

A CONVERSATION WITH SALLY KEMPTON

Bill Harris: Hello again everybody, this is Bill Harris, Director of Centerpointe Research Institute and I'm here today with Sally Kempton and we're going to, once again, be discussing some of the ideas of Eckhart Tolle and hopefully, fleshing them out even more, adding more practical ideas for how you can embody more of this in your life. So, Sally, I'm really happy to be talking with you once again.

Sally Kempton: My pleasure, Bill.

BH: We had a nice conversation a week or so ago about some of this and I almost wished we'd been recording that because it was...

SK: Yeah, I know, I know, I know.

BH: So hopefully, this will be equally fascinating and not just to us.

SK: Yes and greetings to everyone who is joining in, who's tuning in.

BH: So, why don't you start off by telling people a little bit about you and your spiritual background in life so they'll know that they should pay close attention to and hang on your every word.

SK: Very good. Very good. So, I grew up in the East Coast of the United States and I was a journalist in New York during my 20s and wrote for a lot of magazines including *Esquire*, *New York* and the *New York Times*, and my sort of official awakening as we sometimes said, happened quite spontaneously one afternoon in my apartment in New York. I was actually listening to a Grateful Dead record and was totally flooded out of no

where with a feeling of absolute, unconditional love, which I had never experienced in that power and in that measure before and which I immediately realized was everything that I had always secretly longed for in my life and that state lasted for a couple of days and it really kind of changed the way I lived my life. I'd been writing sort of intense, feminist articles about suffering and pain and how difficult life was, especially the life of love and you know, from that moment on, I began actually doing a lot of inner exploration and at that time, there was way... There was actually very little to read except the traditional texts. You know, people are so fortunate these days because there's so much amazing, practical material.

BH: Yes, what was so esoteric in those days is in lots and lots of books and trainings.

SK: Yeah, and really very often put into terms that we can grasp very immediately. So, my path led me to a couple of very full on training situations and then in 1974, I met my teacher who was a very great Indian enlightened teacher named Swami Muktananda, who was at that time traveling in this country. Some people may have heard of him through Ram Dass, who actually introduced him on his first tour and also through Werner Erhard, who was for awhile a student of Muktananda's, and had introduced him to the est training and I began to travel and study with my teacher. I was with him very closely for eight years until he died in 1982 and then I continued as a monk in that tradition, which in that day, it was in many ways a traditional, Indian Vedic tradition, but very, very modernized and then at a certain point it became clear that what I wanted to do was make the practicality of inner awakening and the practices for inner awakening

available to, I would say, the person I had been when I first started and to the people who are looking, who are searching, for not just for meaning, but for a really down home, nitty-gritty way of getting to the core of themselves. So, I began teaching kind of widely. I give workshops, trainings, I teach meditation a great deal, and also spiritual philosophy based on a very practical approach to bringing what are sometimes called non-dual teaching or teachings about the essential oneness of everything into practical experience. So that's my story.

BH: Well, it's interesting, back in those days when Muktananda first came to the United States, how small the, I guess, the subculture of people that were interested in those kinds of things, compared to the way it is now and with Oprah putting Eckhart Tolle on the national or world stage, it's, you know, a very, I don't know. It is a new Earth as he says because it's kind of amazing to those of us that have been involved in this for a number of decades to see this sort of thing and even to see that they are talking about meditation fairly frequently in Newsweek and Time and so on and so forth. It's kind of amazing. I guess one of the things that happens is that it becomes a little watered down in a way as it goes into a more mass market and there's more confusion about it because sometimes some of the essence gets lost, but I guess that's a good trade off really because the more people that know about this, the better.

SK: Yeah, and the beautiful thing about meditation and yoga practice for that matter, is that you can approach it from so many different places. So, you know, you can approach meditation actually as a way of calming your mind before you go to the doctor's office, which is, you know, a very practical and you might say, limited use of it and you can approach meditation as a doorway into the deepest part of your soul. So, the beautiful thing about these practices is that they are so available at so many levels and they will actually take you from wherever you are to deeper and deeper parts of yourself, really quite seamlessly very often.

BH: You know, one of the things I've really enjoyed getting into both of Tolle's books and looking at some of these lessons that he has online with Oprah, one thing that occurs to me is that because he had a spontaneous opening and didn't really need to be a part of a tradition and doing a daily practice and so on, there's less emphasis on that in what he is saying and he does talk about a number of little ways of getting into the now, into that transcendent place, but one of the things I really think is important for people listening to this is that they do need to find some kind of daily practice because otherwise, you're just kind of doing something to get into that now moment here and there and when you do a daily practice, a daily meditation practice, it becomes easier and easier and easier and more spontaneous to be in that place more and more often and fewer and fewer things kind of push you off center or push you out of it.

SK: Yes, that's very true and in fact, the daily practice actually begins to provide a baseline, out of which those spontaneous awakenings can begin to become more and more normal. I have actually found, Bill, that what's very important in creating a daily practice is experimenting a bit until you have a sense of what it is that feels naturally right for you, because again, in my experience, and this is also something that some of the traditions say, there is no such thing as a one-size fits all practice. You know, even though there are certain practices like obviously, essential mindfulness meditation that which is really taught not just in the traditional teachings, but also in medical meditation these days where you sit, find a good posture, watch your breath, notice the thoughts coming up. You know, that kind of very basic practice, you know, is a fabulous baseline practice, but in fact, because we have different temperaments and because we are, most of us, are ruled or determined by different aspects of our personal being. You know, for example, some people are very, very intellectually oriented or mind oriented or thought oriented and for them, a practice that, you know, a very useful practice is one that allows them to be mindful or to notice thought and to notice events and to notice

emotions so that the practice of applying awareness.

