

THE KEYS TO INNER WISDOM

A HIGHER SELF GUIDES CONVERSATION
WITH **PETER RUSSELL**

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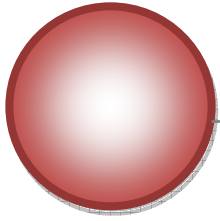
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A Higher Self Guides Conversation with Peter Russell

Matthew Joyce: Good day and welcome to a Higher Self Guides conversation. I'm your host, Matthew Joyce and today we have the pleasure of speaking with Peter Russell.

Peter is a visionary thinker, a spiritual teacher and a popular author and public speaker. It's amazing how down to earth Peter is when you consider the impressive accomplishments that he claims on his resume. For instance Peter is an academic scholar with post graduate degrees in computer science and the psychophysiology of meditation. He's a business man with a long list of corporate clients who have hired him to develop programs on issues ranging from stress management to sustainable environmental practices. But he's also a Renaissance Man who is sufficiently versed in Indian philosophy to have translated into English the 25000 year old Upanishads, a classic Vedic text that is considered to be among the most influential books ever written.

Peter is a prolific author, having written 10 books and produced three films on consciousness and spiritual awakening, and their role in the future development of humanity Among his better known works are *A Global Brain*, *From Science to God* and *Waking Up in Time*. And let me just close Peter's introductory biography by saying that he's also a spiritual teacher and trainer who holds workshops at The Monroe Institute and in the San Francisco Bay area.

Our conversation today is going to consist of three parts. We're going to spend a little bit of time getting to know Peter as a person, and then we'll be discussing some of the big picture trends in the realms of consciousness and spirituality that are happening in the world today. And then finally we'll be focusing on what you can do to participate in these changes as you pursue your own spiritual path.

So with that, welcome Peter and thanks for joining me today.

Peter Russell: It's lovely to be with you Matthew.

Getting to Know Peter

MJ: One of the things I like to do in these interviews is to give people a chance to get to know you as a person. Perhaps our listeners have read your books. Maybe they've heard one of your lectures or attended a workshop with you. But I thought you might tell us a little about when you were a child. What did you want to be when you grew up?

PR: I always wanted to be a scientist of some sort. What I can recall is that I had this idea of being a research chemist. I'm not sure that I knew what it was about when I was 7 or 8 years old or 9 years old but I had this idea – probably because I was playing around with chemistry – that was my introduction with science, was playing around with chemistry sets and things. And as I moved on into high school I really enjoyed chemistry. That was my first vision. I was going to become a research chemist. It was some sort of glamorous career. And then when I went into university it went more into seeing myself as an academic physicist, mathematician, something like that, but it was always in the scientific realm. I always saw that.

MJ: I know that science plays a big part in your work to this day but you've got a parallel track that has to do with spirituality. How did that develop?

PR: That really came when I was at university. That's when it blossomed. I can see now looking back that it was always there. I wasn't interested in religion. In fact, I'd rejected religion right around the time I went through the process of confirmation. I realized that I couldn't believe any of that stuff they were saying. It didn't agree with my scientific world view. So I rejected religion, but I was still interested in the human mind.

In my 3rd year of doing mathematics and theoretical physics I realized that mathematics wasn't going to answer the questions I was really fascinated with – which were to do with the mind and the fundamental question of why we have a mind - why is there consciousness in the universe and that then led me into looking at meditation. I realized there were many people throughout the world – throughout cultures who had explored the mind first hand by looking at meditation and exploring the whole nature of the Self. So I started doing my own parallel studies into this area.

Then I changed from physics to psychology, and finished my degree in experimental psychology studying the brain, thinking that that would help me understand consciousness. It didn't. I understand a lot more about the brain and how the brain works and how the brain processes information. But no one was really interested in consciousness. That was the beginning and then from there I got more and more interested in meditation and lots of things.

Discovering the Root Cause

MJ: Now I understand from our earlier conversations that at some point your life took a turn and you took a trip to India when you were a young man. Can you tell us a little bit about how that trip came about and what some of the results were?

"The problems we see in the world are all symptoms of a root cause. They're all symptoms of our thinking."

"A skeptic isn't a cynic or disbeliever. It means I'm not going to believe in that until I understand it and see a reason to believe in it."

PR: Yes, that came after I finished my undergraduate degree. I realized the only way to really study meditation properly was to go to the source. I had been invited out by the Maharishi to go to his Ashram. I was doing transcendental meditation at the time. So I went out to Rishikesh in India and lived in the ashram there studying meditation in depth, doing long deep meditations and really studying the whole philosophy behind it.

I think the key change there was realizing that behind all the problems we see in the world today, they all come back in one way or another to human consciousness. By which I mean human thinking, human values, human decision making, human self-centeredness, human short-sightedness. But the human element was there whatever the problems were – economic or environmental problems, social problems, even personal problems. What we tended to do the whole time was to deal with the problem out there.

