Introduction to Trauma and the Guest

No matter how challenging it is and how unjust it may be, ultimately, and each and every moment, it is up to us, and it's our choices that are going to determine our future and our destiny.

Is choosing in a self compassionate way, being willing to get the support we need to give ourselves, the compassion we need, seek the validation and when we need that.

But ultimately focusing on what can I do, focusing on my choices. This is doctor talks. Hello to you all. I am very grateful today to be able to talk about the topic of Trauma to Transcendence.

Trauma is such a profound topic that affects all of us, without exception, in different ways. It often doesn't get enough attention and its effect on us and society, but often it's also misunderstood.

And in this sense, I really I'm so glad that it is being talked about. And today I have the honor to interview Doctor Fleet Maull. It's really hard to how to really introduce him.

He's an author, is a meditation teacher, actually. Meditation teacher. A little bit of an injustice because meditation teacher is a very popular term.

You can go for a weekend or a month and become a meditation teacher. It's what you call horizontal learning. Doctor Maull is a vertical teacher. He has been decades training and having inner contemplation, not only in the comfort of being in a nice place in nature, like most of us, but actually being in prison for 14 years on a mandatory minimum federal drug sentence from 1985, in 1999, and in this time he founded the Prison Mindfulness Institute and the National Prison Hospice Association, catalyzing two national movements.

He then found in the transformational educational platform Hartman Institute, and really has been in the intersection of personal growth and social transformation, being on the leadership of the annual Auschwitz-Birkenau bearing witness retreat for more than 20 years and founding the Rwanda bearing Witness Retreat.

He is a roshi, a Zen master, in his background, and as we talked before, he's highly trained in Tibetan Buddhism. We had some we shared some details over the years, but he's really one of the old, old, old timers from the 70s, really.

So there is a depth to everything, he says. It comes from a place of of wisdom, of experience. I hope all of you take it in and he is the author of Radical Responsibility How to Move Beyond Blame, Live your Highest purpose and become an Unstoppable Force for good and Dharma in hell.

The prison writing of Flipboard. So with this, I'm honored to have you. Welcome to this interview. Thank you very much, Doctor Isaac, for having me. Thank you.

And today you are going to talk about healing trauma and promoting post-traumatic growth through radical responsibility and neuro somatic mindfulness.

So why don't you start maybe by briefly sharing with people, your life story so they get a sense of the gravity between what you are sharing? Well, you can tell by the gray hair that I'm, of the baby boomer generation.

And, so I came of age in the 1960s, and, I grew up in a basically good middle class family with good middle class values. In, in the Midwest of the US, Roman Catholic family.

But we had alcoholism in the family, and my beloved mother, suffered from alcoholism and was kind of what you

might call an episodic alcoholic. She would just drink sometimes once a week, sometimes twice a week, every other week.

Early Life, Family Trauma, and Spiritual Seeking

But, when she drank, she shifted from being a very creative, beatific, wonderful mother, like my best friend to being this, really as a young person, a terrifying raging holic and violent and, and so, you know, usually getting home from school, you could tell she'd been drinking is slurring the words a little bit, and then it would just, you know, things would just get worse and worse.

And, dinner would usually just erupt into absolute chaos. And, and at some point, she would pass out and, and then, you know, you'd all be down to breakfast the next morning.

We there were I had an older brother and three younger sisters. So five of us with my mom and dad will be at breakfast the next morning as if nothing had ever happened.

There would be mom sober, wonderful mom making breakfast and, and nobody ever. And talking about it. It was never addressed, never talked about, never addressed.

So this creates some really deep what I what I know today and what we know from Western psychology and trauma, science and so forth, that creates a real deep splitting in the psyche.

And so, so I came into adolescence as kind of a classic angry young man with a big hole in my gut, which is felt like a, a black hole of, an abyss. If I went anywhere near, it would just be annihilation.

So I was trying to fill that in or cover it up, patch it up with anything I could. So, you know, and the other factor was, I remember my early childhood, and this was before the onset, at least before the onset of my awareness of my mother's drinking problems.

The light being very magical. You know, I remember, you know, up until maybe the time I was 5 or 6, probably up until the time I started school. Feeling really plugged into reality, things being really magical.

And and then suddenly that just went away. Everything became gray tones, and I never maybe that's a normal developmental process, I know, but I never made peace with it.

And I was very, really hungry to reconnect, to have that sense of being plugged in to reality, the magic and growing up Roman Catholic god. The one place this was pre Vatican two.

So the theology was pretty fire and brimstone and I never really bought into it. I remember being in kindergarten doing you know, reciting the catechism, all kind of things you do in a Catholic school and, and I didn't quite even I remember clearly having thoughts like, I don't know about this, which is pretty extraordinary when you're 6 or 7 years old.

But but the pre Vatican to mysticism of the church was there the style of the mass and Latin, the call and response. And I was an altar boy and I, I enjoyed that aspect of it.

I loved the high masses, the midnight masses. I didn't buy into the theology, but I liked the magic. I was attracted to the magic. Right. And so, and with the onset of, the counterculture revolution in the 1960s, you know, I in my sophomore year of high school, I was going to a Jesuit high school.

I got a good Jesuit education. There were solid educators. And actually, they their kind of philosophy was they wanted you to mature beyond your, you know, childhood catechism, understanding of religion or even of Catholicism and develop a more mature faith.

