the comment at 18:39.
- 23:33 Mel: Ahah! Yes!
- 23:34 RTH: Where, whereas the *other* one was *not* so much about the words, and I'm, I'm speaking about the one that's L- [Mel: Liv. Yeah.] *This* is about the *message*. The Liv beep was about I'm absorbed in, I'm absorbed in the moment, situation, whatever that was.

- 23:55 Mel: Yeah. That's really interesting. And that's a really nice juxtaposition. Um, and that makes both of those things feel like they sit even better with me by being able to compare them. They feel distinctly different. Yeah. That's cool.
- 24:14 RTH: And I, as an aside, I would, I would say it's amazing to me, in my DES work, how often that kind of thing happens where there's one beep that clarifies another, clarifies another beep in some important way.
- 24:29 Mel: Yeah. How interesting. Especially when it's like, sorry,
- 24:32 RTH: Jung would have an opinion about that!
- 24:35 Mel: [JBK laughs]. Especially when it's like, uh, y'know, in the weeds for me. So it's like getting to points that are kind of hard to, uh, articulate or like distinguish, like, y'know, it's in, in the real gray areas. So being able to see the differences and like feel the differences in those descriptions is really nice.
- 24:59 RTH: So I think I'm good about this particular beep.
- 25:02 JBK: So, so you're registering *feel better*? [Mel: Yeah.] (I actually have a few more questions. I, I dunno if it's, if I missed some stuff.) [Mel: Sure.] Is it more about this concept of *feel better* or the concept and also the words feel better or some mix?
- 25:18 Mel: It wasn't so much the concept. Um, it was really more like just the reading and cognition of those words, rather than like a broader concept of the meaning associated with those words, to be honest.
- 25:34 JBK: Okay. So you're registering the words "feel better," but you're not attaching broader meaning, about feeling better.
- 25:42 Mel: Yeah, I don't think so. Not on this occasion.
- 25:47 JBK: Um, uh, [pause]
- 25:50 RTH: So before, before we leave that, there, there's two, there's still two possibilities behind that. So one is that these words have, are semantically *free*, so to speak. I am somehow taking in these things *feel better* and, and they don't have *any* meaning *at all* to me. They might as well be in Greek. I recognize them as words, but they could be Greek. *Or* I recognize these, this as a well-wish and, uh, but no, nothing further than that. This is, I, this, these are understandably well-wished words "feel better."
- 26:28 Mel: Uh, I'm weighing a response to that. But I would say honestly, like it was sort of something in the middle. I, I wouldn't say like it's as though the words were Greek, but like there wasn't a whole lot of meaning, y'know, associated with them at the time. No. So if somewhere in the middle could kind of be possible, then that sits comfortably with me.

26:28

Julian comments: Russ, do you have suggestions on how to take another stab at experience descriptions when reviewing transcripts and videos? I've tried it two ways:

a) Going back and looking at my original written descriptions. Then watching the video and updating descriptions with my new understanding.

b) Watching the video. Mentally forming a new (or revised) understanding of experience. Then looking at the description and updating it.

It occurs to me that there could be an even better way:

c) Watching the video. Forming a new understanding of experience. Then this part is different: *Committing it to paper*. Then looking at the original description and reconciling the two.

I think this could have some advantages. By committing my new understanding to paper (or electrons), I can't ignore it. I'd be forced to reconcile differences between it and the original description. I can't let default inaction win out.

I was wondering if you have a procedure or thoughts about it.

I tried this with this sample, and my description stressed the words being close to meaningless. Originally, I wrote about Mel registering the words "feel better":

She has not attached particularly strong meaning to them but they're not completely meaningless either.

I thought this might not convey it though. Yes, meaning is not particularly strong. But it's hardly even there at all. I revised it to:

She has not attached much meaning to them—somewhere between them being completely meaningless and them registering as a basic well-wish.

From a method's perspective, I think writing a new description did help me take some action. And I think the new description is closer. The original description gives too broad a range: strong meaning<->meaningless. The updated description gives a much narrower range: some meaning (basic well-wish)<->meaningless. I think this is closer to Mel's experience.

