

## Richard Moss BATGAP Interview

Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and Buddha at the Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. There have been about 315 of them recorded so far and if you are new to this you might want to go to [batgap.com](http://batgap.com) and check out the archives under the past interview menu. This whole thing is made possible by the support of generous listeners and viewers, so I'd like to express my appreciation to the supporters and encourage those who feel inclined to support it to do so. There is a donate button on the site.

My guest today is Dr. Richard Moss. Richard is an internationally respected leader in the field of inner transformation, subtle body/mind dynamics, and a living path of conscious relationships. In 1977, Richard was a practicing medical doctor when he experienced a spontaneous spiritual illumination that awakened him to the multi-dimensional nature of human consciousness. We are going to be talking about that. This realization profoundly transformed his understanding of the roots of emotional suffering and inspired him to explore the almost limitless potential for growth and healing. Compelled by this opening he released the practice of medicine, in other words, he retired from it, to devote his life to mentoring individuals and couples whose lives had brought them to the point where they hungered to explore the mystery of their being. Whether called to his work by their soul's yearning to awaken and grow or impelled by a health, career or relationship crisis, his comprehensive and evolutionary approach to healing and forging loving relationships has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of people. He is particularly renowned for the innovative, experiential nature of his workshops and longer retreats that offer individual direct experience of life-changing states of consciousness and provides them with very effective models and practices for ongoing personal growth. He guides seminars and retreats in North and South America, Europe and Australia, and is available for private mentoring for individuals at his home in Boulder, Colorado. He has published seven seminal books on his visionary approach to human evolution, which have been translated into six languages. So thanks, Richard, thanks for being here.

Richard: Nice to meet you, Rick. Nice to be with you. So I'm like 326, or whatever.

Rick: You are getting up there.

Richard: No it's wonderful, years and years ago, I got to know, in the 70s, Michael Thomas and Justine Thomson, New Dimensions Radio. I did many interview with them and became dear friends.

Rick: Oh, nice. I used to love that show. I used to listen to it all the time.

Richard: Michael passed on a few years ago.

Rick: Yeah, it's funny, when I was listening to that show it never occurred to me that I might someday be doing something like this, but it just dawned on me one day about six years ago that I should do this. And it's been working out real well. So let's start with your awakening that you had, when you were, I guess, already a doctor, or in medical school? What was the situation?

Richard: I was already a physician. I had been practicing about four years, after internship. So I had started a psychiatric residency briefly and suddenly had a deep clarity that I didn't want to be inside that kind of context any more. And at that point, the option was really general medicine, so I did emergency medicine, hospital medicine for about four years and during that time I started to have some very fascinating events, energetically, with some of my patients, and it was all part of a process of search that it happened very spontaneously with me.

Rick: Can you tell us what some of those fascinating events were?

Richard: Sure. When I was coming out to do my internship, driving from New York with my small amount of possessions to California, where I was going to do my internship, I camped one night at Jenny Lake in the Grand Tetons, and there I am, with two friends that I was traveling with and it was cold. I had a little down parka on. It was sometime in June, but still it was night, it was cold. A man comes waling up with a beard and a turban, and a bit of firewood, and says, "Can I join you?" And when my friends went to sleep he started talking to me about the Sufis and he started talking about consciousness and about unconditional love and things like that. Then he left. I said, "Well, where are you going?" He said, "I have a car over there." I never saw it. I'm not saying he was an imaginary person, but he came back the next day for breakfast and when I got to do my internship I was in it very briefly and I overheard two of the residents talking about that they were opening a new group with Claudio Naranjo, *Seekers After Truth*, was what it was called. SAT, and I ended up being part of that, and through that, learned the Enneagram. I had been meditating already, so I was then more in a meditative process, so that was kind of the path, initially. And then I met - so that was an unusual event.

Rick: Did you formally learn meditation, or did you just figure something out on your own?

Richard: Mostly I figured it out on my own, with a little bit of reading and then you discover that what you figure out is pretty much what meditation is. Then one day when I was working in the emergency room there was a patient who had been in a fight and had been injured, and he was actually from a local jail. And he had been violent with the other physicians and the x-ray technicians, so there was a guard present and, long story short, I realized that I was going to have to observe him for a while, and I thought I'd sedate him, so I had a nurse with me with medication to inject him with, and I said to him, "Let me try to examine you. I will touch you the way I would want to be touched assuming I was in great pain." And I began to touch him and

then suddenly I had this realization not to give him the medications, and I said to the nurse, "Don't." And a moment later I became blazing hot, this tremendous energy poured out of my hands, the nurse literally sat down in a chair, almost in a faint, and the guard went and opened a window. The man-in-the-bed's eyes rolled back, the whites of his eyes, he went dead asleep, he was a big guy, dead asleep. I stayed there in this energy for about 10 minutes with him, and I had my hand over the top of his head, my other hand just at the base of his belly, I was barely touching him. I had wanted to examine his belly. End of story is when he had woke up there was no more pain. I could examine him completely. There were tears in his eyes and he went back to jail. And when this happened, there was a voice, which was not my voice, or any kind of thought, and it said, "You have nothing to share with this man except love." That was the moment when my hands lit up. So after that I said to myself, "Oh my God, I'd been meditating, I'd been exploring consciousness, I'd met a former physical named William Brugh Joy, who wrote a book called *Joy's Way*. I had already been shown how to scan and sense energy fields, so I was familiar with energy. I was a young man, and I was curious about the role of energy and medicine and healing, way back in, whenever that was, 1976. So I took a leave of absence and, in fact, I didn't go back. And shortly after that leave of absence I had this experience that I have chronicled in some of my books, especially in the book called, *The Black Butterfly*, in which suddenly this tremendous energy just exploded. I guess we can call it kundalini. I didn't know what to call it at the time. Cosmic Consciousness or something, but at first it was an extremely intense experience of loss of boundary. Everything was vibrating. I could see into the insides of animals.

Rick: You mean like you would see their organs and things like that?

Richard: Yes. And they're just vibrating molecules, the land around them is vibrating molecules, the air is vibrating – everything is vibration. I was vibration, and it was very terrifying at one level because my ego was holding onto

Rick: Yeah, I was going to ask you did this freak you out a little bit?

Richard: It did, but having been a physician, I knew that I wasn't having a psychotic episode. I could objectively report my experience. I wondered whether it was some sort of adrenal tumor, but I ruled that out with self-examination, and so I didn't truly know what it was, and after many days, a friend, a Jungian analyst friend, an older woman, synchronistically showed up at the very same time that this experience started with me, and I didn't expect her. I ended up staying at her house and she took care of me and one afternoon I was sitting in her back yard.

Rick: Why did you need taking care of? Where you incapacitated by this a little bit.

Richard: I needed companionship. I needed some grounding. It was profound. It was powerful, powerful. I wasn't incapacitated, I just was incredibly vulnerable. I was raw beyond words. And

what I began to do, was simply observe myself very carefully, and I would say, “Oh, that was a thought. That thought is creating this sensation. This is a future thought. This is a past thought. Now I am judging myself. I am judging my circumstances.” And I was just watching every thought, and this was going on almost day and night. There was so much energy running through me I was really not sleeping well. And around the third day of that, I was sitting in the back yard and I suddenly saw a black and a white butterfly dancing in the air, and they landed on a branch that was kind of hanging down, not far from me, just a few feet from me. And they started mating. And they were mating. And when they finished mating, they danced around in the air and the black butterfly landed right center of my forehead. And bam, the experience went from being terrified to being absolute stillness, oneness with everything. Perception and perceiver all unified. Then the words reverberated in me, “I and the Father are one.” Again, not thought. And so began or continued this process. That was really the beginning of all of my teaching.

Rick: So what do you make of that, in terms of the butterfly? It is very Carlos Castaneda-ish, sort of an omen, kind of an external thing coinciding with or collaborating with a subjective development. What do you make of the subtle mechanics of that, or the significance or symbolism, or anything like that?

Richard: It came days after my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. The butterfly is a symbol of transformation. My mother profoundly loved butterflies. When I was a child I caught butterflies, and sad to say, mounted them. When you are young like that, you don't realize what you are doing is cruel. I just thought it was a fascinating way of learning and looking. It was kind of the preamble to my interest in science, which still continues. You know, I thought you'd ask me about this. People do. And I've written about it in my books. That period of life, that period of awakening, even to this day, I can't explain it. I don't understand where it came from or why. I know it's not common to have it that deeply anti-integrated, but I do know that it is not an uncommon experience. Before that I had experienced states close to oneness, profound flow, through rock climbing, mountaineering, surfing, but I never experienced it this way. And I see it as the beginning of - if there is such a thing as being born again that has nothing to do with faith-based belief systems, but has to do with an actual energetic transformation, that's what happened. The Richard Moss before that just, he continued; he continued with his neurosis and anxieties and needs and fears. The new person knew that that was not me, that was the construct of the developmental stage we can call ego, or me, the me-I concept that we all have. And it was an extraordinary transition in the spiritual sense; it was like going through puberty into adulthood. I would say I am still in the journey of integrating that deeper and deeper. It never stops, because it's like if you are living in two-dimensional reality, and suddenly you are placed in

three dimensionality, there is no limit to how many different ways you can explore three dimensions. And that's what I feel. To this day, I continue to - the energy, thank God, is never that intense, otherwise I wouldn't still be alive. It would have just cooked my body. But that energy is always available to me, always. Whenever it's needed it just flows through me, and it's there.

Rick: And in a way, who knows, maybe the energy is as intense, but you've totally acclimated to that and grown accustomed to handling that sort of energy, so that it's second nature to you. You could think of it that way.

Richard: That's true, too. And I would say that as we get older, and I'm approaching 69, the body wisdom just gets more and more profound. Not necessarily the body's capacity, obviously the aging process limits body capacity, but body wisdom. The body wisdom linked with that consciousness is taking me deeper and deeper, constantly, into a sense of presence and into a sense of connection with people. And the transmission used to be very energetically strong, now it's more subtle, but quite pervasive with people. And I don't emphasize it, because my emphasis is constantly on what someone can learn for themselves, and not on me.

Rick: Sure, that's important. Every sentence you say has some little nugget in it that I'd like us to elaborate on. But let's elaborate a bit on body wisdom first. What do you mean by body wisdom?

Richard: The body is the most intelligent part of us. It's the end point of evolution. It knows. You have to just have a thought, like "he doesn't love me, she doesn't love me," and the body knows instantly anger, sadness, loss abandonment. The body knows. And body wisdom is when the body's knowing, moment by moment, which is inseparable from the kind of heart's level of profound feeling, that wisdom connects us to everything. The body is in a sense connected to everything, and so then the thinking becomes the servant of this body wisdom. If you think about it, I don't want to date our conversation, but the recent attacks in Paris, I was in France at the time, in a different city, and the recent events in San Bernardino, California. That's an example of the head, the mind, the belief system's profound effort to derive identity through belonging to something, having a cause, a belief system, an action, that's all forcing humans to be obedient to thinking. It's forcing the body to be obedient to the emotional arousal of the thinking. So there is no body wisdom whatsoever. None whatsoever. It's all mind dominated. And that is the disease that every human being suffers from until they mature to some extent.