BH: Kind of a witnessing sort of approach.

SK: A witnessing practice yeah.

BH: Where whatever is going on, you're paying attention to it, whether it's your breathing or your thoughts or bodily sensations or it could be anything really.

SK: Yes, it could be anything and then there are people who are very physically oriented and actually practices that work with the body tend to open them more and actually, you know, allow them to enter a state where they're relatively thought free or relatively disturbance free. So, you know, for people like that, sports practice and of course yoga practice, martial arts practice are often the best daily doorways and then there is the people who tend to be more emotionally oriented or feeling oriented or shall we say, heart oriented and those are the people, I would say, who respond to practices that involve prayer or what's often called centering prayer where you actually work with your own emotional states and turn them towards more unconditional love or towards healing states like forgiveness and gratitude.

BH: So a more devotional approach.

SK: A more devotional practice. Yeah.

BH: I think the point too, to just align this with what Tolle is talking about, is that all of these things take you into the present moment and out of worrying about the future or regretting the past or in some way, taking your attention out of right now, what's happening right now, because when you are in the now, whether it comes from any of these approaches, that's where the transcendent is and that's where kind of the problems of life seem to just kind of disappear.

SK: Yeah and in a certain sense, my experience of the

now is that it's what I often call a threshold state. So that in a certain sense, the first step is to take yourself into the, even the willingness, to be present with what you are experiencing and that in that willingness, the door opens into what I sometimes call, what Tolle calls the now, I sometimes think of as the space between one thing and another.

BH: Right. Exactly.

SK: And one of the, you know, one of the very beautiful ways to begin to access the now, to access the space between is to work with the breath. Actually focusing on the place where the inhalation comes to an end and exhalation starts and in that moment, you know, which we of course totally take for granted, it just kind of passes by unnoticed. If we could start to notice that there actually is this moment when our ordinary in-breath stops for a moment and then turns around and becomes the exhalation and then at the other end of the process where the exhalation stops for a moment and turns around and becomes the inhalation, that focus, which is a very beautiful way of focusing in meditation, but which you could also do in many other moments in life, will take you into the experience of the now in a very, very natural way.

BH: You know, I think that a lot of people when they first hear about these things, you know, they read one of Eckhart Tolle's books and it's fairly new to them, when they start doing these kinds of practices or doing some of the other things that Tolle talks about in the books, it's very tenuous in the sense that they can experience these now moments for, you know, a few seconds or a half-a-minute maybe at the most or something and I think a lot of people wonder, "So what?" Because when it happens for a few seconds, it's not a remarkable event and then it also, because it's difficult or it seems difficult at first to get your mind quiet, I think sometimes people despair of being able to ever get to a place where it is significant or they can do it for very long and so I would just encourage people to just spend time every day doing it and what happens is, as you

know, it just kind of creeps up on you and then at some point you say, “You know, wow, this used to be really hard for me. Now this is with me most of the time.”

SK: Yeah and it’s... I can remember when I first started practicing meditation, I had a very, I would call it, a very Baroque mind. In other words, I don’t believe I had ever had a moment of mental stillness in my life. You know, even in my dream state it was incredibly busy and I remember when I first started practicing meditation and of course, you are told when you begin to practice meditation that the goal is stilling the mind and I’d like to say something to that in a moment, but I remember walking down the beach about three months after I’d started meditation practice and realizing that there was hardly a moment when my mind would be quiet and this was, you know, quite a revelation because I don’t think we normally really notice how intense our thinking is. And three months after that, I was back on the same beach, walking along and I realized that there actually were periods when my mind was quiet and if not quiet, I would say peaceful and I realized that this was actually the result of six months of meditation practice and it was palpable and noticeable and it was beginning to affect the way I was with other people, the way I handled my difficulties as they arose and that the interesting thing about it was that it had happened very naturally. You know, that my periods of meditation had been not necessarily experiences of high states of consciousness, but, you know, kind of work, but the effect of it had been to actually transform the way I was experiencing my own mind and my own thought processes and what I’ve come to see about the effect of daily practice and I am sure you agree, is that you make that effort to sit there and do a practice for 15 or 20 minutes a day or more if you can and a kind of natural growth process starts that is very much underground, undercover. You know, and you don’t really recognize what’s going on until you notice that you’re different, that your mind is different and that’s to me the magic of daily practice.

BH: Yeah, a lot of people, as you know, they expect right

away for their mind to be really quiet and of course it isn’t in the beginning unless you’re a very unusual person.

SK: Unless someone hit you on the head with a hammer.

BH: Yeah, and people are, you know, particularly adults, it’s not very easy for adults to go through that kind of learning curve. It’s like if you start playing the piano when you’re really young, you don’t really realize how bad you are at first and so it doesn’t bother you, but if you’re an adult and you start to play the piano, your expectations are much higher and so it’s difficult to go through being a beginner, but it’s one of those... You know, I always tell people, that there is two things that can happen when you are meditating. Either you do transcend the mind, in which case you get into that very peaceful place of equanimity and silence or whatever is standing in the way of you being in that place is surfacing and both of them are equally valuable and so, at first, you have more of the latter and it should not discourage a person if that happens because it’s just sort of offloading all the crap that’s in the way and that’s very, very beneficial to do that.

