

The following is a long 9863 word transcript of the second interview with Ryan Hallford of the Cranial Resource Centre in Texas April 2017 – lightly edited for clarity.

For the actual interview, see the url below:-

<http://www.craniosacralpodcast.com/episode-53/#more-989>

Ryan has done a number of interviews with Craniosacral personalities and these can be seen at Craniosacralpodcast.com – see url below:-

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Ryan Hallford

Episode 53

Interview with Mike Boxhall

Ryan - Today is a special episode featuring one of the most popular guests, Mike Boxhall. One of the most common comments was how much you enjoyed my interview last year with Mike and I enjoyed conducting that memorable interview and I am quite happy to bring you more time with Mike who brings over 45 years experience in the therapeutic arts and almost 90 years experience in life.

Mike is one of the more prolific teachers right now, teaching across Eastern and Western Europe and South America at times as well. I have big news for those of you who live in the North American continent with me and that is that Mike is teaching a five part course titled Presence in Stillness in Tulsa, Oklahoma from Oct. 4th through 8th 2017. This is the only time Mike is scheduled to appear in the US for at least a year, maybe even two – this is one of those no brainers, mark your calendar now and get registered. This will take you into the heart of the body experience, offering you the opportunity to deepen to your own healing process and to better clarify how to better sit with the healing process of others.

I don't know about you but I just love being with people who don't rush me but I truly value interactions with other people who have space built into them. You will notice the space and long pauses in my interview today. In some interviews I might edit those out but they are an integral part of the experience with Mike, so I left them in for this episode. Mike takes his time with me and I with him and what a pleasure that is, so I hope you find the pace of the interview pleasurable as well.

At times the interview feels almost more like a Zen teaching or Hindu Darshan as Mike brings such depth in his interactions as well as breadth. We discuss many things including the nature of Spirit the feminine principle, therapeutic safety, silence, emptiness, intelligence versus intellect. We also talk about Mike falling out of the sky in an aeroplane and other times when he almost died. We even meditate for a few minutes so I think this an entertaining one and is one for everybody, wherever you are in your life or your practice.

I am really glad to be with you once again to talk some about life about consciousness and relationship with other people. How are you Mike?

Mike - Well, I just got back from Spain where I did two courses down there and they were very beautiful. I do believe they have gone to another level over the last year or so and what I find is that the most amazing things happen, it's exponential. Something comes up in Spain, a week later I'm in the Ukraine or South America or wherever it may be and I find that it is there already: it's not restricted to the people I am talking to: there is a bigger intelligence at work and any time you create a new awareness, that awareness is available everywhere to anyone who tunes in at the right level with another. Relationship, it's all about relationship. It's particularly about human relationship which comes from another level than the intellectual level. It's the heart level, it is wisdom not intellect. They are both forms of intelligence but this is wisdom working. I only learned recently that these things I have been talking about, which come from old, old traditions, are now being brought into sync by science. The heart being more powerful than the brain in the electro-magnetic field; 60 times more powerful in the electric and 5000 times more powerful in the magnetic field than that of the brain – that is incredible. But we don't use it; we use our intellects. We are only a fraction of what we could be if we were fully present in our bodies. Achieving our potential is, possibly, to achieve the potential of the universe. Many scientists would say that consciousness creates the universe and that is what I experience.

Ryan – in our first interview I read one of your poems and I thought it might be a little too clichéd to do that again but I would like to read someone else's poem if I may

Mike – yes, who is this? Rumi?

Ryan – No not Rumi, the darling of the new age community. Actually it is from your book The Empty Chair – you use a portion of a quote from Mark Nepo

Mike – He was coming to join me on a course a few years ago but it was the time when his wife became very ill. So he couldn't come.

Ryan - where is he from

Mike - from Canada if I remember rightly.

Ryan – quote from “Look around” from empty chair.

Mike - OK

Ryan - A dog loves the world through its nose. A fish through its gills. A bat through its deep sense of blindness. An eagle through its glide. And a human life, through its spirit.

Well what is the Spirit?

Mike - I think I see it this way:- it's the connection with the universal heart. I haven't answered that question quite like that before but it's the connection with the universal heart. We each have this pump organ but wisdom is Being, based in the heart. In the same way as I have described wisdom being in the heart, so is the spirit.

I have a personal soul, as much as I understand what soul means. I suppose the soul to be the highest level of the personal, individual consciousness, something like that, but the Spirit I see as being universal and we have to open ourselves to realise it. It is there but we have to surrender our

separation from it, which is the ego, in order to be fully in connection with it. So it isn't *my* Spirit it is *the* Spirit.

Ryan - and we have this ego structure which is laid upon it and part of the responsibility of our lives, I feel, is to learn to understand the structures of ego so we can see through it to stay in contact with Spirit.

