

Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio. A state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: Today's episode is amazing, and you totally want to listen to the entire episode, all the way through to the end. It is with one of the great luminaries in the field of transpersonal psychology, a guy who pioneered the use of psychedelics for personal development, and one of the world's leading experts on non-ordinary states of consciousness. You'll learn the story of how LSD was legal, how it got banned, and even how governments attempted to misuse it. You'll learn how you might consider not using a hallucinogen like that, and replacing it instead with some powerful breathing exercises that you use in a group setting. You'll learn about how the circumstances of your birth can impact the course of your life, and how that trauma can stick around.

You'll even learn what one of the leaders in the field thinks about how psychedelic drugs are used today, why you shouldn't use them, and maybe why you might want to, and all the different modalities that are now available to you to reach a flow state or transcendent state of high performance. This is one of the coolest interviews I've ever done. You're totally going to want to hear the whole thing. This is a chance to hear from someone who's spent almost 100 years learning and growing and changing the world. It's just an incredible honor to be able to listen to it, and I hope you enjoy it.

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. This Cool Fact of the Day is really cool, because a team at Georgetown figured out that they could use something called Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation, or TDCS, to stimulate an area of the brain associated with creativity. They did this while they were giving test subjects verbal cues to think more creatively. Previous researchers had shown that creativity was a static trait that you couldn't hack. However, these guys did hack it. Now we know that creativity is a dynamic state that changes quickly in an individual. That means you can put your thinking cap on, literally, and it just might have electrodes.

From a personal perspective, you can learn to turn your creative states on and off. It's a question of set and setting. Also, just learning how to tap into that part of your brain. That's something that I've trained very extensively myself. It's really, really paid off to be able to say, "Hold on a second. Let me find that creative state." Just like you could find some other calm or meditation state. Pretty cool, though, to see you can do it with the electricity, which is something I also like to put into my brain.

Today's guest on the show is a luminary in his field, and kind of a legend. His name is Dr. Stanislav Grof. I'm recording this episode live, in front of a relatively large audience, at the Bulletproof Be Unlimited event in the Bay Area. Dr. Grof, you'll hear during this episode, is one of the great leaders in the field of psychedelic research. He's both an MD and a PhD. His research in the '60s and

'70s, along with his wife, lead to the creation of the field of transpersonal psychology, which is a school of psychology that integrates the spiritual and transcendent aspects of the human experience, with the framework of modern psychotherapy and psychology that we're all familiar with.

He literally wrote the book on LSD psychotherapy. His clinical research started in the '60s in Moscow, Czechoslovakia, and Johns Hopkins University. I'm mentioning Czechoslovakia because it wasn't the Czech Republic back then, and it wasn't Slovakia. It was one country. This was before they split. He focused on the types of experience that become available to the average person when they're using these powerful psychedelic substances, including things like psilocybin, mescaline, DPT, DMT, MDA, and LSD. So basically, a laundry list of the things that are most regulated and most feared.

It turns out he used them legally, with a prescription, as a therapist and as a psychiatrist, and had profound results with his patients. Results that led people to understand what early childhood trauma can do to adults. Stuff that you barely remember does affect the way you experience reality, and there are things you can do with and without substances to change that. In fact, at the event here, the Bulletproof Be Unlimited personal development event, we actually used breathing exercises to reach some of those same states, no substances required.

Dr. Grof was later a Scholar-in-Residence at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. That's where he and his wife developed Holotropic Breathwork, which is what we're actually doing at this workshop. It's a combination of non-pharmacological self-exploration and psychotherapy, where you do accelerated breathing, evocative music, and a special form of bodywork. He's the author of over 20 books and 150 articles and still teaches others despite being more than 90 years old. He lectures and leads Holotropic Breathwork and transpersonal psychology programs and workshops all over the world, and is one of the great masters of this school of therapy. It's an incredible privilege to have him onstage, in front of an audience, and to share his work with you on Bulletproof Radio.

Welcome to the show, Stan.

Stanislav Grof:

When I started psychiatry, you know, because I was interested in psychoanalysis, was actually when I finished what would be high school, we call it gymnasium in Europe, which has a different meaning here. I wanted to go into animated movies, and I already had an interview I was supposed to start, and then a friend of mine came to visit me and he has holding this new book. He had a strange look in his eyes and he said, "You have to read this book. You'll never be the same." I looked and it was Freud's Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.

