

The Foundational Teachings of Richard's Work

"The greatest gift we can give is the purity of our attention."

Richard's teaching is exceptionally effective in helping you uncover and resolve self-limiting thinking that is diminishing your ability to live a fulfilling life or sabotaging your effectiveness in your chosen field of endeavor. His work stimulates a profound renewal of purpose and helps you liberate your creative power so that you can achieve your highest goals in whatever arena of life you want to invest your genius.

He is gifted in mentoring therapists, coaches, other helping professionals, as well as business people to take their work to a new depth and level of effectiveness. His work on relationship has helped hundreds of couples to appreciate their relationship as their spiritual path.

By guiding you to a timeless grounding in yourself, you discover a deeper motivation for what you want to live and dedicate your life to create. This new consecration to life acts like a spiritual rudder guiding you to steer your actions toward true gold and not be distracted by fear or the allure of ego embellishing behaviors. His teaching leads to an economy of action and the efficient use of your time because very quickly your body tells you when you are off course and you learn to continuously reconnect to your inner knowing and wisdom. He helps you become an inspiration to others and a teacher in your own right at whatever level life calls you toward.

The heart of his work is about presence and conscious relationships. Once you are solidly grounded in yourself, you become capable of profound relatedness with others. He believes it is the relational field created between awakening people that actualizes and transmits an evolutionary paradigm of consciousness that is essential to resolving the deep challenges of our time. To achieve this, his work has several Foundational Elements:

- **The Power of Awareness**
- **Focused-Spacious Awareness**
- **Ready-Relaxed Embodiment**
- **Energy Awareness**
- **The Mandala Approach to Presence and Emotional Clarity**
- **Differentiating Emotions from Feelings**
- **Transformation Through Threatening Feelings**
- **Working with Dreams**
- **Living an Evolutionary Relationship**

The Power of Awareness

Fundamental to all of Richard's work is what he calls "the power of awareness." To be aware of anything implies some a part of you that is larger or more universal than whatever you are aware of. You have thoughts, but (because you can be aware of them) you are more than just those thoughts. You have perceptions, sensations, feelings, emotions, internal imagery, but the aware part of you is more than any of these.

This means that awareness itself is a relationship. You can identify with your thinking and become the prisoners of your own beliefs and judgments or you can question every thought. You can identify with emotions like anger or guilt and lose yourself in them or feel them and know yourself as always more than any feeling. He teaches you to become a disciple of your feelings, and learn to transform yourself through your relationship with your feelings. No fear is greater than your capacity to be aware of that fear and choose some kind of constructive relationship with it. While there may always be the sensation of fear, ultimately you need never be the victims of it. The power of awareness means that you will forever keep transcending whoever or whatever you believe about yourself and everything else. Discovering the power of awareness is the heart of all his work. Awareness is the elixir of transformation.

Focused-Spacious Awareness

Meditation is a time honored practice which Richard has explored for over forty years. For him the art of meditation practice is to steadily strengthen your ability to focus your attention so that every inner and outer perception is vivid, while simultaneously letting your mind remain spacious. In this way you can precisely observe your thoughts, sensations, and feelings, and be very present to your environment, but something else always remains with you – a vastness of being, an open awareness – so that you do not become lost in your experience. This is the root of true equanimity.

Intellectually, the concepts focus and spacious are antithetical. But to the degree that they are simultaneous, it is a way of describing degrees of presence. When we speak of flow states in art, for example, the artist's mind is both focused and spacious. The creator, the creation and the space in which creation is taking place become one.

If you only focus, as we are trained to do in ordinary education, you tend to become narrow. You gain information, and with it immense power, but generally fail to develop a larger perspective in which to utilize that knowledge wisely. This is the problem with specialization in any area. For example in medicine, doctors become so focused on their specific area of expertise they fail to see their patients holistically and this can result in overmedication which is a very great risk to many people, especially the elderly. This same problem of focusing and narrowing causes you to let your attention collapse into your worries, which only amplifies them, and causes you to miss seeing other perspectives and opportunities.

