

Deep Culture Podcast – Transcript

The Deep Culture Podcast explores the psychological impact of intercultural experiences, informed by the sciences of brain, culture and mind. Join hosts **Joseph Shaules** and **Yvonne van der Pol** as we look at the personal growth that can come from travel, living and working abroad, learning a foreign language, growing up in a multicultural context—and the challenges of bridging different cultural worlds.

(Episode 23 – Best of Season 2)

Join Yvonne van der Pol and Joseph Shaules as they look back at the memorable moments from Season 2—listener reactions to episodes which struck a chord . . . and some that didn't. Podcast team members nominate favorite clips, such as Ishita Ray talking about how time is experienced in India; Daniel Glinz's five-senses first aid kit for culture shock, and Zeina Matar's musings on "Where is home?". And we talk about what the future holds for the Deep Culture Podcast!

Time	Speaker	
00:00:00	Joseph	(Hook) There are so many issues that the world is facing, whether it's climate change issues of war and peace, refugees, political division, all of these huge issues require us to work together, require a building of community, and that requires deeper forms of intercultural understanding.
00:00:00	Joseph	Hello, this is Joseph Shaules. Welcome to the Deep Culture podcast, where we explore culture and the science of mind. And I'm here with my co-host Yvonne Van der Pol. It is great to be with you today, Yvonne.
00:00:53	Yvonne	Hi, Joseph. Wonderful to be here again.
00:00:55	Joseph	Well, Yvonne, it is episode 23. It is the final episode of season two, and it reminds me of the very first time we recorded together something like two years ago. And I remember, and I was in actually in California in the basement of my mother's home and we had technical problems and it felt like such a disaster, but somehow we got this podcast off the ground and here we are at the end of season two.
00:01:24	Yvonne	And I vividly remember that recording session because it was a heat wave here in the Netherlands where I am based. And it is amazing how long ago it feels. And of course, so much has changed even in those two years and look where we are now with all those turbulences around the world. It's very profound. The time we live in.
00:01:48	Joseph	And, you know, from the beginning, we've focused on this vision of Edward Hall and that deeper forms of intercultural understanding are not easy. And one of the things that's great for me about doing this podcast is that we really have to dig deeper into some topic that sounds maybe simple, but when you look into it, it's deeper than you think it's more complex than you think.
00:02:14	Yvonne	What I also enjoyed about the last season is the podcast team. We have a diverse group of people, very dedicated, working together in a collaboration with all the diverse perspectives coming together. And that makes it so powerful. I, I really enjoyed that.

00:02:33	Joseph	So in this episode, we're gonna look back at this season. We're gonna hear some reactions from listeners and from the podcast team as well. And then we'll talk a little bit about the future direction that we're gonna be taking. And that brings us to Part One "Listeners speak".
Part 1: Listeners Speak		
	Joseph	So Yvonne, I remember when we were working on the very first episode and we went through, I don't know, 6, 7, 8 different versions to finally get it worked out. And I remembered what was so difficult for me was that I didn't really have a sense of who I was talking to, who might listen to this podcast. And what's been great over the past couple of years, is that we've been getting to know our listeners and getting reactions from them.
00:03:39	Yvonne	And what struck me personally was also that we often got reactions that were very personal. And so that, that was very powerful in a way I like that.
00:03:49	Joseph	So let's look back at some of the episodes from this last season. Now, episode 13, that was in September, the title was 'Deep Culture: You can't get that from Wikipedia'. And we were talking about this unconscious cultural knowledge that we all carry within us, but that we don't notice. And we got a lot of reactions on this famous iceberg diagram. There's a famous diagram of an iceberg, which has unconscious culture hidden underneath the water. We read this long list of all these different things that are in the bottom of the iceberg.
00:04:29	Yvonne	Yes. And people really related to that. So notions of decision making on leadership, conceptions of beauty, all these notions that we unconsciously hold and it made it clear to them. That's what deep culture is. That was fun.
00:04:47	Joseph	Episode 14 was a very personal episode for me. It was 'Cultural Resistance and the Eternal Tourist'. And we were talking about how some people will spend a lot of time in a foreign environment, but not seem to learn very much. And I, in fact, talked to my good friend, Jack, who I interviewed many years ago about his adaptation to life in Tokyo.
00:05:16	Yvonne	And also here, we got quite some reactions and, and one in particular struck us and it's Heide. And she says, "There is no deep cultural adaptation without accepting that language needs to be learned. I see this every day with my clients, they move to another country and feel the pain of not being able to express themselves beyond the level of a child. I call this Fallhöhe in German, the height from which you fall and the higher up you in your career and life, the deeper you seem to fall into the pit of not speaking or understanding the language. Happiness starts with opening up to the language." That was very nice how she worded it and related to well, mainly Jack's story, I guess.
00:06:06	Joseph	Yeah. And then of course, Jack spent many years in Japan, but did not learn Japanese.

