

The following is a long 8239 word interview with Ryan Hallford of the Cranial Resource Centre in Texas. August 2016 – lightly edited for clarity.

For the actual interview, see the URL below.

<http://www.craniosacralpodcast.com/episode-32-mike-boxhall-surrendering-knowing-to-meet-revelation/>

Ryan has done a number of interviews with Craniosacral personalities and these can be seen at Craniosacral podcasts – see the URL above.

Ryan Hallford

Episode 32

Interview with Mike Boxhall

Ryan - Welcome to Episode 32 where of the podcast where we check in with the various people and threads of thought that shape the broad tapestry of Craniosacral Therapy. I am going to skip the usual chit chat and announcements today and get right into our interview. Today is a very special episode.

I am absolutely delighted to bring you Mike Boxhall who, at the age of 86, has been immersed in the field of therapy and spiritual practice for the last 45 years. And today he will share with us some of the wisdom and depth he has cultivated during that journey . I really enjoyed this interview where mike cover s a lot of ground, including the limitations of intellect, core nature of the therapeutic relationship, his philosophy on teaching and training teachers, the importance of moving to a place of no pathology, spirituality, science, the limitations of biodynamic concepts and much much more.

A spacious interview filled with lots of wisdom and at times humour. What a gift for us to hear our work distilled down to its essence by an elder in the field.

Mike keeps a busy teaching schedule over Europe and beyond helping Craniosacral workers and other therapists cultivate deeper state of stillness and authenticity.

I have put links to Mikes two websites so you can check out both his school and teaching foundation and an Amazon link to Mikes first book entitled “ The Empty Chair, The Teaching not the T.Shirt”.

So sit back get comfortable and take a warm spiritual bath in Mike’s awesome vibe. I’m confident you will enjoy.

Ryan – So, Mike we finally have got everything connected so we can visit. I have really been looking forward to talking with you. It’s morning where I am but afternoon where you are. And you are quite close to London?

Mike – Yes, about 50-60 miles south of London.

Ryan - I have checked out some of the photos you have of your home on your website and your garden looks just gorgeous.

Mike – It is very beautiful, we have been creating it from absolutely nothing – there was only a concrete wall and a concrete path, no trees nothing. And what is there is the result of the last 26 years.

Ryan - I bet it is a lot of work.

Mike - Mostly my wife's.

Ryan - If I could get my wife to work in the yard I'd be a much happier man.

I'd like to read one of your poems

Trust the Tide.

The tide goes deep and deeper still. Witness.

I do not hold it has gone on. Witness.

Hear the pain, not me to fix. Witness.

Ever deeper - where now the pain? Witness.

All doing done, who holds who has held. Awareness.

Mike - I just want to say that I found that very movin. It was beautifully read and do you know, I have never heard it read by someone else, and that touched me a lot.

Ryan - It has been helpful for me and when I connect with it, it brings me into a sense of simplicity and that's very valuable for me in my life right now with the practice , the school and two young children and every access that can bring simplicity is of great value to me so, wow.

So tell me a little about simplicity. I get a sense that is something you value in therapy in teaching. Do you have anything to say about the value of simplicity?

Mike - Yes, yes I do because we make life so complex, we make everything more difficult than it need be. I think we do that and that is largely the intellect at work. We have this great prefrontal brain which has evolved over the years and we've got stuck in that as though it were the complete summation of who we are and I don't believe that is the case.

Thinking is one aspect of the psyche or one aspect of the human capacity/capability. There are also feelings, sensation and intuition, and those have all got left behind; exponentially worse and worse and you can feel it, see it, increasing all the time. We've forgotten so much. Somehow we've left wisdom behind; we've left feeling behind; do you see? Feeling is a feminine attribute and thinking may be called a masculine attribute. I am not talking about gender here, that's got nothing to do with it. That feminine aspect of us called feeling, of being with wisdom, has gone out of the window.

We want to be right all the time but we can't quite make up our mind from whose point of view we want to be right. Whether it is yours, mine or this or that country's point of view. We have forgotten that still point that is in the middle of all those points of view. To me that still point is located right in the middle of the beating heart and the great news is that modern science is coming to say exactly the same thing but most of us haven't quite caught up with that yet.

