How Trauma Can Spark Transcendence Transcript

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Welcome to the Trauma to Transcendence Summit

Hello. My name is Dawson Church. I am the host of the Trauma to Transcendence Summit, and I am so thrilled to welcome you here today. I'm thrilled for many reasons.

One is that I had a 20 plus year career where I was a researcher looking at PTSD. I've been a researcher in over 100 clinical trials, many of them on PTSD.

And what I saw there was devastating. I saw refugees, I saw domestic violence victims. I saw people who were the victims of child molestation. I saw people who had been caught up in wars.

People who were either combatants, soldiers or civilians. And just the devastating consequences of these traumas on their lives, not just right afterwards.

And it often surfaces many, many years later.

PTSD Research and Delayed Onset Trauma

For example, a study of 5000 survivors of the World Trade Center disaster in 2001 found that half of them didn't have PTSD symptoms at all. In the months following the disaster.

They had what's called delayed onset PTSD. They looked fine after the event a year later. A lot of them didn't look fine, and five years later, many of them had developed the symptoms of PTSD.

I did one study with Vietnam veterans and their spouses, and we found, to our shock that about 1 in 5 of the spouses of Vietnam veterans had said, let's call transfer PTSD.

When you're living with somebody with flashbacks and nightmares and intrusive thoughts. All these symptoms of PTSD. You are at risk for PTSD as well. PTSD can affect not just the life of the person who's gone through traumatic stress.

It can affect their family and their entire community. But what I'm happy to tell you is that that research showed that there are incredibly effective therapies for PTSD that have emerged in the last couple of decades.

In 2006, the American Psychiatric Association did a review of all the research globally, every single study on PTSD looking for effective therapies. And you know what they recommended?

Effective Body-Based PTSD Therapies

They actually had very, very few effective techniques they could point to. They said that the best you can do is manage these conditions. You can't cure them.

They call it an intractable condition. But since that review, new therapies have been developed. And the result is that in some of my studies, for example, we find that 90% of veterans with PTSD, the symptoms of flashbacks and nightmares putting stress, anxiety, depression actually recover.

Nine out of ten veterans recover after they receive these effective techniques. What's unique about them is they are somatic. They're body based. They're shifting the brain.

They're shifting your sense of safety. And so it is possible now in a whole new way, wasn't possible just a few years ago to recover from PTSD. I also have been investigating now more recently, what happens next?

what happens with the flashbacks to go? And what happens when the nightmares are gone? What happens when you aren't infecting those around you with all of your symptoms?

what happens when you're in that space of just being okay? The answer is Transcendence. You start to explore higher states of consciousness. Maybe it's through prayer or attending your church.

Maybe it's through meditation, or going to a synagogue or a mosque, or you're part of a meditation group. Whatever technique, whatever faith, whatever spiritual tradition or no tradition brings you into contact with those elevated states.

You can then move into that space.

From Recovery to Transcendence

Once you have released the pull, the tug, the force, the the, the, the, the downward spiral that PTSD pulls you into. And another surprise finding this research is that for many people that face a Trauma, the Trauma itself actually results in Transcendence.

And this is the phenomenon called post traumatic growth, post-traumatic growth. And I have all chapter in one of my books. I've written several bestselling science books.

One of those is called Bliss Brain. There's a whole chapter there on the finding that two thirds of people, not one third of people, attempts other people, but two thirds of people who go through traumatic stress actually are able to move into those self-Transcendence states.

So with the right tools, with these modern therapies, with these insights we have now from neuroscience, you can too. I remember one young veteran I worked with just after he got back from Iraq, and he was really suffering.

He was so jumpy. His startle response would go on just like that. He'd hear something or he'd experienced something that would trigger him and he would be ready to react instantly.

I remember I was talking to him and somebody in the room had a water bottle, just a regular plastic water bottle, and they crinkled it. You know, you just crinkle a plastic water bottle.