Mike – yes we can't lose the Spirit but we can lose awareness of it, by our attachment to that separation which we call me – and that separation builds up in many ways over the years. Our life experiences identify who we are. Some of those have gone directly into the hard drive of the unconscious before cognitive processes develop – in the womb, before thinking develops. If you look at embryology; first you have sensation. Every one of the 50 trillion cells has sensation; then some months later you begin to acquire feeling but then, finally, along comes this co called superior unit called the intellect and from then we identify with the processes of the intellect, many of them at the level of the intellect but some, in the precognitive stages, like the relationship of our parents, if that is troublesome, then we will identify with that. We won't know what parent means or trouble means but we will have at what you might call a lower order of perception, the feeling or the sensation of that and that becomes the library we operate from. I always describe The story of the Garden of Eden as being the story of the ego when Eve realised her separation, she realised at one level the minor biological difference between man and woman, but she realised her separation, her something elseness, from the source, which of course is described as God; so that's the story of the initial formation of the ego, the Spirit is not separate the soul is separate.

Ryan – to me the story of the Garden of Eden is like the Buddhist dhuka or suffering.

Mike – yes, indeed that is where suffering comes from, the separation

Ryan – so would a mending or a return to source, would this be described as enlightenment?

Mike - I fight shy of trying to describe enlightenment – as I think most of things you can say, say that the person who is saying it, isn't!

Ryan – yes a tricky thing to talk about.

Mike - yes, it is tricky, I have tried in the past – I think it is something like being fully embodied; that surely is the message of the Buddha and the message of Jesus. They fully knew who they were, not that they knew everything but they knew who they were. It isn't that they knew everything, they may have known a lot of the things that were available to be known but to say they were adept in differential calculus is silly as it wasn't invented then. But they were fully embodied. And we can do that, we can stop being separate and the human task is surely to be *fully* human; embodied, not to go somewhere else and grow big ears and strange marks on the bottom of your feet, it is to be fully embodied.

Ryan – the culmination of stillness is enlightenment

Mike - yes I think that says roughly what I have been saying – to be fully aware is probably better and the more fully we become aware even of our limitations, the better. To be aware of them is a great leap forward from being reactive to our limitations and then if we can take away the judgement

about not being fully aware and accept that quietly and in stillness, then that to me is a pretty advanced state. It is similar to saying 'be present'.

Now if we find we are not present, as in the example of a practitioner working with a patient – you realise you have gone off to the supermarket and wondering what you are going to serve your guests for dinner, if you become aware of that and if you start struggling with yourself, "I've been doing this for 45 years and I can't even be present for a short time" – you are getting into the negative. That is getting through to your client and you are not there with them. But, if you can realise that you are not present and be compassionate about that and say "ok now I have noticed I am not present" you are at least - and this is going to sound like a joke but it isn't - present to your absence, which means that the client does not suffer from being abandoned. To be present to your own limitations is as much of a presence as being present to the fly buzzing around the end of your nose.

Ryan – it helps to be gentle with ourselves when we become aware of our limitations.

Mike – yes, it can be painful, particularly the awareness of how you are carrying around in your rucksack of your life, and being reactive to, that which happened 75 years ago – 87 years ago in my case – but 20 years ago in other people's cases, yesterday even. You are being reactive to those. There is hardly anything we do, most of us, most of the time, that comes fully from what is in the present.

Ryan – many of us seem to have parts of ourselves that are stuck in the past.

Mike – yes. Stuck in the past and reactive to the past, without realising we are being reactive to the past – it has become who we think we are and we have become identified with the past. So every gesture every thought every action, the concepts you come up with, your life view, is not based on what is going on, it is based on what you brought with you.

Ryan – how do we go about helping our clients to better understand the parts of themselves that they are carrying forward from the past.

Mike – by ceasing to focus on how we can make them *understand* and going to a deeper level, a more primary level in the embryology, the human expansion, yes primary, that is to say, "how does it feel", "what is the sensation of that" as sensation can only be in the present – you can't have a sensation yesterday or tomorrow; it can only be in the now. So we have to keep asking "how does that feel", "where in the body is the sensation of that", then there is the possibility of reaching that extraordinary level of human experience where there is only the present, which is actually emptiness until something fills it.

Ryan – some people have a very difficult time sensing in themselves in the present. How can we go about helping people to feel more of a sense of comfort in being with their sensory experience in the present?

Mike – yes, that's an interesting question – why do they have difficulty? I would suggest that it is because it is painful, because that is the negativity that has been part of what has shaped them, they have buried it, they prefer to keep it out of sight and out of sound, they prefer to keep it somewhere where it doesn't affect them so they retreat into distraction. They retreat into whatever it may be –

turn on the telly, pick up another cookie, whatever it is. This is a major part of the work as far as I am concerned. It really is. How can we get away from pain? And I think the only possibility is to go back to what I always go back to – what does the body say?

Now you have said, “what happens if the client finds it difficult because they are painful sensations.” I think for an answer we have to see what the body does again – it ingests, it digests and it eliminates. Those are the main big stages. We ingest information, experiences, relationships, beautiful pictures, ugly experiences as well and then we go through the process of digestion and the liver sends that experience, which maybe a painting by Monet or it may be a carrot or a potato whatever has been ingested it distributes and what is useful becomes who we are. It is made up of experiences, stuff I have ingested, taken in, digested – some muscles, brain, blood then, what I can’t use, I let go of.