SK: Very, and one of the analogies that I love is the analogy of a Coke bottle. You know, you shake up a Coke bottle and all of this fizz comes to the top and it actually explodes over the top of the bottle, but if you leave the Coke bottle by itself for a few minutes, then all of the bubbles come back to the surface becomes calm and in a certain sense, the process of meditation in which you let all of that stuff bubble up; you know, you expect it to bubble up and just wait it out is not only going to benefit you by allowing you to have some moments of quiet, but in my experience, it also actually dislodges over time the inner turbulence that’s making the mind so crazy and so hyperactive and it does it. It actually discharges the turbulence and in some very mysterious and beautiful way, actually makes the process of using the mind skillfully much easier because that turbulence which is, you know, which is actually in the way of the

Skillful use of our thought process gets cleared out.

BH: Yeah, when you want to use your mind and it's quiet, it's much more effective. You know, one of the things that I think is interesting is that I don't think anyone would just intuitively get that quieting the mind would have so many benefits. You know, that it would change you emotionally, that your mind would become more clear, that you would be less reactive, that you would feel more connected to people. You know, that all kinds of suffering, I guess for want of a better word, calms down considerably because you wouldn't think that that would be so, and I think that it's really a service that Tolle has done and Oprah by putting him on this stage, to kind of alert people to the fact that this seemingly really simple thing has so many tremendous and valuable benefits to it.

SK: Yes, and also the way that he's been able to help people understand that the source of the mind is where our power is. You know, that one of the most revolutionary and the most really radical understandings that comes out of this science of meditation is the recognition that there is this, you know, I would say subtle version of the same power that's at the source of the atom. You know, that's inside the stillness at the source of thoughts. So, you know, and because we are so much on the outside of it because we've sort of come to the mind at the point where, you know, the power that's there at the source has kind of dissipated itself by engaging itself in so much thinking, we are very rarely able to tap into that profound, intuitive, you know, well-spring that's at the source of the mind.

It's a little like an analogy that an old physics writer named Itzhak Bantock used to use, which is the analogy of the pendulum, you know, whereby the power that makes the pendulum move is actually in between the two swings. So, if we can bring ourselves to the point at the center of, you know, of the swinging pendulum, we actually can tune into the power that is making it swing. So, whatever we call that source

of power, you know, we get to it by turning into, you know, by allowing the mind to quiet down and it's incredibly paradoxical that that should be the case, but it is a little bit like, you know, how if we... It is a little bit like pouring gasoline into the tank of your car. You know, actually using the attentive power of thought, the attentive power of the mind to turn inward rather than dissipating the power by, you know, as we do when we constantly turn outward. You know, it is kind of like we are taking this enormous power and spilling it onto the ground and lighting a match to it. You know, and looking at the conflagration that is created as we move around and think and act and etc., etc., etc., never realizing that if we were to spend just a little bit of time redirecting that attention inward towards the heart, towards the source, we would literally be putting gas in the tank. You know, we'd be connecting up to a source of power that most of us don't even recognize.

BH: Well, you know, you bring up a good point because I get letters from students all of the time who are, I mean, they're coming here to Centerpointe because they have problems emotionally, they have problems in relationships, they have problems financially, a lot of times and they're just having trouble getting their life to work and their main way of trying to make that happen is, seems to be constant analysis and they just are going down this labyrinth internally in the mind, sorting through all of this stuff and it's endless and it never reaches a point where they seem to get completion or really solve anything and what you're really pointing out is that when you have gotten all that mind stuff out of the way, you do tap into this place, you could call it, of power or whatever, but it's a place where you seem to intuitively know exactly what to do in each moment. It's a place that can evaluate the infinite number of variables that are going on all at once, all the time and figure out in each moment exactly what the most resourceful thing to do is. Again, it is a variation on what Tolle is talking about, about being in the now, but when you have, what he would call a life situation, something that you would see as a problem, that right now, there is either something you can do

about it or there is not anything you can do about it. If there is something you can do about it, then right now, you do it or make a plan to do it tomorrow if it needs to be done tomorrow rather than today or something, or if you can't do anything about it, then you surrender to it, but it all kind of happens right now, but if you can't be in the now, that part of you that can figure out what to do is sort of held at arm's length. I have gotten, over the years and I'm sure you are this way too, where if I have a situation I need to deal with, I ask myself kind of a how can I question. You know, how can I and then I fill in the blank with whatever it is and instead of trying to analyze it and think it through, just do a lot of thinking about it, I just ask the question and always the answer comes to me and I think the ability to have that answer come to you is proportionate to how much you have done some work on yourself so that your mind is quiet more often than not quiet.

SK: Yeah, that's a really good point, Bill and I would also say that that practice of learning how to put a question into your own being as it were is something that can be practiced just the way that meditation can be practiced and one of the practices that I often teach is a kind of step by step how to of how to do what you are talking about. You know, where you actually write down the question, because for some reason when you are learning how to do this, writing it down seems to crystallize it in a really good way. You write down the question, then you take a few minutes and you write down everything that you think about it. You know, everything that your surface mind has to tell you about it. You know, so let's say it is something like, you know, how can I get into college. So, you write down all of the steps you could think of. You can write down all of the things you are afraid might happen. You write down all of the things that you hope will happen and you in a certain sense, you take five or ten minutes to just exhaust everything that you think about it and then you put the paper aside, you close your eyes and you take a moment or two with centering practice. You know, which could be focusing on the breath or using a mantra, which of course, many people like to do in meditation, doing Holosync or listening to meditative

music and then you hold the question and then you let your mind get completely still and then you can often, at the end of that period, you realize that there has been a shift, there's an answer, there's a new perspective on it and it actually can come up quite quickly or just as often, you'll find that after doing that exercise, you know, you'll go about your day and the answer or the perspective shift will come in the shower or while you are taking a walk.