But as we get older, if we're on a constant path of releasing identification with what we have or don't have, what we think about ourselves, belief systems, as we sort of digest ourselves what emerges more and more profoundly is this knowing, this organic embodied knowing. And it really is part of the sky, the air, the life everywhere. It is part of Gaia.

Rick: That's nice. In a way you're saying the body can be, at least, a very sensitive instrument for very useful feedback, if we can learn to tune in to it, then every – we couldn't - doing something like what happened in Paris or San Bernardino would be completely out of the question because it would be so egregiously opposed to what the body is feeling. But what you're saying is that for those of us on a spiritual path or whatever it can be a very nuanced, subtle indicator of the value or the appropriateness of each thought, each emotion. Am I correct? or am I putting

Richard: No, that's it, exactly. It's a different level of intelligence. And you know, I was a physician, so I understand how we objectify the body. I understand how people derive aspects of their sense of self according to what they look like. So the body becomes an object. They become an object through what their body looks like, and in so many other ways. So that's not body wisdom, but when that deeper body wisdom is present so is the very word presence. So we are really in our bodies in the present moment, and now the mind, when the feeling in the body, of the heart in the body, unify or work together, then the mind automatically rebalances, automatically. So in my work, I don't just have people sit and do satsang. I have people dance, work with breathing, move, explore their voices, and then sit and observe and interact. It's very, very highly experiential and creative because it really is getting consciousness deeper and deeper into the body. And what happens is that people start to become happy. They begin to spontaneously experience communion with life, with the moment, connection. They begin to fall in love with each other, not necessarily in the romantic sense, but in the sense of reverence, respect and appreciation. They begin to reverberate with the voices of the people around them. They feel in a deep empathetic compassionate communion. And it happens every time without fail, without having to say, now be compassionate, or be good to each other, there is no – it emerges, the compassion, and forgiveness, trust and humility. They emerge as we go deeper and deeper with consciousness into the embodied present moment.

Rick: Nice. Here's a sentence from your website that I highlighted that relates to this. It said, "His teaching leads to an economy of action and efficient use of your time because very quickly

your body tells you when you are off course and you learn to continuously reconnect to your inner knowing and wisdom.” Basically, it’s what you’ve been saying, but it’s nicely phrased.

Richard: Thanks.

Rick: Yeah. So just to kind of wrap up a few of the threads of the conversation so far, do you have any kind of esoteric feeling for what happened to you? If I wanted to I could roughly classify people whom I’ve interviewed into one camp of people who did a lot a spiritual practices and seeking and intense stuff and then eventually after many years of that. Usually, had some sort of profound shift or awakening, and then another camp, it’s actually a much smaller one, but there are quite a few people in, people like yourself, who weren’t really doing that much or seeking that much or anything and something profound just came on and totally shifted them. And I find it interesting that yours was accompanied by this sort of little voice in your head that actually gave you some feedback or confirmation on what was happening, like what the guy in the hospital, “Your work is done here.” Whatever that voice said, and

Richard: And nothing to give or receive except love. Forgiveness meant there is nothing to give this man now, or to receive except love. And that was not - I mean, I know my thinking mind; I know what that voice is.

Rick: And you know these stories from ancient traditions, for instance, Saul on the road to Damascus, had this huge break-through experience, and Mohamed was apparently worked over by angels or something and underwent this huge metamorphosis. So, I mean, did you have, not to get too woo-woo on you, but did you have any kind of sense that there’s just somehow higher beings or higher intelligences in this universe that tagged you, and said, “OK, this guy is going to serve and now is his time and let’s give him a little confirmation with this voice,” or do you not like to think in those terms?

Richard: I’d be scared to think in those terms, just in terms of ego inflation and grandiosity. Puberty happens. And if it doesn’t happen you stop developing. I think in terms of, just as you said, there are people that have been involved in a tradition, have a lot of practice, and through the practice have developed a certain state of consciousness, and because it comes that way, the way they teach is inseparable from the tradition in which they developed. Then that is good. That is good, but they are still in a sense within the confines – the language, the framework of that tradition. And they have to make people be part of that tradition, even

though the Buddhist will say, you don't have to believe anything, just do this work, meditate, you prove it in yourself experientially, still there is this framework of belief in the heroic and mythic quality of the Buddha and so forth. And the same thing with mystical Christians, I think there is a parallel process that has to do with the very origins of what we mean by the Shamanic process. The individual who for some reason is quite different or has an experience that changes them and then becomes a source for the community. I would call it the lineage of spontaneous realization.

Rick: MmHum.

Richard: And it's interesting that the teachers that were important to me early in life, like Brugh Joy, had a spontaneous realization. He was a physician. You may have heard of him. He died back in 2009, but he was a profound man. And then Franklin Merrell Wolff – so Franklin Merrill Wolff and I knew each other very well. I met him when he was 89. I read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* into his ear when he was 98, when he passed. And again, here was someone who was seeking, but wasn't seeking within the framework of any tradition and had a spontaneous realization, a profound one, at the age of 49. I was seeking, too. But I was seeking without any kind of framework. I was not part of a teaching. I did not have a sense of lineage and context. I was just broadly seeking because I came alive in rock climbing, I came alive in skiing, I came alive in dancing. I came alive in those places, and I was unhappy. There was a place inside of me from early in childhood that didn't feel safe, that had compensated by being smart, that had done all the psychological things we do for - let's call it - psychological survival, psychological functioning. And something inside of me was hungry, but I didn't know what it was for. Nor did I really know that the kind of experience that I then lived at the age of 30 even existed. So it never – in a way, out of my innocence, I was able to live something with profound originality and now I can draw on the deepest parts of Sufism, or Buddhism or Kabbalah or mystic and gnostic Christianity and Yoga and Dzogchen, and I know

Rick: You're not locked into any one thing.

Richard: No, and I know what they are talking about. I know it from my own experience. I lived it. So someone will say, "Well, you teach Dzogchen. And then they'll say, "Oh, you're teaching Sufism." Well, of course I am, because it is the root of all those mystical paths, actual spiritual paths, that involve practice as much as belief. There is a fundamental experience of realization. So having that spontaneous realization – that fundamental realization spontaneously, means

that in a way I am both an appreciator of the traditions, can take the best from all of them, but I am not confined in any particular tradition. That doesn't mean in any way that I feel superior to the traditions. I've learned so much from them; they have a profound wealth. It's just that there are people who – I wouldn't say I have a really large audience. I have had a very profound following. These people don't want to follow a guru; they don't want to line up; they don't want to put on clothes; they don't want to join a religion. They have already outgrown one or two religions, probably. And so when I have someone who is a Catholic priest who works with me, or a Jungian analyst who works with me, or a Muslim that works with me, they are given a chance to discover their spiritual tradition in a completely new way that makes it more alive because my experience gives me the capacity to look at Jesus' experience and Buddha's experience and all of the experiences that people have had, Mohamed's experience, through the perspective of my own experience. I'm not saying I'm a Buddha or

Rick: Yeah, you have kind of tuned into the experiential nature of the perennial philosophy and so there is a resonance with all the traditions.

Richard: The perennial philosophy comes after the experience.

Rick: Yeah. The experiential nature of the experience, yes, and then that philosophy, you are quite comfortable with all the expressions of that because it is your experience.

Richard: When I study them, when I look at some of the deeper parts of Jung, or some of the poets, like Walt Whitman, the deep mystical poets, then I go, "Oh, yes, of course, thank you, thank you, thank you."

Rick: There are a couple of well-known teachers who could probably say the same thing you are just saying, like Eckhart Tolle, for instance, who wasn't really locked into a tradition, had this experience and then began to sort of put things together after that experience dawned. Or Adyashanti who was in a Zen tradition, but then after his awakenings just became very sort of all-embracing and eclectic and just deeply studied all of the traditions. And your point about the people not wanting a guru, this seems to be a stronger and stronger sentiment among spiritual people and seekers. There is the down side of it in which people say, "I'll just be my own guru, I don't need a teacher," which I think can be kind of trivial and keep one stuck for a long time. But then there is also the reaction to the problems that have arisen with so many different teachers and gurus and the hierarchical inequity that is usually there in those situations where

you, there is this teacher who is in a place where you are never going to be, so there is something about the peer to peer nature of teaching, such as you seem to be doing it, that is appealing to a lot of people these days.

Richard: Exactly. What people say to me is what they really appreciate is I'm living my human experience side by side with them. I'm living the path of relationship, the pains of separation, the struggles, the suffering, the compassion for the world, the sense of helplessness in front of the enormity of some of the craziness, and yet the transmission that comes since that awakening is so indisputable, and since I am simply saying that's the transmission. OK. Richard is a man and Richard is more than a man, but I would never, neither in appearance nor in languaging, be the more-than. To me it's – I never lose touch with the most basic aspect of myself, or the most basic questioning within myself, the most basic vulnerability in myself.

Rick: And you would probably say the same thing to your students, wouldn't you? Put metaphorically, you would say, "You are all waves and we're all the ocean. Both."

Richard: Sure. Metaphorically, I would say that. I would basically say, don't run away from fear. Every time there is fear, that's an opportunity to find out what you believe that isn't true in some way and it's an opportunity to choose, whether you are going to keep your heart open or not, whether you are going to become self-involved or not, and if you have some kind of expansion or breakthrough are you going to become self-important? Is it going to become another adornment for your personal identity, your ego? Or is it just going to move you into deeper and deeper humility? For me humility doesn't mean that we become passive or inactive, it just means that there is nobody doing it particularly. We are instruments, in a sense.

Rick: Yeah, I love that sentiment. We are instrument of the divine. "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace."

Richard: St. Francis.

Rick: And this thing about humility, it's a very important point, because I see so many examples of people having awakening, perhaps assuming a teaching role, perhaps prematurely, you know, in many cases. In Zen traditions they say to wait ten years after the awakening before you begin teaching. And then it begins to go to your head, and things get more and more messy, so I really appreciate your emphasis on humility and your humanness.

Richard: It's an emphasis simply because at every step along the way - I'm sure, trust has much more profound in me than it was when I was younger, but I've always had to deal with self-questioning, with doubts, with fear and vulnerability and uncertainty. You know? And there is certainly a voice that knows, or an energy, that's balanced that comes through, but I don't lose touch with the man, in myself, that has made a lot of mistakes in the journey of love and intimacy and continues to want to discover what's possible between human beings. If you have integrity, then as the shadow emerges and is integrated and digested, it would be impossible for it to go to my head at this point. And really, all along, thank God, I was sort of protected. I was protected by my insecurity. I was protected by my own internal knowledge that, hey, wait a minute. These incredible things are coming through you and your teaching, and it's affecting people's lives, but you are learning all the time, and you are making your own mistakes, and I don't disguise them. So anyone around me gets to see that. So this has been nearly 40 years, very close.