On the other hand, if you are too spacious without sufficient focus, you are ungrounded and can easily "space out" and injure yourself or others. Spaciousness without focus is a mind that jumps

continuously from one thing to another – a form of attention deficit – and never slows down enough to really see what is happening and how to accomplish what really needs to be done.

In his work, Richard guides you in meditation practices expressly designed to help you develop focused-spacious awareness. As you become more proficient, you find yourself able to step back from identification with your thoughts and beliefs and find a new, grounded balance within yourself even at times of exceptional stress. He calls this building the “muscle of attention.”

Ready-Relaxed Embodiment

For Richard, meditation is not only a practice for the mind; it is a practice for the body. Deep learning always involves the body or it is merely the acquisition of information that does not truly translate into wisdom. What you know in your body, you truly know.

For this reason body-centered activities involving movement, voice, breathing practices, strength-building, flexibility, and overall fluidity of motion – as well as having fun – are basic to his teaching. But it is not just moving the body, but the quality of presence in the body, which Richard teaches. This he terms “embodied awareness.”

Embodied awareness has the dual quality of both being ready and relaxed simultaneously. It is the ability to spring into action like a lioness stalking its prey, while simultaneously being completely without tension. An experienced surfer, for example, is completely awake and ready in every fiber of his/her body, yet fully relaxed. If there is tension or if he is not fully ready, he will fall. To be simultaneously ready-relaxed is a deep experience of being in the Now. All great athletes know this, but few understand that it can be lived at all times.

For most of us our bodies are just extensions of our ego-driven self-images. We train our bodies to perform as our egos demand – run marathons, impose strict diets, even compete at Olympic levels – but even sublime athleticism often is a limited depth of embodiment. Training the body is not learning who you really are through a deep surrender into the body. Sports and exercise can give you skills and a sense of wellbeing, but you should not confuse this with deep embodied awareness. Most people pass through life rarely enjoying heightened sensual aliveness because as soon as there is a threatening feeling they flee from their embodied awareness into thinking and become consumed by the emotions generated by their thoughts.

Richard first discovered deep flow states in athletics, particularly when he was a rock-climber, and taught himself to enter this state in dancing, skiing, walking, and in ordinary daily activities. Then he used the same understanding to enter his body whenever life brought him into deep unknowing and intense fear. This is when he really gained appreciation of the wisdom of the body.

Ready-relaxed embodiment is meditation as lived in the body. You learn how to listen into each moment with your body, not escape feeling. You acquire the ability to gently breathe into any feeling or sensation no matter how threatening without becoming tense and closing down. It is a way of developing profound sensitivity without being overwhelmed. New understanding and integration occur spontaneously without thinking. It is in the mysterious depths of your own embodiment that you regain contact with your natural intelligence.

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Energy Awareness

A human being has many kinds and levels of energy fields. The physical body has an electromagnetic field which can be measured, for example with an electrocardiogram that tells a doctor if the heart is healthy or has sustained damage. When Richard had his awakening, he became able to feel subtle energies in his own body and could feel the energy field of others – humans and animals. By sensing the field he could tell where there was active disease or even older injuries, as well as evaluate the depth of embodiment of the individual.

Richard does not try to teach you how to sense energy for diagnostic purposes, but he does teach you that by actively changing the focus of your attention you can create a strong energy shift that others can sometimes feel. He calls this practice “Sacred Attention.” It involves intending to enter an intensified state of focused-spacious awareness with another. In this practice the focus is on your breath and the visualization of energy flowing through you to the other person. The spaciousness comes by imagining your whole being opening as receptively as possible to Limitless love or God’s infinite love, whatever represents to you a transcendental dimension of wholeness and love. This “split” attention – like two poles of a magnet – creates an energetic field that is transmitted through your hands, through your gaze, and actually radiates from your whole being. Often what is felt, both by you when you are the person actively sharing the practice as well as when you are the individual receiving it, are sensations like warmth or heat, tingling or pressure, but as well it is usually a sense of love.