BH: Yeah, or when you least expect it.

SK: Yeah, and you know, and I've always found that actually having a practical, sort of protocol, for finding other ways that is very, very helpful and, you know, just redirecting your attention.

BH: Well, I like the part about writing down what you are afraid of and what you are hopeful for in the future because those are things that Tolle talks about that keep you out of the present moment and by listing those and getting them out, instead of being those things, being those fears and hopes, you have objectified them, they have become an object or something that you have rather than something that you are and it allows you to have some distance from them, which is what allows you to get into that present moment, which is where all the answers are.

SK: Yeah, absolutely and I have also found, haven't you, that because we have all of these mental habits, you know, because we are nailed to our addictions to hope and fear and also to the habitual ways that we think about problems that there is something about just putting it all on a piece of paper that allows us to feel, okay, I have done that stuff. You know, the mind can relax now.

BH: Yeah, it makes it more finite too.

SK: Yes. It does.

BH: When it is swirling around in your mind, it seems like it is bigger than it is.

SK: Yes, and it creates a kind of miasma of confusion, which is what I think is an issue for many people when, you know, when we feel kind of mired in our unsolvable problems. It is often because we haven't been able to concretize our thoughts about something.

BH: Right. Exactly. You know, another thing that I'd like to bring up here too though is that a lot of people look at something like what Eckhart Tolle is talking about or any, you know, spiritual tradition, they think it is going to be a way to live a life without problems and, you know, this is partly what he is talking about when he says at any given moment, there is either something you can do about it or there isn't and if there isn't you surrender to it and the truth is that in this universe, everything is in time and passes away eventually and that means that when you have something, eventually you won't have it, including your life.

SK: Including your problems.

BH: And the problem, but so, since everything is in time, there is something built into being a human being that means there will always be things that you don't prefer and prefer is a pretty soft word. I mean, sometimes, the things that, you know, the death of a loved one or your own impending death or a painful injury or all kinds of things, there are all kinds of things that are just going to happen. There is no escape from being human until, you know, you are not human anymore and once people kind of surrender to the fact that life does have these situations and it's not getting rid of them so much as learning how to meet them in a different way.

SK: Yeah. Absolutely and in fact, there is this tremendous moment of freedom, you know, that he talks about very often and which I would say, it is actually one of the highest forms of freedom when you accept what is and, you know, you allow yourself to live in the fact that you are human. You are not special as you are. You are not exempt from the issues of life and you allow it to be and there is... Don't you find a

tremendous sense of opening that comes when you just accept what is?

BH: Well, anybody that has ever been around someone who is dying and finally got to the place where they came to surrender to the fact that they were dying, such people just radiate this incredible peace and people around them get a contact high from them as they go through the dying process, except that you don't need to wait until you are dying to kind of surrender to what is, which of course, also doesn't mean that you are passive about life. You can surrender to the fact that life is what it is, which you are doing what is within your power to make it be the way you would like it to be.

SK: Yeah and that to me is really the art of living. You know, it is the secret art of what I would call a spiritual life, is how do you make appropriate effort with, you know, using all of the resources at your command while living in a state with great interest, noticing that the way things turn out is often so far from what you thought they were going to be that it is always a surprise.

BH: Yeah, in fact that almost nothing ever turns out the way I thought it would turn out or hoped it would turn out, but you know, you work with however it does turn out and sometimes it turns out better than you thought, sometimes it turns out much worse, but the much worse somehow has the seed in it of something that's much, much better, that you never would have arrived at if it hadn't happened. I mean, most people, they look back on the 'tragedies' of their life, they turn out to be big points of opening to some sort of growth or something better.

SK: Yeah. Definitely. Definitely and a lot of it is really, you know, that art of recognizing what can be changed and what can't be changed. You know, so much of the suffering that we go through happens because we keep banging our heads against the wall of a situation that can't be changed.

BH: Yes, it is the fly beating himself against the windowpane and we do the same thing and we think the fly is being stupid. You know, and another thing that Tolle brings up that I think is really a good point is, I don't know if he says it in exactly this way, but this is the way I would say it, is that you have the world, the relative world, the world of the past and the future and the mind and all of that, the ego and on the other hand, you have the world of the transcendent. The now moment with all of the benefits that being in the now moment has and people, as I listen to the questions in these lessons that Oprah is doing with Eckhart Tolle, a lot of the questions underlying it is the idea that I am trying to get this. I am trying to understand this and the truth is that the mind can not understand the no mind state. The mind can't understand this now moment state and all attempts to get it in that way are just doomed to failure, but you can be it. So, I really think it would be interesting for us to discuss that a little bit because I think that's a real sticking point with people is that they keep trying to understand it and I get letters from people where they go on and on and on for these long, 40 line paragraphs that are just again, down the labyrinth of their mind, all of this stuff, trying to grab onto it and you can't grab onto it with the mind.

SK: Yeah, I was just thinking of a friend of mine, she's a journalist and she is constantly questioning and she has been doing her spiritual life for 20 years, constantly questioning and always feeling like she doesn't get it. And so about a year ago, she was sitting with a friend and she was going on and on and on and on about, you know, her questions and her doubts and this and that and her friend said to her, "You know what, this is just your mind," and in that moment, she saw her mind. You know, she actually became the witness of these thought processes that were going through her and you know, in other words, that statement, "It is just your mind," which caused her to look at herself, gave her the recognition as her mind as an object of perception rather than as her and there was a complete shift for her, which lasted about two days and then she was back to asking questions. But there is something about that

practice of, you know, looking at the thought process as something outside yourself that is almost the only thing that the so-called rational mind can do to break that cycle. You know, it is why witness practices are so useful.