Rick: I think another important aspect of what you are saying is that it paints a more realistic picture of what the awakened state might be, because many people who assume the teaching role and then they try to put on this aura of perfection and infallibility, which usually is that bubble bursts because of something they say or do, but they try to maintain that and then it gives people the expectation, or the assumption, that well, I couldn't be anywhere close to awakening because I perceive these imperfections in me and awakening must be like what this perfect dude is like. So I think you are painting a much more realistic picture of it and I think that's much more helpful to people. I just want to interject, before you respond to that for those who are watching this on the live streaming - there are about 30 people on the live streaming - if any questions occur to you, you can go to the interviews page on batgap and there is a form at the bottom where you can submit your question and I'll ask it of Richard. OK. Back to you.

Rick: I love this. I love just the space we're in in terms of what we're looking at and what we're talking about. So thank you. It made me curious about your background.

Rick: Well, I'll go into it very briefly, because I don't want this to be about me. I had a troubled childhood, alcoholic father and mother in and out of mental hospitals, suicide attempts and so on. I got kind of messed up as a teenager, drugs, and so on. Dropped out of high school and then I learned to meditate, when I was 18, Transcendental Meditation, and it had a dramatic, profound, immediate effect on me. Within a couple months I had reconciled with my father,

gotten a job, gotten back into school and I became a teacher a couple years later, taught it for 25 years. It really – so I've been a pretty zealous spiritual aspirant ever since. So in a nutshell that's my background.

Richard: Perfect, thanks.

Rick: I'm no longer in the TM movement, but I appreciate all the benefit I derived from it.

Richard: Yeah, exactly. I have a good friend that sponsors me in Scandinavia, spent three or

Rick: On yeah, he was on my teacher training course in Estes Park, Colorado, so we are good friends, too.

Richard: OK, so you know Sven. And when Sven was going through the metamorphosis, the time when he needed to outgrow the TM movement, I was the teacher that he found his way to, in a synchronistic way, so that I helped. I was instrumental. I was contributing to his change, and now he has been doing quantum seminars there for 25 years in Scandinavia.

Rick: I have to tell you a funny story. There was this friend of mine on the teacher training course who had a crush on Sven, so I was kind of friendly with her a little bit and she said, "Would you invite him to come to our room to do a puja after the meeting? I'd like to get to know him better." So I invited him and he came there, and he told me afterward, "I knew immediately what was going on as soon as I saw her there."

Richard: Well, he has been mostly a bachelor, but he has a lovely girlfriend now. And he continues on the path and he brings good people there to present. Well, so the TM movement was instrumental for many, many people and it gave so many people the experience that I can begin to learn how to calm this wayward mind and how to break the connection between thinking and identification. And, yeah, it was a very important thing, and again, it was one of those things where the teacher and the teaching were truly important. The community wasn't quite as important. And Maharishi was so elevated, in a way, and I think that's part of a pattern that will continue. It's very old.

Rick: Another point I'd like to go back to is your emphasis on the constancy of the path, it's like a continual unfolding. I tend to emphasize that in these interviews, because I think that's the way it actually is, and I've asked some people towards the end of an interview, "Well, how do

you see things unfolding from here? What's on the horizon for you?" And they kind of stretch their head, as if to say, "I'm done. What more could there be?" But I think there is a vast range of possibilities and - who is it - Ken Wilber, said, "Waking up is just a beginning, there is also growing up and cleaning up." And there is no end to doing that, so I just want to say I appreciate your emphasis on this as a lifelong learning process.

Richard: Well, it is. I mean, the consciousness is not an individual experience. It's not my experience. The first book I wrote was called, *The I That Is We*, because the nature of that original awakening was that I was inseparable from everything, including other people, but while that is a realization, and actually a direct experience, the process of living intimacy, of getting into profound conscious relationship with other people, how could you ever reach the end of it? How could you? In the certain sense, if it's just one, it doesn't matter, but as soon as there is two you are beginning to create a foundation for, let's call it society or even civilization. And so if you ask me, "Where is it going?" I would answer, "I don't know." But where I think I am going is into deeper and deeper trust in each moment and at the same time a willingness and a vulnerability and openness to more and more profound connection with anyone and everyone, but also in particular a desire to see how deep intimacy can go with someone else, and that means that they are on a journey, and we're exploring, and I'm not the teacher, I'm a student, and what is teaching me is relationship. That third consciousness that is relationship itself, in a certain sense, just between you and me, in a way, listening to the process of our connection, that consciousness is profound.

Rick: Let me read another little passage from your website here. "The heart of his work is about presence and conscious relationships. Once you are solidly grounded in yourself you become capable of profound relatedness with others. He believes it is the relational fields created between awakening people that actualizes and transmits an evolutionary paradigm of consciousness that is essential to resolving the deep challenges of our time." I like that. I highlighted that. Perhaps we should emphasize, once you are solidly grounded in yourself you become capable of profound relatedness with others, because if you are not solidly grounded in yourself, then who is going to be related to anything? I mean, you don't know who you are, how can you know who somebody else is?

Richard: Yeah, the problem is if you do know who you are, because whoever that is, the part of you that is aware of that, already transcends it. In a certain sense there is no knowing who we are. There's being, there's being, and when someone says they know they are enlightened, I go,

“Yeah? So what part of you knows that?” I was once asked to do a review for a particular teacher’s book, and I could see, feel, taste the ego in it, so I wrote back to him and said, “You know there is a lot of good stuff in this book, but I can really feel your shadow in it and people like us should talk and look at these things together. How about if we just do that, but I can’t write an endorsement for the book.” And I got back a little succinct, “Well, not everybody is ready for my teaching.”

Rick: Oh, brother. Where is that guy these days?

Richard: Well, I’m not going to mention names.

Rick: No, not the name, but how did he turn out?

Richard: He crashed and burned. But incredibly successful. A big following - dah ta dah ta dah - crashed and burned, and I saw that coming for him ten years earlier, as soon as I met him.

Rick: I thought we might go over – there is a nice document on your website which you might want to read called *The Foundational Teachings of Richard’s Work*. There are about five main points in it that are elaborated on. I thought it might be interesting to go through those. Would you like to do that?

Richard: Sure.

Rick: Ok. Let me just read them first, then we’ll go through them one by one and it will give people a nice overview of your teaching: The power of awareness; focused spacious awareness; ready relaxed embodiment; energy awareness; and the Mandala approach to presence and emotional clarity. And if that happens to be an older document, and there’s more you’d like to cover, we can cover more also, but would that give us a nice overview if we run through those?

Richard: Yeah. Let’s do that.

Rick: OK. The first one is the power of awareness. What do you mean by that?

Richard: It’s really very obvious and it’s truly amazing when people don’t see it because the power of awareness simply means, that whatever you are aware of, whatever thoughts you are having, it’s arising in a field of a deeper consciousness. So you have to be more than the field.

Rick: More than the thoughts, you mean.

Richard: More than the belief. And likewise with a sensation or feeling. The power of awareness means that you can have a relationship to your thoughts as opposed to truly identifying with them. You can have a relationship to your feelings instead of truly identifying with them. So I have thoughts and I am more than my thoughts. The I that is more than the thoughts is just language. You could give it a name, you could say it flow, it's your spiritual self, you could call it consciousness, you could call it rigpa, whatever you want to call it, those are just names, but it transcends and is prior to all categories. You could call it God-consciousness. The power of awareness just simply means that you are in relationship to your thoughts, you can choose to examine them, you can choose to question them, you are in relationship to your sensations. You can choose to relax around them, you can choose to let them drive you into thinking or

Rick: So how do you do that? How do we shift from understanding this intellectually, which is probably what most people do, and having it be something that is your actual experience.

Richard: Well, for example, if you sit down to meditate, what you are going to observe is where your mind goes. So if you give your mind a simple assignment. OK, stay here. Let's not try for anything. Let's stay in the body. Let's use the breath as an anchor in the body. The presence of the sensation in the body, basically the instructions for something like Vipassana meditation is different than what you were talking about earlier, TM, where you are given a mantra. But the important thing with the mantra, is the point where the mantra fades, goes over the horizon, disappears, but the part of you that was listening to the mantra remains there. And now you notice that in your mind, suddenly there is an imaginary conversation with a friend, because something is unresolved or you want to communicate something, and you watch. You watch what is arising in your mind and you begin to see the patterns of ego dynamics, such as a controller or a narrator or a know-it-all, and you begin to see, oh there is a victim consciousness and there is the one that feels superior, there is the pious spiritual persona dynamic. The power of awareness is that you are the one that is observing it, therefore you don't have to actually become identified with and lost in that. The same thing with a sensation. We know for example, when people have body sensations and then go and say, oh my God, let's say it's a stomach discomfort. "I'm getting an ulcer" versus, someone says, "well, there is this strange kind of burning in my stomach." Someone who stays with just that objective description of the sensation versus someone who assumes the sensation might be linked to a disease, actually people who do that have a lower life expectancy. So the fact is that you can be in relationship to anything that arises in your mind because of the power of awareness. The power is: this is a thought. It's not who I am. This is a sensation, it's not who I am. The who I am is really unnamable, but it is the part of me that allows me to be aware of that. Earlier on when you asked me about my awakening and I said I began to just observe, this is a thought, it's about the future, look what it creates, anxiety. This is a thought about the future and look what it creates,

expectancy, eagerness and hope. This is a thought about the past and look what it is creating: a kind of nostalgia or an assumption about what normalcy was at that time. “Oh, God, I used to be normal, now what is happening to me?” This is a judgment of the environment, circumstances, people – what I call “you” stories. This is a judgment about myself. Instead of actually living in that world, you become the witness to that world, so the aware part of your consciousness, the aware ego, is that witnessing capacity. And it’s powerful because it sets you free from being the victim of your own thinking. Or the victim is the reactions to your clinging to the things, Buddhism 101, clinging to what you want to feel and pushing away what you don’t want to feel. So you become the observer of the pushing away. Don’t push. You become the observer of the grasping for the pleasure or the happiness. Don’t grasp. And then something new can happen. That’s the power of awareness. It never stops. You are going to outgrow everything, and anything that you are. No matter what. We are – it’s built into us to transcend ourselves. And that is if people do it. They don’t do it, but they can.

Rick: Right. There is a bit of a prescription/description issue here. You often hear teachers describing their experience, the way they function, and kind of offering that description as a prescription. It’s kind of like this audience is sitting here listening and they’re hearing how this guy functions, and they are kind of getting it. And to a certain extent I think the description can be a prescription, it can awaken in you a sort of appreciation for how another person experiences and you can begin to inculcate that in yourself, but there is also a problem, I think, in that, very often people have difficulty bridging the gulf between their experience of what the guy is describing which might be very rudimentary, and a kind of fledgling stage of it, and the full blown ability to not be gripped and overshadowed and identified with your thoughts. So how would you address that concern?