OK as we all know, some things are not easy to digest, they get stuck so we bury them, we put them out of sight until we find a time, a place, a space, a company that makes it safe enough, which can provide conditions that are safe enough for us to take a journey, in company, to a level of Being, where there is no pathology! To get to that place, which exists in all of us, we may have to revisit, not re-ingest, it is already there but find a way of digesting that trauma which is causing us to be this way or that way, unconsciously.

They say in the latest biology that 90% of all pathology is due to stress. Whatever label it has on it the origins were in stress, that we have been unable to digest as a foetus, a young person, older person, whatever, it remains hidden until we meet safety and I do think the meeting is important because the human being is a group animal not an individual that pops it of an egg. We need that joint practice, that being held and being heard, the two primary needs of the human being at the emotional level are to be held and be heard. We don’t get that any more. The chances are we get taken out of the womb, and then taken somewhere else put through the car wash come back cleaned up and you’ve already been abandoned – when I say you, there isn’t even a you, you haven’t separated yet, you look to the mother to know who you are but then all of sudden you have been taken away.

So this is not a cognitive process it is a feeling level. It is no good saying I am not who I think I am that is at one level true but we are talking about a level where I don’t think - I feel - I have sensations - they are disturbed and that is right at the root and life piles on top of that in levels that we have not been able to digest. We have not conceptualised what we are suffering from in order to look at it, so the task that therapist has is to provide the conditions in which it is safe enough to make that journey to the bottom of the cave that the Greek mythologies talk about, the depths of our unconscious, to explore the demons that are guarding the treasure, the treasure I call peace, and bring that back to the surface. Finding those conditions can be relatively rare and if we do, and not feel abandoned along that journey, we can recover our natural first primary state, in my opinion.

Ryan – I am interested in safety can you please talk some more about this cultivation of safety. How do we go about invoking safety into the relationship and the space so people can really feel and trust it.

Mike – I am going to digress slightly and I’ll bring it back – I mentioned the great need of the human experience is, at an emotional level to be held and to be heard. And my digression is this; in the

Chinese language the pictogram to listen has five little parts – mini pictograms taken together make the larger concept: the five are – ears, eyes, you, full attention, from the heart. From the heart, as I described earlier where the universality is, where the wisdom is based - so eyes and ears, the five senses if you like, all of those are giving full attention to you from the heart. We take the journey together metaphorically or physically holding hands on this trip.

I am accompanied by somebody who is accompanying people several times a day into the depths of not the client's experience but into the depth of their own, the practitioner's experience and who has the confidence to do that. So from the client's point of view they have touch (holding), that is why we have the formality of touch; touch isn't doing the work, it is there as a metaphor for connection. It doesn't matter in my model where the hands are, as the hands are not transmitters, your hands are receivers, they do nothing but receive, they don't know what they are receiving as we are not working at the level of knowing, we are working at a deeper level from the heart, not the brain. We are receiving the other person and as I the client feel myself being fully accepted, perhaps for the first time in my life, I too develop a little confidence that that acceptance is not going to go away and the hand that holds me is not going to go away and I can go a little deeper into my pain and deeper still into my pain and all the time I go deeper into it I am bringing it into awareness, the level where I can digest it this time.

This time I can conceptualise it, this time I can realise that my mother's suffering is not necessarily my suffering but whatever stuff she had she was exhibiting her undigested life experience, It wasn't me it was her undigested life experience, so I go deeper and the trust remains there and the love remains there and I can explore this part of me that I find disgusting, for example, which is very fearful, I can explore that knowing that I am not going to be abandoned or judged and that allows me to go deeper and deeper until perhaps, not in one hour or not in 10 hours, I go towards finding that level where I have now digested who I am. And I am fully embodied and that is the peace that passeth understanding. Understanding isn't it.

Ryan – there is something powerful about having a witness. You can go to the woods and cry your eyes out but if we do it in the presence of someone or in a group there is something particularly potent about that being seen.

Mike - I would rather it was seen, not as an object of review but as an experience of the practitioner as well, as a sharing that is joint practice. At that level of humanity there is no separation

Ryan – that is where we are working from that place of no separation and no pathology.

Mike - and no judgement. It is actually the feminine at work if we think of the two great dynamics of masculine and feminine principle we are missing the feminine to our enormous loss and that is the rediscovery of the feminine.

Ryan – the other day I was in a restaurant there was a child having a difficult morning, screaming crying running around, not being well behaved. You could see it was becoming annoying to those waiting, this child having a tantrum. I was watching the mother constantly come back with infinite patience and acceptance and not being judgemental, like you see on the face of those observing. She held this ground of continual loving connection of deep presence she was coming from the Spirit.

Mike - how old was the child?

Ryan - maybe 2.