I realized that is just the symptom of the problem. If we see something going wrong in the environment that is a symptom of our wrong thinking. But we don't look to the root cause. We don't look back to what it is in our thinking that's wrong. We try and mend what's happening in the world. So we're dealing with the symptoms the whole time. And you know, if a person had a stomachache and you just started giving him pain relievers, you're not going to deal with the root cause. What is the root cause? And I realized the root cause was basically a psychological cause. Or you could say a spiritual cause.

Since I came back from India my life has been about focusing on that in one way or another – looking behind the problem – what is it in ourselves that is behind the problem and how can we change that? Because very often it's our self-centeredness, our short-sightedness, whatever it is, not willing to give up comforts – that actually stops us solving the problem as well. That's really been my focus in one way or another.

MJ: And in that coming together it seems you're combining your interest in science and spirituality because both of those are ways that you can dig into and explore aspects of those issues.

PR: Yes. I think my interest in science has been very important. I am fascinated by what's happening in many different areas – whether its physics, astronomy or medicine. I also think having scientific training has been very important because it means I don't just take things on belief. Someone will say I want to know what the evidence for this? Does this make sense? Does it fit in with my own personal worldview? I want to test this. So I've had a healthy skepticism to spirituality. A skeptic isn't a cynic or disbeliever as some people think. It means I'm not going to say "I believe in that" until I really understand it and see a reason to believe in it.

I think that's been very healthy. I think I get a lot of respect for that in the world. People like that as opposed to so many people who just take things on board because somebody said it or they read it in a book and they think it must be true. So I really question things.

But also I did research in meditation looking scientifically at meditation – how does meditation work and I've always been fascinated by that. And by the brain and how we perceive – how we construct our experience of reality because I think that is a very important part of the spiritual work – shifting how we see things. Not so much how we physically see things, but how we interpret things – how we judge things – how we make sense of things – what value we put on things. Too often we think things are the way they are. But by understanding the brain and understanding our minds better we can see how we are continually, in a sense, adding or creating with our experience.

As for my love of physics, I played around a lot with looking at things such as light and parallels between light and consciousness. The whole paradigm that we are in now. Looking at the scientific paradigm, why we are caught up in this materialistic worldview that believes the ultimate nature of the world is matter, whereas most spiritual teachings say consciousness is fundamental. So there's this huge schism between spirituality and physics. Science usually thinks that it's got it right and that spirituality is wrong. But I am interested in a real coming together of those two views and I think that is possible these days.

MJ: And that sets up beautifully the next part of our conversation. Thank you, Peter. You've really foreshadowed some of the things that I wanted to talk about, especially as we move into the big picture.

The Coming Paradigm Shift and What It Means

MJ: You were talking about the root causes of the issues that we're dealing with today in the world today and how it all comes back to consciousness. You talked about beginning to investigate how we construct reality and how we can shift those perceptions. And you talked about looking for evidence of these things as they are occurring in our world.

Let's examine a bit more closely the big picture of what's happening in the world today. I'd like to look at two aspects of that. One is what you began to talk about, which was this paradigm shift as we're beginning to move from the materialistic and scientific point of view and some new things are emerging. So can you tell us about this paradigm shift that's occurring.

PR: It's something I often call the super-paradigm because it's a paradigm of paradigms. Just to remind people, a paradigm in science is the basic model behind any area of science. The basic theory that

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"Even if we are living in The Matrix and everything is being fed to us, we can't doubt that we're experiencing something."

underlies it. So in biology the basic paradigm has to do with DNA and RNA. People are working to understanding how DNA and RNA work. In physics you could say quantum physics is the paradigm. The theory of relativity is a paradigm. It's the basic super theory within which individual theories live. And what I call the super paradigm is the much later paradigm in which all of science – physics, biology, astronomy – all of science does its work.

And that paradigm says that the fundamental nature of the physical world is matter. It's material in nature. And in that sense it is considered dead unconscious matter.

Very few people in science question that paradigm these days. But as with all paradigms, there are things that can't be solved within the paradigm. The classic case was the old paradigm of the earth being the centre of the universe, which couldn't explain the movement of the planets. So Copernicus came up with the idea that maybe the earth is revolving around the sun. And even though that was heresy at the time, he questioned the fundamental assumption.

The problem that's coming up today with the material paradigm is that it explains everything pretty well except for the fact that we are conscious – that we have experiences – that we have an inner world of thoughts, feelings and things like imagination. There is absolutely nothing in the scientific worldview that says that the dead inanimate matter that constitutes brain cells should ever give rise to an experience. According to modern physics all that activity in the brain should be going on in the dark, without any experience arising. And nobody can explain that. Various theories have been put forth, but always they come up against this problem of how on earth does unconscious matter ever give rise to an inner experience?

MJ: That's a fairly large hole in the paradigm.

PR: It's a huge, huge hole because in a sense the only thing we know with absolute certainty is that we are experiencing beings. We can doubt any aspect of our experience, as if we were living in The Matrix and experiences are just being fed to us. Perhaps there is not even a real world. But I couldn't doubt that I was experiencing something. And that's the one thing we really cannot explain. So it's a huge anomaly, and science is doing what it always does when it comes up with against an anomaly; it tries to explain it within the existing worldview. Some people look to quantum physics. Others look to information theory or biochemistry. But there's always this problem of how does matter give rise to experience.