Richard: Well, somebody sees - a four year old that has not had his first bicycle sees somebody who can do flips on them, you know, or ride on one wheel. Is that person going to say, “Oh, God, I’ll never be a good bicycle rider,” or are they going to become really inspired and say, “Wow. When am I going to get my first bike.” And you know the Dawn Wall was climbed for the first time in Yosemite last year by two young guys. Incredible. This was not physically, physiologically or even mentally possible twenty years ago. Thirty years ago for sure. So my answer to that is, I’m in the shower. Real experience. I’m a bachelor now, after 38 years of serial monogamy, my last relationship, she decided to leave because her grandchildren were born it was time for her to go back to England our relationship wasn’t working well enough, and there were other real obstacles like no health insurance for me there and no health insurance for her here. So she left and I grieved. It hurt and I love her. Love never stopped. So I’m in the shower and I hear myself thinking. I’m trying to describe to someone what it feels like to feel this aloneness and suddenly my aware self goes, “Oh, imaginary conversation - self-justifying about your own self-pity.” And the moment I said that to myself - bam - it stopped, and now

there is just the sensation of the water, and I'm showering and it's delicious. So now that's because I've practiced. I've practiced for decades and decades, stepping back into the present moment, starting all over again. There is a whole chapter in one of my books, *The Mandala of Being*, which is about learning to step back into the present moment when you recognize what your mind is doing. So yes, it is both prescription and description, and I like that differentiation. The point is, there is no - you don't just wake up. Enlightenment is like a mustard seed, Jesus says in the Gospel of Thomas. It's the smallest of all seeds, yet it can grow into a shrub that shelters many people. In Dzogchen Buddhism they don't talk about anyone, ever, staying in that state of full awareness all the time. It's that they access it, first in just moments. That moment you step back into the - the moment someone says to you, "What part of you is listening to this right now?" And for a split second consciousness turns back to look for that part, for a split second, or if I say to you, "If you are not understanding this conversation, wherever you are right now, what if you just say to yourself, "Who would I be right now if I just trust?" For a split second something inside just goes, "Huh." Now what if that split second happened 50 or 500 times a day? Initially what if it happened - so it sounds like a formula, and at first it has an effect, and then after a while it doesn't, but then, gradually you keep resting in relaxing, relaxing, relaxing into focused spacious awareness.

Rick: That's nice. That actually gets us onto our second point here. We were talking about the power of awareness, now we're talking about focused spacious awareness, and I think your bicycle analogy is good, with the little kid watching the person doing flips, you start riding the bicycle and you get better and better at it. It doesn't happen overnight, but you develop muscle memory and all kinds of skills, and eventually you are doing flips.

Richard: Exactly. And there is absolutely no shortcut in the spiritual path. There is no short cut. You can borrow your identity from your belief system and your club or your tribe or your gang or your sect, but if you keep exercising the power of awareness, again and again, you are going to come back to this present moment and if you try to describe what is this, when you come back to the present moment, it's paradoxical. On the one hand every perception is vivid, so in that sense there is a precision of focus. At the same time, you are not collapsing into it. So let's say there is a feeling that is scary, and you look at it, right? But if you look at it and you stay vast, it just moves like weather, like clouds that are just changing shape and it moves on. So at the level of the mind, we can talk about the mind as simultaneously focused and spacious as we get more and more present. At the level of the body, the body is more and more awake, alert and ready. The image is of the martial artists, they hear the drop of water fall, or they sense somebody coming. So the same thing, if the mind is focused and spacious that is the exact same thing as describing the body that is both ready and relaxed. Most of the time when we are ready we are tense. We're ready but we're nervous, we're anxious, we're tense, we're armored. And if we're relaxed, we tend to space out. We tend to drift to sleep. We tend to lose

focus. So it's the simultaneity – it's a muscle. It gets stronger and stronger and it does two things. It moves toward the center of the mandala – if you look at a sunflower or a daisy, where there is the dark inner center and there are the petals radiating out, circumferentially, out radially, and if you look at the mandala, two things happen: you want to be drawn to the center, but you want to be pulled to the outside. It's so impossible to describe to people what the state of coming deeper and deeper into present-moment awareness really is, except you are more and more focused, in the sense that everything is more vivid, precise, exact. And at the same time, you are not narrowing. So when I went to medical school, and anyone who is studying anything, law, science, anything, you're narrowing your focus, and you are losing spaciousness. You become identified therefore with your wave, your knowledge, your information, but in a passage to developing self, consciously we are doing two things. We are expanding into limitless mind and every perception is vivid. We are coming deeper and deeper into the body so that in a split second you can respond to something, but at the same time you are profoundly relaxed. Now if you are really ready all the time and not relaxed, then any stimulus is going to scare you, or overexcite you or over-arouse you and you are going to go into nervous exhaustion, literally, neurological exhaustion. You'll go into post-traumatic stress, if you cannot find that place of relaxation at the same time. A dozen years after I had that awakening, I was in an auto accident. I was in the passenger seat and the next thing I know I'm upside down in the back seat. I had my seatbelt on. And I realized just before the impact, at my side door, I could see the car coming, it was almost, there was a split second, not rational, in which I was trying to throw me and the car out of the way of this oncoming car. So I realized that at that moment of impact I was in a very extraordinary state of consciousness, and if I didn't actually find that state of consciousness again, then all of the injury was going to be imprinted in my body at the very level of consciousness at which point the injury occurred. So I crawled out of the car, got on to the grass at the side of the road and I just asked people to leave me alone, and I slowly, slowly relaxed and relaxed and relaxed, kind of like regressing, until I felt that I was at the moment of impact. I was at the exact state of state of consciousness at which the impact occurred. At one point a policeman came and said, "Are you alright? Do you need an ambulance?" And I said, "I just need a little more time. Please, just trust me and leave." And he did. And I just stayed with this, and I walked away with just a few bruises and no fear of being in a car accident again. No post-traumatic stress. I went back, and so I focused and got spacious. I went deeper and deeper into the body and got vaster and vaster and then I was at the exact same energy as at the moment of impact. And at the moment of impact we're in a timeless state, and then people afterwards they just can't seem to get over the injury, because the injury is imprinted not only in the physical body, but it is imprinted at the vibrational level at which it took place. So that is why, when there is trauma in a very young child, that has profound repercussions for the rest of the life of that individual. Psychological trauma, emotional trauma, any kind of trauma, because they are so undifferentiated, they are so close

to a more unitive state, they are preverbal, if they are very young, and if you are working with an injury that takes place at that point, in my work, at a certain point in a ten-day retreat, even people who have had injury at that level are going to reach a state of aliveness that is so undifferentiated and yet so present in their bodies, that suddenly the trauma from early childhood actually passes through them. It's released. Maybe it's released as tears, maybe it's released as sobbing, maybe it's released as shaking, trembling, ecstatic - but it's released and they are not the same again, because they reached the level at which the imprint took place. So that's what the power of awareness is. That's what it means to be both ready and relaxed, focused and spacious. You're going deeper and deeper. As a practice, sit down, find a sensation, like the air moving through your nose, but don't move your - be in your body, don't lose the awareness of sounds and the space around you, and that's spatial in the physical sense. I mean right now we can all imagine that we are on planet Earth, and that's big. Most people are not going to actually imagine they are even in the room they're in or the building they're in or the city they are in or the part of the Earth they are in. Then if you want to get bigger, well the Earth is rotating around the Sun and now we are in the Solar System and the Milky Way galaxy. That's spatial. So it's a spatial suggestion of limitlessness or vastness, but mind itself, or consciousness itself, is not spatial, but it's the great space. It's limitless, it's vast and within that are constantly arising sensations and feelings and thoughts and perceptions and so the experience you actually have after you emerge from the period of meditation or after you have finished being totally focused on a rock climb, is that everything is alive. You are alive, everything you perceive is alive, and in that state, of course, the ego will then come back in and say, "Oh, I love to do this. I want to become a rock-climber." So it becomes part of identity again, but there is this process of learning, through the body to be ready and relaxed, learning through self-observation to be focused and spacious, they are really not separate. I find sometimes that going through the body is actually easier, or let's say, more useful, than just trying to sit in meditation.

Rick: or both. Sometimes when I meditate there is like this CAT scan going on with my body, checking things out, and things are coming to my attention, and so on.

Richard: Exactly, well both are vast.

Rick: On this spacious focus thing, there is a quote from Padmasambhava, he said, "My awareness is as vast as the sky, but my attention to karmas is as fine as a grain of barley flour."

Richard: Exactly what I am saying.

Rick: Yeah, and I was reminded of earlier in the interview when you were talking about your initial awakening, you had to have somebody take care of you for a while. It's like you were vast, but you hadn't learned to integrate that vastness with focused awareness within

boundaries. And like you say about education, you want your brain surgeon to be really focused on what he is doing. You want your commercial airline pilot to be totally focused on what he is doing, but at the same time that focus, especially if it is habitual, day in and day out, can tend to become engrained and entrenched, so the comprehensiveness or the broadness is lost. So I'm just reiterating what you are saying, basically, but I think one way of looking at spiritual development or enlightenment is the development or the culturing of simultaneity of vastness and specificity, having the two so well integrated that you can be flying a 747, landing in a show storm, and at the same time be in cosmic consciousness or vast unbounded awareness.

Richard: and you will function better.

Rick: Yes, absolutely.

Richard: You will act without knowing why you act. You will know without knowing why you know. By the way I love your clarity. Thank you.

Rick: Thank you. I was also reminded to suggest that there has been some research on meditation, I think specifically TM, but maybe other types, where they find that people habituate more quickly to stressful stimuli as measured by galvanic skin response, so there's a loud tone or something, and the tone repeats itself at unpredictable intervals, and whereas an ordinary person would tend to continue to react unnecessarily perhaps to those stresses, someone who is in a more settled style of physical functioning tapers off very quickly and doesn't get stressed by something. They kind of adapt to the situation. So I think this has a lot of implication for PTSD and actually meditation of various sorts has been used very successfully these days to treat people with PTSD, sometimes with quite dramatic and profound and almost immediate results.

Richard: Yes, exactly. Also, what you are saying suggests something interesting about people who habituate to a particular stress level or particular level of arousal in the body, and one of the reasons I do long retreats is to try to get the body – to try to get that process to come to a new, to subside to a new level of balance so that now you have a deeper sense of what it is like to be routinely focused, spacious, ready, relaxed, heartfelt, and then the slightest thought will arouse you, and then you can just quickly release. So I teach people to breathe five times. Five focused, spacious breaths. For a moment you are very precisely aware of the sensation of the breath and you are allowing intuitively your mind to imagine your mind as limitless. And so you are coming toward that silence that has no beginning and no end and at the same time there is precision, like a barley-grain of karma. The precision of the sensation of your breathing for five breaths. And do that 20 times a day. Each time you do that, here is your arousal level, five breaths and you are here. They you get into the habit of your arousal level going up because you identify with your thinking, "He doesn't love me. I have to do more. Now is not enough

time. I won't have enough money." The thoughts just arouse, arouse, arouse, each thought, and then you go, "Ah, five breaths." Now, then you start to see your mind arousing, and you go, "Wait, wait, wait, five breaths." And you start to take your arousal level

Rick: Nip it in the bud.