Ryan - that image just popped into my mind when you spoke about the feminine principle, this constant source of love coming towards us from us depending on which side you are on.

Mike - can I tell you how I came to some of this model – by working with babies, they taught me my work, not books. When I had a clinical practice speciality which was infertility in women and I got to work, happily, with a lot of babies sooner or later both in utero and when they got a bit older. I realise you cannot communicate as if they are small adults they haven't got a geared up intellect but you can communicate – you communicate from feeling and sensation or with feeling and sensation – from the heart, this is what you just said about this woman. So I realised then that you had to find another way of reaching deep level trauma other than through words because words belong to conceptualisation and separate you from the baby.

Ryan – so what do we do with let's say cognitive behavioural therapy. I get these clients who come to me and they've been talking about the concepts around their problem for quite some time and I feel so bad for them sometimes because they are almost made to feel more responsible for their suffering than maybe they are as if they like they should be able to change a cognitive belief it seems cruel somehow.

Mike – I have a tremendous argument with an awful lot of psychotherapy as a great deal of it is so out of date but I think some psychotherapists know it is out of date and there is some lovely recent work being done. I'm going to attend a seminar by a man called Van de Kock who writes very beautifully on the subject and I want to go and meet him so, I signed up for his course and hope to get some dialogue going perhaps. I cannot see how you can resolve traumatic psychological issues by talking about something that didn't happen at the level of cognition. You've got to feel it, digest it and it may be painful, I think you need company, as we've discussed, and that company who may be a therapist, is every time going to be on their journey as well as they won't have finished it.

Ryan – I have handfuls of stories of clients who have come to me under the care of psychotherapist or psychiatrist who tell me that they get so much more from even a single visit with the Craniosacral approach than they have got from talking about the particulars of their life or situation through a talk based therapy. It reminds me of how powerful and helpful this approach to work is and makes me very grateful that this tool is available for people that are suffering, as I feel many of them are not being served very well.

Mike - the great thing of course is you don't have to be cleverer to do this work you have to be prepared to surrender to it, not to know more

Ryan – to feel more?

Mike - yes without analysing. it without judging or diagnosis, prognosis, treatment plan, you just listen and the story gets heard and that is synonymous with digestion. All those adjectives are masculine the feeling is feminine. The almighty power of the feminine principle.

Allowing things to be what they are.

Mike - exactly as they are.

Ryan – What I would like to do now is break the cardinal rule of radio and being an interviewer, I'd like to spend 2 minutes in stillness and silence with you – is that ok?

Mike – yes I would like that.

Ryan - I would love that. I'm going to leave the recorder running as I want everyone that is listening to do with us. Whatever you want to do, there are some of you who are walking the dog right now, some fixing breakfast, some sitting in full attention, listening to our conversation in a quiet space – you do whatever you want to do with this but right now Mike and I are going to be still and quiet for 2 minutes then we'll see where we go.

Ryan – I am going to start right now.

2 minute meditation.....

Ryan - OK... so how was that for you Mike?

Mike - from about half way, very peaceful.

Ryan - It took me a little time for some of that forward momentum of the conversation to settle and lose some of its pressure. For a little while I forgot about the listeners and the construct that we are working within here and that was very nice for me.

Mike – I do that in every teaching session, morning and afternoon with students ; to start each session, for about half an hour. I am doing this new course of five parts of four days except the fifth part will be five days as one of those days will be spent in silence and we'll see how that goes.

Ryan – I feel like to be able to sit in silence with people who are growing in their sense of embodiment, to do this together, let's say in a Craniosacral classroom, is one of the most precious environments on the planet. To feel the possibility that arises in some of our classrooms truly is a magical place, holding so much potential and value for people and I just love to hear that you are creating these types of settings particularly with your emphasis on stillness.

Mike - I try to work from persona I experience all the time and I have found that is exactly how it is for me so I try to share that, yes. I said something earlier about consciousness creating the universe and I think that is an example of it. If we can do that, and all our patients, clients, students, are doing that, it is having a much wider effect than merely on the sixteen/fifty people we are working with. We all have our own environments or fields we live and work in and even sleep in, so I think it is kind of important.

I've just made a British understatement!

Ryan – ever since I was a child I have preferred stillness more so than many people it seems like. I was raised Catholic and I used to like going to mass as a child as it was one place I could be still and resource myself in the company of others with nice music and a very boring guy wearing a robe. I liked that I found I had an instinctual feeling it was healthy for me. I was raised in a part of America with a more Evangelical presence; revivals, fire and brimstone; very emotional types of religious

practice. So I believe that my childhood in the Catholic church kind of predisposed me or led me to this kind of Craniosacral work. I am wondering if you had any experiences as a child or growing up predisposed you to going into this kind of work?

Mike - I think I was a very late starter I feel envious of you – if only I had started 40 years earlier. Then I might have a large tummy and funny marks on the bottom of my feet and big ears.