00:06:13	Yvonne	And then episode 15 'Rubber time or slaves to the clock'. This was an episode fully dedicated to time and our notions about time.
00:06:23	Joseph	Well, it seems like everybody has some experience with, "Oh, people from that country are always late" or "People from that country are obsessed by the clock". And so this was something that we got a lot of listener reaction to. It sounds so simple, cultural difference in time, but it is so hard to really adjust yourself to different time logics. And that's one thing I like about this episode that it's something that's simple, but it's deep and it's not really easy.
00:06:58	Yvonne	And then in episode 16, Joseph, you had this conversation with Bob Whiting.
00:07:04	Joseph	Yes. Bob Whiting, he's the bestselling author of books like the 'Chrysanthemum and the Bat', and 'You Gotta Have Wa' and 'Tokyo Underworld' - just an amazing career of finding cross-cultural insights in unexpected places. And I interviewed him about his new memoir. That was a very special episode for me because I have known Bob for years and he has been a mentor for me. And it was such a pleasure to sit down and speak with him. In Episode 17, our theme was 'Honor and Diversity', and we asked this question, what does it mean to honor diversity? And we talked about honor cultures. For me personally, it was, I thought a very serious episode and I really enjoyed working on it, but we didn't get such a big listener reaction did we Yvonne?
00:08:12	Yvonne	No, it was well rather quiet <laugh> to say diplomatic and maybe, yeah, just reflecting. Maybe it was perhaps because it was a touchy subject Episode 18, actually it was 'Culture Shock'.
00:08:29	Joseph	Well, you know, culture shock is one of those things that everybody has heard of, but it's not really a simple single thing. And we had a lot of listeners reacting because they have experienced it. And also because it's a very important thing for intercultural education. One listener Bernd in fact said, "I shared it with a number of my students who are going abroad soon. I wonder how much sense it makes to them now before the experience, but they were drawn into the stories and I'm sure it will make a lot of sense once they're away." It makes me really happy to hear when listeners are using the podcasts in their educational training.
00:09:14	Yvonne	And also they used the transcripts of the podcasts. Uh, and especially in this episode, it struck us how many people were, um, saying, "Oh yes, this is what we'll use with our participants and trainees and students."
00:09:29	Joseph	The title of episode 19 was 'Why do we think differently?' And we talked about how culture influences the way that people think. And the question of whether our cognitive processes are the same everywhere in the world. It's a, a fairly technical episode, but it was a lot of fun for me.
00:09:52	Yvonne	It was a lot of fun. And we got some listener reactions, also, not as many. And maybe because it was an abstract episode in a way.