Ryan - Yes when I first proposed to you to do an interview, I got what was a pretty interesting response – “well I'm not a big fan of lectures or interviews”, you said you felt there was a tendency towards over intellectualisation or conceptualisation in the field of cranial work. But that you would be willing to have a conversation but not do one of those typical lectures or interviews.

When you responded to me like that I felt you showed up with a big golden key to a prison cell I had been locked up in and you opened the door as I come very much from a mystical place, if I can use that word, that's the richness and the depth of this kind of work and kind of therapy. And, in the course of doing these podcast, for just over a year now, there's been so much energy and time in the intellectual and conceptualisation of the work like one-up- man-ship between some teachers and the others. I see there's some value in masculine growth of the work and the concepts but it's so nice to open up to the wisdom and to sit in the heart to not have to know and so I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more about that focusing on the wisdom that is resident in the heart rather than the intellect.

Mike - Well, I can try – let me say already that what I said about having reservations about doing this kind of thing has been made easier by the fact that you and I are having a conversation rather than my standing on a podium delivering the totality of the truth of the universe in 16 minutes or so.

But to speak a little bit about stillness – Ok, let me put it this way. In the beginning was the word, next line should be, and the word was the first limitation. What the intellect does, is that it defines and because it defines, it limits, so none of us claim, even the most egotistical, to know everything. So if we come from a place of knowing, we are inevitably coming from the limited story of our life experience and that is a limitation.

If however, and this is the way I see it, we can speak and react from the heart we are reacting, speaking from the present. The heart is in the present; the heart beats in the present. This is true embryologically. We start being sensate; every cell in the body is sensate; we have about 50 trillion cells I'm told. I have to admit I haven't stopped to check that out, but 50 trillion and every one of those has a nest of genes sitting in it and those genes receive information and give out information and that is partial. What is expressing from the genes is experience, relationships - a large part of that comes into our being when we are an egg onwards - we don't start conceptualising and thinking, in the sense you and I are talking about, until substantially later on and after birth. There is no thinking in the beginning but there is sensation and next there is feeling. All this is uploaded into the hard drive of our computer and that is what we are reacting from the whole time, most of which has been uploaded into our unconscious. All the time the talking, the reacting is not from what is there in the present but what we have neatly stored away in the unconscious. And that's what speaks.

There's a lovely expression, and I can't remember who first said it, and that is "You are not who you think you are" - that is a massive limitation and that applies to all of us. We are not present - it has been rated as 95-99 % of the time we are not present. We are talking, acting, moving, breathing, everything else, from patterns, from habits laid down before we could conceptualise what was happening.

So who am I? Well, I like to look at it this way - yes I am my parents, I am also the puppy dog I had when very small, I am the pictures I saw in this or that gallery, I am the music I've listened to, I am some pretty nice meals I have eaten recently in various countries, I am my relationships, I am my girlfriends, I am my wife, my children that's what I am and I speak from that. So if that is in the unconscious and that works for me that is fine but, where there is suffering, what can I do about the suffering? What I can do about the suffering has, I think, to have stages. First of all through grace or something else, I have to be aware of the fact that I am suffering from my habits not because of you or events. That's a big one.

The habits started accumulating right from two cells onwards, if I can accept the awareness of that, then a path of possibilities to changing which collection of genes I am operating from the whole time, which memories I am operating from. This is called genetic expression and which genes are expressing can be changed. The content itself of the genes mutates very slowly over vast periods of time. How do you change habits? I guess the practical way to changing habits, other than having a massive stroke or something, is to put in new habits. You can't put in new habits until you have come to the conclusion you have habits you don't want - that initial awareness; that spark.

But if I find that taking a whole load of drugs and booze and hanging out with strange people and getting into acts of violence makes me feel bad, I can begin new habits.

If I play violent video games all night, which I am told you can do in groups, for six hours a night, well why would I be surprised I get ill – do you see what I mean?

So, stage 1 is awareness; stage 2, and this is the masculine, is to use the left brain - I've got to do something about this. Stage 3 - what is it that is keeping these things in place? How do I surrender what is keeping these things in place – we make a plan, masculine. A plan to surrender the things we don't need (feminine). Surrender to the beauty, which is also there beneath the habits.