If you were going to and they were okay if you came out of there as a somewhat questioning agnostic. And, at any

rate, it was in a comparative religion class myself, my year that I first read about.

I first read some eastern religious teachings, Hinduism and Buddhism. And it was the first thing I ever read that made sense to me, just immediately made sense to me. And, so I discovered that.

But then I started looking for books. I found Heracles, Zen in the art of archery. And, about, German man who went to Japan back in the late 40s, early 50s and studied with a kyudo master.

And, that was his is his journey with that master was basically a deconstruction of the self and a realization of non-self and an essential being. And and then I started reading DBT, Suzuka and so forth, so very quickly in that year, when I was 16, 17, I was reading a lot of Zen Buddhism and, that very same some the summer of my sophomore year, I also discovered, marijuana and discovered LSD.

So that was all happening then. And then so on the whole counterculture, which is unfolding, and I was incredibly angry and culturally alienated. I didn't believe anything.

I didn't believe anything that my family had been saying. My culture had been saying, you know, really even before that with the Kennedy assassinations, you know, that which happened when I was maybe in the seventh grade, sixth grade, John F Kennedy assassination and, and then, you know, I already didn't really believe anything anybody was telling me from the older generation and, the adult generation and then, you know, so that was just continuing on.

Then I graduated from high school in 1968, which was an incredibly tumultuous year in U. S. history for people that like us that were around then we had the, the assassination of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy and the Kent State killings of students on campus.

And by the National Guard. And and it was just incredible. It was an explosive year. The, the the, the the way the kind of racial rebellions maybe is better understood today where recall riots were happening all over the place.

I grew up in Saint Louis, and we had we had a lot of turbulence and rioting and every, every summer of 65, 66, 67, I was also happened to be in Los Angeles, during the watch riots with my family on vacation.

So I'm witnessing that in 1965, and I just I was just, you know, I just didn't buy into anything that that the culture I'd grown up in was saying anymore.

So I was very alienated. And so, you know, as the counterculture came online, I just went headlong into that, and really to the extreme and with, the drug experimentation and the sexuality and the whole thing and, and, you know, so and there was some sense of plugging back into a, some quality of reality, with the music, with the drugs, with the, with the sex and alcohol and also but also a mixture of a real kind of connection and some mirage, like an if you had a big hole in the gut like me and a propensity, therefore a very strong addictive propensity, a lot of baggage went with it right.

So those were really tough and tumultuous years. And, and when the, when the kind of the, the, the love and light era of the counterculture started moving into hard drug use and a darker side in the early 70s, I really wanted to escape that I was involved in, and I became an I drug user, but I knew I wanted to get out of that.

I also, when Nixon was reelected, I couldn't stand being in the U. S. anymore. So. And I'd always had this idea in South America, I'd rediscover that magic I was looking for.

And it wasn't even about drugs. It which is I don't know where I got that idea. But anyway, I took off traveling and ended up living as an expat down in Peru and and fell on a small scale.

Drug smuggling as a way to live outside the system. And I justified this with all this. Us versus them thinking I had going on about the culture was so hypocritical and we were right and they were wrong.

And and so, you know, all that kind of when but I was the spiritual seeker all along. So I had these mixed up things going on. And even once I went back and found my teacher and went to graduate school and did a deep three year clinical training program at the university in Buddhist and Western psychology, which is now called.

It's now called a program in contemplative psychotherapy. You know, I was still disappearing once or twice a year, and, and, and smuggling. And I wasn't trying to get rich at it, but just to have enough money to keep living outside the system.

And my marriage was falling apart, and I was keeping my problems at bay with money. And I was getting deeper and deeper into the Buddhist tradition. And so I knew all this.

I, you know, there was a lot of cognitive dissonance around all this, but I would self-medicate around that or, and spend by half the year traveling with my teacher or in retreat.

Now they have the year running around being this crazy person. And so, you know, before all that, I eventually I realized and I stopped by other people continued on, and then they got themselves in trouble and they decided to invite me to the party.

So in 1985, I was indicted and, on the advice of my teacher, turn myself in. First time I'd actually ever taken anybody's advice. But, I did turn myself in, and, and initially, I was sense that 30 years with no parole, I was 35 at the time.

The paper the next day said I'd be 65 before a chance of release, and I pretty much thought my life was over. And, as I'd known it anyway, I'd really just torched my life.

And and what was most devastating was my son was nine years old at the time, and I knew he was going to grow up without a dad, and I was I was absolutely devastated by all that I had faced.

That was the reality of all the incredibly selfish decisions I've been making for so long, despite all the justifications, despite what was going on. Nonetheless, I was clearly making really selfish decisions.

And and, I had to face all that. And that was a real dark night of the soul for me.

Counterculture, Addiction, and Exile

And so I became radically motivated to get all the negativity out of my life and to take everything I had received from the positive things, from my own family background and all I had received from my teacher and, and, and, my Tibetan Buddhist path and, and really just try to get my son a better legacy than just his dad went to prison or even died in prison because I had no surety that I would survive that time.

And, eventually, you know, it turned out I was sentenced under the old law, fortunately, before 1987. So you get a lot of good time on a long sentence of just out of trouble.

And then on appeal, they drop one count. That was about two and a half years into my time. The appeal went through the court, so essentially reduced to 25, and I had to serve 14.5 on 25.