00:10:00	Joseph	I mean, how do you talk about cultural differences in cognition without, you know, being a little bit abstract? And so that's always the fun challenge though, is how can we get this complexity connected to our experiences and have fun.
00:10:17	Yvonne	And usually in all these episodes, we have three parts and the last parts is how do we look at this topic from brain mind perspectives, we have to crack the nut. And we got one reaction of a person saying specifically on this episode, "But I made it all the way through the third part and understood it." So that was brilliant.
00:10:38	Joseph	That's great. Well, I personally really liked this episode.
00:10:50	Yvonne	And then episode 20, 'Where is home?' This was also a favorite - living between cultural worlds. It's really hard to sort of know where is home.
00:11:02	Joseph	It was a very personal episode in particular, a story that Zeina Matar on the podcast team told. And in fact, we're gonna listen to a little extract from that a little bit later in the program. Episode 21 was 'Culture in the Cradle'. We were discussing cultural differences in parenting and how cultural patterns shape us as we grow up. And of course, Yvonne, you had important contribution because we were talking about the three RS of parenting in the Netherlands. And I was talking about the pressures that I felt to be a winner growing up in the United States. That was a fun episode.
00:11:45	Yvonne	<p>And also we got some input there. And for instance, Rhoda said, "It immediately made me think of intercultural homes and parenting- how and acculturation happens in that case. In my case, he said, my mom is my national. My dad was from another country. My siblings and I grew up in France where neither of my parents were from, and there are so many families where children are growing up in multicultural homes." And that's a very strong message because the original research was rather monocultural and of course comparative. And so here we had the additional layer of complexity and also of course, a reality for many people. So that might be a topic for next season.</p> <p>And then episode 22, the episode of last month, it was about 'Culture and the Self'. And the main question was can we adapt to different cultural worlds and still stay true to our true self?</p>
00:12:51	Joseph	We had some very strong personal reactions to this episode. This is of course talking about how culture shapes our feeling of who we are. And particularly when you're growing up in a society where you as an individual have to navigate between different cultural worlds and you may have different cultural selves. It's not always easy to kind of figure out who you are and how you fit in. And in fact, our podcast team member Ishita, uh, mentioned that this podcast is being used in classes, in intercultural management, that she knows in India. And she spoke with an Indian friend who said that she felt understood for the first time after listening to that podcast. And I think for me, this was the high point

		of all of the feedback we got from this season was this listener who felt understood by listening to this episode. That brings us to part two - Podcast Team Favorites.
Part 2: Podcast Team Favourites		
00:14:09	Yvonne	Each podcast is produced by a whole team. These are Robinson Fritz, Zeina Matar, Ishita Ray, and Daniel Glinz. And of course the two of us and the process is really a collaborative effort. And every single month, all these team members have huge amount of input.
00:14:27	Joseph	So we thought let's just ask the team members, what were their favorite clips from this last season? And just listen back.
00:14:36	Yvonne	Can we start with Daniel's memorable moment? And it comes from episode 15, Rubber time or slaves to the clock. And he says, "I particularly remember the story of Joseph's girlfriend being late for the movie in Mexico and her reaction when he got upset and why This was very useful for me to understand what was going on."
00:15:04	Joseph	I was living in central Mexico, this beautiful city of Zacatecas with cobble stone streets and plazas and churches. And I, I walked everywhere that I went and on one occasion I was walking towards the central Plaza to meet my girlfriend. And I was walking a bit quickly because I happened to be a bit behind schedule, but then a friend of mine spotted me from across the street and he ran over and he excitedly started to tell me about this car that he had bought and what a great deal he got. And he started to go on and on about this. Well, I, I was interested, but I was also feeling kind of impatient and it was making me more late. So eventually I, I kind of pointed at my watch and said, oh, you know, sorry, but I, I really have to go. And when I did that, he stopped in mid-sentence. He looked at me, he looked at my watch and he said, you are so American <laugh>. He said, you care more about that machine on your wrist than the friend in front of your face.
00:16:21	Yvonne	And Joseph also your memorable moment is from this very same episode, isn't it?
00:16:28	Joseph	Well, I was remembering Ishita's story. And when she was talking about the experience of time in India and the way that she put things, brought it to life for me, and it was amazing.
00:04:04	Ishita	I grew up using different time systems. in English we say, time is money. Like it's a precious commodity in Bengali. There is a word, 'nagad', it means around or approximately, and can be used only for time. Time for us more often than not, is approximate, not an exact quantity which we can spend or waste. The word for yesterday, and tomorrow, 'kaal', is the same. In Bengali, the word 'kaal' could mean yesterday, tomorrow time or season, depending on the context. The concepts we use to talk about time are themselves very flexible and fluid. There is a certain logic, a rhythm to this fluidity. India is primarily an agrarian society with vast shifts in climate and temperatures within a single year. So time cannot be viewed as linear static, or be defined once and for all. Time must