I had a lovely conversation about 3 or 4 days ago - and I quite shocked myself by saying that I was experiencing how fortunate I was that I spent about 85% of my time (I didn't make a mathematical calculation) surrounded by beauty, beautiful places, beautiful people, observing beautiful and sacred things happen. I feel pretty good about that.....

Ryan - The rewards of a life well crafted I suspect.

Mike - Maybe, but I don't think I am crafting the life, I would like to say the life is crafting me – I really feel that. It is working with the people in these places that has changed me significantly.

Ryan – I have a question for you on a personal level. Have you had any bad habits that you have had to deal with?

Mike - Yes, a rotten bad temper.

Ryan - I don't believe it.

Mike – I am telling you man, don't argue with me!! Criticising and judging people, particularly that, and then probably making my opinions feel felt, sure.

Ryan - Are there any key insights about your life that really make you find the transition out of those habits.

Mike – I am balking at the finality contained in that question, as habits have a nasty habit, they lurk, so I find it best never to get smug about it, it is a continuous process. Have I had insights – well what I have done has been to get much more in touch with my feelings and allow people to get much more in touch with me - if that makes sense. Because I think that's part of it, try and be more open. It was at first tentative and you know how things arise in the mind “oh if I tell them this will they accept me” that kind of thing, but I found it was quite the opposite – the more I tried to be open and as honest as possible, just be who I am not something better, but who I am, the more I was able to communicate at a deep level with people.

Ryan - That facilitates a sense of safety in relationship

Mike - In this work, at the level we are talking about, trust is a prime word. Trust isn't a one way traffic; I trust you or you trust me, I trust intelligence, I don't have to know

what is wrong or how to fix it - I can't fix someone else problems. I can however trust that we can take a journey together to that level of human experience where there is no pathology; interior to all pathologies.

Pathologies are largely add-ons or bolt-ons in one way or another. What the Buddha would have called suffering basically, of any kind. So I do believe. There is a little sentence - "this work at its tenderest is a journey taken by two or more people to a level of being where there is no pathology". And I think that's what we try to achieve in the work; with the practitioner, whatever you want to call her or him, going as deep as they can in themselves and letting go of separation and just plain receiving, listening,(some might call it resonating) not only with the ears but with full attention; that is to say all the senses; from the heart, to the other. The magic of that is that the other gets heard. Often, and very powerfully, for the first time in their lives.

Throughout our lives we suffer from not being heard, certainly not fully heard, and in some cases not being heard ever right from the beginning for various reasons. Maybe our parents' life story didn't allow them to be able to hear us, they were too preoccupied with difficulties - that kind of thing. To be heard is to be healed and to be heard deeply is to be deeply healed. The two prime emotional needs of the human being, the two great emotional needs after shelter and food and water, on the emotional side, are to be heard and to be held. In our society today most of our suffering stem from not experiencing either.

If you look at how we begin, we begin by being held in the womb for 9 months. In many societies we go on being held and not put down at all for a year or two after that; it doesn't happen in our society very often. But to be heard and to be held are a blessing from which we can flourish and, in fact, they are essential to our flourishing not just in our thinking, not just in the masculine but at all levels.

I think it has been estimated that , as human beings, we operate from only about 12-13% of our genes at a time. Well if only 12% are being employed it just blows the mind to think of what the potential of the human being could be if somehow we could find a way of expressing more fully and in better balance. Balance of all our attributes, thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. To see people lying on a couch - that is what happens in this model - being held and being heard and to see how their whole expression of being blossoms, is very moving.

Ryan - So on this idea of being heard and being held and connecting with the health in the person we are in relationship with, can you talk a little more about the specifics of that process. Our audience are Craniosacral Therapists – so we sit at a table and someone brings all of the complexity of their life, the patterning their habits their fears their joy; such a constellation of experience lies in front of us what are we attempting or aiming to connect with. Where should the focus of our awareness be to stay in that healthy place?

Mike - Where are all those things you mentioned, that nice long list? I don't mean where are they geographically, where are they in time – they are in the past Ryan, in our rucksack that we bring with us, clamped firmly to our back. They're in our unconscious hard drive, all of those things are. So what should we do? We should connect with that person in the present . What is present, sensation is present. Sensation cannot be anything else but present . You can think about past feelings; about past, present and future but sensation is only in the present; that is the magic, to me, of touch, it is sensation at work that is reaching the person at an almost cellular level, deeper than the thinking level - what I was touching on when I talked about how in our beginning we are just cells with sensation. If we can touch that place of sensation then we are in the present and if we are in the present, where is the pathology? So, what a great habit to make, that of being in the present.