In Richard’s work, the importance of learning to induce an amplified energetic field through a conscious shift of attention is not particularly about healing. Rather, it is about experiencing that your consciousness influences the consciousness of another. The affect is strongest with those who are nearest, but ultimately what this practice teaches is that you are always influencing the state of consciousness of everyone else by the quality of your presence and attention. Whether we know it or not, we are “our brother’s keepers.”

For Richard deepening in consciousness is the obligation of every person and the most important form of service you can offer the world. Richard calls this dynamic, “The I That Is We” which was the title of his first book.

The Mandala Work for Presence and Emotional Clarity

The Mandala of Being model and methodology for transformation is the synthesis of all of Richard’s teaching and his greatest achievement. It is the foundational practice that he teaches to show you how to live more consistently in the Now and free yourself of emotional suffering. Richard teaches that who you really are begins Now, not when you were born, not when some trauma or blessed event happened to you. Your life begins anew in each moment according to the purity of your attention.

The Mandala model clearly shows that when you are not present – when you lose connection to embodied awareness – there are only 4 places your attention can take you: into thoughts about

the Past, the Future, Yourself (Me), or Others (You). The model explains that emotional reality (your psychological state) is the result of which of these places your mind move into, and the specific thoughts (stories) you tell yourself at each position.

The Mandala of Being simplifies the complexity of the psychological world by showing you that you create your emotional reality with your thinking, moment by moment, and not because of what someone else has said or done, nor anything that happened in the past or may happen in the future. This means you can completely transform your emotional reality by learning to recognize the stories you are telling yourself as they arise in your consciousness, and rather than identifying with them use the power of your awareness to return your attention to the Now.

The Mandala approach provides a simple, but powerful method of self-inquiry that shows you how to come home to embodied awareness. Once you learn to recognize where your mind has carried you and the stories you are telling yourself, you can then take the step of feeling the emotional and energetic consequences of those stories. You feel how your judgments and beliefs can poison you with negative emotions. Then you have a choice to stay in the toxicity of those stories, or to return your attention to the present and regain connection to clarity and well-being.

Differentiating Emotions from Feelings

For Richard, feeling is a mode of consciousness distinct from thinking. Feeling gives us information in the present moment in the body. Our feeling state is in constant flux, like weather. This information can come from within our bodies (one example is hormonal influences) or from the larger environment (examples are weather changes or the effect of the emotional milieu of people around us). Some feelings are delicious, even ecstatic, and others are so abysmal that they can be psychologically destabilizing. Most of us have been unconsciously running away from either the ecstatic feelings or the threatening ones since our childhoods because both are overwhelming to our egos.

In his teaching, Richard makes an important distinction between emotions and feelings. Emotions are sensations inevitably created by thoughts (or images that generate thoughts). For example, if you think, "I am unlovable," that thought instantaneously might make you sad. If you return you attention to the Now and release that thought, the sadness will vanished. Feelings, on the other hand, are bodily responses to many sources of stimulation, but not necessarily from thinking. Often you will have no idea why you are feeling what you are feeling and if you don't transform the feeling into an emotion by judging it or rejecting it, the feeling will keep flowing. To feel in this fluid way is part of our deeper intelligence, whereas thought generated emotions are what blind us to a deeper connection to ourselves and to others.

Richard believes that overwhelming feelings have chased us out of our embodied awareness and into desperate thinking since we were old enough to have egos and to think. It is our desperate thinking and the powerful emotions that result from such thinking which actually act as a defense against having a conscious relationship with our feelings. The ego chooses, through its judgments and beliefs, to create emotional suffering rather than face feelings whose source it does not understand. Paradoxically, the emotional suffering created by thinking is generally far worse than even the most abysmal feeling once you learn how to create a space within yourself to work with those feelings.