		<p>depend on context. Seasons are viewed as something that returns. Farmers who have lost their crops this year due to floods must remain hopeful about a bounty the following season. If there is drought, the time for repaying the loans will have to be extended to continue feeding families - seasons influence time, relationships influence time, community influences time, life influences time</p> <p>In my modern work life I do understand the logic of the clock. Yes, it is important to reach the office in time for the 9:00 AM meeting. But do I ignore my neighbor whose car has broken down and needs a lift? An unwell loved one who needs to go to the doctor? How do I control the water on the roads from the especially heavy monsoons? Does this mean the meeting is less important? That time is less important? No, but when life itself is uncertain, how can time be fixed? Because of this, the overall approach towards something that couldn't be done today is very forgiving. There is always the next time. So what about when setting timelines in an international project with multicultural team members? Does one stick to deadlines, no matter what, or should some things be left flexible? Well, it depends.</p>
00:19:57	Yvonne	<p>My memorable moment comes from Daniel and he talks in episode 18 on culture shock about how he got fed up with a lot of things in any of the new countries he lived and just with this, which is emotion. And that is the depth of the intuitive mind and in culture shock.</p>
00:20:20	Daniel	<p>The times I lived abroad was first in Holland and then China, Japan, India, Sri Lanka. I spent some time in Jordan, in Nairobi and Africa. And then in central America, Mexico, Colombia, I think most of these places I stayed a year or maybe sometimes two years, maximum was four years. At some point I always experienced a culture shock. There was always one moment where I was totally fed up. I, I was really fed up. In Japan I was fed up because the doors were too small. I was banging my head. In China I was fed up by the system. I thought I had lost all my individuality. In Mexico city I was fed up with the pollution and traffic jams, in Arabic countries I was fed up by the people, always changing their minds at the last minute and so on and so on. So yeah, it never really disappears. I mean, culture shock can come back any moment, any time you're abroad, there's no permanent cure for it, but maybe with time passing, you just start to realize, Hey, that's just normal. It's part of it. It's part of the cycle of getting adapted to a new place. And there's nothing big to worry about.</p>
00:21:54	Yvonne	<p>Zeina also highlights this very section where Daniel talks and then he talks about the five senses tool kit.</p>
00:05:36	Daniel	<p>A psychologist once told me if you go abroad and you prepare to have a culture shock pack a five senses first aid kit, first aid kit contains five objects, one for each sense. So a photograph of someone who you feel very close connection, sounds from home or the voice of someone from home, a typical candy or chewing gum or something with a taste, you</p>

		can only find in your home place and maybe something for the smell, and then just smell it when you feel a little bit tired or down, and this will give you a few seconds vacation at home. And then the last one is that the sense of touch. So maybe a piece of cloth, a stone, a piece of wood, which comes from a place connected to your, to your home. And, uh, if you feel really bad after a big culture shock, open the box, open the first aid box and use these objects and yes, get home just mentally for 10, 15 minutes, have a good sleep and you are fit for the next day.
00:23:33	Joseph	Another clip that the team members mentioned was one in which Yvonne, you were talking about Dutch parenting, and there's this moment where you recount where some people you talk to brought up. Just the thing that we were about to discuss on the podcast.
00:23:49	Yvonne	And what does that represent? I remember that vividly, and it was such an amazing coincidence and it was right there. <laugh> I did some research again for this podcast. And the three RS were first mentioned in the early 19th century. Can you imagine? And actually it was yesterday that I had a follow up conversation with a young couple, three months after their relocation to a Latin American country, but it was amazing. They literally said that they focused from the start on the rest and regularity for their tree and six year olds. And only when they had the routines and rest, we all be happy as a family. And in fact, I think that many Dutch parents might simply assume that the three RS are things that babies everywhere need, that they are universal.
00:24:42	Joseph	And the last clip will play here is Ishita's memorable moment from the episode 'where is home?' It is Zeina talking about where is home for her, many people had a very strong reaction to this episode. I think because for people who are living between cultural worlds, the question of where is home is strikes very deeply.
00:25:09	Zeina	So is Germany my home now? Yeah, sure. It is my home, but I do not think of Germany as being my home forever. For example, I, I don't think of these things. I don't think of building a big house where I will sit in for the rest of my life. And, and no, this is very, very alien to me. And I think it did come through this experience of war. It hurts you so deeply that something happens. I dunno, in your mind that you say I will not get attached anymore to somewhere or something or in such a way that I will be hurt again. Sometimes I find myself looking at things in a very cold, cold manner, but I guess it is also part of surviving things of wanting to, you know, to go on, but life continues and it, it can be good. I'm happy with my life.
00:26:11	Zeina	I wanted my children not to be torn between cultures. I knew they're going to live in Germany. There's no way that we will go to Lebanon to live. So I brought them what I could bring them of the culture. I mean, we used to go every summer and spend time with my brother's family at the beach, with my parents and so on. You know, it was the, the relationships are very strong and they're there, but the physical