So that's what I ended up serving. But it was really my monastery time. My actual time. I just was leading this incredibly disciplined life, sleeping only for five hours a night.

And practicing 2 or 3 hours a day, studying 2 or 3 hours a day, and serving my day job was teaching school. I started a meditation group in a prison chapel.

This was a federal prison, a hospital in the height of the Aids epidemic. They were bringing all the Aids patients there from all over the federal system.

So men were dying there in horrible conditions from Aids and liver cancer and heart disease and all kinds of things. So with another inmate, I got the first hospice program in the prison started, and I spent most of my meal breaks and free time and evenings on weekends up in the hospital taking care of, men who were dying.

And, and so I like, you know, but we had to be back on our units, like at 9:00, and then they locked the doors. So from then, you know, I'm just studying and practicing until late at night, and I would get up early in the morning and and practice.

So I led this very disciplined life. Not, you know, I was active in the community. I was teaching and leading programs. I got very involved in 12 step work to deal with my own substance abuse issues.

So it was a combination of a deeply contemplative life with a real focus on practice and study, while at the same time being engaged. And, that was my life for 14 years.

So that was a real crucible of transformation for me. And fortunately, I did survive it. And and really, I got out in 99 and I've had really nothing but opportunity to serve, since getting out to. I'm sorry.

That was kind of the long. Oh, no, it's, go. But that's the story. Yes, it's a moving story. Like I'm taking a deep breath because, Yeah. Is it the term, you know, domain hell, you know, really?

Really. And sometimes it takes hell for us to recognize that in the hell there is actually an opportunity, you know? And it's very hard to see why. It's how we react to suffering.

Do we react with being reactive or do we see. Because that's what the how does the how it takes all the dirty blood, but it doesn't react. You just connect to the universe and gives and really nourishes, you know?

And so I can see I can see really how your approach of personal growth and, and social transformation, what they introduced initially is really built into your into your cellular structure from your experience.

And it's really fascinating for me to see how you took personal responsibility into your own truth. But your truth became deeper and deeper as you recognized.

Okay. Yeah. I'm practicing. I want to learn. Damn, I want imitated, but I'm actually using method that, hurting people in my family. And you really went all the way. So really.

And in this sense, you know, you wrote your book is titled Radical Responsibility. Really how to Move Beyond Blame and Fearlessly Live Your Highest Purpose.

So I think it really suits your story and become an unstoppable force for good to really what you've done. So how can you share your approach with radical responsibility?

How it can facilitate both trauma healing and post-traumatic growth? Both, of course, from your own personal experience and from your wisdom and knowledge over all these years.

So that philosophy that I call that approach to life that I call radical responsibility was really borne of my prison experience. You know, when I got there, I was really consumed with the drama of my own situation, what I've done to myself and done to my son, if you can imagine.

But when I arrived at that federal prison and I saw it was just like I remember my first couple days, there was like a Fellini movie of terrible suffering, men who are paraplegics and quadriplegics and blind and emaciated with cancer and Aids and male were medicated in the psych ward.

And, you know, it was just really an intense place. And the good thing about that, it shook me out of my preoccupation with my own drama. And I realized this is a place of tremendous suffering and that I was here to serve.

So that became my focus. But the other thing I saw immediately was I was in a world where it was extremely negative and where every all my fellow prisoners had huge victim stories.

Even though the society sees them as perpetrators, most of them end up in in trouble and in the criminal justice system because of their own childhood victimization.

And, and they're full of anger and they arm themselves up with anger and bitterness. So and, and, it's a very polarized culture and just full of anger and bitterness.

And I and I realized that if I didn't proactively do otherwise, I could end up, like that. And and I didn't I didn't want to come out of prison angry and bitter with a big victim mindset, big victim story.

But I didn't want to live that way while I was there. Fortunately, I'd had, you know, ten years of deep trading in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and I had a three year finished the three year clinical program in psychology.

So I had a lot of training, a lot of background. And so, I realized the only way through, if I was going to survive my time in prison, and create any kind of life afterwards, I realized I had to embrace 100%, even 200% ownership accountability for having got myself in there and what I was going to do with it, I, I just realized focusing on anything else would be a complete waste of time.

And, you know, the were provided a lot of people's time. You know, I became because I refused to testify, not because I was trying to be a hard guy or stand up guy, but I was a Buddhist, had the idea that somebody else is going to go to prison instead of me.

Somebody else's family's going to suffer instead of me. I just couldn't, you know, that didn't work. And so I didn't testify against anyone. So I became the designated kingpin.

And, you know, a lot of people testified and didn't go to prison, and I did. Even people that were much bigger players than I was. So I kind of focused on that.

Also, when the government prosecute you, they they break all the rules. They break all the laws. They play hardball. Right. So I kind of focused on all that.

If I wanted to and, you know, just been consumed by all that blame and resentment and close associates or even so-called friends who had kind of stopped the knife, had my back.

But I just decided immediately that's a complete waste of time. It's not going to take me anywhere. And so I got to, you know, take 100% radical ownership.

We got responsibly for having gotten to where I wanted to continue. But please. But I want to you made one point, which for you for you was in the beginning obvious.

But it's key. When you came to the prison and you saw the vast suffering, it shook you of your personal, focused personal drama in this. Is it key for all of us?

For every living being, we get lost in our personal drama and we keep on playing it, and we keep on blaming and time waiting for us. We can't be in the moment if we if we blame and hold something from the past because we are moving with time.