Russ comments: In all my DES studies where I have substantial control (that is, *unlike* this series), I require that descriptions be drafted on the day of the interview (before sleeping) and circulated to all interviewers on that same day. Then all interviewers have the responsibility of reacting to the descriptions before they sleep on the next day. By reacting, I mean that they have the responsibility of ensuring that the description of each sample conveys with precision their understanding of the participant's at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience. Those understandings don't have to agree—there is no requirement for agreement; in fact, disagreement is explicitly valued. If there are, say, three interviewers (as is common) there may well be three somewhat different overlapping versions, all in a tracked-change document. That document then gets passed back and forth, as many times as it takes for as long as it takes until everyone is satisfied that their own personal point of view is expressed

in the document, which we call that the “messy” description (acknowledging that it is not desirable to clean it up). Sometimes the passing back and forth results in one or another interviewer(s) changing their opinion, but the express aim is not agreement but individual responsibility that your own individual view is expressed, even if your view differs from all the others.

Sometimes the messy description involves long discussions of issues relevant to the sample and its understanding, exercises for the reader, and so on, pretty much the same as we have done in the present series.

In most of my studies, we do not make transcripts.

In the present series of studies, I don’t have control over your time, so we do not go through the contemporaneous process. But we do make careful transcripts, so the way of attacking the description issue is substantially different.

I see substantial virtue to your option (c), but I would focus it somewhat differently. The aim of description writing is twofold; one of the aims is to write a good description—your plan (c) covers that. The other aim is to improve the description-*writer*. Your plan (c) is “I think writing a new description did help me take some action,” and part of that action should be your meditation on what was it *about Julian* that gave his original description too broad a range. In short, description writing is part of the iterative procedure.

26:54 JBK: Okay. Clear on that. Can I ask one more question about sample 5?

27:01 Mel: Yep.

27:02 JBK: So you said it was more about the scene and being absorbed and Liv talking and being attentive to her rather than about exactly what she’s talking about. If she’s talking about watching or like dates you went on recently. [Mel: Yeah.] It’s more about the scene. Do you think it’s *at all* about what she’s talking about or is it like, do you think it’s, could be just about the scene, but she could be talking about her dog or talking about a date—doesn’t even *matter*? Or do you think it’s somewhere in the middle? Or, [inaudible]

27:02 Russ comments: This question makes it too much an either/or when RTH’s questioning was a both/and. The good news is that Mel’s response makes it clear that she understood the both/and nature.

27:38 Mel: Sorry, how I, if that really... Yeah, how I understood the like, line of questioning that Russ asked, which made me to answer that way, is that I am definitely hyper-focused on *what* she’s saying, but it’s like my awareness is still like, um, tied to that present moment. So it’s not like she’s telling me about a date she went on and my mind is processing those words and then thinking quite conceptually about like that area or, y’know, if we use the election reference, I’m not then sort of, yeah, thinking about Donald Trump or like whatever the broader con- the, the broader conversation concept. It, it wasn’t that. It was tied to this moment. Um, seeing my friend, hearing my friend, really actively listening to my friend, and the words that she was saying were really relevant, but I was still very much grounded in that moment, if that helps.

28:39 JBK: Okay. Yeah, it does.

28:42 Mel: Yeah. So I think in that sense, it's probably why I couldn't quite remember the exact word she was saying or haven't even felt the need to write down like the subject of our conversation because it was so grounded in listening to her in that present moment and the scene that Russ is calling it as opposed to thinking more like broadly about the conversation.

28:42 Russ comments: See the schematic at 18:39.

29:09 JBK: Yeah. Okay. I'm, I'm good on questions for that and for 6.