Richard: Yes. And since not many people are going to be willing to sit down and meditate for ten days, and even if they did, their arousal level would come down so low that they could function without any stress for maybe three days, or maybe a week, or maybe a month, and then the habit, the arousal habit of identification with judgements about yourself, judgments, stories about others, the way you look at the future, the way you look at the past, it's going to start, you're going to start having that instantaneous arousal with every thought, and if you don't stay alert, and awake, to go, "Ah." Or if you start to tense like this, if you don't simply say, "OK, how would I be right now if I just trust. Ah." "How would it be right now if it is just all given away?" "I forgive, ah." We only get that response for a millisecond, initially, but what if there are 50 milliseconds a day, they something begins to imprint and so the mustard seed happens again and again and again. The moment of rigpa, again and again, brief, but- so just start to – and now this arousal level is much, much lower. What does that mean? That means that when someone has a thought next to you, you might not hear the exact words, but you know the field has changed because of the thought, so you know they are thinking. So I sit there in front of an audience, or in front of people, and I know the moment their mind moves, because their field changes. And then, intuitively, based on the content of what is going on in that moment, I have a pretty good idea where their mind went. The kind of internal question, the kind of internal doubt, the kind of internal – OK, that mind just jumped into the future. I can sense it. Oh, that mind just made a reference to the past, based on the past, made it jump into the future. I can feel that. I can sense it in the field, because my arousal level is so, so still. And it's an interesting thing, as soon as I am with a group of people, and there is that collective field, I am influencing the collective field. They're influencing me. That causes me to move into a deeper and deeper stillness and then I function more effectively as a guide. And it is a completely integrated, connected, inter – It's the I that is we. It's not the I guiding the we, it's the I that is we, and it's a field consciousness, but if I'm agitated, then I'm not any good to anybody. So, and I still get agitated, I'm learning what it's like now for the last eight months to live by myself, after 37 years of serial monogamy – there was always someone there, either soon to be with because I was in love, or living with. A massive change to a whole different set of mental constructs arising, a whole different, and again and again, it's like, "Ah. Ah. Settle, settle, settle, settle."

Rick: There is a metaphor you might like. I've used it before on the show, but I think you might enjoy it, and that is that you might think of a sort of a stressed, agitated nervous system as

being like stone. OK, and if you try to make a mark in stone, it's hard to make a mark, but if you do make one, it stays there a long, long time. Now perhaps a less stressed, more settled nervous system is like sand, you know you can make a mark in sand, it's easier to make a deeper mark, in other words, you can make a deeper experience, and the mark doesn't stay very long, it gets washed away. But an even, taking it to the next step, water. You can make a really deep mark in water and it's gone immediately. Next step, air. You can easily make a deep mark in air, pass your arm through it, metaphorically speaking, a very deep, profound, rich experience, and yet it, poof! Gone as soon as it happens. So.

Richard: Well, that's a wonderful metaphor. It's very similar to one I used in my first book, *The I That Is We*. I talked about rock-man, a body that is made of rocks the size of my fist. If you want to get that person to feel something you have to really push hard and hit him, and when you do, if you touch them softly they're not even going to know that anything happened.

Rick: Kind of like we were talking about the terrorists earlier.

Richard: Exactly. So as you practice, you evolve and now you become pebble-man, then you become sand-man, and then you become humus -man, so the slightest touch affects you, and at the same time, you are just constantly being affected by all these movements all around you and from within you, and the passing through. I like your metaphor very well, because the point is, if you get to be water-person or air-person, you have to be prepared for extraordinary vulnerability. That means everything is going to affect you, everything. And if you at any moment identify with it, at any moment you say, "No," to it, you are in deep trouble.

Rick: Sounds like we have the makings of a spiritual superhero movie, instead of the incredible hulk, the guy who is on fire, we can have pebble-man, rock-man, sand-man, whoever –

Richard: And water-man and air-man.

Rick: So the next one of your points was ready, relaxed embodiment. Let's talk about that one a little bit.

Richard: Well, think about a surfer, everybody, if you haven't surfed, at least, or a skier.

Rick: Yeah, I've skied.

Richard: Yeah, me, too. And then surfed. And not very good at either, but enough to know what it is like to be in flow. So when you are in flow on a surf board, as you get better and better at it, there is a moment where your body is responding continuously to the slightest change in the alignment of the board or the skis. At the same time, if you are tense, you can't respond to it. If you are thinking about what you are doing, that slows down the way that information is transferred between the peripheral nervous system and central nervous system,

so in a certain sense, when you are profoundly relaxed and profoundly ready, you are adjusting to anything. It would be the same process in martial arts. In martial arts or chi gong or in tai chi, they are trying to teach people to be both relaxed and ready, simultaneously, but every athlete who gets into a state of flow through whatever activity understands what that is, and things like surfing, which are very difficult to learn and in which the wave function is changing all the time and the weather is changing all the time, that's so - I'm teaching people with movement, with dance, with whirling, and again and again, it's not just to have an experience, it's to understand that if this experience suddenly moves you profoundly it is because you are simultaneously very awake, very alert, and equally relaxed.

Rick: Yeah, I was just reaching for this book on my shelf. There is this beautiful quote from Billie Jean King, it contains some others quotes, too, by this guy I interviewed a while back, Craig Pearson, *The Supreme Awakening*, but he quotes a bunch of athletes describing their experience when they are totally in the zone, and it's just what you're describing. There is this complete effortlessness, as if they weren't doing anything, even though they are involved in the most dynamic activity, but they are just, you read the accounts from really top-level athletes, Michael Jordon, and people like that, and it's like they are just sitting back and relaxing while they are doing this incredible stuff in their sport.

Richard: Exactly, and if that then generalizes to being with your children, to being with your financial adviser, to working on your taxes, to being with the person that you want to deepen in love with, if that generalizes into every moment of life, then we have what we could call spiritual integration, or spiritual maturity. So it's clear that we are able to access aspects of this consciousness in certain contexts, but eventually Michael Jordan can't play basketball the way he did before, because he got older. Same with all athletes, but can he still be in the same state of flow. Can Billie Jean King, or is the identity caught in a memory of how wonderful that was, and therefore life now is not quite as full as it used to be. One of our - Rick Chaffee, was an Olympic skier in the 60s for the U.S. He came to one of my retreats in the early 80s. He experienced in the retreat the same level of energy that he experienced in the starting gate as he skied the giant slalom. He was one of our gold-medal winning Olympic athletes, and he had never believed that he would ever experience it again. And so what he did was, he left the motivational speaking circuit and he actually went into ministry and decided that he wanted to, in the framework of his faith, teach consciousness. I don't think I'm trespassing - I'm interpreting him because it has been decades since we had a conversation about this, but he caught up with me about five or six years ago with an email about where his life had gone. But the thing is to take something that happens at peak moments, and then continue to integrate it, spiritual awakening, cosmic consciousness, Kundalini awakening, whatever you want to call it, fundamental realization is a peak moment. Then integrating it is a highly creative, imaginal, inventive - it requires discipline, consistency and persistence. People need to know you are

laying down the path each time you take a step, as you take a step, from the very place you take the step from inside yourself, and it doesn't end, and there is no final state of illumination or clarity, in my opinion, and in my experience. There is just a ceaseless evolution. And that doesn't mean that there are not moments of the mustard seed, or moments of unitive – so both are happening. It's being and becoming. And evolving and you are already there and you are still growing.

Rick: It's kind of interesting to think of top level athletic performance as a spiritual practice, because to really reach the top level you have to do what we have been describing here. You have to be able to be relaxed and dynamic at the same time or else you are just going to be in the second or third tier, you are not going to be at the top. And so obviously, most of us, the vast majority of us aren't going to be engaged in world class athletics, but everyone can do it. Somebody who is a wheelchair with an injury can culture that same quality. There are ways of going about it and athletics just happen to be one and athletes tend to be famous, but it's something that's available to every human being.

Richard: Well, it is, and for example if I have a group that I am working with, one of the simple exercises I do is I have people just start walking around in a room, and I ask them to watch the empty space where you are going to put your next footstep, OK, then gradually I accelerate the speed that I invite them to walk, and if you have enough people crowded into a relatively small space, that automatically means you are going to have to change direction. You have to change direction even as you are taking a step because somebody else is about to step into the same place, because the only rule in this exploration is no collisions and don't stop. Don't stop for somebody to get out of your way. Never stop and no collisions and people do this. First I say, let's take an inventory of your state of being before we start, and people will describe where they are: distracted, interested, curious, da, da, da. And then we do this kind of dolphin movement faster and faster, more and more random

Rick: like some school of fish or a flock of birds

Richard: exactly. Right. And then at a certain point I will say, "Stop. Now what is your state?" and then we hear: alive, vital, calm, peaceful, centered, joyous. Ok, let's do it some more, and we find out that if you actually are forced to be ready, you are also forced to be relaxed. You are forced to be focused, but you are also forced to be spacious, because if you are just focused on where you are putting your feet, then you are not going to be aware of the people around you, and there are going to be collisions. But if we do this gradually, and this is a typical exercise I would do, for example, with a group of people, to give them the direct experience of shifting states, or shifting into a more focused, spacious, really relaxed state, and now notice it, OK. Now, think about what we do all the time. All day we are doing the same thing at the same desk in the same way, the same routine. A lot of my exercises have to do with discontinuity. We

know that Prigogine got a Nobel Prize for the theory of dissipative structures, if you add energy to certain systems, like if you put too much heat under your porridge and you don't pay attention it's going to burn. Entropy, no more energy, that's it, but there are certain systems if you add energy to them, they reorganize and now they can handle even more energy, and that's what I think a human being is. What we call ego can only handle a certain amount of energy before it's going to flip out into ecstatic states, or psychotic states. It's going to break down or at a certain point the whole sense of me disappears, the ego is gone, and there is just a being that is alive with this energy pouring through it and it is dancing in the danger zone where the dancer becomes the dance, in that song, "Maniac," from *Flash Dance*, the film. She is dancing to the danger zone where the dancer becomes the dance. So there we get this direct experience. Now, once you have that direct experience and you begin to realize, there is a moment of discontinuity that happens. So is it going to come through an auto accident? Is it going to come through divorce? Is it going to come through a disease, or are you going to do something really creative? Stop doing what you are doing now and go play your piano. Go out for a run, but don't go for a run every single day, because then it becomes a pattern. Change your energy. Change your activity, discontinuity, discontinuity, discontinuity. Good idea to change your career every seven years. I've heard some people recommend that. Go play – hang out with the grandchildren and be absurd. After I get done teaching, I can't help myself, I make the most ridiculous puns and things and when people protest I say, well, look, I've been so earnest and so serious, in a certain sense, in communicating this work, now my mind needs to go to ridiculousness and it just starts to play with word association and, it's silly, but for discontinuity I use singing, not disrespectfully, but singing to the Halleluiahs Chorus, for example, or making believe you are a trombone or a trumpet, or speaking gibberish, or trying to point your finger at something and name it what it isn't. Which is virtually impossible. Once a label, a word, has been put on something like finger, to call it a tulip, you can't do it. And you watch the way the mind starts creating patterns. It starts naming foods or naming colors, when it tries to change, but forcing the mind to do what it can't do. These discontinuities, I do them every day. Sometimes in different forms with people in retreats, because it just frees energy. It puts us into the body in a way that is no longer patterned in the old way, so we start to become ready and relaxed. The mind starts to become focused and spacious, and that is the state we are talking about when we talk about now or presence. To be really in the now is to be focused and spacious. To be newly in the now is to be ready and relaxed. And everybody gets a taste of it in some form. Athletics, love making, writing poetry, painting, essentially when we talk about the now, the present moment, what we're really talking about is focused, spacious mind; what we are really talking about is a ready, relaxed, embodiment. The deeper, the closer you come into the now you leave the world of thought, the world of language and you come into focused spaciousness, ready, relaxed, and it's being. And there is no limit to it, it goes deeper and deeper and deeper.