So really, for you, this recognition and it was I can sense you didn't share it. It was a pivotal transfer, maybe the biggest transformation because also for the word base just fell away and even all the pretentiousness and I'm you know, I'm better the other everything falls away.

Right. And you you're you are nakedly opened. The reason why I interrupted with this for people who are listening, this is the moment of opportunity. This always comes.

But we have to be aware to recognize it, you know? Otherwise it just goes by and you get upset the next moment. So please, please, I just wanted to clarify.

Yeah. No, no, it is very important. And I'm very grateful for that moment. I think it was important. So, you know, I had my family a good day thankfully despite the alcoholism, and we're community oriented people.

But then my teacher took prompt changes. Live 24 over seven in service of humanity. So I think I the combination of that background and then coming into this place where it literally was a hell realm, it just woke me up.

And I'm very grateful, that it did.

Prison, Radical Responsibility, and Service

And, and so then, you know, I had this realization that, you know, I really needed to radically alter my circumstances and the choices I was making. And, you know, these are not new ideas.

Obviously, these ideas have been around forever, but unfortunately, they don't dominate our culture. There are cultures ridden with shame and blame and, cultural blame.

But, but those ideas are there. I often reference Marcus Aurelius so some people call him the last good Roman emperor. Right? He was a stoic philosopher, and his meditations are great.

You know, it's a great book to read, but, you know, paraphrasing one of his statements, something like the vast majority of people, think their destiny is determined by their circumstances, but it's not.

It's determined by their response to those circumstances, which is very similar. What Viktor Frankl said in Man's Search for meaning about that space between a stimulus and a response, therein lies all of our human freedom and so forth.

So, you know, these are not new ideas, but but it became a reality for me in a very deeply experiential way. And because I took that approach also, I was very fortunate that Trump Warm chair, my Tibetan teacher, had, had emphasized skillfulness over simplistic notions of morality.

So it was so like, that it's not that he didn't believe in right or wrong, but but, but, you know, there are lots of life situations where there's a, there's a greater good and a lesser evil or greater, even a lesser good.

And, you know, you're trying to discern those things of being able to discern those things in his wisdom, but his focus on what's skillful, what are the causes of suffering, what are the causes that happen?

And and as we get greater and greater discernment, what can we be skillful? So my approach in that, in that prison setting where the answer to you try to do anything, he answers, no, you go to any step.

Could we try this? Do we know well what what if yes, why not? They might like up just for being, you know, bold enough to say why not? But, if they give you an answer, it's.

Well, we used to do that, but somebody did this, and now we don't delay more as some prisoner abuser. They always. There's always a story. Right. So how can you get anything done.

And this was a maximum security prison with a, a psych, a big psych unit where if you bucked the system, you'd be in poor point restraints on a concrete bunk, getting hosed down at night and full of, hell, it all.

Or Thorazine. I mean, this is literal. So you couldn't buck the system that there is a total institutional and totalitarian situation where they had all the power.

You couldn't think of being in a more powerless situation. So how do you get anything done? And so I just relied on

that philosophy and on my Buddhist training.

And I just really tried to, to work with everybody, my fellow prisoners and the staff, even though I had real clear boundaries. My my community was the prisoners.

You got to keep real clear boundaries. But I still didn't demonize anybody, and I and everybody's a human being. So how do you approach people in ways that they'll respond?

So I just very patiently and try to be professional and kind and courteous and skillful, but consistent and persistent. And in that way I was able to great all kinds of programs during my time in that prison that you normally don't happen, or that certainly prisoners don't create and then create two national organizations and two national movements.

But it all came out of that philosophy of, radical responsibility and also the idea of because, you know, I love and I don't I don't blame them. A lot of prisoners have gotten into really fighting the system from within prison.

And, and I enjoyed some benefits from, you know, fights that prisoners had made and paid a high price for in the past through the courts and then being punished for being involved in the courts and so forth.

But a lot of times, those kind of things, you know, the pendulum, you win some victories and then you get to push back and you win some. You know, I, I chose to the route of, of getting a relationship with people and getting them to see the value and the wisdom and, and doing things.

So that's the way we got the hospice program started in a prison anywhere in the world, as the way we're able to get all these meditations, programs going and then get these national organizations going.

So I just chose that route and chose and I saw that rather than getting caught up in my, you know, this is terrible. You should, you know, the blaming or the, you know, the right or wrong stuff.

So much so what works, what skillful and where are my choices and how can I create better? What's the most creative thing I can do in this very powerless situation?

To try to benefit myself and others, in ways that that, you know, are sustainable. So you know that approach created a lot of change and has stood me well ever since I got out of prison. That same approach.

So I'll often describe radical responsibility as voluntarily embracing 100% ownership for each and every circumstance we face, day in and day out. Now, that may sound good and makes sense, but if you really think about each and every circumstance, so includes the ones we can see.

We had some role in creating, co-creating, allowing, stumbling into whatever. And it's and and this invites us to get radically honest and look at that not to blame ourselves, but just to learn.

Because if I see how I got myself into situations I don't like, I can do something different next time. So it's really important that radical responsibility is a completely beyond blame model.

It's clearly not about blaming others, but it's not even one iota about blaming ourselves. And it's certainly not about blaming victims. And so we look into see where, where might how could I have done something different or where might have contributed to this.