I knew very little about Freud, because it was something that was forbidden under the Nazis, all the psychoanalytic books were burned. And then we had

three years of freedom, and then the communists came, and Freud was again in [inaudible]. Capitalist regime created psychoanalysis to discredit the revolution, trying to blame it Oedipus complex. So I knew only what they taught us in these Marxist classes that he was a pansexualist trying to explain everything from repressed sexual [inaudible]. So that was kind of interesting to start with.

Dave Asprey: Wasn't that kind of true through?

Stanislav Grof: Kind of, yeah. So I started reading it and really got into a similar kind of state that my friend was in. I read through the night, and then finished reading, and I decided within two days that I dropped the animated movies, and I'm going to become a psychoanalyst.

Dave Asprey: Just in one night.

Stanislav Grof: Which required enrolling in a medical school. You have to have an MD or PhD degree in Europe to be a psychoanalyst. Then I also started my personal training analysis, and as I was getting deeper into psychoanalysis I was getting increasingly disappointed. Initially not by the theory, but by the practice. I realized how long it takes. How much money, how much time it takes, how much energy. I realized that the results were not exactly breathtaking. I started kind of nostalgically thinking about the animated movies, I should never have started this profession.

Then I was working at the psychiatric clinic in Prague, and we got a box from Sandoz pharmaceutical company Switzerland full of ampules. We opened it, it was very mysterious it's LSD-25, and it came with a letter describing this is a new investigational substance discovered basically by accident by Dr. Hofmann working with alkaloids and he actually intoxicated himself as he was doing this. It seemed on the basis of some pilot study that this would be something interesting for psychiatrists and psychologists. Would you like to do this work and let us know if there's any legitimate use for it in psychiatry.

They actually gave several suggestions. One was that this could create experimental psychosis, and we could study people before, during, and after, and get insights into what might be happening in naturally occurring psychosis. The second suggestion from the pilot study was maybe this could be used as a therapeutic agent. But there was a third little note that kind of became my destiny, or karma, if you want. It said maybe this could be used as a kind of unconventional educational tool. Psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, students who have experience of maybe spending six to eight hours in the kind of world that some of their patients seem to be living in. As a result they will be able to understand them better, be able to communicate with them better, and hopefully get better results. Which was sorely needed.

At that time psychiatry was medieval. They were using electroshock, they were using [inaudible] shock, we were using insulin, coma, there was even prefrontal

lobotomy was done at the time. I got very excited, it was like a possibility of a whole new approach, so I volunteered, and I had an experience that just transformed me completely. Within six hours professionally sent me in a completely different direction. It was combined actually, my preceptor was very interested in electroencephalography, so everybody had to have EEG before, during, and after. He was specifically interested in what's called driving the brain waves by exposing people to a very powerful stroboscopic light and different frequency, and picking up if the suboccipital brainwaves pick up the frequency. I had to agree also to have my brainwaves driven in the middle of this experiment.

Dave Asprey:

Wow. Where did they drive them?

Stanislav Grof:

It was like between the third and the fourth hour when it was culminating, this research assistant came and said it was time to drive the brainwaves. So she put me into this little cell, and I lie down and she put electrodes on my head. Then brought this gigantic strobe and turned it on. Then in the next moment there was light like I had never seen, I couldn't even imagine something like that existed. At the time I thought this is what it must have been like in Hiroshima when this thing went off. Today I think it was more like the dharma kaya, the primary clear light from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, that we're supposed to see at the time when we die.

My consciousness was catapulted out of my body. I sort of somehow ceased to exist, I felt extinguished, but I had a feeling that I became everything there was. This is the paradoxes from mystical experiences. You become nothing, and by becoming nothing you become everything. Then I had some experience coming back that I became part of the astronomical universe. As this was happening she was following the scientific protocol, starting from two frequencies per second, taking it to 60, back, leaving it in the alpha range and the delta range, theta range. Then turn it off and then my universe started shrinking again, and then I found the planet, I found Prague, I found the clinic and found my body.

But there was a major problem, because I didn't know how to align my consciousness. My consciousness was separate from my body. I couldn't figure out how to get those two together. At that point it was absolutely clear to me that what they taught me at the university was absolute nonsense that something like consciousness can be created a neurophysiological process that's in the brain. So I landed in a wonderful place. My brother was actually four years younger, he was in a medical school too, and so he was my sitter. We had a wonderful, wonderful evening then, and I was very, very impressed. I was already stuck with psychiatry. I felt if I'm in psychiatry this is by far the most interesting thing I can do with my life.