Rick: Incidentally, this is a pretty traditional guru tactic, you know. Shaking the disciples up, getting them out of their ruts, breaking their routines. OK, get up at 3:00 in the morning and run this message over to the next village. And the gut gets over there and he hands the note to the recipient, and it says, "Send him back." And you just kind of break it up.

Richard: Well, discontinuity. To put discontinuity in so that you don't have to – obviously – I was just talking to a divorce attorney yesterday. He was saying, divorce is an opportunity for transformation, but people get so mired in their anger, they get so mired in their hurt, so mired in their fear, particularly financial fear, or if it has to do with custody of children, they get so mired in anxiety about who is going to get custody, angry, you know, and we just literally poison ourselves, hour after hour, day after day. It's so sad. And then you are in a profound discontinuity. What an opportunity to observe your mind, to observe the emotional arousal of the thinking. It's just a tremendous opportunity, but we've never been trained to take advantage of those opportunities, so you end up with the discontinuity, and sometimes a breakdown but not a breakthrough, as someone said, I can't remember who.

Rick: Right. You know, people often say the world is your guru and it's a very intelligent universe and things that are happening to you are not happening capriciously, they are happening with your best interest in mind even when it might not seem that way. So I think if you can culture that perspective it might help one to do what you are saying here and treat disruptions and difficulties as opportunities. A question came in. This is from Richard in South Hampton, England. It's about spacious focus. "Relating to childhood trauma, is there an area of the body that one might concentrate on to help find the bodily roots of childhood trauma? I can feel that I am often overstimulated, and I suspect this is related to fear in connection with my father's temper towards my mother, when I was a child. I know below that memory my childhood and infant self is quite open and relaxed. All the best, Richard."

Richard: It's not like here's the issue, here's the formula for solving it. I don't think that way. There's not a specific way to focus in the body. It's broader than that, or it's more simple in a way. So what I would say to Richard is, in the present moment, which is all we have, there is a sensation. Whether it was caused from your father and mother's aggressiveness, or your father's aggressiveness, that's a belief. It may be true, it may not be true, but the important thing is that you have this sensation in the present moment, let's say if you are overexcited, or you have this anxiety. The question is what are you going to do with it, or how are you going to relate to it now. And when things have been imprinted from very early in life, as I said earlier, you have to really shift levels, you have to descend into – not regress to – not in the kind of hypnotic regression, let's revisit this wound and live it through. I think maybe that has a therapeutic value at times, but you only have the present moment. Live deeper into this present moment and as you reach the places where there is inhibition, and you touch them

with respect and gentleness, you dance them, you sing them, you find that your consciousness and your body knows how to heal this already. So that potential is already there, so consciousness needs contrast, and we're not as linear as we like to make ourselves out to be with the *Neoness*, the diagnostic textbook on symptoms and syndromes. My experience, after almost 40 years of working with people, is that the body knows how to heal profoundly and the psyche knows how to heal profoundly. What we have to do is just let it become alive right now, in the present moment, any way we can, so rather than focus on where it might be in our body, just see what happens if you start moving. See what happens when you start dancing. See what happens if you start letting your voice make sound and move to your own sound, and just keep moving deeper and deeper into your own body, into your own creative, generative self-expression in the moment and suddenly, without even understanding how it happens, something will release, or reorganize. Since I've seen it happen thousands of times I can simply tell you I have never tried to work with a problem at the level of the problem. I just work with the energy in the moment, coming deeper into the body, coming into your voice, coming there through dancing, coming there through singing, coming there through quiet sitting and observation, coming there through breathing meditation, come there – there's just almost limitless ways – it's like you reach a moment. It's like the Sistine Chapel ceiling. You are getting closer. Adam and God are reaching for each other. So when you are out here, Richard, and you're really stressed and bothered and you look at it through your head and you give labels to it and explain it from your past, OK, that's one level of it, but if you enter the sensation and you begin to dance with it, you begin to sing with it, you begin to voice it, or you just cry with it, and you're getting closer and closer, and suddenly it just reorganizes. You go to a different level of consciousness, you go to a different level of embodiment, and things then pass through you. It's not like we're solid. It's not like these body memories are there, imprinted forever. It just a reorganization. It's not – that's just a way of describing a process we go through. Sometimes it doesn't – it looks very chaotic or feels very chaotic, but afterwards, as it settles down, you discover, oh! I remember a report of a small airplane crash that happened to a couple. Both were diagnosed; he had severe heart disease, and she was diabetic. It took them almost 10 days to extricate themselves from the wilderness area where they had crashed, at which point she was no longer diabetic and his heart disease had improved. Part of it is discontinuity. Part of it is probably that they were starving.

Rick: Yeah. Fasting was good for them.

Richard: But the point is, these moments of discontinuity, however we reach them, allow us to reorganize into a new level of wholeness. Especially if we go there with respect for ourselves, we enter the process with a sense of tender curiosity, we enter the process – nobody is ever forced. I never force anyone to do anything. In fact, if they are going to trust me, I have to believe in them. So Richard, I would basically say, don't try to heal it as a problem from

childhood. It's an immediate present-moment sensation. Enter it. Explore it. Dance it. Sing it. Go for a run. Don't try to run from it, just dive into it with awareness. Dive into it with singing. Dive into it with dancing. And, what did Gabrielle Roth say? "Sweat your prayers," with the Five Rhythms Philosophy of dance. That's basically how I would work with it. And there are other ways that I would work, which comes at some point to talking about the Mandala methodology.

Rick: Yeah. You have kind of segued into energy awareness in what you were just saying, which was the next point and we will get to the Mandala methodology in a second, but you said in energy awareness that a human being has many kinds of levels of energy fields and you referred to something called sacred attention, so let's touch on that before we go on to the Mandala work.

Richard: One of the things that was really profound for me in my own development was to learn to do energy work, that is to learn to scan or sense the energy field of a person, and I was coming from medicine and in fact, I was still in medicine when I first learned about energy work in the 70s and I thought I had found this incredible methodology for healing, and it is, up to a certain degree, it can be a very profound form of healing, but what I got interested in was the state of consciousness I was in when the energy was the strongest, when it was being transmitted the strongest and I was the most sensitive to it in terms of observing, sensing the energy in someone else, I thought, wow! Instead of making this about energy work, why don't we make it about sacred attention. I'm changing the quality of my attention in order to be aware of the energy. I'm changing the quality of my attention in order to be a transmitter of the energy so how am I changing it? Well, I'm moving more and more into the present moment. I'm using something like the idea of the divine as a transitional object for surrendering to limitlessness. Then I'm connecting to that and letting it flow through me. So, over time I took the work out of the context of energy healing and put it into the context of what I call sacred meditation. I teach people that to this day in all my retreats. So right now, for example, if we take hold of the chair that you're sitting on, and you squeeze it hard, that is one form of delivering attention, and if you keep doing that, maybe you'll be more alert, maybe you will be more focused, but after a while you will get tired, you will get irritable. If you relax, then you touch the chair very, very softly, you think, well, ok this is pretty soft. I wonder if on a scale of one to five this level of softness is a 5, I wonder what a one would be like. So now everything has to sort of soften inside of me. It seems to me to be soft takes a stronger mind and more attention than to be forceful. And so, if I know that I can breathe in now and be opening, if I need in the sense of using words, opening to limitless consciousness, opening to the infinite, opening to universal energy, opening to unconditional love, so I use those words as transitional objects, a way of giving the mind a direction of attention. I'm opening to that and as I breathe out I am allowing that to flow through me and be present in my eyes, my heart, my hands, and just listening to you, and walking with you, and going down the road with you, so now I've

taken the kind of thing that happens when a healer is working on a client and we put it into a gas pump. We put it into the daily environment, the everyday activity. So from everyday awareness work, which becomes to me too narrow and too limited when it's about healing or even when it's about energy, to the state of consciousness or the quality of attention that is necessary in order to be present in that energy, to finally being aware that as I breathe in right now a part of me is connected to even that less consciousness and it's like the spaciousness of the sky. And as I breathe out another part of me is precisely present for this moment. That's how I evolve energy work. I mean you can feel the field in a person, you can change energy in a person, but then you have to have a person as a receiver and a person as a giver, so then you have a John of God figure standing up there in Brazil, and all these people coming out of neediness to the great person who transmits the divine, right? So there is just level after level of mental construct between all of those people and who they really are. If John the Divine gets rid of whatever he is wearing, gets on a bus in any major city in Brazil, would anybody feel any energy?

Rick: Good point.

Richard: If you meet Mother Theresa, but you don't know who she is and she happens to be dressed in casual clothes, are you in front of a great presence? If the Dali Lama wears a little different mask and wears western clothes, are you even going to know he is there? The fact is, to the extent that these people really embody it, there is a field coming off of them and if you're sensitive you'll feel it and even if you are not it will affect you. But there is this enormous transference that goes if someone says, "I am a healer." That improves, like the placebo, it improves the influence of the energy, but we still miss the point. The point is there is only this moment. Where is your consciousness resting? Is it resting in ego need, and self-interest and self-involvement? Or is it resting in the limitless consciousness in which all of this sense of me is arising anyway, arising and disappearing. And do I want to be a healer or do I just want to be consciously present? And to me, very few people are going to make themselves into healers, and very few people – I've actually shared energy with thousands of people. I did it with every single person in a retreat for the first 15 years of my work.

Rick: You'd go around one by one?

Richard: One by one, spend a half hour, 25-35 minutes with each one. And with every client, and with couples, I'd be between them and sharing energy with the couples, so after thousands of times of sharing energy, I figured I'd learned what I needed to learn from this. What is it that really matters? What matters is that I simply changed my consciousness, surrendering to the present moment, knowing that one way of understanding the present moment is that it's God, or it's limitless consciousness, or it's perfect in its own way, whatever way, it's pure white light or whatever you want to call it, and I become an instrument for that. I become a little more

transparent. It flows through me. You can feel it. I mean, there is this energy that is coming out of the hands. It's flowing off you. It affects people. I put my hand over someone, they go, "What? I can feel that. It's warm, it's tingly." So at a certain point I realized using energy in that was tiring me, was beginning to burn me out, and also I'm borrowing an identity, if I have this power, people look at me in a certain way, that makes me more safe, because I'm special. I didn't want to be special in that way anymore, but I didn't want to give away the intelligence of being present to that limitless consciousness, breath by breath, moment by moment, so it's a practice. I just, the same energy that I would have used to do healing work on those thousands of individuals, when I did it individually years ago, is always with me all the time, but I don't activate it unless there is a need for it. And most of the time I don't have to activate it at all; it is activated by the people around me. I just feel it suddenly just go, hoof, and there it is, and it's happening. It's just activated. It can be at dinner with people that I know or meeting someone new. It even happens on a train or an airplane.