And, and in that way I can learn. But maybe some situations we may not see anything, we may just not see unless it was past life karmic. Who knows about such things, right?

Well, may see and everybody would agree. I'm a complete. And as a bystander there's no relief. Well, then I'm I'm still going to take ownership for it.

Okay. What am I going to do with this? Am I going to let this take me down and and get caught in a victim mindset forever? I mean, I may it's human. You're going to feel victimized.

People are terribly victimized. But am I going to get stuck there or am I going to shift into, okay, this is terrible. Maybe this is unjust. It shouldn't happen to anybody.

But here it is. It happened. It's in my lap. What am I going to do with it? Am I going to let it take me down? Or am I going to get creative and find the most creative way I can respond to this, to move my life board in a beneficial way?

And if I'm thinking long term, that usually is that everybody else is better there as well. So it's that idea of radical ownership and it goes back to another influence.

There was, I can't remember his first. Larry Edward Deming was often called the father of American manufacturing. And a lot of people know about that world, Six Sigma and continuous quality improvement, all those kind of ideas go back to him.

He helped Japan. He had the resurgence of after World War Two of the Japanese, economy was largely his doing and then American manufacturing and so forth.

Anyway, he had a simple model. He had a line and, and above the line, he had responsibility, ownership, accountability below the line. He had blame. I think he had ours a little more, I think justification, maybe resentment and then shame, which meant blaming herself.

And he said, it's very normal and human to deflect blame and blame others to justify our own behaviors, to blame and shame ourselves, or to hold on to resentments.

It's just all normal human psychology. But it just his point of view was it's inefficient. It just ultimately it's a waste of time and energy that the only place we have any power is with our choices.

That's the only place where, because we can't control other people, we can't control the world. The only thing we have any real control with and influence over is ourselves, our own choices and behaviors. And that's challenging enough.

So the idea here is to really, you know, be self in a an environment of complete self-compassion, understanding that we may be having very difficult feelings, we may have been victimized and we may need a lot of support around that or have that validated or but ultimately, our future is going to be determined by the choices we're making today.

And are those church choices, choices that are going to be life affirming and empowering and move us forward, or are they going to be choices that take us into debilitating mindsets that keep our life stuck, or take our lives backward?

And no matter how challenging it is and how unjust it may be, ultimately, and each and every moment, it is up to us. And it's our choices that are going to determine our future and our destiny.

So it's choosing in a self compassionate way, being willing to get the support we need to give ourselves, the compassion we need, seek the validation and when we need that.

But ultimately focusing on what can I do, focusing on my choices, or so I you know, it's for the listeners. We all go through moments, you know, that we can blame ourself and we can feel shame when we can.

We go through moments, we feel good with ourself if we are fortunate and the because we all go through it, we also built in this way, you know, every cell in our body has this survival drive.

When it is a boundary, it takes what it wants, it pushes out what it doesn't want, and it creates this judgment that this is good for me, this is bad for me, and it creates a relationship with environment actually, on a cellular level, you know, fully.

That's an amazing thing. And as a result, all the way to the cells, we become reactive. You know, it's a physiological biochemical reactivity, which is an expression of all these words of wisdom that you answer to.

It's built in us, but in. So this is really our maintenance survival mode, what the prisoners were doing in prison. And it really didn't work for them.

It's a losing proposition. And that's why it leads to suffering and to pain and to try. And it's a, you know, it's a perpetuated trauma. But yet this concept about responsiveness, you know, tug, you know, responsiveness, it's built in us because our heart takes all of the dirty blood with open arms.

It doesn't say one take it from the liver. I won't take it from the kidneys. It takes it. And instead of fighting, it recognizes we are part of a bigger society of the universe.

So we're there and then what does the heart do? It gives without discrimination, right? The author I tell this a lot, so the heart just gives this our love for others.

But after it gives, it relaxes and it nourishes itself. And when we connect with our heart, blame and shame cannot exist because we are now wishing all others with love and compassion, without, without, you know, judgment.

And we are now asking ourself that self-love is part of loving other than you think. You said a sentence about it in the beginning that people are not trained may miss you said I knew I need to do this to help myself and others, you know.

So you took the action to leave this life. You actually brought it to the way that you leave, to the contact, to the skillfulness and, you know, I, I bet your psychological training is a psychotherapist in living clinical also was very helpful.

But we for the audience, we are built to do this. What is called fixing. For example, in Kabbalah cone, we are built to do this. We are wired to do this.

And this is why your approach what you are saying, what you are saying is not theoretical. We each, each and one of us is capable of doing it. And some, you know, some the stuff they get back is more refined.

They'll be more evolved. It will be faster for them. We can learn from them, you know, but we are all on this journey. And in this sense, maybe you can share with us what's unique about your neighbor somatic mindfulness approach to meditation and how it facilitates both trauma healing, which we need in post-traumatic growth?

Yeah, pretty much builds on what you're just talking about. And, very important what you said, because we're kind of dual wired as human beings. We're wired for survival.

And so there's a paradigm of survival, and we have this fear and survival oriented psychology and, and wiring, literally. And there's something called the negativity bias that that causes us to, develop, long term memory, mostly full of memory of threatened and negativity.

And then we spend things the negativity. So the human condition, the human condition and the human condition unexamined is a life sentence to a life of fear and survival and, and really victimization and but that same human.