A Continuum of Consciousness

PR: Now what I've been doing and what a growing number of people have been doing is questioning the fundamental assumption that matter is not conscious. And what I believe now is that there is not a line in which consciousness appears. We know other animals are conscious and that they experience. We see dogs seeming to dream at night. We know they feel pain and I think that's true of other animals as well. So, where do you draw the line? Spiders or ants or bacteria? I think everything has an inner aspect. I don't mean to say an ant thinks and feels like we do. But there is an inner model of its world. There is a subjective experience. It might be something on the order of light intensity. It might be a billionth of the intensity of our consciousness. But there's something there. It isn't completely unconscious.

When you take that view that consciousness and awareness is always there then this problem of how dead inner matter gives rise to experience dissolves because, what's happened is, as life has become more complex so the inner life has gotten much richer and more structured. Until we have the magnificent rich consciousness that we humans experience. It's always been there.

MJ: I want to go back for one second for our listeners. It's one thing to talk about living things like ants or bacteria. But you're making a jump that I want to be sure that our listeners are following, which is that you are extending the notion of consciousness to what science would consider non-living matter.

PR: Yes. And that's the leap. Where science normally draws a line as to the existence of consciousness is with the nervous system. Science would say as soon as the nervous system evolves you have consciousness. The nervous system gives rise to experience. If you go back further and say that a bacterium has some inner light, but a virus doesn't, then you have to explain this magical step. And I think as soon as you draw any line you come up against this problem.

What we have to do is say there is no line. Let's say that the consciousness of the bacterium is on the order of a billionth of ours, and the consciousness of a virus is much less still. Still, there is never a point where that inner light is completely extinguished. It's hard to make sense of this because we are so rooted in the idea that the ultimate nature of matter must be insentient. But if we accept that there's something there, say very faint but there's something all the way down. So I am saying that ultimately there is an inner aspect to matter. That doesn't mean that rocks think or feel or have experiences anything like we do. But they are not absolutely, completely absolutely dead.

"When you say conscious awareness is always there, then the problem of how dead matter gives rise to experience dissolves. It's always there, but it becomes more complex."

"In time the old split between religion and science will soften and we'll see they are two ways of looking at exactly the same thing."

MJ: Now it seems to me that while science is wrestling with some of these issues, the spiritual path has wrestled with them as well, and they've come to different conclusions about that.

PR: Most spiritual teachings or metaphysical teachings are actually positive that consciousness is fundamental to the cosmos. That the cosmos is spiritual in nature. They talk about the Great Spirit or the Divine Being that emanates everything. So they are coming to a similar conclusion but they are coming at it as an article of faith. I'm seeing it more as a sort of argument within science for a new way of looking at science which actually makes more sense of why there is consciousness in the universe.

So I think what's happening here is that as this new model begins to evolve, the old split between religion and science begins to soften. And ultimately we will see that there are actually two different ways of looking at exactly the same thing.

MJ: Now one of the things you mentioned earlier is that your scientific mind likes to look for evidence. What evidence can you point to that this is happening?

PR: I think over the last 10 years or so there has been a lot of growing interest in this view. The technical philosophical term is Panpsychism. Pan means all and psyche means mind. So it means there is mind in everything. And now you do find that there are many different philosophical views. But Panpsychism is now considered a respectable view that people talk about at conferences on science and consciousness or philosophy. People speak about it; people debate about it; people argue about it. Not everybody accepts it, but it's reached that stage of being respectable. So it's actually gaining quite a lot of ground.

Why the Pace of Change Is Ever Increasing

MJ: Let me see if we can bring a couple of things together here as we think about the current state of the world. We're talking about science and spirituality and how those things are coming together. But we also have some other changes taking place in our world. We're seeing ever increasing changes in developments in technology and communications. And we're seeing increasing changes in our social norms and what's happening with our environment. So do you think there's a pattern with this acceleration of change, and does that apply to this paradigm shift that we're talking about?

PR: Yes, yes, I think it does. I think everything is accelerating, and I also believe this is a natural part of evolution. It's not just a contemporary thing. I think so much of our development is accelerating. The pace of life has been speeding up throughout the

history of life on earth. It took billions of years for cells and bacteria to evolve. Mammals took tens of millions of years. Human beings took a million years, and then we look at human society and civilization which was just 10,000 years ago; the industrial revolution 500 years ago; the information revolution less than 50 years. This speeding up is an evitable part of evolution. We're moving into a future where things are going faster and faster. This speeding up is an evitable part of evolution. And we're seeing it now in terms of just how fast things are developing with the internet, with biotechnology and other technologies.

I think the same thing is happening in terms of our inner awakening. Just look at so much that has shifted since the 1960s. I would say this interest in spirituality began then and it's been changing more and more rapidly. More and more people are becoming interested in it. I think that's also affecting how we see the world. So as we begin to shift our consciousness as individuals I think we begin to look at the world in new ways, and that helps us to let go of the old paradigms. I think this underlying shift in values is actually affecting the way we look at the world. So this new way of seeing science in terms of the world not consisting of dead matter but being fundamentally alive will be approaching a mainstream view within the next 10 to 20 years.