Ryan – when I first began to move in the world or Craniosacral Therapy following a class I just felt so invigorated, alive, present and free and it's that place of being that continually brings me back to an exploration and a sharing of this work as it's sometimes hard to explain being more fully in the present than previously and is what we are all looking for, what we all come to classes for therapy for I feel.

Mike - I think at all sorts of levels not just therapeutic levels, it is what we need as a human race; to find that magic place of presence and stillness, as that's where the stillness is, in the heart of the turning world; that is the point, the place of creativity. That is the truly creative act, everything else is a repetition of everything we brought with us, and is limited.

Craniosacral Therapy has been marvellous for me, because it has given me a model which I have been able to use in the exploration of what is spiritual work and what is the spirit, as it allows me to safely put my hands on someone, to be close with somebody, encourages the listening. Yes, it's sort of built in, intrinsic to the Craniosacral model.

What I think we need to do, if we want to take the work further; to other levels which are not limited by conceptualisation; is that we need to surrender. Having found a model to get us there, we then need to surrender knowing. That is very difficult culturally to do but if we can surrender knowing we meet revelation; knowing being a limitation, we exchange, we give up a little of the knowing and limitation and intellectualisation, in return for the infinity of intelligence.

Ryan- I find that when I am in sensory contact with forms of biodynamic movement say, primary respiration or the long tide, it is easier for me to let go of the intellectualisation as I feel I am in touch with intelligence, moving gliding kind of rowing the boat, if you will, it's spatial being taken on a journey by intelligence as it moves through space forming me and my surroundings, giving a rising to all that comes and I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about this tidal movement. It's a

big topic in biodynamic circles and I wonder if you have any interest in speaking on your sensory experience of the tide, primary respiration, what have you.

Mike OK, this is where I put the cat amongst the pigeons! The long tide is a limitation, it's a concept, yes you can palpate it, yes, of course I can palpate the long tide. I use the long tide as a simple technique knowing that I am, to a modest certain degree, present, because otherwise I wouldn't be in connection with the long tide. Having got there I let go, and from then on I do not know, period, I trust, period. And that's it.

Ryan – Good, that's funny.

Mike - I didn't say that was easy, I recognise that is not easy. It is against most of our cultural training. We are taught to know what we are doing, why we are doing it, how we are doing it and all the time we are limiting who we are, what we are and what we do. So that is the nature of trust, as I understand it, and if people get heard at the kind of deep level I'm talking about, there is no need to focus on what disease they are suffering from. The disease becomes irrelevant when you find stillness because the disease is the outcome of a long history of events stuffed into the rucksack of our past.

I work a lot with people who get in touch with things they have deeply buried because they were too terrifying, too shaming, frightening, or whatever, to face. At the time they first met those traumas they were too young to conceptualise what was happening to them. They were not surrounded by people who would or could hear what they were saying, but largely couldn't hear what they were saying had happened or what they were signifying had happened so they did their best to bury them. The buried trauma is active like a volcano and eventually manifests in this or that symptomatology until you have something with a rather powerful label attached to it and then, of course, medicine in whatever form wants to do something about the symptomatology, the label. It is too horrendous to go down that road, you need trust to go down that road and you need company to go down that road with, it is a very lonely road discovering the sources of your own pathology. To take that journey in company becomes very important.

Ryan – and that's why it happens in therapy.

Mike – and that's why it happens in therapy, yes, what happens in therapy if you're lucky. It is more likely to happen and happen more deeply if the attention is not on the awfulness of the pathology. If you put attention on the pathology you are energising the pathology with your attention; if you put your attention on the health, which is there in the present, the pathology gets bypassed and we learn gradually to be in the present, where the pathology has not taken form, hasn't come.