The study of these states became, like I say, my profession, my vocation, my passion. For 60 years I have done very little that would not be in one way or another related to these non-ordinary states.

Dave Asprey: So one powerful experience changed the direction for you?

Stanislav Grof: How ...

Dave Asprey: I'm just saying that night, that one time you tried it, changed your entire career, the whole path of your life?

Stanislav Grof: Well I was going to become a psychoanalyst, and then suddenly I became interested in consciousness. I actually became interested in a particular important subgroup, large subgroup, of these non-ordinary states, which have healing, transformative, heuristic, H-E-U-R, as a source of new information. Also evolutionary potential.

Dave Asprey: What do you mean by evolutionary potential?

Stanislav Grof: I believe if we had responsible work with these substances we would become a different species. You wouldn't see what you see in the television these days. This is mass insanity.

Dave Asprey: So everyone on CNN should take acid?

Stanislav Grof: CNN is [inaudible] words. I'm serious, I've seen in people who did it responsibly, transformation that would create a different species.

Dave Asprey: We're going to adjust your mic.

Stanislav Grof: People for whom violence is not an acceptable form of solving conflict, people who are aware of the fact that we are deeply embedded in nature, that we cannot destroy nature without destroying ourselves. People who feel like global citizens, rather than being first Czechs or Russians, or Americans. People who are for international peace. People develop spirituality which is ecumenical, which is universal, which is all embracing, all inclusive. It's not organized religion which unites a certain group of people and puts it against another, you know, we're Christians, you're Pagans, we're Muslims, you're Jews.

It's something that's a source of bloodshed. Or even within organized religions hundreds of years of bloodshed between Catholics and Protestants, and Sunnis and [inaudible]. It's not that religions didn't help the planet where we are, but this kind of mystical spirituality is finding mystical branches in people who have really serious spiritual practice that could change where we are.

Dave Asprey: We talk about non-ordinary states of consciousness, if they become ordinary that would certainly drive the change of the species, but then what happens to the ordinary states of consciousness we have today? If everyone was walking around, I'm exaggerating here, but walking around in these altered spiritual states, are things going to work?

Stanislav Grof: No, that's not the point. The non-ordinary state is transformative, and then you have to ground it. You have to go back, you have to get a zip code and a place to stay. This was the problem with the hippies of course in the '60s. This was an unbalanced way of using this. But no, it's not enough to go and [inaudible] and stay there. The experience can be transformative and then I believe it doesn't have any value unless it changes the way you are in the world.

Dave Asprey: So the idea is by introducing people to the fact that these states are possible, and possible through breathing, through Holotropic Breathwork, or through a variety of ways you might get there, there's many spiritual practices. That that one experience changes the way you see the world. So when you're back to your ordinary state of reality you act differently.

Stanislav Grof: The transformation takes more than one session, but certainly it's a way, and what's very interesting is that a lot of people, increasing numbers of people it seems, are going into these states for [inaudible]. Of course, let me say I mentioned that I was interested in a special sub-category of these experiences that have the healing and the transformative potential. Those are experiences like the shaman's experience is part of the initiatory journey. Or they use in their work with clients, this is what the native cultures experience in the rights of passage. This is what the initiates experience in the ancient mysteries of death and rebirth.

With what I call the technologies of sacred that were developed in some of the great religions. The different types of yoga, the Hindu practices, the different schools of Buddhism, Daoism, Christian mysticism, Sufism, and so on. Those are very, very important experiences. But we don't have a category of a mystical experience in psychiatry, spiritual experience. Everybody who would have a spiritual experience and has some problems with it, gets tranquilizers and is hospitalized and gets a diagnosis. So my late wife Christina and I developed a concept of spiritual emergency, crisis of spiritual opening. People who have spontaneous experiences like this, which can be healing, which can be transformative, but are misdiagnosed.

People are basically punished for them. So as the situation in the world is getting worse and worse, more and more people are going into these spontaneous kind of experiences, and we don't have a supportive system that will use the healing potential, the transformative potential of these states. Again, we tranquilize and hospitalize the wrong people.

Dave Asprey: At the same time that you were starting in research, it's pretty well documented, the US government and probably the Russians as well, were looking at using LSD and various other substances to gain control of people's mind. There are people who say if you use the stuff you become more vulnerable, you could be mind-washed, it could be dangerous. What do you say to that whole set of discussions?