MJ: That would make sense because we keep building on the progress of those who've come before us.

PR: Exactly! And that's why it keeps speeding up. I mentioned how fast the information revolution is happening. One of the reasons that can happen so fast is because we had the industrial revolution 200 years ago where we developed the technology to make things in factories and we could design and produce things in large quantities. So when we began to design computers or cellular phones, we didn't have to recreate the knowledge about how to produce factories, we just plugged it into that and now we have moved very quickly to the idea of global distribution. All of it feeds itself and so things just keep on speeding up.

But another reason things speed up is because we're going from manipulating matter to a subtler level and this is something that Buckminster Fuller, the architect inventor called ephemerization. We move to doing more and more with less and less energy. I think that also allows things to go faster and faster.

Future Breakdown or Breakthrough

MJ: Now most of the changes that we've been talking about so far are very exciting and generally very positive. But we've also got some negative things that seem to be increasing as well. There are economic issues, political tensions and things of that nature. So while technology or spirituality may be headed for a positive breakthrough, some of these

"Change happens ever faster because it builds on those who have come before us. The same thing is happening with our spiritual development."

"Our culture says if you aren't happy or at peace you have to do something about it. This is what keeps us on the treadmill chasing after possessions and manipulating the world."

other things look like they're headed for a breakdown. How do you reconcile those two things?

PR: I think that they are actually quite closely connected. The breakdown partly is a result of our rapid technological industrial growth. Look at the environment, climate change, pollution, resource depletion. We are consuming so much faster and creating pollution and waste products so much faster that the planet cannot cope. I mean the planet could cope with rising CO2 levels if we gave it 10,000 years to recover. But we're not. We're just pumping more and more and more. So the environmental crisis is very much a result of that accelerated change. And a lot of this comes back to our consciousness.

As I said earlier, I think the root cause of so many things is how we look at the world and what our basic operating principal is. And I think today our culture is stuck in a belief system that says if you're not happy or at peace, or if you're not feeling okay you have to do something about it. Get something, achieve something, go somewhere, get some new experience. It's encouraging us to do things and to consume things. As people sometimes say, we've become human doings and human havings rather than human beings.

That's one of the forces that's causing us to abuse the environment. I would say that mode of thinking is the unawake, the unenlightened mode of consciousness that says how I feel inside depends on what I have and what I do. This keeps us on this treadmill of chasing after possessions and chasing after getting other people to behave the way we want them to behave. I think this is why the crisis is coming so fast.

We've been heading towards this crisis point probably since humanity began. As soon as we started making tools and manipulating the world we were heading in this direction. As our technology has gotten better and more efficient and there have been many more of us, we have been accelerating towards this point of breakdown. The only way through it ultimately is through the breakthrough in consciousness. It's all pointing out to us that our consciousness has got to change.

MJ: That's right.

PR: You mentioned the economic crisis. I think one of the good things about this economic crisis is that it's becoming clear that the reason behind it is human consciousness. We all talk about human greed, human self-centeredness and people trying to make a quick 10 million bucks. But it's clear now that human consciousness is behind the crisis. Before it wasn't so clear. But now it's becoming clear. So that becomes a push for us to begin to change. We're not doing it en masse yet, but the more we see the breakdown as a reflection of our limited consciousness, the more we will become aware of the impetus to shift consciousness, to wake up, and to make that breakthrough of awakening.

So I see the two are connected. It's a lack of awakening that's led us to this crisis point. And hopefully because the awakening is now coming about there's a global transition happening that is speeding up. My hope is that we will begin to develop the wisdom and compassion and understanding to steer ourselves through this crisis and not be wiped out by it.

MJ: I was writing the movie script, I'd say we're getting to the exciting part of the story because now it's a question: Will our heroes (meaning the human race) make it through this time or not? We've got this major crisis, but we also have this wonderful opportunity right in front of us to take that chance and to have that spiritual awakening.

Where to Find Evidence of Spiritual Awakening

MJ: So can you tell us where you see that spiritual awakening happening in the world today? What evidence do you see for hope and for moving forward?

PR: I see a number of things. First of all we just have to look to the growing interest in this area. I mean there's something on the order of 22 million yoga practitioners in the United States today, and I think it was five years ago there were only 15 million. The number of people becoming interested in self development, in meditation, in various spiritual practices wasn't there 20 years ago.

Forty years ago when I started looking at this there were hardly any books on the subject. Now you see whole bookstores being devoted in one way or another to self development and to the awakening of consciousness. So it's becoming mainstream in our society. The largest sector of book publishing today is what they call the mind body spirit list, which is about self development.

I see more and more corporations beginning to become interested in teaching meditation and other self-improvement practices. When I started doing corporate work back in the late 70's and through the 80's companies were very secretive. I was actually made to promise I would never tell anybody that I was doing something like teaching meditation in these corporate settings. That was the last thing they wanted anybody to hear. They thought it was valuable but they didn't want anybody to know they were doing it. Now it's the opposite and they are almost proud to say 'we give our employees time to reflect and to be quiet. It's become a positive thing for the company. So that's a very big change.