But, no, it happened somewhat later, but I do agree with the sentiment of what you are saying, particularly about the Catholic contemplative orders. I work with quite a lot of them, working in a number of monasteries, and one of the most beautiful is a contemplative order where every time I go there they ask me to talk with them and, at first, I was terrified because it was the Curia or the Inquisition, in my eyes They were all sitting in their little niches around the room in their place and they were all looking at me –in what I thought was a “what kind of thing is this that has just come in”, and then I realised that was my projection.

I started talking and sharing with them as I have been with you, as human beings, and they are a lovely lot and I am not a catholic or a Christian but I go to their mass sometimes. The particular way they serve the host is that everybody does to everybody else rather than one person, so I am part of that too and I find that very moving and peaceful and it is quite extraordinary as the Abbot said he is coming on a course one of these times soon, in his own monastery and I find that incredible; that openness of spirit.

Ryan – yeah that’s great

Mike – we’ll see what happens. He has become a good friend of mine. We have to find some sort of language to talk in, as we don’t have one in common, but we manage.

Ryan – I have found Catholic monastics much more open than you might think. When you get to that contemplative place in your practice you really start to move beyond some of the limitations we traditionally attach to the trappings of religion.

Mike – yes, it is interesting as you talked about 2 different types of Christians, both of them great, but you talked about one being more contemplative, one doing more talking. The one I find the more open is the one that comes from the heart not the one from the head. And I would say the same thing, incidentally, about Buddhism, where you can meet an awful lot of talking dogma from the head and which seems to have nothing much to do with the spirit of what the man (the Buddha) was saying.

Ryan - On this topic of western monasticism , I wonder if you have any favourite authors or books on the western monastic field? Thomas Merton at one point saved Christianity for me. It is hard for me to identify with most Christians now actually, but Thomas Merton helped me to understand some of the depth of spirit and heart in the Christian view of life. I am just wondering if there are any particular authors or books/classics that have been meaningful for you.

Mike - any question about data is difficult for me as I have a lousy memory about names, dates, facts and places; it’s not basically what I work with. But, the one thing that was coming to mind as you were talking was, in fact, Merton, whom I admire enormously. There is, of course, Jung, who although he was not a monastic of any kind, he did speak from some depth of experience on some

of the subjects. So yes and no. No, I can't quote to you, but, yes, I have experienced several books that have been important to me but I think the importance of those books has now become the same as the carrots – part of who I am rather more than a library of material that is out there somewhere. I think that is the best way I can handle that.

Ryan – so I had a topic on my mind lately I wanted to bring to you and that is, how do we prepare for our own death or can we prepare for this.

Mike - I've done it three times. Do you know, the only answer that I can give really is by being present, not in the future death, and if we *can* be present, including present to our own death, that would cut out a lot of the fear of dying I think. It is a great fear I think in most of us. But my experience is that, and it has happened to me three times, but, particularly on one occasion when I was in Florida. I was being a workaholic and I was about to go to the Galapagos islands for a holiday at the invitation of someone, which would have been fantastic. But I freaked out at Miami airport, there was a storm going on and I just felt 'I can't go any further' and said "I'm not going" so I went up to the boarding desk and said "I am not going on this flight".

So I went and sat down and got my mobile phone and called a friend in Florida and she and her husband said come and stay. So I went outside, it was still pouring with rain, found a bus, which was pulling away into the distance; so I ran after the bus and managed to get on it. It was a four hour journey and I was already completely wiped out. I got to the other end and they put me to bed.

I went through this experience of having a fairly major heart attack and ostensibly dying, including actually feeling my physical system disintegrating and the atoms actually going off in to the distance. So my senses went, hearing and everything went, my body started disintegrating, everything. Then fear came up and then there was a magic moment and I just surrendered and there was no fear. And of course the moment I surrendered, the atoms started coming back again – it took about 10 days and I flew back home.

Ryan - this surrender; was this an act of the will a conscious movement of self to surrender or something that was given to you like an act of grace?

Mike - I don't know. I have always thought of it as being conscious – and I still, probably, think it was. Practice, practice, practice.

Ryan - So you re-materialised and came back to us.

Mike – Yes, something like that. I think we can all do that either literally or metaphorically. Even in every moment, somehow that moment of surrender is a re-birth. I am not talking about re-incarnation, that's another subject altogether and I don't want to go down that road. I am talking about re-birth. I think going deep enough into the psyche to find that emptiness, that peace, which is beyond understanding, which is prior to or basal to all our accumulated experiences; that sensory experience is very deep; it is a gateway to a re-birth. I do believe that can be experienced in a life time and I dare say, I don't know, many times in a day? There's only one place it can be experienced and that is right now. No good putting together your picnic with a thermos flask of tea and some sandwiches, "where you going darling?" "Oh I'm going off for a re-birth" – I don't think it happens that way.

Ryan - So peace is very precious, when we experience it, and it can be very fleeting. So we often find ourselves more in a state of suffering with this longing for peace. How do we get into that flow of movement towards peace; a healthy following of this longing for peace?