BH: The thing is that it is, you know, your mind is designed to think and to generate thoughts and all of that sort of thing and there is nothing wrong with having a mind and there is nothing wrong with thinking. It is the identification with it that is a problem. So, even though her mind was probably still going, as soon as she begins to watch it, that takes her to the present moment. It isn't that her mind has to stop, although I have found that the more you are observing your mind, the more that it does tend to quiet down and then it only is active when it needs to be active for some reason because a mind is a great tool.

SK: Yeah, the mind is a wonderful tool and on another level, of course, you know, coming back to my gas tank analogy, the mind is a particularly powerful form of energy. So, and I think that that, I mean, I find that that tendency to ask questions over and over and over again, to sort of refuse to, you know, to let the mind stop and drop in is often a sign that there is in fact a lot of energy in the mind. You know, that the person in question has a great deal of energy, which is going into mental spinning and that sometimes just being able to recognize that the thoughts that are going through your mind, the questions that are going through your mind, you know, the beautiful ideas and insights and the fears and worries that if you can look into them and see that they are actually made of a very subtle energy. You know, they are made of this energetic stuff, this consciousness stuff that that in itself will put you into the now. You know, that will help you recognize that the content of the thought is in and of itself, less important than the energy that's contained in the thought.

BH: Yeah, it is interesting that the thoughts are really made of, as you said, this subtle energy and yet it is also that energy, which is observing them. That presence, to

use the word that Tolle uses a lot, that presence is what allows you to observe the fact that you are having a thought or having a feeling in your body or whatever it is you are observing and it is a kind of a just... You know, at first a little baby doesn't know the difference between itself and the whole, you know, the rest of the world, but at some point, it does begin... You know, as Ken Wilber is fond of saying, it bites its blanket and nothing happens, but it bites its thumb and it hurts and it says, "Oh there is me and there is not me." At that point, the witness begins to observe the rest of the world in a very, you know, rudimentary way and then as we progress, we are able to witness the fact that we have a body, the fact that we have feelings, sensations in the body, then emotions and then thoughts and you know, some people sort of stop this process of being more and more aware of things at some point, unfortunately. Most people stop at awareness and what Tolle is talking about is continuing to be aware of that because there is something very, very magical that happens when you do that. Again, it is back to what I said earlier where it doesn't seem like this would have much potency or value, but it turns out to have more value than anything else.

SK: Yeah and I also find part of what Tolle is offering that I think is tremendously significant is that he is privileging subtlety over, for what of a better word I could call, density. In other words, the ability to appreciate being itself. The ability to appreciate the space between things. The ability to appreciate awareness as such is a very, very subtle ability. You know, and it takes a degree of subtlety to be interested in it and the fact that there is someone in our life who keeps calling our attention to the subtler level of experience, you know, to getting us to look at okay, what's looking? To get us to, you know, like for example, to take the painful worries and images that keeps coming up in the mind and just say, "Okay, so, what is that image really made of?" You know, it is not actually made of the flesh of the person, the image of the person that you are worried about being angry at you or that you are worried about causing harm. The

image in your mind is not actually made of flesh and bones. It is actually made of thoughts, made of energy and if you can start to see that there's a process of creation going on in your mind in which very subtle energy is being turned into thoughts and that these thoughts are creating emotions in your system and even as we now know from body mind medicine, you know, creating physical conditions in your body, but if you could just start to see the subtle origin of what's going on in your mind, you actually can begin to appreciate not just the subtlety of yourself, but also the creative power that you have within yourself and you know, that's when we start to actually begin to be masters of our life and death. You know, masters of our own mind and it all starts with being willing to appreciate the subtlety at the core of what it is that we are thinking and feeling.

BH: Yeah, as we were saying earlier, that subtlety has just infinite, tremendous power in it and the way to get control of that power is just to observe because the more you observe your mind, the more instead of it controlling you, you control it and the irony, I think, is that as you gain control over it, you realize that you don't need to control it. It seems at first like, oh, it's really important that I get control over everything, but at a certain point, something shifts and Tolle talks about this in a lot of different guises also, I think, in these books. It turns out that you don't have to be in control. It only seems at first that you need to be in control. Things control themselves just fine and all of that mental stuff is an attempt to control what can't be controlled. So I would say there is this transitional period where you become the witness and you do tap into that power, but once you get it, you realize you don't... It's not that you need it, it's that you become that power, I guess you could say. Another way to say it.

SK: Yes and you know, and in line with what you are saying, it's actually very... For a person who is practicing meditation and in that place where the mind is driving you crazy, that the recognition that first of all, you don't have to make the mind shut up and secondly, you can't

make the mind shut up because as you said earlier, the job of the mind is to think. You know, the nature of the mind is to think. That recognition that you don't have to control the mind, even when you're sitting in meditation, all you have to do is give it a little bit of focus and then observe what's happening. That in itself is a tremendously useful thing for a person who is beginning meditation to realize.