DISCUSSION AFTER THE SAMPLING: WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

29:18 RTH: So that, that gives us some time to talk about what, what we ought be doing here. Because I, I, I think we are in the diminishing returns [Mel: Yeah.] realm. I'm not, I'm not saying that we have *arrived* there yet, but I think we oughtta be talking about what we're gonna, what we're gonna do here. [Mel: Yeah.] We've been at this for 13 times. [Mel: Yeah.] I think we have a fairly clear sense of what Mel's experiences are like: there's quite a bit of nothing; and there's not very much cognitive-think-y kind of stuff; there's absorption; there's sensory awareness. And I'm guessing if we continued on we would get some, some more of that. And, and there is some mer- some virtue in going forwards and nailing that stuff down. But I, but I think there's also alternatives and, and maybe we should think about alternatives.

30:11 And so I guess that what I'm, I'm really sort of asking what everybody's *interest* here is. And, and we don't necessarily have to have the same interest. We're, we have to share the same hour or whatever. But we don't necessarily have to be doing it for the same reason. But so for example, I think we *could* enlist another person, and the *three* of us interview that person. And uh, that would be another thing that we *could do*. And I don't know whether that would be something like... Mel, Mel at one time or several times has said she's interested in doing something with this project. And I dunno whether that would make things easier for her or harder for her or whatever.

30:11 Julian comments: I was wondering if we were going to code and give Mel a rundown of her experience: ok, you have X% sensory awareness and Y% absorption. But Russ's summary pretty much does it in a sentence: there's quite a bit of nothing; and there's not very much cognitive-think-y kind of stuff; there's absorption; there's sensory awareness. Interesting when the data collection is clear and careful, the analysis doesn't have to bend over backwards with elaborate methods to show some kind of result.

Russ comments: I suspect there would be value in undertaking what we call a *green meeting* or a *sample review*. I suspect that it might cause Julian to gain a substantially altered appreciation of what he thinks is the core of DES—for example, the aim of that meeting (and all DES) is *not* to code and *not* to be able to give an accounting such as "X% sensory awareness and Y% absorption"—such statements are actually a *risk* to the aims of the green meeting (and to all DES), not the desired result. DES is about idiographic fidelity, and those questions are about nomothetic validity. The aim of the

green meeting would be, for example, to try to understand Mel's absorption, her hyper-focus, her nothingness, and whether or to what extent those are phenomena are idiographically *experientially* Mel or just her idiosyncratic use of language. The aim of the green meeting would be for Julian to grind away at his presuppositions, and for Russ, his.

If we do something like a green meeting, I think Mel would be invited (but not required) to attend. I suspect it would take us several sessions, each substantially over an hour.

30:54 Mel: Yeah. That's interesting.

30:56 RTH: Uh, I don't know whether Mel has been paying attention to the conversations that Julian and I have been having. We've been sending it back and forth. You could or could not have been paying attention. (I don't really have to know, know about that.) But, but I don't know how much of that is in Mel's interest wheelhouse.

31:15 Mel: Yeah. I think that that would be cool. It's funny, I had a conversation with a, uh, producer friend yesterday actually about this, cuz I often talk about it cuz I find it so interesting. And sort of felt like, as I was talking to him about it, it was probably ready to consider like next steps of what, what sort of form this takes and stuff. So I feel like I've been thinking the same, Russ. I think that's a very... I hadn't considered that, but I think that that would help with whatever I wanna do here. Y'know, like we all agreed that it was very important for me to experience this side of the fence, in order to tell a story about this. Um, and I think that it would, uh, make it even richer to sort of experience the other side of things. I, I think that's a really great suggestion.

32:10 JBK: Um, yeah. I, I hadn't considered that, but I think it's a really interesting suggestion. I was kind of thinking the same thing during this interview. Like, we're kind of snapping along through, through it, and I feel like, like I, I could see it kind of wrapping up at some point. [Mel: Yep.] Um, I was thinking in my head maybe 15, but that's probably just cuz I like certain numbers. [Mel: Yeah.] But I guess that doesn't matter so much [laughs]. Um,

32:37 Mel: I mean, I'm happy to be guided by you guys, like, y'know, uh, you guys are the, the actual [laughs] researchers. So like, happy for you to say, yeah, as you just have, Russ, like, when do you think that there's no longer any, uh, additional value in doing any of these? If you wanna do another two, I'm open to another two. If you think there's nothing more to be gained from doing *this*, happy to wrap and pivot.