Confidentiality, of course, stops one writing stories about so many of these things but powerful memories come up in these groups. I think groups are very important

because to be able to talk, to have the trust, to have the courage, to be able to talk about stuff you haven't allowed yourself to even think about, let alone tell your Mother about or tell the police about or tell some institution about, is incredibly liberating if it is safe enough to do that. So it isn't just the symptomatology, which finally expresses, that we are dealing with, in fact we are not working with that. I will go as far as to say we don't have to know what the symptomatology is. It is quite likely that you *will* hear about it, not because people come along with it, but because that is what people come along with. But that's just the symptomatology; what they won't come along with is the root of their suffering. Very few people would come anywhere near the root of their suffering until the trust is there. So in order to meet that criterion, the main resource of the practitioner is vulnerability. Being able to be with and not somehow sitting above their own feelings about what they are working with. In touch.

Ryan – do you think that one way of working on our own vulnerability is being in a therapeutic relationship ourselves with a therapist.

Mike – Oh yes, being in one oneself, I actually think that is pretty essential, I really do. I seem to remember spending a lot of energy trying to get this business of Supervision going years ago. Yes, I do think that is important. It depends on what you mean by supervision, though. Supervision, in my book, doesn't mean telling someone what they should have done and what to do next time, it involves being a clean mirror to what comes up for the practitioner in his/her own process.

I like the idea of the Sangha, that is to say, in the Buddhist tradition, the getting together in groups over the rainy months in the winter, ok we don't have to get together in the rainy season in this climate but one of the factors behind it was actually, I believe, people came back to the centre, came back to the temple, back to the ashram, whatever it was, to share experience, life experience. To be clean mirrors to each other and to hear and experience the communality of the human experience in all its complexities. We tend to think somehow we are either uniquely bad or uniquely good or uniquely persecuted or whatever. Whether it be by disease, by fate, or by the universe but what we shall hear, if we go a little deeper, is the absolute communality of what the human being can suffer from or enjoy. These being heard, there is only the inherent health.

Ryan – and when we come together as a common minded group there is a recalibration of perspective in our own life that helps us to be more clean, I would say.

Mike – Yes I think so, in fact I am sure of that, yes. But just to go back and repeat one time, a prerequisite to my mind of any kind of therapeutic work at the spiritual level is vulnerability on the part of the practitioner.

Ryan – How do we demonstrate that vulnerability in a healthy way for the client?

Mike – The way I demonstrated this is by investing in Johnson and Johnson, who make Kleenex. Double your money overnight. I use an awful lot of Kleenex. That is just one aspect, that is sorrow, but there are so many other things. Be real. That's what I am saying, be who you are.

What is the purpose of human life ? To my mind is to become as fully embodied as we can, to see what it means to be fully embodied; that to me is the message of great teachers, the obvious ones, the big ones, the great ones, that they were fully embodied and if they were fully embodied, the implication is that the human being, when fully embodied, is that and there is no separation.

Ryan – Fully embodied whether we are experiencing joy or sorrow, being with whatever the experience actually is. There seems to be an artificial push towards happiness in some spiritual approaches that I have come across and I'm very much a fan of happiness, joy and beauty but we also need to be able to be fully embodied in our sorrow our pain our anger even.

Mike - Yes, yes, all of it. Be fully awake is what it really means I think. Awake to who we are, which includes the bits you'd rather you weren't. If instead of putting negative energy into those bits you'd rather you weren't. If instead that, you embrace them a) you would become bigger because your becoming more instead of cutting bits off and b) you'd have a whole load of disciples.

Ryan – I had a student once explain her philosophy was as if she was having tea for some friends and she set a place at the table for everyone to show up, the happiness, the anger, the nasty depressed person, the person who talked too much. To set a place for everyone allow everyone to be aspects of ourselves and love them all, leads to a fullness of life and growth of our capacity to be with all the aspects of the human experience. I'm very much a fan of that particular perspective, it has helped me as I know I spent many years trying to cut out of my life my demons. When I can sit with them and look them in the eye with love then life becomes more interesting.

Mike – Yes, have them to tea and schmooze them.

Ryan – So I'm curious Mike, how are you enjoying this part of your life, You are 86 now. What is this chapter like?