BH: Yes, and you know, another thing that occurred to me while you were talking a minute ago is that when you first start to pay attention to these things, when you first start to watch your mind, watch your thoughts, whatever it is you're watching, it seems very effortful at first and I guess another thing I'd like people that are just starting out to do this, that they should know is that it is not effortful always. At a certain point, it becomes second nature to do it. It is kind of like driving a car at first is very effortful and you have to think of everything you are doing. You know, I am going to change lanes, so I have to... Okay, what do I do first? I have to look over my shoulder and find a spot that I can turn where I can get in between the cars and you know, you've gotta turn on the turn signal and do the brake and do the gas and turn the wheel and all of it and it is kind of overwhelming, but after awhile you just do it. So, or like playing the piano. At first, you have gotta focus so hard to play the right note and everything, but after awhile you just play and so, I would just encourage people to just go through that initial, beginner part of the practice where it is effortful and you will come out the other side sooner than you think so that it becomes more and more easy.

SK: Yeah, totally and I also would say that it's really helpful when you are starting a practice of self-awareness of self-observation to do micropractice. You know, in other words, not to think that your practice is just what you do when you are sitting for meditation, but to take moments during the day, for example, where you just stop and become aware of okay, what am I thinking or stop and focus your awareness on the breath and I found that with a lot of my students and

a lot of the people... I write a column for *Yoga Journal* every month and there is always a little micropractice. You know, something you can do during the course of the day. I found that for people with very busy lives, it's the micropractices, the tiny one minute of self-observation while you are sitting at your desk, you know, or the two minutes of just being present with the breath or noticing how your shoulders feel and relaxing them that actually begin to infuse your day and really make a difference so that your meditation practice becomes kind of the way you set yourself up and micropractices become the way you create now moments as it were in the course of your day.

BH: And the more you do that, the more you remember to do it and pretty soon it's like the drive-in. You know, you are just doing it all of the time and at first it doesn't seem possibly that you could be doing it all of the time because it does seem effortful and you know, another thing that get hung up on sometimes is that, you know, they've read these books about enlightenment and so on and so forth and then they do something to get into the now moment and it isn't as dramatic as it said it the book it would be and then they either think, "Well, I must not be doing it right," or, "Well, there is nothing to this."

SK: Or, this is ordinary, this is not a big deal.

BH: And in a way, it is ordinary. It can be very dramatic... Like what you were saying at the beginning of the conversation where you were talking about having this spontaneous experience while you were listening to the Grateful Dead record that those things, when they do happen, can feel very dramatic, but then you kind of integrate it and it becomes more ordinary, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't allow you to be alive in a whole different way. Just because you are not just blitzed by it constantly, doesn't mean that it's not still there, but that awareness just becomes a way of being alive and when you are around someone like Muktananda for instance or like Genpo Roshi, who both of us know. You see someone having such an ease about

them, an ease about being human and it's because they've learned to be in that place all of the time and it's beautiful to see and it also gives you kind of a contact high in a way to be around it.

SK: Yeah and the interesting thing about this whole process is that very often what starts out as an altered state experience, something that is very, very different from the way you normally experience your life, as you practice, you begin to realize that that has become a kind of base station. So, you know, my experience of this Big Love, which, you know, which was utterly radical when it first occurred, you know, I realize about 15 years into my practice that this was my base state. You know, it had become normal. It had become ordinary. Never ordinary, but, and as a result, life in its moment to moment experience had become just incredibly juicy. You know, so, and you are totally right.

It's the idea that the experience of our source of our reality of our spiritual essence of the now of presence has got to be radical and a kind of altered state experience is very misleading because, you know, it encourages us not to look at our moment to moment experience. Then the moments of being in touch with presence that they actually occur over and over and over again. There is a beautiful book that is a 16th century text on practice and one of the things that it says that I've always loved is that everybody has what the text calls fleeting moments of enlightenment over and over and over again during the day. You know, that those moments when in the middle of everything, there is a stillness and a sense of ease. There is a recognition of your contact with the ground. All of these moments that just come and go in the course of life and that we never notice. Sort of like, you know, walking on the grass and never seeing the grass and the text says that the secret of an enlightened life is just to make the connection.

You know, so that we are actually inhabiting those moments, recognizing them when they come up and inhabiting them and I think a lot of what Tolle is doing

and doing very beautifully is flagging those moments. You know, I am just saying, you know, you have had this experience, you just don't recognize what it is. You know, it is like your normal awareness, that part of you which knows you are awake, you know, that part of you which sees that you are seeing the trees outside, that knowingness, that awareness is your expanded self. You know, it's the great awareness. It is actually the part of you that's not different from God, from the truth, from, you know, from the source of everything and just learning how to turn back and recognize, "Oh my god! My ordinary awareness. My ordinary sense of being, that little moment of stillness between one breath and another, that's, you know, that's my contact with it"

BH: Yeah and people look at a tree and then they get into thinking about the tree, making all of these internal representations of the tree and then they mistake the tree for the representations and the representations for the tree and pretty soon, there is this layer of mind between a person and their experience and it doesn't feel the same. It doesn't feel as good. There really is a feeling of separation when you do that. That doesn't mean that you can't think about a tree, because there are times to do that, but if people are thinking about things instead of just experiencing them and they are doing that most of the time, you do end up feeling separate from things and that brings anxiety and sometimes depression and fear and all kinds of other emotions that are all kinds of symptoms of being way too much in the mind and not enough in the now.