Rick: Probably specific to some particular person or particular situation, right? Without you even having to understand why this person or why this situation. It's kind of like that story in the Bible where Jesus was walking along and a woman came up behind and touched his cloak and he turned around and said, "You touched my cloak, I felt the energy transfer."

Richard: Yes, and she said, "Oh, you've healed me." And he said, "It was your faith that healed you." Yes, exactly that. If we want to live into a long old age and be conduits of this energy, we can't force it. We have to let it – we have to just stay in a kind of innocent humility and let it flow through us when we need it. Because for me, for example, if I were to activate energy now in order to have an effect on an audience, or a group, why would I do it? I would either want some form of control or it would have to be something with power or I wouldn't believe, I wouldn't be trusting the rightness of the moment as it is. So since I am surrendering to trust the rightness of the movement as it is, there is no reason for me to activate something. It will activate of itself and it just keeps – when I talked about body wisdom earlier on – part of the body wisdom is stronger and stronger transmission, but it's subtle. It's not hurting the body any more, it's just this

Rick: That's an important point. So it actually used to hurt your body?

Richard: Oh, yeah.

Rick: Because I know a lot of healers do end up with problems because they're – I don't know whether they are draining their own energy or somehow just being a conduit for energy is too much on their nervous system, or something.

Richard: I think both of those. Yeah. Also wherever there is identity there is opacity, so if I'm a healer then to that degree that identity is a form of opacity. Healing may happen through you,

but who you are in the essence of yourself is unnamable, it's not an identity. That makes you completely transparent. Now the energy does what it wants to. And every one of us can learn that. Every one of us can learn to be that much more transparent, that much more available to this limitless energy, this limitless consciousness, and a vessel that is transmitting it, radiating it into the field. So that field is an intelligent field because it's not coming from the limitation of its specific level of identity. It's coming much more from the universal. It's sort of like a fiber-optic device versus an electric cable. Only a certain amount of information can go through an electric wire, but through a fiber-optics device, 10,000 times more information for the same diameter cable can go through. So as we keep surrendering, surrendering, surrendering into just the yes of this moment, what operates through us is this amazing intelligence. As an energy, as a consciousness, depending on what level you talk about it, it's an energy, and it's an energy that you can feel. It's palpable. The consciousness, something changes inside of you that you don't know necessarily why it has happened. I often say to people, especially when I'm coaching people in the business world, "No matter what interaction you are in, don't give up your own agenda, but at the end of that interaction every person there should feel better about themselves."

Rick: This energy thing reminds me of Ama, whose picture you see over your shoulder. She will sit there for 10, 12, 14, sometimes as long as 24 hours without getting off the couch, hugging people one after the other, and it's not a trivial gesture, it's this sort of profound attunement thing that takes place, and come away fresh as a daisy, apparently. She experiences physical pain from the repetitive motion, but there is this sort of joy and buoyancy that just continues, while most of us would say, "Get away from me," after an hour or two of that. It's like she just says, "Bring them on," and it's fun to watch her do it, because as you were saying there is something about not clinging, not grasping, not getting stuck. There is this fluidity where one moment she'll be crying with someone, the next moment she'll be scolding her swami and the next moment she'll be laughing uproariously. There is just this continuous flow of being in the moment with each person and each situation. In a way it's like utter chaos around her, but she is like this silent center of deep being. It's just kind of an interesting illustration of the point you have been making.

Richard: And for me, I would lead these 10-day retreats, and afterwards I'd be really vulnerable and depleted. I didn't want people to hug me. And as the years went by I began to realize that wherever there is any form of tiredness or burnout there is some form of identification, some form of manipulation. And as I kept surrendering, now I can finish a 10-day retreat, I can be hugged by as many people as I want. The fatigue I have is just normal fatigue, go to sleep, have a night's sleep, I'm fine. So I just finished an extraordinarily hectic travel schedule. People say to me, "How do you do that?" And I say, "Well, if I don't have a thought about why is should be a problem, then my body moves, I'm not moving." Yes, there is jet lag, that is true. Yes, there is

disruption in my normal dietary pattern, because I'm a whole-food-plant-based person as much as possible, but it's not always possible when you go to a restaurant in another country, particularly in a country like France, where every single thing is some form of meat, which is pretty much true everywhere, but

Rick: You used the example of a regular cable versus fiber-optic and the idea of resistance comes to mind. If you have resistance in a wire, it heats up, it could even melt. Whereas if there is no resistance, then the current flows unimpeded without that heating effect. So it's kind of like what you are saying here is that perhaps years ago there was some resistance in your wiring which caused

Richard: Well, the resistance is what we mean when we say me or I.

Rick: Yeah, yeah.

Richard: The resistance is the belief that somehow I am a separate, self-existent psychic entity. That I am the source of these thoughts, I am the source of these feelings. I am the one that is causing this to happen. And that me does not exist. And that me, when it does exist, is resistance. So if you get a lot of energy moving through you and that ego structure, that self-identification is still there, it is going to burn you out and burn you up. And that's probably the great paradox : nobody is born transparent. I have an awakening at 30 and I'm made transparent for a little while to extraordinary energy, and then after that my ego self, my me comes back in, trying to understand all this and live it's life and organize the future and take care of all the aspects of necessity in daily life, and it becomes then engaged as the doer, or as the one that's done to. And over time, just over time, because that's not conducive to the energy, there is suffering. So then over time there is relaxation, and more relaxation but it's not the relaxation into a diminished consciousness, it's the relaxation into an even more embodied, present, ready, awake state. And words like humility are really important. And words like compassion are really important. And words like forgiveness are really important. And trust may be the most important of all for me, because once there is trust there is just now. You know, if there is not trust, then something has to be fixed or changed and I'm on my way to the life I need and I'm on my way to the life I should have, instead of I'm in the life that I have. This is it. So, I'm slowly learning trust, forgiveness, humility, steadily, and then as that happens, then the transmission is clearer, purer, and doesn't hurt me.

Rick: You've been talking about the diminishment of the me, but would you say there is still very much a sense of personal self, in a way? I've had this discussion with friends, some of whom say, "There's no sense of me anymore. No sense of personal identity." And I don't understand how they can function, or who I'm talking to when they say that. It seems to me there always is – but maybe that's just from my perspective. Maybe I just don't understand

where they are at, but it seems to me there has got to be some sense of personal identity, to a certain extent, or else you wouldn't know how to put a fork in your mouth. You might just as well put it in the wall, or something, because there's no identification with this here needing sustenance. Does that make sense?

Richard: Well, yeah. Can you have a circle without the central point? I would say no. by its very nature a circle is something that is determined by a radius, a diameter, a circumference. And you can't actually measure a circumference. It's a transcendental number, pi. I think there is always something that is me, but the identification with me as a separate person who is important and needs to be understood, who is not being seen. That me can fall away. That me can become less and less and less present. And still I'm talking with you and we did all that it took to organize this, and planning

Rick: And you have back pain, and there's this and there's that, and you need to eat lunch, and there are these personal sort of things.

Richard: Right, and I think each person has to decide or choose in a certain sense the trajectory of where their life is going based on what they've experienced, what they want to do. And some people are completely identified with the material world and they believe that they borrow their identity from what they have, financially, let us say. So if they have a lot of money, they are self-important. And if someone else has more money, they are more important than the person with less money, and so forth. If you are not borrowing your identity from your tribe, from money, from being clever, from being smart, then what happens is you begin to start to overflow from this place that you can't name. It just overflows. Now to say that that's me would not be true. To say that I'm working constantly to let go of self-involvement and identification, which is a resistance to life. I don't want to derive my identity from what I have or don't have or how smart I am or what group I belong to or whether people love me, or don't love me, or like me or don't like me. Those terrorists, they have no center, so they derive their identity from a belief system; they derive their identity from the group that shares in their belief system. They arouse their own emotional reality out of their beliefs, out of their judgments, and then they make it even more real by behaving and they behave in their crazy way. And they are lost, they are completely lost, but everybody else is – until you are awake to a certain extent, you are lost in a similar way, just not so extremely and not so destructively.

Rick: I was watching a documentary by Fareed Zakaria the other night about the Mumbai terrorist attack about five years ago. One of the terrorists wasn't killed and they were talking to him. He was in a hospital bed, and that said, "Why did you do it?" And he said, "Well, they told me I would be a big man and I would go to heaven." And, first of all, it's the "they told me," he was completely buying into what the characters had told him, and then there was this sense that, just as you said, self-aggrandizement and some promise of future reward, all based on

belief that doing some horrible, violent, absurd thing was actually going to produce those benefits.

Richard: Well, and there is no remedy for it except consciousness.

Rick: Good point.

Richard: And you know, what we should just try to understand from all of this is the nature of how people become identified and do these things, and borrow their identity from externals, and from what people tell them, from belief systems, but we do it all the time. If someone comes up to you and says, "Oh, you are looking tired." What do you feel in that moment? If someone comes up to you and says, "Wow, you are looking great." What do you feel in that moment. And it happens all the time. Our parents are constantly telling us do this, don't do this, who we are and who we aren't. And so the initial stages of development that form the functioning human being that you and I are at the level of me, or ego I, that's a stage of development that can't be skipped, but as long as we are still borrowing identity from the outside, then we are going to manipulate. We narcissistically manipulate people in the world to see us the way we want to be seen. That's what ISIS is doing. It's narcissistically manipulating the world to see it in a particular way. And the only way to counter that is a certain kind of education, spiritual education. In fact, I just read a recent study that young people who have had some religious training in Islam are much less likely to be radicalized than the ones who never have. So that's very interesting -and so the radicalization, so called, - I mean I call my deep retreats "radical aliveness," because I'm coming to the roots of aliveness, but radicalization in this sense has to do with people becoming so much the instruments of a particularly limited belief system, and deriving identity from it, and getting people to see them in a certain way, and the fact that we will allow them to cause us to be afraid, and the media will emphasize words like terrorism, and in a sense, playing into the very thing they are attempting to do. We start to derive our sense of identity as victims, or as avenging angels, and everywhere in between, for an act that is essentially an act of pure unconsciousness.

Rick: You say in your notes here, "Deepening in consciousness is the obligation of every person and the most important form of service you can offer the world." Let's use that as a segue into your final point, the Mandala work for presence and emotional clarity.