Mike - it's the best part. Best part so far but ask me next year. No it really is because I don't have quite so much angst, I have a sense that occasionally something useful gets done, I don't want to be doing anything else. "What are you going to do when you retire" people say to me – I've got no idea, why would I want to. I might drop dead, I probably will, but that's another thing altogether. I enjoy life, I don't mean that I go round in a cloud of bliss, I don't go around in a cloud of bliss. I am pretty neurotic, I have more neuroses than most people have had hot dinners, I tend towards paranoia but I don't think I'm paranoid schizophrenic yet. I could give you

whole list of things. But I gradually accepted that those are just things that come up from time to time.

A great spiritual doctor once said to me, when I had recounted all my problems, he said “Michael, do feel like that all the time?” I said no not at all. He said, “well that’s alright then” , That was the end of his treatment. I learnt a lot from that. I’m neither happy all the time nor am I miserable all the time, things come and go and some of the time I’m actually present.

Ryan - You keep a pretty rigorous schedule, you just came back from Scotland and you’re going to Argentina next, is that correct?

Mike - Yes I go to Uruguay first then Argentina, yes.

Ryan – Holy cow, you’re all over the place.

Mike - Well you could say that too. All over the place could mean scattered or geographically moving – I would say both. Between now and the end of the year I’m very busy. I do about 33 or 34 courses a year.

Ryan – Golly, and they’re spread around geographically, so there’s some travel involved. I take it you must like travel.

Mike – No, I don’t but it gets me there. It gets me to meet a lot of nice people. The travel itself - I think I prefer that it should stay boring, I don’t need too much excitement when I’m flying, as long as it stays boring, then I’m ok.

Ryan – You’re mainly teaching your “Presence in Stillness” course at many of these locations, is that correct?

Mike - Yes, it gets called different things from time to time but the teaching that comes across depends on who is there basically; it depends on what the conversation is, put it that way.

What happens is, I spend a little time doing the thing that I don’t like, giving a lecture, giving a talk, painting a picture, laying down some kind of framework, but having done that, then the rest of the time it will be working more and more deeply, experientially, with the experience that comes out of doing what I have suggested.

Ryan Wonderful.

Mike – So I would say, if it’s a 4 day course, I spend the first morning talking. First afternoon I will do a demonstration, with a “volunteer”, “subject”, on the table of what I mean by doing nothing. Then the other 3 days will be about, in this context of Craniosacral Therapy , people going to the tables working for 45 minutes, coming back sharing that process out loud in the group, having a break, doing the whole thing all over again and my picking up on something that triggers in me as a result of something somebody has said, whenever I believe I can helpfully go a bit further into

it from my own life experience. Some key word comes up so I kind of divert and go with the keyword for a little while.

And another thing that can happen is that somebody has had a difficult experience on the table and I ask them if I can move a little closer and I move in and work with them in front of the group with my hands on. They won't be lying down, they will be sitting down somewhere, and I just go and sit beside them and get them more in touch with what's there in the present, not the awfulness of what's there in the past. It's part of the digestive process.

Ryan - and the whole class benefits from that I have found.

Mike - Without a doubt, I agree with you.

Ryan - So you are doing some teacher trainings as well

Yes I am, but I'm coming to the end of those I think. I am completing the second one in Spain and the first^t one in Italy. that's just the way it started. Each of them has 4 modules of 6 days, but when I finish those, I don't think I will do any more, because I am now feeling there is a certain artificiality about my thinking I can tell somebody when they are ready to teach. So I'll put something new in there, new for me, which will be a multi part course probably 21 days (could be 25) - 4, 4, 4, and 5 days. And it will be on personal growth basically. Still through the hands-on, hearing, holding, feminine principle, these kind of things but going through more or less steps, then, in the last segment of 5 days, 4 days will be in total silence and that will be a period when everything they've worked with will..... ..Well I don't know what it will do but that will be the real digestive period and then the last, the fifth day of that last one they can chat as much as they like.

Then from that, people may, because of the work they have done on themselves in this course, they may attract students..... if you attract students and people ask you to teach that is the time to teach. If you go out and get a certificate and plonk it on the wall and advertise that you're a teacher, I don't think that necessarily does it, not at this level that we are talking about.

Ryan – That's largely how your teaching has grown by organic request from people to come and share.

Mike - What are they going to teach; their life story not mine. I don't want anyone trying to teach my life story – it's mine thank you.