SK: Yeah, totally and beautifully said and, you know, at the same time, there is in most people, the moment when you are first aware of the tree or when you are first aware of, you know, the dog running across your path or when you answer the phone and there is that moment of recognition of the person. There is always at the beginning of every encounter, there is that moment where you are simply inside the experience without the mediation of mind or the moment when

you wake up in the morning, there is this moment when you wake up in the morning where if you actually stop and pay attention to it, tomorrow morning when you wake up, you realize that there is this moment of pure awakesness. You know, when you are just alive. You are just awake. You are just aware before you are aware of the bed and your name and your appointments and if we could just get ourselves into the habit of noticing the first moment of an experience, for example, you know, the moment when your eye falls on... Right now, I'm looking at a cup in the middle of my table and there is this moment when my eye lights on the cup before my mind goes, okay, cup, red, tea bag, empty. All of those things that, you know, you do, but by just letting yourself notice the initial moment of perception is a powerful way, you know, to sort of interlace your experiences of separation and thinking and hurry and rush with touches of glimpses of the now state.

BH: You know, I don't want to make this a commercial for Holosync, but I would sort of like to bring Holosync into this a little bit, partly because I know a lot of people that are listening don't know very much about it and we were talking about this the other day because I had sent the first part of Holosync to you and you were saying some interesting things to me about it. Holosync, because it creates certain changes in the brain using sound, takes people into that now moment and allows people to be in it for extended periods of time, although sometimes, as we were saying earlier, all the stuff that keeps you from being in that place, does come up and I know that for me, even after 16 years of very disciplined meditation, it so accelerated this whole process in me of getting to a place where I was embodying this now moment, you know, more and more and more. So, I don't even remember exactly what you had said about it, but I'd be curious for you to say a few things.

SK: Well, absolutely. Without really understanding the brain state processes, what I would say is that something that I recognize through Holosync and through certain other practices that actually work

with the body and the brain is that very much of the experience of spaciousness or presence or the experience of inner transformation is actually very physical. You know, that we have tended in the West and also in the East to make a kind of strong split between, let's say, body and spirit, between the material, physical, fleshly world and the sort of immaterial, transcendent world and I would say that one of the real breakthroughs that, you know, contemporary brain science and I know that Holosync takes advantage of this, has been the recognition that the transcendent is actually in the brain. It's in the body. It's of course beyond the brain, beyond the body, but it is also inside the body and I would say that the work that has been done with sound and brain states, it actually works on this principle and it is just an extremely powerful tool for not just allowing us to touch the now, but also allowing us to understand what I think is one of the most radical realizations: that there is that everything is inside the human body. In other words, that the entire, which is of course a point that Eastern sages and esoteric traditions have made forever is that inside the physical, you know, inside the atom is the power that, you know, a power that can turn on all of the electricity in the world and in the same way, inside the cells of the brain, there is the power that can make us recognize our, you know, our vastness, our stillness, our brilliance, our wisdom. It's quite an amazing thing and I think that we are just on the verge of recognizing the enormous potency inside the cells of the human brain and human body.

BH: One of the things that scientists have recognized over the last 30 years or so as they have studied meditators is that when people do traditional meditations, some of the things we've talked about like repeating a mantra or following your breath in and out, those sorts of things, or any of the things that Tolle talks about as ways of bringing yourself into the now that there are certain events that are happening in the brain and certain changes in the electrical patterns in the brain that happen at the same time and one of the things that happens is that the brain is creating new

neural connections in the brain. Whatever part of the brain that helps you to be more in the present moment kind of takes over more brain real estate you might say. It is really the same thing that happens if you practice the piano or anything else really is that more... If you knit, let's say, the part of your brain that is good at doing that knitting gets bigger and bigger and more real estate is given over to that and you become a much, much better at knitting, but the same can be said for being in the now moment and so when you meditate in any way, this tends to happen and I just noticed that it happens at a really accelerated rate when people listen to Holosync, which is, you know, kind of blew my mind when I first began to play around with this, which was 23, 25 years ago or something.

SK: Yeah. It's an amazing process and it also illustrates something that I have come to see more and more, which is the process of waking up is actually what I call the full court press process. So, in other words, that a process like Holosync, which, you know, kind of cuts to the chase in terms of rearranging the neurons in the brain, if that's the correct way to put it. Also going along with certain kinds of physical practices that actually change the habit patterns in the body are equally important along with practices for opening up the emotional body, the heart, which if you do all of these together along with a kind of recognition of what it is that is happening, that I would say comes through study or through spending time with teachers, who understand the process that a tremendous acceleration is possible.

BH: Yeah, this kind of goes to what Ken Wilber and I were talking about in another one of these conversations, which is this whole idea of Integral Life Practice where you are practicing in a cognitive way by learning things. You are practicing, you know, in a body way, in a spirit way and when you do all of these practices together, it really accelerates the process and so, I just think it's incredible that Oprah has put this on the public stage because if we get a lot more people doing these kinds of practices, it really will change this

country and the world. You know, I mean, you and I are part of a group of people that have been practicing these sorts of things for quite a long time that Ken Wilber has put together and you know, when you are with all of those people, it is just so remarkable to be with a lot of people who are to a great degree, nobody is saying that we are perfected or anything, but to a great degree are embodying a lot of this, it's really refreshing and the of the people in society that are in that place, the more smoothly everything is going to go I am just sure.

SK: Oh yeah, and also because of this step, that phenomenon, that seems to be part of that transformation of consciousness, you know, that sort of tipping point phenomenon, it seems to me and it has certainly been my experience and I'm sure yours, that as the process accelerates and groups of individuals begin exploring this and sort of entering into those places of unconsciousness that actually it makes it possible for more and more groups of people to do this and so even those there is so much of the world today that seems difficult and dire, you know, and dense and full of conflict, at the same time, there really does seem to be a tremendous acceleration of this process of many, many people starting to recognize the different levels on which it is possible for a human being to exist.