That young man almost died under the table, because that crackling sound reminded him of the small arms fire he'd experienced in Iraq. So here he was in this hair trigger response.

I did some work with him.

A Veteran's Rapid Trauma Relief

We were using acupressure pressure on acupressure points, and I actually encouraged him to remember those firefights. So here he is in suppressing the memory.

This dissociating from the memory. He is literally having a vivid experience of that memory. But we're introducing acupressure and that is sending a safety signal to his emotional brain.

And when it gets a signal, it cancels out the association the emotional brain has with that sound being linked to fight or flight. And when you break that association in the mind of a trauma survivor one time, that's often enough for it to remain broken forever.

And so just a short while later that same day, that same after that session, he was able to hear somebody crinkling that water bottle and have no response whatsoever.

He was just a completely calm guy after hearing that same triggering stimulus. That's how fast these techniques

can work. We've used them with Rwanda genocide victims.

We're training many therapists now in Ukraine to use them in the war there. We have volunteer teams in places like Haiti, Haiti, places like Palestine to help people who are affected by the wars there, by the natural disasters there.

So these techniques really, really work. And you too can learn them and resolve those old traumas. So the finding now in research is that traumatic stress does not have lead to PTSD, hopefully to these states of self-transcendence connecting with something greater than yourself, your higher power, the universe, God, whatever you want to call it.

Global Trauma Work and Post-Traumatic Growth

there are lots of names for it, but it's not hanging out there in trauma. It's moving into these states of Ecstatic Bliss. I mean, think about the poetry of Rumi.

Think about the poetry of Mary Oliver. Think about the the the amazing states that send Francis or Mother Teresa or Ramana Maharshi, or Amma hugging the Saint or Paramahansa Yogananda, all of these wonderful monsters who we know are in these elevated states of of well-being.

Why not go join them? Why not be there to actually also have a one year mentor course called the Short Path to Oneness? And we actually guide people scientifically in these ancient techniques.

And we also use neuroscience proven techniques to help them move to the states of Transcendence in just one year. So it isn't necessary to hang out in that traumatic stress the rest of your life.

I know you've been hurt. I know all of us have had disappointments. Maybe wounds, maybe grave physical and moral injury done to us. So I'm sorry those things happened to you.

I know we've all had those challenges and struggles in our lives. In my book, Bliss Brain, I tell about some of mine. And they weren't pretty. One of them is my house burned down in a wildfire in 2017.

One moment I had a house, and five minutes later, I didn't have a house or an office or any possessions. It was one of the shocking losses of my life.

I had literally lost everything. And in the year after that, I lost all my money.

Personal Loss, Resilience, and Summit Invitation

I lost my retirement savings. I lost my health. All kinds of things went wrong. But as my book this frame describes, I remain in the sense of well-being because I was meditating.

I had a resilient brain, and I want you to have that resilient brain, too. So Trauma to Transcendence. This Summit is all about moving into those self-transcendence states.

You can do it. And the experts and the recommendations you going to find on the Summit are going to help you move to those states. So it's not just me.

It's not just Rumi. It's not just Mother Teresa or Amma or Paramahansa Yogananda. It's you, your brain. your brain can do that. Your brain has the same structures to move you into these ecstatic states of well-being.

And you'll discover how on this Summit. So I'm so delighted to have you here. I encourage you to listen with a notebook in hand. Make notes in your journal and apply these lessons, these priceless lessons, to your life.

You'll find each of these inspiring speakers has something remarkable to say and a different perspective. And as you see us coming at Transcendence from all these different perspectives showing how to be resilient.

Show you how to turn life's lemons into lemonade. we know you'll find what's right for you. So welcome. I'm glad you're here. We're forming a community. You are now part of it.

You'll feel the energy building as we move through the Summit. I am so delighted you are part of this wonderful movement. I invite you to make this your time of finding meaning from those events in your life that wounded you and hurt you, and know they can move you into those transcendent states.

So every blessing. I look forward to sharing this grand journey with you over the course of the next few days.