Ryan - Speaking of your life story, I want to ask you a couple of questions about your life so we can get to know you a little better, if you could go back in time, and mentor yourself or give yourself advice when you got into the therapeutic arts, how would you coach yourself, what advice would you give yourself if you could go back to that time? As you started quite late didn't you?

Mike - Yes I started around 40. In hindsight, I would probably say, because hindsight is a great thing, I am glad I didn't start at 20 – because I do believe - it depends on what you want to teach doesn't it. We've got to be careful with this, making sweeping statements, if you've got the right kind of brain and you want to teach arithmetic for example or most kinds of physics or certainly geography, you learn things you have data so you can produce that data in a way that student find acceptable. But we are not talking about data any longer. As we have already said in this conversation that it doesn't matter what the data says basically, it's the human development that we're talking about, the Spirit.

So to go back to your question, what would I advise myself – I don't know and I tell you why because I went in with great ambitions of how I was going to be a great healer and then I realised that was not what I was about, I can't heal anybody but, if I can present the conditions in which they can have the courage to make that journey towards being themselves, the journey, in Greek mythology that the heroes made to the bottom of the cave to get the treasure and bring it back to the surface, that treasure incidentally was peace, in my view, if they can bring that back to the surface that's fine but I can't do it for them.

If somebody has got a dislocated little finger I can get hold of it with my hand and give it a really good tug and push it back in again and they will holler like mad and in 2 or 3 days times the inflammation will die down and the pain will be gone, but that's not what we are talking about here. We are talking about deeper levels of pain; they have to do that by letting it go, by releasing it.

Ryan - That little demonstration brings up a question in my mind about science and science is so oriented around knowing and conceptualising but what we are talking about is oriented on kinda the other end of the spectrum. And I find myself sometimes wondering what to do with science how to have a healthy relationship with it because it seems to be like chasing rabbits so often in scientific land and I wonder if you have anything to say about science in work like ours.

Mike - only this; that some of my favourite reading for the last 40 years has been about science, the other half has been in mysticism; quite a lot of Eastern mysticism but not all of it by any means, as we have also Western mysticism, religions, philosophy and then we come to science.

Now some of the recent science, and I am not an academic and I don't want to be an academic and it's hopeless expecting me to produce reference numbers and quotes and dates and things like that, but there are people in science, from my point of view, probably from Einstein onwards and probably going back way before that if only I knew my books more, that are demonstrating that there is a mystical side to science.

I think Einstein was a mystic; the founder of osteopathy from which Craniosacral Therapy stemmed, was a mystic but they were mystics at a time when you had to be careful about saying you were a mystic because you were liable to get locked up.

But now science, I think, is exponentially coming incredibly quickly to meet mysticism, the two are converging. I feel that and I read that and just out of interest you could read some of the latest science of all the sciences which is Epigenetics which comes from biology. Biology seems to have taken over from physics, in the headlines, in being the science that people want to study at this moment. So I think it would probably be invidious in this talk to advertise specific people but if you look at biology and look at things like Epigenetics, they say a tremendous number of things that I am saying only very slightly masked but really is the same thing.

Ryan - Biology seems to speak very closely to our experience of ourselves even more so than physics.

Mike – Yes, and most of psychology, not all, there are some very beautiful exceptions, but most of psychology seems to be stuck in the knowing model and doesn't actually encourage the vulnerability of the practitioner, at least not in front of the client!

Ryan - Have you done much training in psychological work?

Mike – Yes, I started with counselling training, I think it was 3 years in basically the Jungian model it was Christian Jungian based. Then I went on and went into training analysis with a Jungian trainer, who happened to be head of training in the UK, a marvellous man, a lot happened in that 4 years, I think, I worked with him.

Ryan - You mentioned earlier that you have an interest not only in Eastern Mysticism but in Western Mysticism too. I'm wondering if you have any particular luminaries in that world that were helpful to you?

Mike – Yes, there's a string of people that I've been with who and been important in my life. It started actually with a Russian woman called Irena Tweedy who was a Sufi. She had been married to two English senior naval officers, not at the same time I rush to say. Then at a certain age her own journey took her to India a few times and she found a teacher and she studied with a Muslim who taught her Hinduism, then said, go home and teach Sufism – it's the way they work in some circles.