There's nothing wrong with the human condition. That's that same human condition. If we examine it, if we have a practice, if we're doing the inner work, that very same human condition is the platform for our awakening, and there's nothing to throw away there.

It's all good. And I think, along with having deep self-compassion as a foundation for radical responsibility, also the developing the recognition of our own innate goodness.

What in the Buddhist tradition is called Buddha nature, but could be called Christian nature or Christ nature or divinity? Chump change is called it basic goodness.

Our innate, unconditional, basic goodness and so neuro somatic mindfulness, I'll talk about it in a number of ways, but it's a it's a, it's a path of meditation that accelerates the, journey into the depth of our being, where we can experience beyond a shadow of a doubt, our own innate wholeness, our unbroken.

This even the part about being that's never been affected by trauma that we experience, that all the messages we've been receiving our whole life, that we weren't enough or we weren't this we weren't that.

All the messages, you know, the rigid, the culture is so full of them actually drives our consumerist culture. Right? You're not enough. But if you own that or you buy that, you just might get your needs met.

So, you know, we've all heard that our whole life in one degree or another, and it's all a lie. We are completely, innately whole, good, wise, intelligent, beautiful, beings.

Now, if one can even just read that and take that as a possibility, that could be very helpful. But if you actually experience it directly through contemplative means, it changes everything.

Even just touching it a little bit. And then of course, your practice is developing greater and greater faith and confidence in that.

Neuro-Somatic Mindfulness and Inner Healing

You know, it's been said in the Buddhist tradition across traditions that the basic difference between a fully awakened being or a Buddha and the rest of us who are also all already Buddhas, is that the awakened Being recognizes their Buddha nature and has confidence in it, and thus can live from it.

So even once we glimpse that we have to work to develop that confidence in it. So the right neural somatic mindfulness does that is it's intensely a very deeply embodied approach to the practice.

Now, a lot of teachers, including my first teachers, talked about the body, including the body, but our culture is so disembodied. Our Western culture is so disembodied.

In fact, I have a friend that says in Western culture that they've been relegated to the role of being simply a brain, taxing something to carry around the supercomputer that's on her shoulders.

And because of that, even when we meet these eastern traditions and traditions of meditation and maybe the instructions being given relatively well, but we don't hear it and we just practice from the neck up.

And, you know, we're dealing with this overactive default mode network. We're putting their neck up. But even eastern, even in eastern tradition, being in the Himalayas, we can practice from the skin out.

Yeah, we can have this spaciousness, yet we are totally disconnected with what's happening inside, you know? Yeah, there's not enough emphasis on introspective awareness when you go into the inner yogic practices.

There is. But I if you haven't really been introduced to it in different ways, you may you may miss it in a certain way. So this practice is very neuro scientifically informed, and it's based on my study of the growing emerging field of neuroscience over the last 30 years, and how we can deeply enhance introspective the capacity to feel itself from the inside out.

So all the instruction and they're all somatic by plus first gets us in touch with a sensation on the surface of the skin,

from head to toe and, and really getting that in a universal sense, very importantly.

And that goes through one set of neural networks of the brain, which is highly myelinated for us. We're very sensitive to touch because myelinated neural networks are more efficient.

But then and we can develop like a warm like structure. Really feeling held you our awareness of the external sensate field, the contact between our body and the space surrounding us, which is energetically, to me, very fluid boundary, but relative terms is a real boundary.

But we can feel that we can regard as space spaces, benevolent and feel held within that, like the embrace of a mother and child. And then within that we feel greater safety and we can dive deeper and we start exploiting the internal landscape.

And our body is sensory all the way down to the bones and including the bones, all containing their own cells, the marrow, the bones, the outer white hard layer, the bones, the circulatory system, all the vital organs, the glands, the lungs, the heart, the everything, the musculature.

It's all century, and it's subtler because it goes through different neural networks to the brain. But over time we can develop a more and more refined the world.

And that brings us deep into the body. Now, the real key here, there's two real keys to this. One is that we know from current neuroscience that that our busy mind that makes it hard for people to meditate when they first try is called the default mode network.

Because when we don't focus our attention to minus costly ruminating about the past, the future, the present, it's very busy. And. But when we focus our attention, it naturally quiets down because we activate something called a task positive network.

Anybody who tried to like thread a needle, you know, or at least a moment, your mind gets very quiet. You may not be able to sustain it, but that's that shift from the default mode network to the task positive.

So by yoking your attention with the body, what my first teacher called synchronizing body and mind. But taking that deep all the way down to the bones, feeling the body ever more deeply, it creates, a platform for your mind to rest, and the default mode network quiets down.

You don't have to struggle with your thoughts, it just quiets down naturally. So you find yourself going into deeper, deeper attention stabilization, and then deeper and deeper awareness.

And as you're doing that, because you're getting a lot of internal data, the mind, the brain and the nervous system is learning how to do that. So you start with self-directed self-regulation, which any practice begins with.

And gradually your body mind, heart system is learning to do it. So it's gradually moving into auto regulation, which means you can move from a more dualistic practice to more non-dual practice.

The other thing that's happening is as you go deep into the body, you're starting off with the, you know, gross physical body. But even if you close your eyes, you know, those sensations.

Now they somehow seem almost more mental and physical. But the deeper you go into the body, you're getting into subtle sensation and subtle body, and then you're getting into the subtle mind, and then you're getting into the very depth of your being.