Mike – I will tell you – surrender the longing.

Ryan – because there is something kind of healthy about that longing, something good about that so it gets really delicate following that thread, recognising what is healthy in that longing, but also, if we are clinging to it, we are defeating the peace.

Mike – but it remains a concept, it remains a concept, remains in the head until we surrender the looking for it and then the sensation of it is finally there.

Ryan - can we experience peace and turmoil at the same time?

Mike - who is the I who is experiencing the peace and the turmoil? Where are you experiencing the peace and the turmoil?

I am very sure that we can move extremely rapidly from one thought to another, from one feeling to another, from one sensation to another – can we have two at the same time, I don't know. Where is your attention? And, the more important question: that watcher that is aware of both is surely you, the rest of it is the construct, ego.

Ryan – so we could say the awareness is really even, let's say, more nourishing than the sensation of peace. There's awareness behind the peace that's more primary maybe.

Mike - there is awareness behind the peace, yes, I think that's got to be true. I think that probably, certainly, behind the peace there is emptiness. Emptiness is not nothing it is everything unexpressed, not taken form, so you can't experience it because that's the duality.

Ryan - does emptiness have a felt sense?

Mike - emptiness is the sense of it, is the duality. There is a sensor and something sensed. Everything we look for is a new duality – maybe not a new one maybe an old one being re-hashed. There may be complete emptiness which, paradoxically, can only be experienced when it becomes a thing, in other words, a memory, yes, because memory is a thing, yes. Weird.....

Ryan – so the more we can develop a facility with identification with awareness, rather than the phenomena that arise within it, the better off we are.

Mike – yes, I think so, I think that is a good way of putting it.

Ryan – but that takes a little practice too, whether its peace or turmoil, suffering arising in the awareness, to be able to step back from it in non-attachment takes more time for some people - practice. But sometimes we are just delivered a healthy freedom as an act of grace. But we still have to work on it, it seems like.

Mike – I am sure practice is important. I think we practice and I think we practice not getting attached but it is very different, I think it is different. There is a difference between practicing not being attached and practising getting rid of attachment. Getting rid of attachment is an action, it

isn't going to lead you to the core of who you are, which is the core of everything that has ever taken form, including these words and the thoughts that lead to these words, so just practice or call it grace if you like, call it whatever you like; emptiness, but no that's wrong because I have just turned it into a thing. Perhaps the realisation that there has been emptiness, the space between the notes.

Ryan – I find emptiness to be a very comforting experience when I can touch it. I was teaching some of my understanding of this topic in a class and just putting up some images that point to transparency and emptiness, and to me it was just so comforting, the sense of space that is there, the removal of pressure from the ego. And one of the students came up to me and said “why would anybody want to be empty?”

Mike – yes it is very frightening - to whom – to the ego. Who am I in emptiness, what am I in emptiness?

Ryan – so I told her that the alternative is that you can be full of yourself. I don't think she really quite got it. I find this an incredibly life-giving thing to consider, emptiness and transparency is so rich, there is so much freedom in working with that, but people can become really resistant to this.

Mike – well if you start from that standpoint that you have just said, that you experience emptiness as being comforting and full of freedom, you are saying something very significant. If that is the case then where is the fear of death – you have answered your own question.

Ryan – I'm enlightened, clearly.

Mike – yes, you obviously are – the fear of death is a fullness of the ego, not an emptiness. And you have answered it from your experience.

Ryan – you say something in your book, *The Empty Chair* - “It is basically fear, fear of change which in turn means fear of being that makes us so pathological.” You then go on to say to work with fear. What does that mean? To work with fear. How do we do that?

Mike – I am not sure that is a particularly good line, let me think. Well, I suppose I mean what I have been talking about. Bring it up into awareness, digest it, don't avoid it, work with it. I have worked with it. As an example, which may or may not be in the book, I don't remember:- I was once in an aeroplane which was in serious trouble; it was hit by lightning; we were in a typhoon. Things were bouncing all over the place. It is quite a dramatic story because there was a fire extinguisher going down the aisle gently floating in the air as we went weightless falling down. The plane was doing a falling leaf.

I was sitting in a smart seat and one of my pats of butter stuck to my luggage rack and the other stuck to the window on the other side of the aeroplane. There was a hole in the tail, hit by lightning, and it did a falling leaf and that is a bit worrying in a four engine aeroplane. So I got very frightened and I was traumatised and wouldn't go in a plane for love nor money for some time after that. But I dealt with the fear by not working with the concept of fear, if I said that, that was badly put, but by working with the sensations – every time I thought of flying I would get pressure in the head, churning in the stomach, my mouth would go dry. So I worked with those as sensations ; that we can do.

Ryan – learning acceptance of the sensations?

Mike – yes, and once you accept the sensations, the fear that is causing the sensations isn't there either because they are all levels of the same thing, but it's a different level. I don't think it is much good working with fear from the level of thinking but you can work from a level below, which is sensation. By working with them not with the concept.