I also see something that's not normally noticed when I look at the way teenagers and people in their early 20's are thinking about their values and their concern for things. They have a wisdom that we never had when I was that age. I used to think I was pretty hip when I was that age and probably compared to how people were then I was. But now people have moved on so much and it's not because the kids are any different. It's our

"Whatever situation you are in, realize you have a choice. You can get caught up in it or you can step back into a state of being at ease."

whole culture that has moved on in the wisdom and the way we see things. That to me is an interesting mark because we can look back and see how we were as kids and realize things are changing in the world. So it's not a rapid thing, but it's a growing groundswell. And even things you'll notice that Time magazine will have a special edition on healing or meditation shows again that it's becoming more mainstream.

The Importance of December 21, 2012

"The crisis is coming upon us, and it's an opportunity for change, renewal and looking at things differently."

MJ: One thing we often hear people talking about in terms of spiritual awakening is the date December 21, 2012. Can you tell us a bit about the significance or insignificance of that date?

PR: Oh yes. My view would be that this specific date is insignificant. I think a lot of fuss is made around that date. That date really comes from the fact that the Mayan calendar completes its 5,000 year cycle on 21 December 2012. And some people think that's the end of the world. It just completes a cycle and then it will begin again. That's all.

I think that prophesying that the ending of the calendar would be a time of crisis and transformation and renewal might be useful, but that doesn't mean that date in particular will be a time of transformation.

When they talk about the ending of that cycle they are probably referring to a time of transformation and renewal. I think many cultures and many people have pointed to this fact that we are coming up against a time of crisis when this old materialistic way will be really threatening our continued existence. Then there will be this real awakening of consciousness. Many people have pointed to this time.

I see 2012 not as a date that's important but as a moment of underlying recognition that we are meeting the consequences of our misguided way of doing things in the world. The crisis is coming upon us, and, as with any crisis, it is an opportunity for change, renewal and for looking at things differently.

So I see 2012 as a symbol for the time we're going through. I think it's clear now to many people that the first two decades of this century are critical. If we haven't changed by the year 2020 we're in deep doo doo. We really are. If we haven't really come to grips with climate change and resource depletion and the use of energy and the water problem we are really in trouble. So what happens in the next decade is really very critical. I think we're going to see more and more crisis but also more and more opportunities to change.

How to Wake Up in Time

MJ: We've talked before about *Waking up in Time*. Can you tell our readers about what it means to wake up fully both as a species and as individuals?

PR: *Waking Up in Time* applies to one of my books. And there's a double meaning there. One meaning is, can we wake up in time to save ourselves as a species? But also it's about waking up to the present and waking up out of being caught in our dreams of the future and our worries about the past.

So much of our thinking, as many people have pointed out, keeps us trapped in the past or the future. In fact most of our thinking when you look at it is really about the past or the future. As soon as we're thinking in that way we're not in touch with the present. So one aspect of waking up is becoming fully present, which means actually being aware of your experiences in this moment, rather than being caught up in thinking about what might be happening in the future.

Most teachings talk of that as a state of liberation and freedom. So much of our thinking keeps us trapped in the feeling that things aren't the way we want them to be. We start getting so caught up in our desires and wanting things to be different that we actually create discontent for ourselves the whole time. And that's where we come into this mental paradigm I talked about earlier.

When we feel discontent we then start looking out in the world to see how we can ease that discontent out there. What all the great spiritual teachings have been pointing to in one way or another is that the mind in its natural state or what I call the natural mind is not troubled by worries or hopes or desiring or grievances or judgments. The mind in its natural state is at ease. It is content. It's only when there's something missing that we fall into discontent.

So instead of having to look for something to make us happy we have to cease the creating of discontent and just allow the mind to settle down to become quiet. Then we find that inner ease that's always there but that gets overshadowed by all our thinking and our worry.

Another aspect of waking up is recognizing that what we're looking for is actually our own nature which we've lost because we've been looking in the wrong direction. We're so busy looking, and all the tension associated with the looking stops us from being aware of ourselves of that inner contentment, ease and deep sense of love that's there inside ourselves. So that's the essence of waking up.

And the consequence of waking up is that we are not so driven by these created needs. If you're feeling okay in yourself you don't have to go out so much and prove who you are to other people. If you're feeling content in

"One aspect of waking up is becoming fully present and actually being aware of your experiences in this moment."

yourself and you know who you are, then that whole motivation drops out and you're not chasing after things so much. So it really frees us from a lot of that egocentric misguided activity.

That's how I would describe the essence of the waking up process.

Three Steps for Your Own Awakening

"The first stage is to turn our attention inward and begin to observe ourselves and notice how we function."

MJ: You are setting things up beautifully for our third section which is about getting practical. One of the things that I really enjoy about my conversations with you Peter is that you're not only a scholar and visionary thinker who looks at that big picture, but you're also a practitioner. Now the conversation has shifted from talking about that big picture to talking about the practical steps that people can implement in their own lives. So while recognizing that people have different backgrounds and goals, can you talk to our audience from your own experience about what three important things people can do or focus on spiritually to take that next practical step?