And in a depth of our, our true nature. Right. So this this approach helps us shift from a dualistic approach to a non dualistic approach to meditation much more quickly.

And it takes us into the depth of our being much more quickly, where we can experience the reality of our innate,

unconditional goodness. And so I find that people can make a few if you because, you know, I'm usually in your place and I want to share and share, but create some really important points for this.

So for the people in the audience that want to make sure they don't miss what it is saying, even if you taste it for a second, we all have the capacity to taste it.

We are built to do it right. It's a Buddha nature. It's made in the image of God, but it's all the same. We are built to do it, even if for a second. Even between being angry this second, when we recognize it is life shifting on an experiential level, it's very important.

It's very easy to talk beautiful words, but when you experience our reality is never the same. That's really what fleet is referring to. And the other thing it is referred to is whatever is your experience, if you fixate on it and say, wow, this is amazing, this is it, you are missing the next layer.

And so Flynn is talking here. He's talking about it from a somatic experience to subtler and subtler and to the bone than to the cell. Like, you know, lately I was meditating here on the ocean, and I was telling my family I had the experience and have never taken any psychedelics.

It was like cellular happiness. It sounds crazy. Every cell in my body was vibrating with happiness. It's like, maybe it's what you feel when there are no drugs, you know?

But yeah, I have a lot of reasons to be stressed and worried right now. I can make a long list, but there was something about connecting with this quality, which is not mine.

It's out there. And really what you're offering is, is the wisdom lineage based that was adopted to our needs to connect with the. So what I would like to do if okay with you.

And I know we already spent a lot of time, but I want if you have a few more minutes is maybe you can share with people where they can find more about your work, and then maybe if you can, if we have enough time, lead us in in a short meditation.

So so people don't have time to sit and experience. We know how to find you and those who want to stay. And I recommend to stay connected. Stay absolutely.

So people can find my work at my basic website at Malcolm, and you can find your way to other places through their, my courses or at heart, mind.com heart mind that go there you can find about all our online summits and my course neuro somatic mindfulness courses.

There. And if you're interested in the prison work, prison mindfulness.org. But if you go to sleep, Malcolm, you'll kind of find your way through all that.

Or if you want to go directly to my book site, it's rec or Responsibility book.com. And right now, if you order the book online through there and you put your receipt, you ordered Amazon whatever books I'll put your receipt in there. There's a whole lot of bonuses offered because the paperback edition just came out.

So that's enough to get people oriented to find out about, my work. So. Right, right. Okay. So please, please, maybe, like, you know, I know it's short, but, you know, maybe it can take, you know, ten, 15 minutes and.

Yeah, so I, I invite, all of us in the audience to, just take a posture. The view feels relatively uplifted, upright, and at the same time relaxing, sustainable.

Now, if you that means you can kind of sit board in your chair or sit on a cushion and sit up with a relatively upright posture, extending the crown of the head towards the ceiling a bit, letting the rest of the body relax around that.

But if for any reason a physical limitations you need to lean back in a chair or do the practice lying down or

standing up, please do what works for you.

So then, having established your posture, I'm going to bite you to close your eyes for this. Now, I generally teaches open meditation. But to really connect with this internal landscape of sensation, it helps to close the eyes.

To begin with. And to begin with, I invite us just to simply drop into being. Just let ourselves be just as we are. And if we not ourselves doing anything, even trying to meditate, let there go and just come back to being, just being.

Just being. Nothing to do. Nowhere to go, nothing to accomplish. Nothing to prove. Just being simple presence. Simple being. This. Within that, I invite us to begin feeling.

Feeling the body. To begin with, feeling sensations on the surface of the skin from head to toe. Perhaps sensations that the contact points between your body and the chair, the cushion your feet in the ground.

You know, tingling sensations, prickly sensations, sensations of warmth or coolness or numbness. Perhaps the texture of your clothing, the weight of your clothing, the contact between your skin in your clothing.

Sensations related to the air temperature or movement of the air where you are on exposed skin. Surface areas like the base of the neck. The hands. And moment up to a moment just gradually connecting the dots from head to toe all across the surface of the skin, sides, back, front, soles of your feet.

Scalp. Just feeling all the sensations you can feel. And we're working here with actual sensation when when I say the body, the body is simply a word or a concept.

And we actually have a kind of conceptual cycle, somatic body that's made up of parts and images. But here we're talking about actual tactile physical sensation, literally feeling the sensations as directly as we can.

And we can begin to feel ourselves and developed in a sensate field from head to toe, the boundary between our body and a space surrounding us. And of course, we generally regard space as empty, but it's actually made up of gases and so forth, and it's tangible.

So we could we could feel ourselves being held by the space. Regard to space is benevolent. And so as we're weaving together the sensate field to our awareness of it from head to toe, we feel somewhat held within the benevolence of this space.

Much like a child, an infant embraced by their mother, father. And we can relax further in that feeling. The safety of that. And then you're invited to begin exploring the internal landscape of sensation.

So the weight and mass of the muscles and bones, the force of gravity holding us down on the earth. All the sensations we can feel with each in-breath and our breath.

The passage of air across the nostrils or parted lips. The expansion and contraction of the ribcage, the contraction and relaxation of the diaphragm muscle driving the breath, the rising and falling of the belly.