33:08 RTH: Well, I, I, I think there's, there are several different streams of interests going on in, in our conversations. [Mel: Yep.] And, and I, I don't know that I could articulate exactly what they are. But they're, but... But from my, from my, so *my* stream, the, the one that I would say is centered on me, is, is I'm interested in communicating about how to do DES and what's at stake here and how, what's, what are good questions and what are bad questions and why, and how: are there good questions and are there bad questions? And if so, and whatever. So the, that kind of, I think these, these have been a very useful set of conversations about that. And, and, and they were so in the up through day 12, and I suspect they will be about day 13. But it, I think, but I think

from my point of view, it might be more valuable from *that* stream for, for us to engage a different, a different person, a different, a different subject. Because then that would give us a different set of perspectives. And, uh,

34:20 JBK: I have another interest. I, I hadn't thought of joining these projects, but maybe I'll throw it out. Um, I have a, I have a twin brother and I did DES before with him. And the results we got were very different from what he expected of his experience. So he has these chronic pain conditions that debilitate his life, and the results were different. Um, and I talked to him recently, but he didn't really believe the results [laughs]. Like, he was like, *oh, that, that can't be true!* Cuz we talked about it quite some time after. So I was, I wanted to go and redo DES with him, with another person because I think doing it myself, I would be too biased.

35:07 Mel: Yeah.

35:08 JBK: Um, or it would just be nice to do with another person. I dunno if, uh, yeah.

35:14 Mel: I think... Um, uh, one other thing, and this is me spit-balling, but I think it would be really interesting to me to jump on like your side of the fence for someone that we suspect has a very different experience to me. So, like, if that's your twin brother or anyone, but like, that would be, that would really enrich my endeavors with this project, I think. Someone that has a very different experience.

35:47 JBK: I think it's very different. From, from the DES I did before, it is very different. Yeah.

35:52 Mel: Interesting.

35:53 RTH: So, so I've got two reactions to that. One, one is that I, I'm, I'm happy to do the sampling with, with Julian's brother. But, but I also think that brings in a, a new set of complications [JBK: Mmm] because then there's the recollections of what sampling was like before and all that, all that kinda stuff. So I think that that is maybe more complicated than Mel's interest. [JBK: Yeah.] [Mel: Okay.]

36:22 We can do that. So, so I'm not saying that Julian and I only have to ever sample with two people, and then the next person is the last one or whatever. [JBK: Yeah. Yeah.] I think we can, we can work, we can work that out. As far as picking somebody whose experience is different from Mel's, that would be just about everybody! So I, and, and I'm not saying that, that Mel is a unique person, and so nobody ever will live up to her [they laugh].

36:49 Mel: [laughs] Wow! Thanks, Russ! [they laugh]

36:52 RTH: I, I, well, I obviously I think she is! And, but, but everybody is, in their, in their own way. So I, so I'm not at all, I'm not at all worried about that. *And* I am also a, a, a very strong believer in, in randomness, I guess you would say. Uh, we're gonna, no matter *who* we get, if we pick somebody out of the hat with no interest at all, we're gonna get somebody that you would find interesting from this side of the, from this side of the fence [Mel: Yeah, I agree.] I've got, I've got absolutely no, no doubt about that.