PR: One is recognizing what is going on inside your mind. I've talked about getting caught in grievances or judgments or wanting things. So often this happens without us noticing it. We are unconscious of our own minds. So I think one of the first things that I've always found really important is to recognize what's going on with my feelings. You know very simple things like I just stop and see how I am feeling right now. Am I feeling joy or am I feeling peeved at something? Am I feeling angry or am I feeling frustrated or am I feeling excited? And I begin to recognize what's going on in my internal state because our whole culture focuses outside of the self.

So the first stage is to begin to turn our attention inward and begin to observe ourselves and notice how we function. That's the first stage.

The second stage is learning how to quiet that thinking when we are feeling frustrated, for example. How can we actually manage to step out of it? And that's where techniques such as meditation, being fully present, body awareness, and unhooking from those cyclical thoughts can be very important. I think the most basic thing here is coming back to present time awareness and learning how to do that.

Then something else which is also a really important spiritual practice and is not always recognized is how we treat others, because we begin looking at how we can be more at ease in ourselves. Everybody wants to be at ease, and they want to be loved and cared for. So in everything we do, just making sure we are interacting in such a way that others feel appreciated and loved. There is no point in behaving toward people so that they get angry and upset and feel criticized. That's the way it often happens in our society. We think it's good to make someone upset and angry because then they'll do what we want. But actually all they do is

get angry back at us and we end up in a sort of vicious circle and subtly attack each other. So learning how can we give other people a sense of ease, contentment and appreciation. And if we can give that to other people then it feeds back onto us.

MJ: I think that's the teaching of "love your neighbor as yourself," and I think that people look at that externally when really it is an internal thing. When you're finding that quietness and that stillness and that love within then it's a natural expression to do that outwards to your neighbors and to treat people well.

PR: Yes, yes, yes. And it's reflected in the teachings of all the religions. It's what's called the golden rule in spiritual circles. The golden rule is basically treat your brother as you would treat yourself, or do onto others as you would have them do unto you. It's in every single one of the world's religions. They phrase it in different ways, but that's the basic message: treat others as you would like to be treated.

MJ: That's a starting point. And then we begin to explore it in other ways.

PR: Yes.

"The second stage is learning how to quiet your thinking."

Where the Spiritual Path Leads

MJ: We've talked about inquiring into the inner states, getting quiet and finding what I call the Still Point. We also talked about how we treat others. Those are very good starting places. Can you give folks an idea where the path might go from there?

PR: Once you have some practice at watching and becoming more conscious of your own mind, you begin to develop the skill of stepping out of those incessant thoughts that grab the mind. I don't mean to say that you are free of them completely, but you develop a skill that whatever situation you're in you realize you have a choice. You can either get caught up in it and get engaged in it and get excited or frustrated and spend a lot of energy, or you can step back into a state of being at ease. That choice is always there.

As we begin to exercise that we start feeling a background level of ease more often. Not necessarily the whole time, but as we do this more and more we learn how to step back and be at ease. I don't mean to say that we have to accept the way things are, or to always think everything's fine, or that we don't have to worry. There may be many things in the world that need attention and many things in our lives that need attention. We don't get ourselves unnecessarily wound up, which means we don't create unnecessary stress and anxiety over things. And this is really what we're looking for.

So we begin to learn that instead of looking for ease out there, we can begin to practice at allowing it to come forth in ourselves.

I think that's the first thing that begins to happen. And as that happens we find ourselves naturally more compassionate towards others. If you're feeling at ease in yourself, then you're more open to noticing other people and what they need, and your social interactions are not governed by your own needs. You stop worrying how other people see me or am I going to get what I want or do they like me or whatever. You spend less time thinking of how you can influence others. That begins to dissolve and you can actually see what another person needs. That's another shift that happens.

"All the wisdom we need is within us."

But also I think a much deeper thing that begins to happen is our sense of self begins to change. Most of us have this sense of self that is derived from what we do or how other people see us and our personality and our role in life. But there's an underlying self that is much harder to identify, and that's just a sense of I-ness.

You know we say "I Am." I can say "I am Peter Russell." Peter Russell is the name I have. I Am a man, and that just happens to be my gender. What is the "I" that has this name? What is the "I" that has this gender? What is this sense of I-ness that's been there all the way through my life? So we begin to recognize that there's something else and that's really about waking up to consciousness itself. What is this sense of being an experiencing being? As we do that we're letting go of that old sense of identify that has governed us so strongly. Letting that begin to drop away and getting in touch with something that's been there all along but which we haven't recognized. And I think a deep sense of freedom comes from that.

Those are some of the things that begin to happen and there may be many more. Of course I would like to make clear that I am myself far from fully awake or enlightened, so it's hard for me to say what happens in the grand states of enlightenment. But I know it's some of my own experiences on the journey.

MJ: We're all striving in that direction.

PR: Yes, yes.

The Key to Unlocking Your Inner Wisdom

MJ: You may not claim to be enlightened, but as a student of consciousness I know you've learned a great deal over the years. I'm wondering if you can share with us a guiding spiritual truth that you live by. Is there a particular gem that you refer to often in your own life that you'd like to share with us and that others may find useful?