		Lebanon, I did not want them to experience this too much. And this is my problem. It's not their problem. I don't want them to be in the midst of it. I feel that I can deal with it because I know it, but they don't know it enough. And I don't want to be responsible for them. I think you are always a little bit edgy. <laugh> our children are not edgy. My husband is not edgy. You know, they are here. They are comfortable. I am always a little bit edgy. I mean, I know where my papers are if I want to, if I have to leave quickly. So this uncertainty, this, this being always a little bit jumpy also gives you strengths, which, which come out when you need them, because what is, what is the alternative to doing this?
00:27:38	Yvonne	How powerful this is, this absolute certainty about uncertainty and finding strength in the acceptance of vulnerability. So much to unpack there. And that brings us to part three looking ahead.
Part 3: Looking Ahead		
00:28:12	Joseph	So Yvonne, the overall theme of this podcast is how an understanding of brain and mind sciences can help us achieve deeper forms of intercultural understanding. We talk a lot about getting deeper understanding. We don't talk so much about what is it that we do with that deeper form of understanding.
00:28:33	Yvonne	Yes, exactly. And maybe we sort of assume that we all do something with it. And also it relates to responsibility that we all have especially seeing all the concerns we have about global problems.
00:28:48	Joseph	There are so many issues that the world is facing, whether it's climate change, issues of war and peace, refugees, political division, all of these huge issues require us to work together, require a building of community. And that requires deeper forms of intercultural understanding.
00:29:11	Yvonne	We only have one planet and that's currently my deepest concern. Climate change is really affecting us. We had the hottest spring in India, the hottest spring in Madrid in, in Spain. And we have floods in Australia, etc. So everywhere around the world, people notice already the consequences of climate change, and we have to do this together. So that brings us to the question, what can we do with all the understanding from brain and mind sciences and of intercultural understanding to work on these global problems and to go in the right direction?
00:29:51	Joseph	So deep understanding leads to community and community leads to working together, to solve these problems that we all need to face. We will be taking August off, but we're already thinking about season three. We would love to hear your ideas and, you know, Yvonne, I have to say it is so fun to work with you on this podcast and what a pleasure and I look forward to much more together.
00:30:20	Yvonne	Thank you so much. And it was wonderful working with you, wonderful working with the podcast team. It was great to have these perspectives and additionally from the listeners. So thanks everybody.

00:30:36	Joseph	<p>The Deep Culture podcast is sponsored by the Japan Intercultural Institute an NPO dedicated to intercultural education and research. I am the director of JII. If you are interested in culture and the mind checkout JII's Brain, Mind and Culture Masterclass - it is a blended learning course and an online community of cultural bridge people. To find out more, just do a web search for the Japan intercultural Institute. And hey, give us some feedback. You can write us at dcpodcast@japanintercultural.org. Thanks as always to the whole podcast team. Our sound engineer, Robinson Fritz, Zeina Matar, Ishita Ray, Daniel Glinz, Ikumi Fritz. And of course, thanks to you, Yvonne. It is always a pleasure.</p>
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