BH: So, there are a number of things you do to help people in this waking up process and I know you teach some public seminars or workshops and then you have some things that are online and some things that are over the telephone. Talk a little bit about the different ways people could benefit from some of the things that you do.

SK: Yeah, I do public programs and retreats and I also do a monthly teleconference course and I do several of them. This week, I'm starting a new advanced series called surfing reality, which is about how to work with the energy in the body, the brain, the heart. You know, literally to tune into the transcendent places in daily life and I also do two meditation courses that a lot of

people have found very useful in establishing a practice. One is called Opening the Heart and Meditation and the other is called The Power of Awareness. It is a course in witness practice and I do them every other month. So, I'll be doing a Witness course in June and an Opening the Heart course in August and, you know, they go on like that and they are three part classes, an hour-and-a-half class every week and then people get homework assignments and one of the beautiful things about it is that we have an online chat room list serve in which I answer questions and people share their experience and what actually happens is a kind of peer group is developed in every one of these classes, which is tremendously supportive and the mind and heart opening for the people involved. So, because I do believe that in the transformative process, community is really helpful and, you know, these online communities that are occurring, you know, all over the world now really support people in amazing ways. So, my website is SallyKempton.com; www.SallyKempton.com and if you go on the website, go to the top down menu. Click on events and then schedules. Those teleconferences are all listened in there. They are a great way, you know, to begin to enter into this process and there are levels that one can follow as there are with Holosync.

BH: And I'll just say that I consider you to be one of the top teachers in the world really and people definitely can't go wrong if they get involved with the things that you are doing. You have brought up, you know, three things really that I think are really important for people because as good as all of the Eckhart Tolle stuff is, you are not going to... You can't just read a book or listen to someone talk about this and really get to the point where you really fully embody this. The three things that I was that you mentioned are a practice. People do need some sort of a way to continually practice doing this until it becomes second nature and that goes to the second thing, which is having some sort of a teacher. Somebody that has been a little further down the road that you can ask questions of and that you can tell your experience about so that you can get some feedback

and the places where you are unsure if you're doing it right and so on. You can clear that sort of thing up and the third thing is a community. When you have other people that are kind of on the path with you that you can communicate with, it really does reinforce what you are doing and, you know, in Buddhism, they talk about taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and the Sangha is the community and it really is a refuge.

SK: It really is and I think actually one of the great developments, you know, that the technological age has brought about is the possibility of global online communities. You know, and of course, along with the downsides of it, there is just an enormous possibility for conversation and expansion and one of the things that's really blown me away about doing these teleconference classes, especially because they are people who do, you know, one after another and they... And not only are they in relationship with me, but they also are in relationship with each other and more and more, they are able to sort of take the support of each other in many, many areas of life and the thing that is so great about it is that it's very, very clean. You know, it's happening on a level that is really about practice. There is not all of the sort of personality issues that often occur in face to face communication. You know, it is very much about conversation about how we interact with our highest and best self in very practical ways and that opens up a great possibility.

BH: Well, and you know, that sort of just reminded me that one of the interesting benefits of being in a community like we're in of all these teachers is that that also reduces... You know, the things people hear about in the media about spiritual teachers is usually the abuses and they do happen sometimes. Being in a community like we are, it has sort of become self-policing because people sort of have an ideal that they want to live up to and anybody that was abusing their role as a teacher would be really looked down upon by other people in the group and, you know, I don't know if that's anything that people are concerned about, but it probably ought

to be really. You definitely, if you do have a teacher, you want to make sure that the teacher has your best interests at heart and not their own.

SK: Absolutely and having a teacher Sangha is a tremendous help for teachers in that way. You know, that there is a way of just if it's really great for peers to communicate with each other as students, it's also really great for peers to communicate with each other as teachers. So, it's a big boon.

BH: Well, Sally, we probably should wrap this up now. Is there anything else you want to talk about or any last words you want to leave people with?

SK: Yeah, what I would say is that to really remember that the time you spend in meditation, turning inside, finding that in you, which for want of a better word, internal, peaceful, that's innately joyful, is probably the most important platform that you can establish for a beautiful and happy life. It's so crucial that even five minutes a day is going to make a difference. So, I would like to leave people with that recognition that the smallest investment in your inner life and your practice of meditation is going to have enormous untold benefits and Bill, I'd like to thank you for everything you are doing and for, you know, this amazing program that you have developed with Holosync. It's really extraordinary blend of technology and art.

BH: Well, that's very nice of you to say that and I'm very grateful that I know you and that you're my friend.

SK: Right back at you.

BH: And I look forward to that deepening more and more and I hope people will look into getting involved with some of the things you do because I know how skillfully they are done and with that, I'll just say goodbye to you for now and also to all of the people who are listening and until next time, everyone be well!

Thank you so much for listening to this conversation in our Mastering Eckhart Tolle's The Power of Now series. I know this information will help you to master the ideas Tolle is sharing with the world. To thank you for listening, I have a very special free gift for you. As I've worked to master and implement these amazing ideas in my life, one of the most powerful tools I've used is Holosync audio technology, which, when listened to using stereo headphones places the listener in deep states of meditation, literally at the touch of a button. In addition to many mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits, Holosync creates an ability to focus your mind so powerfully that manifesting what you want becomes easy. I'd like to send you a free Holosync CD so you can try it yourself, along with a free Special Report explaining how it works and all the amazing benefits it has created for the nearly 300,000 people around the world who have already experienced it. To get your free Holosync CD, simply click here

<http://www.centerpointe.com/FreeDemoCD/> or call 1-800-945-2741 and we'll send it out to you right