PR: All the wisdom we need is within us – is within me. When I'm caught in a situation where I don't know what to do and I wish I could have some guidance or help, most of the time I don't need guidance on what to do. I need guidance on how to see things. If I'm stuck, it's usually because I've got stuck in a fixed way of looking at things. And deep inside me is the truth which knows where I've got stuck and which knows a different way of seeing things.

So what I will do when I feel caught in a situation is to pause and just be present for the moment, and keep in touch with myself and just ask myself is there another way of seeing this situation? And often it's like dropping the seed of a question in and sometimes the answer just pops out of the blue. It's nearly always an answer that's more compassionate, leaves me feeling more at ease, and has a ring of truth to it.

I remember the first time I did this when I was exploring this as a principal. The person I was living with and I were having one of those relationship arguments that had come up. As in any intimate relationship where we have different views on something, we'd been going on for a couple of days with me trying to persuade her and her trying to persuade me. And I just stopped and said to myself "Is there another way of seeing this?" And instantly everything just shifted and I saw her as just another human being who was struggling through life like me and that was it. She has her own view.

Instantly I fell back into love. I felt compassionate care and realized that for the last two days I'd been out of love, and I'd been in argument, aggression, and fighting. I'd lost love and instantly the love returned. What's important about that is that it was there underneath, but I was blocking it when I'd got stuck. And she was probably blocking it too. But deep down that knowing was there. So pausing and asking of my deeper self – is there another way of seeing it – allowed me to reconnect with that deeper truth and that deeper wisdom.

So that's a gem that I carry around with me. Just knowing deep down I actually do have the wisdom and guidance that I need. And it's a question of pausing and opening to that. I'm finding those sorts of questions are very good ways of allowing that inner knowing to present itself.

A Quick Summary

MJ: That is a wonderful place to close. This has been a really fun conversation. I want to summarize for our listeners that we've spent some time today getting to know our guest, Peter Russell. We began today talking about some of the big picture issues we face, including some important paradigm shifts. We talked about accelerating change in the world, and how that's bringing about a great many problems, but it's also bringing about a grand opportunity for spiritual awakening. We talked

"When I don't know what to do, I ask "Is there another way of seeing this?" And the answer pops out of the blue. It's nearly always more compassionate and leaves me feeling more at ease."

about December 21, 2012 and how the date is a symbol of the turning point for us as a species and as individuals. Then we began to talk about that awakening process and how it can occur within each of us.

Peter, you offered us some wonderful advice and you recommended that our listeners can begin by inquiring into their inner states and beginning to open up to that and to take the step of quieting down and finding what I call the Still Point. You also explained the process of how we can begin to express that in our lives through how we treat others. And we talked about how these are the steps that we take as we walk the path of awakening to our essences as experiencing beings. Then you left us with some important wisdom. Knowing that guidance is within and is always available. And we can ask ourselves the question “Is there another way that I can look at this?” “Is there another way that I can see these things?” It's in the asking of these questions that we create the opportunity to connect with that deeper underlying truth within each of us.

To Learn More from Peter

That brings us to a close in our conversation with Peter Russell. But before we go I'm sure that many of our readers and listeners will want to know more about Peter's ideas. So I want to close by saying that one of the best places to look for him and for more details about his work is on his website at:

www.peterrussell.com

It's a fascinating website, exploding with articles, book excerpts and meditations and lists of upcoming events and appearances. I have spent hours on that website and I'm sure that you all will too.

So I want to give a big thanks to our audience and especially a big thanks to Peter for being our guest today. It's been wonderful speaking with you today Peter. Thank you so very much.

PR: I've really enjoyed it myself. It's been wonderful, yes, thank you.

Additional Resources

If you've read through some of our free articles or purchased a product from us in the past, you may want to know about other resources to help you.

Here's a quick guide to the modular sequence we've developed to help you maximize your skills in the shortest time possible:

1. Awaken your sense of awareness within the present moment.
2. Focus that awareness on the things you choose so you can feel more relaxed, be more productive, and enjoy each moment to its fullest potential.
3. Direct your awareness toward creating the life you desire.
4. Shift your awareness beyond your five senses to access guidance, retrieve information, and interact in realms beyond physical reality.
5. Expand your sense of awareness beyond the limited confines of individuality to encompass your Higher Self.

Awakened Awareness



The first workshop in the Transformation Series, **Unwrapping the Present: The Secret to Making the Most of Every Moment**, helps you to awaken your internal observer so you can pay **Attention** to the sensations, thoughts, and feelings you're experiencing in any given moment. This foundational I Am awareness is the primary source of peace and well-being in life, and it serves as the springboard for all that follows.

Focused Awareness



The second module focuses on **Meditation**. It covers the basics of sit-down meditation, but more importantly you'll learn how to focus your I Am awareness on the fundamental skills of relaxation, concentration, and visualization, all of which can be applied with open eyes and in daily life situations, making them essential tools in the creation of your life experience.