Transformation Through Threatening Feelings

Richard teaches that transformation is often initiated by the ability to consciously face difficult feelings in a new and creative way each time they are present. This means learning to bring a focused-spacious awareness to these feelings in the Now. He teaches you to practice entering a feeling no matter how threatening and miserably familiar it may seem, as if it were for the first time. You must ignore your ego when it says you have felt this feeling before. You must learn not to let yourself be chased into thinking and instead stay in ready-relaxation with the feeling.

In this work healing of psychological problems and wounds comes through the body and through the quality of attention we bring to what we are feeling, not through thinking. By learning to enter the fears with a ready-relaxed embodiment you gradually learn to create a space within yourself that is larger than any fear. When you can do so, you no longer need your psychological defenses and they fall away leaving you naturally capable of spontaneity, authenticity, and forgiveness. It is a slow and challenging work, but there are no shortcuts, no magic bullets to escape doing this essential work in yourself.

Working with Dreams

One of the true wonders of our consciousness, as Richard points out, is that the psyche is always working to restore our psychological health. The inner teacher speaks to us and it does this primarily through dreams. Dreams invite us to see and feel what our waking egos blind us to about ourselves.

Richard's approach to dream interpretation is, as with all his work, rooted in present moment awareness. He asks the question: If I hadn't had this dream what would I not be aware of? Then he guides you to listen in your body. What sensations does the dream generate, what emotions, what feelings? What other images and associations spontaneously arise from sitting with the dream? Does this dream relate to other dreams you have had? He appreciates that many dreams are very mysterious and filled with symbolic richness, but avoids being overly interpretive and intellectual. You learn to consider dreams as coded stories that are helping you become conscious and listen to them with your whole being: mind and body. You re-experience them in the Now and see what this brings to consciousness in you.

Richard believes that the invitation of a dream is often to take you down into the feelings that psyche needs you to recognize and learn to consciously allow. When this is done the insights you gain from your dreams guide you steadily towards psychological health and a new and fulfilling course in your life. He also teaches that it is not a question of having a "correct" dream interpretation, but rather – as with everything you bring your attention to – the process of contemplating a dream is a co-creation. There is the dream and your consideration of it and in this relationship you are inventing or imagining your own meanings based on all that you have lived and grown to understand in your life. In dream work you are inventing your own psychological path that grows from the accumulation of all of your life experience, just as pioneers like Freud and Jung did. For Richard dream work is an art of self-creation; you literally are learning to be your own teacher and create your own psycho-spiritual path.

Living an Evolutionary Relationship

In Richard's teaching personal transformation or any consciousness path is never an end in itself; our individual transformation is always inseparable from and ultimately in service to the transformation of others. Spiritual practice are not about achieving personal enlightenment, but about being able to live a deep, mindful, profoundly intimate relationship with others. To serve life is to cease the kind of fear-based self-interest that corrupts so much of human affairs and kills love in so many relationships.

A relationship is a spiritual path. You can chose to live your relationship as an evolutionary adventure, a rich and challenging opportunity to understand and embody the wisdom of the Feminine and root out the limiting and love-destroying influences in their psyches of millennia of Patriarchal rule and psychology.

The relationship is a tangible presence that you listen to as your guide for learning how to set aside self-protection and self-involvement so that your relationship can thrive. Consciously inviting deep vulnerability, asking the question: What does the relationship want? This question and the change of perspective and inner listening that it brings becomes a guiding light for your path.

“Consecrated Conversation,” is a precise, ritualized form of dialogue that is an essential practice for enriching intimacy and particularly for allowing very difficult shadow material to be brought into the relationship in a healing way.

The emanation of the awakening couple is the consciousness field that more than anything else will transmit a new paradigm for spiritual development in our world.