- 37:23 Mel: Yeah. I guess just what I was getting at without trying to like, uh, decide, I know we'll uncover so much random stuff, it'll be so different to mine, it'll blow my mind. But I just would really love someone that like doesn't have so much nothingness and has more of like a traditional monologue, or, y'know, something, just something that doesn't follow in the category of the nothingness as much. That's all.
- 37:52 RTH: Well, short of sampling with somebody for a while and, and fi- finding out, I, I just think we dunno the answer to that. But I, but I would also say you're pretty unusual as far as having as much nothingness as you've got. That's, so, so picking at random gives you a pretty high probability of getting somebody that's different from you. [Mel: Okay.] *But* I would *also* say that if we *did* get somebody that was pretty much like you, I think there would be something to be learned from that. It would be a *different* something. But it would, it might be just as interesting, or *more* interesting.
- 37:52 Russ comments: At 36:52 RTH said he was a believer in randomness, and similarly here, RTH says that whatever we get will be interesting. That approach is at the heart of fidelity: a high-fidelity microphone picks up whatever comes its way, regardless of whether it is a cymbal crash, Beyonce's voice, or the siren wail from outside. The alternative is to believe that you know what would be best—that would be something like creating a cymbal-crash-specialty microphone.
- 38:25 Mel: Well, yeah, you're right. Because I would be able to ask questions that are different because I feel like it's so similar to my experience. So in a way it's sort of like as if I had the opportunity to kind of question myself. So yeah, I agree. Uh,
- 38:40 RTH: Right. And it, and, and it's, and it's sort of like the distinction between beeps 5 and 6 where, where *fine* distinctions allow, or the juxtaposition of experiences that have something in common, but something *not* in common allows you to understand the, the phenomenon that you're interested in.
- 39:04 Mel: Yep. Yeah. Well, I mean, uh, like do you have, I mean, yeah, Julian, we could do your brother or whatever, or like Russ I'm sure you have a thousand people that offer, reach out to you. Like I'm, I'm easy.
- 39:22 RTH: I, I, I, I know if I were, if, if, if I were gonna pick a somebody, I would pick a student who's shown an interest to me in- interested in my work, who's a young, she, she might be a freshman or something like that. So a young person. I don't really know much about her, so I don't have any... I don't, I don't, I don't know what we would find, but, but that would be, so that, so that, that would be, that would be one way of doing it. And, and Julian and I have also talked about, about an interest in something years, years ago. Maybe that interest was in OCD, maybe? Something like that. [JBK: OCD. Yeah. Yeah, we did.] That would be interesting. Or *Mel* might have somebody in mind as well that would, that...
- 40:21 Mel: Well, yeah. Okay. I wanna, I wanna sit on this for a little bit and think about it. Cuz also, like, I wanna think about it like from a, y'know, broader creative point. Um, yeah.

40:40 RTH: So, so my, I guess, I guess the, the way I, the way I think about it is: I'm, I'm interested my, so this, this is Russ speaking now, anybody else can speak whatever, however they wanna speak about it. But at, at this juncture, I'm, *my* motivation would be to do what *Mel* thinks would advance *Mel's* ball. Because I think Julian's and my ball, the discussions that we've had about method or whatever, I think that will happen [JBK: Mmm.] [Mel: Yeah.] no matter who we did. And, and so I would, so the, the *road* could, could lead to Mel's interest. [Mel: Yep.] And Julian's and my discussions about method, which we've, which I think have been *useful*, I think would be *just as* useful on that road as on anybody else's road.

41:36 Mel: Mm-Hmm. How do you feel about all that, Julian.

41:39 JBK: That makes sense. I do wanna *do* something with my brother at some point, but that could be something separate.

41:45 RTH: That, that's fine with me. [JBK: Yeah.]

41:46 Mel: Yeah. Okay. Let me, let me think about it. And maybe even, yeah, yeah, because I, I, I appreciate you also being really willing to, to do whatever, y'know, helps serve my idea for this project. I really appreciate that. Um, yeah, I wanna think about that. So give me like 24, 48 hours to think about that and then we could sort of look at some next steps for that. But I think that that's a really exciting idea and it feels like the right time to do that sort of thing. Yeah.

42:18 RTH: So what I would, I would say let's, let's not put a time limit on it, [Mel: Yeah.] but however your creative process works, if you want, if you would like to put a time limit on it, do it. But uh, when you think you have something to say or talk about or whatever, let us know and we can get together and talk about it and see whether we're all on the same page.

42:43 Mel: Yep. That would be great. That would be great.