Directed Awareness



The **Creation** workshop examines “The Secret” to manifestation and teaches you to apply the inside-out principle that opens the I Am Toolbox you use to create every experience in your life. You learn to direct your I Am awareness to identify, evaluate, and revise your thought patterns, belief systems, reaction responses, habits, and personality traits that create the outer experiences of your life. With those building blocks in place, you learn when, why, and how you can turn over certain aspects of the creation process to your Higher Self.

Shifted Awareness



The **Exploration** module teaches you to use your I Am awareness to become aware of things beyond your physical senses through a skill called *bilocation*—becoming aware of more than one state of being at the same time. You’ll learn how to send your I Am awareness beyond your physical body, enabling you to access the still, small voice of inner guidance, make psychic observations, dip into past lives, and explore the afterlife.

Expanded Awareness



The **Realization** workshop helps you advance from shifted awareness to expanded awareness. In this module you learn about the two ways to achieve enlightenment—reduction and expansion. The reduction process enables you to merge your I Am awareness and your experience into One. The expansion process enables you to expand your awareness to encompass all that is—which is Unity. I can lead you to both points, but only you can make the final leap into the realization of your Higher Self.

Personal Mentoring



If you don’t feel comfortable sharing your personal experiences in a group or you want to accelerate specific areas of your growth, then consider personal mentoring. This process is an opportunity to work with me privately to help you with your unique interests and challenges as you strive to recognize your essential and inherent completeness, allowing you to stop the relentless seeking and celebrate *what you already are* in every moment.

About the Author

What would you do if you woke up and found yourself floating in midair with your nose pressed against the ceiling?

When it happened to me I thought I was dreaming. I reached out and felt the rough wood ceiling. It felt solid and cool to the touch. So I pushed off it like an astronaut floating inside a space capsule. I drifted backwards a foot or two and simply hovered there.

Then I rolled over in midair and looked around. Light filtered in from a street light outside the window. In its wan glow I could see my night stand with my lamp, notebook, and clock radio. The clock read 2:09.

Up to this point I might have accepted my circumstances as a very vivid dream, but what came next wiped that idea from my mind.

Upon my bed lay a body. My body. Eyes closed. Bare arms resting on top of my down quilt.

I knew immediately that this was no dream.

A Spiraling Journey

That initial spontaneous out of body experience changed my outlook on life. By the time the experience ended a few minutes later I knew there was far more to my existence than I'd previously considered. This new perspective started me on a 20-year spiritual journey of self-discovery that has spiraled back upon itself.

When the journey began I was fully immersed in my life, experiencing my day-to-day existence as a dream without waking. At 2:09 that night I awoke in more ways than one. I grew curious about who I am and why I'm here. I began seeking answers to these questions through direct experience and from teachers who'd traveled the path ahead of me.

I never found a single teacher or a particular path that spoke to me. Instead I treated my journey like an all-you-can eat buffet. I tasted small samples of many things, and heaped my plate with those I liked best. Over time I studied world religions, history, philosophy, and science, skimming the surface of topics like particle physics and delving deep into the practical applications of meditation, prayer, and astral travel.

In time I learned to send my awareness to realms far beyond this physical reality, finally attaining the ability to walk in other realities that are as real and fully-immersive as this one. In those realms I interact with spirit guides, angels, nonphysical friends, and spirits of the "deceased," from whom I've had the privilege of learning as much as I have from my living teachers.

Eventually I came to realize the distinction between teacher and student was not what I thought it was. This sense of commonality propelled my awareness into direct unity with all-things. There are many names for this ecstatic union with the divine, and yet words cannot describe that immersion in light and love.

Despite the all-encompassing nature of that ineffable experience, even this was not the end of my journey. After I learned to access that state of being at will, I had yet another realization—that there is



no need for seeking at all. I realized that divine awareness simply is, and our consciousness is its expression.

Even more importantly, I realized there is no better way to express yourself than to joyously immerse yourself in the processes of life—just as I'd done so long ago.

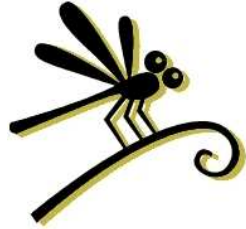
Thus my journey has come full circle. And having done so, it's my desire to help you to recognize that you too can be fully immersed in the joyous creation of daily life, while simultaneously enjoying an awareness of your unity with all that is.

I Want to Hear from You

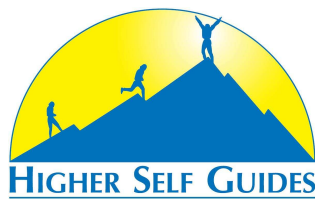
While my spiritual explorations take me far and wide, my favorite stomping grounds are in the Rocky Mountains, just outside my door in Boulder, Colorado, where I live with my wife and two daughters.

At Higher Self Guides we believe Your Success Is Our Destination™. So if you have any questions, comments or suggestions please let me know. I'd love to hear from you.

Email: matthew@higherselfguides.com



If you've found a typo, a mistake, or something
just plain bugs you, please let us know.
You can click on the bug to send us an email.
And if we can, we'll take care of it.
We always appreciate your suggestions and comments.



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