Richard: If you watch where your mind goes, if you become observant, if that witnessing consciousness which - I would say the birth of the witnessing consciousness is a good way to describe awakening. And as that witnessing consciousness goes deeper, you begin to transcend more and more and more limited ideas of yourself, or limited beliefs about yourself, or limited behaviors. The Mandala basically says that there is only the present moment. And when your mind leaves the present moment there are only four places it can go. It will go into the past, or

the future, or into judgments of yourself, or into some form of story judgment about others. And others could be trees, for lumber, a person makes their living as a lumber person, trees are objects that are resources to be cut. For an environmentalist they're something else. So the you depends upon which me is doing the looking, so basically start to observe. Wake up when you find yourself in the future, telling yourself a story that is scaring you, and realize what's actually happening right now. Come back to the present moment. On my website there is a free e-course that teaches this process that people can use. It's very helpful. It's in my book, *The Mandala of Being*, and in the sequel to that book, *Inside our Viewing*. So the Mandala teaching is essentially about, if you are present in the center, now you're in the kingdom of heaven, you are in non-dual consciousness. As soon as you leave that, and you have to leave it. Ken Wilber would say a baby is in an undifferentiated state of consciousness and when we enter into a different state of consciousness and we want to go into a differentiated/undifferentiated state of consciousness, so there is a me and no-me, after the awakening. Before that there is an ego-I, the me. I am buying into it. But if you want to slowly do a practice that takes you back into the present moment, watch your mind. And imagine if you had a Harry Potter kind of magical device and it just, instead of you having to have a witness, it was your witness, and it goes, "Wake up, wake up. You are in the future and you are making yourself very anxious." Start right now. Come back right now. If you come back to the present moment, and your heart relaxes, your body relaxes, your heart fills, the future has completely new possibilities, but when you are identified with the future, the present moment becomes either the eagerness and hope of the positive expectations, where the fear, worry and anxiety of the negative anticipation. So wake up, wake up, come back, start over again. And the Mandala basically teaches, "OK, watch, now you are in the past, so there may be regret, guilt, blame or there are positive memories, but positive memories are lovely. But if you are dwelling in that you are not going to actually see what is happening right now." You are not going to feel the air on your skin right now. The vividness of colors will not be, you will be in a peaceful place because you are in a positive memory, but you are not going to be in aliveness. That profound aliveness of rich perception that is present moment consciousness, so it's a benign state, but it's an inferior possibility, let's call it, for yourself. When we are in these myth stories, we're either exaggerating and aggrandizing ourselves and making ourselves self-important and big or we are making ourselves smaller. So almost everybody has a story somewhere in some context, "I'm not good enough." It's a belief. I'm not good enough, and there's a sensation that maybe drives that belief. It's a sensation of being unsafe, or a sensation of not feeling seen or connected enough. And then there's the story, "I'm not good enough." And I work with that with people all the time. And the ways that you can work with it are clear in my books and on my website, so if you want to help a person wake up – you see, the only way you know that you are on the path when you're off the path.

Rick: How's that?

Richard: When you are on the path you don't know it. It's when you go off the path.

Rick: Particularly if you start to get slapped around a bit by

Richard: Yeah. For instance, if you are doing TM and suddenly you've forgotten the mantra completely and you are in some imaginary conversation, imaginary interaction with a person, because you are angry with them and you haven't been able to resolve it, and then you wake up and you go, "Ew, I've lost the mantra," or "I've lost the breath awareness in my body." You were talking about scanning, making an MRI scan of the body or CAT scan through the body. You have lost this immediate present moment sensation, present moment perception, and the mind is absorbed someplace, right? Well, it's going to be absorbed in a central sense in stories about you. You can make them bigger or smaller. It's what I call the "me" stories. Or it's going to go across to the other side, because subject me, object you, it's going to go, and then you are going to be lost in judgments of other people, or judgments of your house or judgments of your career. And every one of those thoughts will arouse something: anger, resentment, bitterness. Future stories will create hope or fear, basically. And the past will create positive remembrance or negative remembrance, and all of that is mind generated, and if you start to observe that carefully, and I take people through long clear processes of feeling the shift when they are identified with the story, like "I'm not good enough." And they step into the present moment and they are not identified with that story, or we balance it by taking out the compliment to the story. "You say I'm not good enough. Well, what's the proof?" Now you can't have the conceptual structure, "I'm not good enough," without burying its complement, "I am good enough." So there is no such thing as hot without any experience of cold, right without wrong, good without bad, up without down. "I'm not good enough" means you've buried in your shadow, "I am good enough." So now I'll say to someone, take out "I am good enough." It's a different psychology. There are situations where you are in that, but this was a situation where you are identified with, "I'm not good enough." Well, OK, prove it to me. Change your psychology, find the evidence you are good enough. The person will say, "Well, I've done this, and I've done that, I have friends, and I've travelled, and I've been successful" – and it just goes thing after thing – and I say, "Well, what do you feel now?" "I feel wonderful, I feel light, I feel free, I feel open." OK. So now you have two choices. Positive thinking will tell you to identify with "I am good enough." Or neti neti, one of the older teachings will say, "Neither this nor that." Try to be "I'm not good enough" and "I am good enough." You can't do it. So there comes a moment when you have to just drop them both and now you are once again in the present moment, not conditioned by the arousal, the unhappiness of "I'm not good enough," or the positive affirmation of, "I am good enough." You're back into something more essential. So the Mandala methodology basically says "watch your mind, watch your thinking, watch your ego dynamics, and power of witness says you are more than that, so let's engage them in a very creative way that leads you back to the present moment." There is no way to teach people

present moment consciousness. You can teach people how they leave the present moment. At the moment you realize you have left the present moment, you are back in the present moment. So that is what the Mandala methodology is. It's very powerful. Just yesterday, last night, in fact, there was a New Thought, I can't think of the name of them right now, a very positive group in L.A., a very dynamic minister and his wife who does the music. They teach a course. They use my book, *The Mandala of Being*, so the first 6-8 weeks of their course is reading that book, so they invite me, and I Skyped with them Thursday night, between 9:00 and 10:00, and it was just people telling me how that book changed their lives. One woman was telling me she reads the book and how she shares paragraph by paragraph with her mother, and now it's changed her mother's life. Suddenly, instead of hearing about the power of now, you get to hear about the power of not-now. If you are in thinking you are in not-now. If you are in thinking you are in the future or past or judgments or beliefs about yourself or others, or anything else, money, God. That is where most people are. They don't have the direct experience of God, they have the belief in God.

Rick: Yes.

Richard: Meister Eckhart said, "When I am there," meaning me as an ego, "then there are Gods. But when I am not, there is only God, and I am God." And for that, that was heresy, because he was saying that he and the Father were One, but only Jesus can be the son of God in 14<sup>th</sup> century Christianity. So he died in prison, before he burned, but most people don't have the direct experience of this mystery that some people would call God, but they have an incredible amount of beliefs, so someone can tell a susceptible individual, "you are going to do this, and God will love you and will smile on you and you will go to heaven." And it's all thought, nothing but thought.

Rick: I don't think we covered all the main points. You also had differentiating emotions from feelings, transformation to threatening feelings, working with dreams, and living an evolutionary relationship, so, P.T. Barnum said, "Always leave them wanting more." So I think we are probably going to have to do that, because we can't take the time to delve into each of those points in as much detail as I'd like, because we've gone on pretty long, but what can you say as a synopsis or as a summary of everything we covered today, or perhaps anything we didn't cover, things that you would like to leave people with, who have been watching this interview?

Richard: First of all, I'm grateful. I'm grateful for the thoughtfulness that you have brought to the interview. So thank you.

Rick: I'm grateful to you for doing it with me. It's symbiotic.

Richard: Good. For the people that are listening, whatever touched your heart, keep it as best you can. Whatever you didn't understand, don't worry about it. But don't give up. If you decide to just keep waking up, moment by moment, coming back, starting over, in this moment, you will get it. You will have to face the feelings that are scary. We didn't talk about that, about how to deal with these very scary feelings. But gradually, slowly, through vulnerability, through openness, your heart will open more and more and you will become the embodiment of the very thing we all need to do to keep evolving and to heal each other, heal our relationship to the planet, so my feeling is just keep going. Keep going and don't give up.

Rick: Or as Mister ? put it, "Keep on truckin'."

Richard: Keep on truckin'. Yeah, that's the greatest tip you can give to anyone is how present you are to yourself and how present you are to others, so that's basically how I would sum it up.

Rick: I think that's a great summary point, because you know – "Seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened." There's definitely always a result if one just perseveres. What is it the Gita says? "No effort is lost and no obstacle exists. Even a little of this dharma removes great fear." So it's like, I think personally that pursuit of the spiritual path, however how one decides to pursue it is the most worthwhile thing a person can do in life. Of course there all kinds of wonderful expressions of that that benefit others. I interviewed a guy, Adam Buckle, I'll be putting that up soon, who spends his time helping homeless kids in New York City, and that's his spiritual path, so it's not all about marinating in one's own subjective experiences, but however one defines it, it's such a rewarding way to live one's life. And just keep on truckin'.

Richard: I think that's the most important thing we're here for.

Rick: Yeah. It's why we're here ultimately, I think.

Richard: Yes. We're really fortunate. I just feel grateful. Grateful that –people shouldn't feel that when you wake up there is no more suffering. It's that you have a new relationship to it. I had a friend that framed it, the paradox of it, is enlightenment freedom from suffering or the capacity to suffer? And, how would you know the difference? So, say "yes." Say, "Yes," more and more deeply and risk loving and risk being touched and risk touching.

Rick: And kudos to you – it must have taken guts to ditch your medical career after all the study and expense you put into becoming a doctor. I think it's really neat that you have been serving people for so many decades in the capacity you have. It's a life well lived and I hope you continue to live it and do it much longer.

Richard: Thank you. I appreciate that very much. Thank you, Rick.

Rick: You're welcome. So on that note, let me conclude. I have been speaking with Richard Moss and I suppose it's Dr. Richard Moss, but you don't usually use the Dr. It's been a great conversation. I've really enjoyed it. And I hope you all have, too. There have been anywhere from 30 to 50 people on line throughout the conversation, but many thousands will watch this in the coming weeks. If you are watching these interviews and would like to watch them live so as to submit questions to the guest, there is a link on the Upcoming Interviews page under Future Interviews on batgap.com. for the livestreaming thing of each interview. And if you explore around the site there are a bunch of things I always like to call to people's attention. You can sign up to be notified by email every time a new interview is posted. There is an audio podcast of it, and there is a page that shows you how to link up to that on various devices. There is the Donate button, which I mentioned in the beginning. The past interviews are categorized four or five different ways under the Past Interview menu, so check that. So that is about it. Thanks for listening or watching. Thanks, again, Richard. And we will see you for the next one.

Richard: I hope there is a next one. Thank you so much, bye.

Rich: I just want to tape a little bit more here. I forgot to mention Richard's website, which is richardmoss.com. I will be linking to that and to his various books which you can get on Amazon, on the page on batgap for this interview. So that's it: richardmoss.com. Thanks.

End