Ryan - is love an antidote of fear?

Mike - I think it is the other side of the same coin. I think there is one coin in the same way that the masculine and feminine are the first emanations when intelligence takes form or yin and yang arise out of nothing. Those senior, first manifestations of form, love and fear, are two names for that I think and I think they are both two sides of exactly the same coin. I think there is no love without fear attached to it – fear of loss.

Ryan - love is often joined to an object

Mike – yes, that is a different thing and that may be more like possession. I think you can love the world without owning Trump Tower.

Ryan – oh no I am feeling some tension in my body now.

Mike – you can strike that if you like.

Ryan - I might do all our listeners a favour and just take that proper noun out of our conversation. No, we'll see what they're made of, we'll leave it in and let them work with that, it might be good for them.

I took a class the day after election day. The level of trauma in the room was palpable. I thought I was going to have to hose one of my T.A's down with a garden faucet; she was so worked up about the results of that election. It has given us in the therapeutic community a lot to work with in a way

Mike - Yes, I was teaching in the US in Massachusetts, I think it was, the same day as Wako (Texas). People don't seem to remember it much now, but it was big at the time. And I was there about a week after the twin towers, 9/11. And what was going on in the room was amazing. I remember Wako and immediately, most of the women wanted to go home. It is palpable; they wanted to protect their children, they didn't necessarily live in Wako or have family anywhere near Wako but it is not the kind of thing that usually happens 3 days in a row, if you see what I mean. It is in one sense past but in another sense it touches something very deep in the human psyche so people want to be with their families if they are going to feel unsafe they want to be with people they feel safe with. I guess we all do.

Ryan - there's a couple more things we can discuss and then kind of wrap up

Mike – yes, I am happy with that I'm feeling a bit tired

Ryan – I think you and I have something in common; we tend to pack our schedule kind of tight – I've got a workaholic side too. It helps to pay the bills but... So there's something that's been on my mind lately from my time in the classroom that I have for years gotten this question from students

or listeners, and that revolves around this experience of sensory empathy. This part that feels the sensations of the client in their own body and I hear a lot of sense of confusion around this “I was fine going into a session then I got a headache working with them”, and “they came in with stomach ache and I got it” and the question is, what’s mine and what’s theirs? Where is this coming from, how do I deal with these sensations they seem to feel they have got from the client? What is your perspective on this?

Mike – I’ll tell you my perspective because this comes up every class - virtually every class. There’s more than one thing at stake here, I think. I talked about the field, well I didn’t talk about it, I briefly mentioned the field earlier on. There are many fields, I remember saying. There is a kind of global field, if you like, to which we all contribute or take from in some way. And there are many levels of relationship with those fields.

Some of us are predisposed to be, more naturally, more thinking people or more feeling people or more sensory or, in some cases, more intuitive - that’s the Jungian model of the psyche. And perhaps, as he says, our task it to be as rounded as possible and to become aware where our weak zones are and work on enlivening the weaker sites of our psyche.

So to get towards your question - some people are more sensory than others, naturally, and they will be in touch with what is in the field, what comes in to the room, what comes into that particular field, that of them and the client, because that’s one of the many fields, as I said, there are many fields. They will be more in touch with that at a sensory level. Some people are astute conceptually, analysing other people through movement on the face and skin, this kind of thing, and that way may pick up pains here and there. Some people’s sense of palpation is incredible - far beyond anything I can dream of. So I believe that some people can get in touch with what is in the field at a sensory level which might be a headache, in the case you mentioned, more easily than others. It is just there for them. However, if we focus on this deep level of work that we are talking about rather than the mechanical work, if we focus on that, we are only focusing on one aspect of them and one aspect of us and it is a limitation so to focus on that and work with that then you can’t be working at the level of the spirit. Am I making any sense with this?

Ryan – you make sense to me but how do we explain that to the learners?

Mike - So wherever you put your attention is a limitation so can we put our attention of receiving that other human being rather than receiving the headache, which is giving us a headache, so just note that and put it aside. To be clear, it might be useful, to say “what are you experiencing right now” not to say “I have a headache have you got one too” because you are in a position of relatively great power, maybe, as a therapist and you might actually induce them to have one so they can please you by saying “you spotted the right thing there oh master.” So I would say something like – “how are you feeling, what’s going down right now.” If they say they have a splitting headache there is no need to say “so have I” because that’s not what they came to find out. They came to find out what’s wrong with them not what is wrong with you. So just be aware of that, find a tactful and non-forcing way of finding the truth of that. But, having done that, put it aside and just quietly say to oneself, oh yeah, and...

Ryan – that is the same answer, basically, that I have given in the past, it’s this transparency, the emptiness. Ok this is the phenomena which are arising in me, I’ve got it, check the box, I recognise it,

now let it go. What is deeper, what is next, where is the health coming forth in the moment? They get fixated on this empathic sensation and it like it's got some of kind of power they need to pull out of it.

Mike - if you're fixating on your client's headache you're not present, you're fixating on a headache. You mean the headache is the only thing about that client?