Abdominal muscles. Intercostal muscles. Between the ribs. There's this whole flow of sensation with each breath and our breath as the air just flows in and out of the body, there's all these sensations we can feel, and there's this flow of sensation with the breath just going in and out of its own accord, just like waves lapping a the seashore.

So tuning into that, making a gentle effort to feel ever more deeply. And initially, we may have a sense like I'm observing these sensations or I'm feeling these sensations, but as best you can, try to drop into just feeling directly feeling sensation throughout the body.

Perhaps as we slow down, you can feel the heartbeat pulse. And being particularly curious about any sensations of discomfort in the body, there's always some discomfort.

Physical sensations and all perceptions for that matter, arise across the spectrum, from pleasant to neutral to unpleasant. And that's just the way it is.

And we're, of course, addicted to comfort. And we live in period discomfort. We chase pleasure and comfort. We avoid discomfort. We're kind of hard wired that way.

But that keeps us very mechanically on autopilot.

Guided Meditation and Closing Remarks

So one strategy for awakening is to lean in this discomfort, to actually be willing to feel any kind of unpleasantness or discomfort or pain. And this isn't about seeking that or being, punishing ourselves in any way.

Not at all. It's just part of our experience. It's always there so we can choose to really reclaim our dignity of conscious human beings by just saying, I'm going to embrace the whole thing.

Comfort, discomfort, have a human body. I'm going to experience this my whole life and to choose to embrace the whole thing. So breath after breath, heartbeat after heartbeat, letting your attention drop ever more deeply into the body and focusing on feeling.

Feeling sensation ever more deeply. And as you go along, you could focus on a particular part of the body. You could focus on your legs or torso or chest or head, or you could just feel globally or focus on the breath.

But allow this. Focus on feeling sensation to draw you ever more deeply into the body. And as we're doing is we're cultivating attitudinal qualities of almost passionate curiosity.

How deeply can I know myself in this moment? How deeply can I feel my own body? Can I really come home to the body and all the way down to the bones? So challenging myself, be deeply curious, but at the same time having qualities of acceptance, self-compassion, openness, freshness, beginner's mind, and just meeting whatever's there with curiosity.

So feeling ever more deeply under the body. And of course, any time the mind wanders, we find ourselves distracted. We just come back. Although now we just let thoughts come and go.

Other suns, perceptions, sights, sounds and all of this. Let it all, let it all be as it will. Let it all come and go. And just keep coming back to feeling the body ever more deeply.

The muscles store kinetic energy at rest. We can feel that there's like a low hum of energy in the muscles. This vast internal somatic universe of sensate experience.

And the more deeply we go into it, and the more directly we feel it, we naturally find the mind getting quieter and quieter, and our attention and awareness can begin to rest in this internal flow of sensate experience.

That we can begin to feel almost at a cellular level, this kind of dynamism, this aliveness throughout the body, the flow of energy and sensate and sensation throughout the body from head to toe.

Actually, the more our awareness deepens in the body, our internal systems begin to cohere. There's so many different frequencies of energy in the body the brainwaves, the heartbeat, our breath, every organ, every gland has its own energy frequency.

And they begin to cohere. We begin to feel this internal flow, this residence, this coherence, and it becomes so palpable we can actually rest our attention.

There are where is there? It becomes easier and easier to rest in effortless mindfulness, effortless awareness. And this deep flow is very nurturing and healing.

It heals trauma and it gives us a completely different place from which to live our lives. The deep quality of being. So with this enhanced internal somatic awareness, I invite us again just to drop in to being just let go of any effort and simply be just being and be aligned, just being and feeling, just being and feeling.

And to the extent that we find ourselves in a in a state of beingness, to whatever degree we could have a simple inquiry within this quality of pure being, pure presence, is there anything missing?

Is there anything that would make this moment more complete? Or is it really complete within itself and just pure quality of just. Physical. Emotional. Cognitive. Spiritual.

Beingness. Presence. Allowing myself to simply be as I am in this moment, moment to moment, at greater and greater depth and resting in that. And when you're ready.

Continuing to rest in this deep state of being and somatic awareness, you could open the eyes and look out and just get a sense of what the external world feels like when you're more in your body, when you come home to the body, and when you're in touch with this deep state of flow.

And from there you look at it. The world and perhaps have an interesting experience. Thank you. Thank you so much for for sharing this experience. And, really, I hope people will take it in.

You know, if I could just to close a few terms, it's for people like fleeting me unfamiliar. But it's Fleetwood's guiding you from observing as an outsider, looking into feeling, into leaning into the difficulty, leaning in to the experience.

And then he use the term mindful effortlessness. And it's a very tricky term, because you can be mindful in being contracted and looking at one thing, but you're really like a like a while away.

The hardest thing is to be effortless. We are putting our ability to focus, to hold in, to just completely letting go. And this is a term of resting. Resting is not like we go to sleep, is we rest.

Any tendency to hold, any tendency to contract, any tendency to be reactive, and then we just accept there's a deep quality of acceptance in what you are really saying.

It's almost like a, prerequisite. So really. Well, thank you. Thank you. I'm so glad for the opportunity to connect with you and looking forward to many more conversations.

Thank you very much, Isaac. Equally so, it's a delight to meet you. And we have a lot of similar background, and I'm sure we can have some fascinating conversations.

I look forward to more of go. Thank you. And thank you everybody for listening. And please, this is a this is a talk worthwhile listening is second and a third time.

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