I came across her in rather bizarre circumstance and sat with her for a couple of years when she set up a little group in England, in London, and we sat in silence twice a week for a couple of hours, and that was it, It was very powerful. At a certain point she said to me I had to go off and study Tibetan Buddhism. She passed the buck right on again so these things go around.

So I'm beginning to send my students off to various different things to study, the great thing is, don't get attached to them. But, she was very important. There have been others some of them are dead, some were dead before I started following them - there have been many.

Ryan – well I have one kind of final question here meant to be kinda fun and help us to get to you a little better even. What did your childhood smell like?

Mike - what did it smell like? Oh boy..... Wet fur. I don't know where that came from – yes, dog fur.

I was the oldest of 3 boys and a girl and I remember ... oh yes, there was me my younger brother , the one next to me, and then there was my other brother in a pram and my sister wasn't born yet, yes that's right. We had this dog, a chow; yes the smell of his fur.

Nobody's ever asked me that question before. I'm going to have to look this up now in a book on psychology and see what that says about me.

Ryan - Sorry to send you back to therapy.

Mike – He's addicted to dog fur, oh boy.....!

Ryan – it could go all kinds of places with that. Well is there anything else Mike, that you would like to discuss or share with us before we begin to conclude our time together?

Mike - Thank you. In a sense I am trusting completely that your questions will have brought up something that's a little bit useful to your purpose or our purpose, however you want to put it, so no, otherwise I am getting back into this nervously making a speech business again, which I don't want to do but, I must say I have found this much more relaxing than, at the beginning when you first approached me, I thought it might be. So I just say to you from my perspective and it may be others', that if you're doing a sound interview, not a video, it is useful to have the other person, at the other end on the screen while you're doing it otherwise there's that awful syndrome of being up against a brick wall.

Ryan - I tend to feel that way as well but I have had a few people who have spent time with me on the programme who have preferred not to see me because they said they can focus better if we just had sound connection. They wanted to be there with their eyes closed just focusing on what they are hearing and what they were speaking - and not be distracted by looking at me I guess.

Mike - That's interesting as that's like the question people ask about meditation. "Do I meditate with eyes open or closed?" I don't have an answer to that for other people but I know I prefer to have them partly open because having them partly open limits what is coming at me to the objects that are in front of me. But having them closed means that every kind of fantasy you could possibly think of could come crowding in. I think that makes some sort of sense, at least it does for me.

Ryan - That little bit of visual stimulus can be an anchor to keep you present, I think. Everybody is different, all got our own process.

Well, I'm really glad you wanted a visual connection as it has been really nice to see you there in your office with all those books. You've got a great statue of the Buddha back there, that one there another one up there. I like wooden Buddha statues –

It's been wonderful to get to know you better. I really want to thank you for taking the time and sharing with us. So many people are going to pick up some very useful grounding points to kind of keep us on a good healthy, rich path with our lives and growing as therapists and in our lives.

Much gratitude to you Mike, it has been a pleasure.

Mike – Thank you very much indeed I have enjoyed meeting you and perhaps we may do it again. I don't mean this necessarily, I mean meet again.

Ryan – Well we could do this or maybe just meet.

So if people want to find more about you is www.stillness.co.uk the best place to go?

Mike – Yes, in general terms yes, but if they want to find more about the sort of thing you and I have been talking about today they could go to www.theemptychairteachingfoundation.com

Ryan - Wonderful. Great. So people can subscribe there?

Mike – yes subscribe but that doesn't mean money, they just put their email address in and a password.

Ryan – We didn't really talk about your book.

Mike – The Empty Chair. It's on Amazon

Ryan - So people can check it out there.

Mike - Yes, I am working on something else too.

Ryan – Oh really.

Mike – Yes, struggling.....

Ryan - It sounded like writing the Empty Chair was kind of an arduous process for you so you going to do it again?

Mike – Oh, this one's worse!

Ryan - Well everybody, be sure to check that out – I have not read it yet but it is in the mail so I'll check it out and I'll mention it again for the listeners in the future.

Mike - Thank you very much indeed.

Ryan - Wow that was one of the richest interviews I have had the pleasure of conducting for the podcast. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. I listened to the interview four times and got more out of it each time I listened to it.

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