Ryan - that's helpful, thank you

Mike - but it does come up all the time with younger or newer or whatever, practitioners, that's true.

Ryan - it was a factor in my experience when I first got into the work but it is less of a factor now, over time, but this work naturally draws empathic people so it's a bridge we all have to learn to cross in our own way.

Mike - Yes, I think we must do it our own way. You can't teach somebody else's work, unless you are teaching arithmetic or something like that – yes then you can teach somebody else's work because it's didactic, that's the way it is, it is dogma. But at this level of work it must be your work and, to go back to the beginning, it must be from the heart not from the brain.

Ryan - I'm wondering – kind of to make this our final question or one of - Can you share with us a session in which you have learned something really valuable that has stuck with you. You were with a client, a situation arose and you learned from that. Any stories there?

Mike - the most valuable thing I learnt, and I am going to go back to a previous answer – I cannot know what is going on in somebody else without limiting what is going on in somebody else. And I learnt that from babies. Otherwise there may be some remarkable statement that someone made but a part of me is going to say that was that time, that person, that place, that space, I don't know how I am going to use it in another time place and space so the inference is that what I learnt must have been something about me not about pathology or disease, because that I take with me. I continue to learn many things about me on every single course. But which is more valuable? Probably the T-shirt I was given yesterday which said on it something like "the less I know the better"....

Ryan - that feels like home to me. I am very comfortable not knowing, that's one of the reasons why I like visiting with you, spending time with you, because you give me the space to be myself and that's someone who is fine not knowing but daily, client after client, they want to know. And that's the magical type of dichotomy that we work with; it's maddening sometimes. So to be with someone and share some space with someone who gets that and who can allow that and thinks it's good, not knowing, is a real gift for me. I really appreciate this time with you.

Mike – it may be a gift but it leaves you in a perpetual minority and maybe that's the only place to be. There is nothing in the universe that is not in movement, so, that says it all. How can you possibly know - particularly somebody else? Like an insurance actuary - you can make some fairly good guesses about what the result of this and that action might be, of course, but the cause of those reactions you can't possibly know. They go back to the beginning of whatever it is, that strange thing we call time, which, in itself, hasn't got much meaning. But that is fine there are many levels, Ryan, I

think that's the thing to do and to allow people who operate at different levels to be perfect with that level that they operate at, is fine, not that they should be at some other level or they should be this or they should be that. I described to you at the beginning how I hate making a speech, as such, but I quite enjoy, as most old men do, reminiscing about the compost of my life, and that is what I am doing. And you're giving me the freedom to do that and isn't that great.

Ryan – it's wonderful and I like digging through the compost, you throw it around the room; it's great fun.

Mike - and you're not very good in one direction, I've got to say, because, when I go and see the students, they pay me to talk about me.

Ryan - well, as soon as I start getting paid I'll be more than happy to give you some. Well, I am going to need to get in the shower here to get ready to go to my clinic. I smell a little like compost myself from working in the yard and I don't want to subject my clients to that.

Mike – oh yes, it's the beginning of your day.

Ryan - I wanted to give you the last say here. Is there anything you want to say or share before we wrap up this, our second visit?

Mike – not a lot, you asked me any special thing I've learnt just now – I've learnt quite a lot from this second meeting with you – I've learnt a lot about you I didn't know before and that's been very nice, I enjoyed that.

Ryan - I want to commend you on bringing into our field and sticking with, I think, some of the most important aspects of the work, that are so easy to shirk from, to take the easy road and take the road of the intellect, but your willingness and belief to stay tapped in to the intelligence is so important and I really value your strength to stick with that and I just wanted to say thank you.

Mike - Thanks Ryan – about your shower, don't forget to turn off the video

Ryan - you don't want a peep show?

Mike – I am still quite young and impressionable.

Ryan - I hope you are experiencing lots of love and feeling surrounded by it and we will be in touch. And you are going to be here in Oklahoma in the fall, I want to let people know about that.

Mike – yes, in the fall, yes the first week in October.

Ryan – I'll put some more information on that up on the show notes so people can find out how to take advantage of a wonderful opportunity to share some space with you're here in the states, which is rare for us, and would love to get that class filled up.

Mike – great, thank you Ryan, love you lots.

Ryan – thank you Mike, feel my love too.

Well there we go. Two hours with a guy who has seen a few things in the world of therapy, Mr. Mike Boxhall. While I was doing this interview I kept having a term move through my mind. It is a term used in Japan to designate people who preserve important, intangible properties or artistic skills for the culture or those who have attained high levels of mastery of an art or a craft, and in Japan they are called living natural treasures and I think Mike is a living treasure for us in the West and visiting with him is life-giving to me and I hope has been for you as well.

Check out the show notes to learn more about Mike and read some of his writing and for more information about the upcoming class in the fall in Oklahoma.

Well , until next time my friends, I hope you are feeling strong, healthy and joyful, not just with the intellect but also with Intelligence itself.