42:46 RTH: That seem like a plan to you, Julian?

42:48 JBK: That sounds like a plan. Yeah.

42:50 Mel: Awesome, alright.

42:51 JBK: And then for this project, there's also the question of what we're gonna do with it, the video, the writing [construction noise makes him inaudible] [RTH: (inaudible)] but for now just transcribing the interviews then we'll see from there, I guess.

43:03 RTH: Yeah, I do think there is a lot in this project that is totally interesting. [Mel: Yeah.] And, and it's, and it's probably interesting in, in a variety of very different kinds of ways. And I would, I would, if I had the vote, my vote out of, (I think we gotta have a unanimity in this vote), but my vote would be that at least sooner or later we put this whole batch of everything out on the web so people can take a look at it. We clean it up a little bit, make it accessible, and then stick it out there on my website or anybody

else's website or all the above or something. Because I think there's, I think there are hugely important conversations that Julian and I have been having, which I think would be totally useful for somebody interested in the method. [Mel: Yeah.] And I think the struggle with Mel and her nothing nothingness or whatever, I think is a useful, interesting story.

44:10 Mel: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I'm at a point where I wanna really start to think about creatively more of this. The discussion I had with that friend was really interesting yesterday. He's done a lot of commissions for places like the *New York Times* and *The New Yorker* and stuff like that. And certainly thought that, y'know, there's something of [construction noise] sorry, [laughs], there's something of, um, definite interest from places like that. So, y'know, now it's about sort of working out a narrative arc and like what, what I would do and how I would tell it. And, and I think, yeah, that's sort of where my brain is starting to think next. [construction noise]

44:59 So being able to, uh, do something that would be an audiovisual piece, like a, a video documentary that is very much, uh, autobiographical. Like that was the whole idea here that I experienced on this side. So then your suggestion of then flipping it, I think yeah, adds such, such a rich layer to it all. So that's sort of the direction that my brain's heading and trying to work out that sort of thing and put some sort of pitch together to, y'know, perhaps start investigating very slowly the idea of commissions for a video piece out of all of this.

45:42 RTH: [construction noise] Well, I, I think this conversation has, has been productive. It seems like we're all more or less in agreement that, that there's, there's a fork in the road or a bend in the road [Mel: Yeah.] or something that we're approaching. And, and I, I think that, I think the next step around the, around the bend is gonna be as interesting as this step. I think these have been totally interesting.

46:07 Mel: Totally. And can I just say broadly from like a personal perspective, (cuz people ask me about this all the time) I have noticed such a change with myself since we started this. I mean, we've been doing it for a long time now, but like, it's definitely just like the *art of noticing*. Um, and I've found such *pleasure* in *progressing* (I think) at, um, being able to find language for parts of myself. Um, I, y'know, I think I'm a, I'm a better *writer* now as a result, and I *notice* little things better. And I just feel like there's something in the DES format, like by design, that is so, uh, such a challenge to do that level of noticing. But then to be able to try and convey it and feel yourself getting better at that has just had great, um, positive impacts on so many other aspects of my life, which is so cool! [JBK: Mm-Hmm.]

47:14 RTH: So I, I'm happy to hear that. And I'm not surprised to hear that, cuz I think a lot of people have that. But, but I, I think the attempt, the attempt to be genuinely straightforwardly honest about things that are actually personally [Mel: Yeah.] present is a, is pretty much at the core of, of every deep thinker, deep, deepness, deep, every, every deepness, let's put it that way, I think.

47:48 Mel: And, uh, and I think it's also led to like a, a, a, uh, a more, I'm more comfortable at being like vulnerable with friends and family and everything. Like, y'know, it's created this sort of openness with expression, which I always had, but I think that that's just

gone off the charts even more. It's really cool! Like this has been a very good experience in so many ways for me. So like, thank you so much for having me on board to participate, cuz it's been really cool.