Stanislav Grof: Psychedelic substances like LSD are tools. What's going to happen depends on what we call certain setting. Who does it to whom, under what circumstances, for what kind of purpose. Somehow wrongly everything that [inaudible] good and bad that happened with LSD was attributed to the drug itself. You can imagine a discussion about a knife. Is this knife a terribly dangerous thing or is it a useful thing? You would have a discussion where one of the people who discuss it is the chief of New York police who talks about the number of murders that were committed somewhere in back lanes in New York City. The surgeon general will say, "Wait a minute, if you have the right kind of training, you can do great things with a knife." There would be a housewife who would say, "It's a wonderful tool for cutting salami or vegetables."

Dave Asprey: Or butter.

Stanislav Grof: An artist will say, "I use it all the time in clay sculptures." So we would understand that we're not talking the knife it's bad or good, it's about ways of using it in a good way or in a bad way.

Dave Asprey: So LSD-

Stanislav Grof: You see, there are wrong ways of using psychedelics, I would not do raves, for example, where people don't know what they are taking, they are exposing, or there's something illegal that the police can come at any point. That's minimizing somehow the tremendous benefits they could have, and maximizing the risks. So those are wrong ways. Then there are vicious ways, this has been explored by the military of all countries, but secret services. CIA had this problem, MK Ultra, when they were hiring prostitutes and ask them to put LSD into the coke and they were filming it through one-way screens, and trying to learn how they can discredit foreign diplomats or politicians and stuff. They were thinking about this is extremely powerful substance, millionths of a gram are very effective. Put it in the water supply of a city, as a chemical weapon, or use it in aerosols and so on.

Dave Asprey: Wow, I'm glad they didn't do that.

Stanislav Grof: The industrial civilization has just abused just about everything. Nuclear energy, lasers, rockets, biology, microbiology. So how could we handle reasonably psychedelics? It's a powerful tool, you have to have mature people using it.

Dave Asprey: Very well said.

Stanislav Grof: It has incredible influence on creativity, this is now becoming very clear. Creativity both artistic, but also stimulating let's say scientific insights. For example, Francis Crick admitted that taking LSD helped him to create the molecule of DNA. [inaudible] was another one who did the polymerase chain reaction, [inaudible] Nobel Prize for ... It's quite specific that this was due to this process, but Douglas Engelbart who developed the mouse, described quite in

detail how he was using LSD to stimulate his creativity. Micro-dosing is now rampant in Silicon Valley, so it's well-known. There are all kinds of good uses, but there are also dangerous potentials in psychedelics.

Dave Asprey: How did you feel when it became illegal?

Stanislav Grof: I thought it was tragic. I thought psychiatry lost the best thing that has ever happened.

Dave Asprey: How long did it take you to find another way with breathing?

Stanislav Grof: Well I was very lucky, I came to the United States on a scholarship. This was '67, and I joined the last surviving official psychedelic project when Walter Pahnke disappeared in the Atlantic Ocean during diving. You know that story?

Dave Asprey: Do tell for our audience.

Stanislav Grof: Yeah, he went scuba diving and disappeared, they never found the body or the equipment, so I inherited it, and was actually heading that research for a while.

Dave Asprey: Was this Harvard? I don't remember what university this was. Where was he doing the research when he disappeared? I don't remember.

Stanislav Grof: He was on our staff in the Maryland [inaudible].

Dave Asprey: Oh, in Maryland, okay cool, go it. And went diving and ...

Stanislav Grof: He did this famous experiment, Good Friday experiment. He did in the Marsh Chapel at Harvard.

Dave Asprey: Talk about this, it's famous amongst people who are fans, but I think a lot of listeners probably haven't heard the story.

Stanislav Grof: Good Friday?

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

Stanislav Grof: Well there was a situation where he knew that psychedelic LSD, psilocybin, could induce what people considered mystical experiences. So he designed and experiment where on Good Friday during the divine service he got a group of students of theology and half of them got psilocybin, half of them got what was considered placebo. Very problematic, because it was niacin that gives you hot flashes and makes you itch. So after an hour everybody who had what. Some people got [inaudible], some people were scratching.

Dave Asprey: Not very double-blind.

Stanislav Grof: He developed a very, very interesting instrument where he could compare that, and he found out that he couldn't distinguish the experiences that people had with psilocybin from what you find in spiritual literatures. This was actually repeated several years ago by Johns Hopkins, very, very well planned study, methodologically well. Where they were proving that psilocybin can actually induce mystical experiences, which is something extremely important because we have freedom of religion in this country, so it's something about any legislation that blocks people from doing it. We also know that for centuries this has been used by native culture with no question that this is a tool, a ritual, spiritual tool.