48:16 RTH: So let me, that, that's my been my pleasure. Julian can speak for himself too. But the, the, what, what I would say is, I *don't* think it's about the words. We (Julian and I) have been having a conversation about it, it's, it's not about the words. But what you, what you said was it, you made it seem like, *well, now I can put these things into words*. I don't think that's the actual, the important thing. [Mel: Yeah.] It's the *things* that are the important thing. And when you get, when you see the things *as they are*, then a *side effect* of that: w ell, I can put 'em into words now cuz I know what, I know what they are.

48:49 Mel: Yeah! true! Yep. I felt that [inaudible].

48:52 RTH: So I don't, I don't think it's about the language, at all, really.

48:55 Mel: Yeah. It's about noticing and [inaudible]. Yeah.

48:57 RTH: Very [inaudible]

48:58 Mel: Yeah. Cool.

49:00 JBK: Also from my side, doing the interviews is also transformative because you realize you have a certain way of looking at things, and then you have to step back and unpeel why that's wrong and adapt, like to try to understand your experience and if it's different from mine in some way or different from how I think mine is. And then like, being on the other side, doing the interviews is also pretty transformative. So I'm very grateful to have this chance.

49:00 Julian comments: In particular some points that were helpful:

Bracketing intention – When interviewing and writing descriptions, we tried as much as possible to put aside intention. This could all become a book or documentary or whatever. But we should put this aside and focus on the experience at hand.

2023, when we started the project was a stressful year for me. I got fired from one job, started a new one I don't particularly like, and have been trying unsuccessfully to get a PhD position in Europe. I've been stressed about where to take my life and what projects will get me there. It's been helpful to bracket all of that and just pay attention to what's at hand. Whether it's with research or with other pursuits, like making music. With any endeavor it's best not to think—how could I publish / monetize / advertise / this. Just get into the music.

Truth and honesty – Calling this project transformative is not (I think) an exaggeration. I was mentally doing badly when we started and am now much better. Who knows what's correlation and what's causation?

One example is with interactions, with friends, family, or people in general. For whatever reasons, social interactions became a struggle for me this year. Mel noted

being more open to people and I noticed the same (although I think we started from different baselines).

Of course, DES is not a 'normal' interaction. But some things apply. Be honest. Be honest about skepticism. Voice it when it's there and relevant. Don't voice disagreement when it's pedantic and self-serving. Ask questions you want to know. When things are vague, get specific. Be open to completely shifting your point of view.

Focus on others, on the world — I thought a lot about our whole meta and absorbing discussion. In the shower, at concerts, wherever. Sometimes I even tried to make my own thinking less meta, more absorby. But this poses risks: 1) It can fail because of the impossible tasks of trying to change experience while self-monitoring, 2) making it too much about me, which can also be 3) bad for neutrality in research.

It's helpful to think: well, I don't really know my experience, at least with the scope of DES. Maybe in some ways I can't really know it. Turning the focus to others (as the DES interview does) can be liberating.

- 49:30 Mel: Very cool. All right, well let's leave it at that after that very lovely conversation. Um, and yeah, let me think things over and I'll be in touch once I've got some ideas or whatever, and vice versa, y'know Reach out if you have any ideas or thoughts or whatever in the coming.
- 49:50 RTH: Yeah. If, if I, I didn't want to, I didn't want to say that Mel should be the *only* leader in this kind of a situation, because it could be that after this dribbles down or seeps in or whatever, then I've got a better idea, or Julian will have a better idea, or whatever. [Mel: Yep.] [JBK: Mm-Hmm.] I, I'm not backing away from what I said. I still think, *right now* I still think, that, that trying to, trying to tailor the next step in Mel and in accord with Mel's interest is a good idea. But the, but I may not think that in another half an hour. [Mel: Yeah.] And Julian might not think that either. And both of us should have a right to say that.
- 50:37 Mel: Yep. Cool.
- 50:39 RTH: All right. Sounds good to me.
- 50:41 JBK: Mull it over. [laughs]
- 50:43 Mel: I'll talk to you both soon. Thank you so much.
- 50:45 RTH: Hope you feel better.
- 50:47 Mel: Thank you!