Dave Asprey: So is Burning Man a good thing or a bad thing?

Stanislav Grof: Well you know, that's one of the wild ways of using psychedelics. On the positive side, there are a lot of quite experienced people who can help some of them who would be in trouble. It's a somewhat more receptive environment than people would have somewhere in an open square in a big city.

Dave Asprey: That's a sort of a ...

Stanislav Grof: It's an amazing phenomenon, yes.

Dave Asprey: ... sort of a yes and a no at the same time, I would say.

Stanislav Grof: I don't think you get the best out psychedelic doing it there, but ...

Dave Asprey: It's better than Disney Land.

Stanislav Grof: Exactly. They have certainly ... They are aware ... People [inaudible] experience, they're aware what can happen and they have systems of support for people who get into trouble.

Dave Asprey: I once camped at Burning Man next to a group of government physicians, very, very high-end ones. One of the guys who'd spent many, many years working with hallucinogens could literally look at people dancing and say, "MDMA, MDMA, meth, acid, mushrooms." Just by how you danced, and he was there to help, right? They're definitely can be bad experiences in a place like that, but I would say it's safer than a lot of places. But clearly it's an uncomfortable place, and I know people who've had negative experiences as well. Are there people ... There are people who are listening to this who are thinking, all right, maybe I should try this one time. I want to try this one time. Should they? How do you know?

Stanislav Grof: I don't want to be a pied piper responsible for-

Dave Asprey: No, that's why I'm asking.

Stanislav Grof: This is a big thing, when you decide to do something like that. We never ever try to advertise it, we were always being available for people who wanted the experience, but I would never tell people they should do it.

Dave Asprey: It's not about a should or a shouldn't, I'm asking ... People hear this and go, "All right, I've been interested, maybe I do want to try this." How do they go about the thought process to decide I want to take the legal risk, I want to take the personal risk, I want to take the psychiatric risk. How would you advise someone to go through the thought process of deciding whether they want to do this?

Stanislav Grof: Well have money, you probably have money, you go to Peru, you go to-

Dave Asprey: That's what I did the first time.

Stanislav Grof: ... Mexico, you go to Brazil, it's legal. You can have Ayahuasca with an [inaudible] people only [inaudible]. You're legal, you know what you're taking, and hopefully will have somebody experienced guiding you.

Dave Asprey: My first time was Ayahuasca in Peru actually about 20 years ago, before it was cool, I guess. Now I think it's a little bit dangerous to go to Peru, because you get off at the airport and there's guys holding up signs that they'll do it. These are not things that you want to do with someone who doesn't know what they're doing, because they're not without risk.

Stanislav Grof: Yeah, you have to be very careful, you have to do some sort of exploration to know that these are decent people, and experienced people.

Dave Asprey: There are lots of teenagers who feel attracted to all sorts of things they shouldn't do, including drugs like this. Is there a minimum age of safety? I can't imagine kids doing this stuff, but I also know-

Stanislav Grof: There is a whole tradition, cultural tradition, there are rites of passage. This is something that was ... The term was coined by Arnold van Gennep, with a G-E-N-N-E-P, who was an anthropologist and studied native cultures. They all have these what they call rites of passage where people in regular intervals, usually at the time of some important biological or social transitions, they have these powerful experiences. Either with psychedelics, or with some powerful non-drug methods.

Dave Asprey: Fasting.

Stanislav Grof: Somehow all the cultures decided independently that the time of puberty was the time for going through some very powerful transformative experience. I think the teenagers are tuning into the tradition, you see? There is that need for ... It's also a question of individuation. If you see what was happening in these rights of passage, it's powerful technology. The [inaudible] people were experiencing death/rebirth experiences, psycho-spiritual death/rebirth. This was

interpreted as dying in the old role, and being born into the new. So you die as a boy or as a girl, and now you are an adult once you've been through this. Nobody dares to treat you as a child, not like our culture where you can be 50 and go to your parents and they still making decision what kind of car you should buy, and who you should meet.

Then you are really a member of the tribe with all the duties and all the responsibility. If you look at the deep psychodynamic of it, the death/rebirth experience is drawing on what I call the perinatal level, the memories of biological birth. We are entangled in the unconscious with the maternal organism. We spent nine months total dependency, and then we were taken for this rollercoaster of birth. Then we emerge into long dependency as being nursed, and toddlers, and so on. So it creates a kind of sense of deep emotional kind of a dependency and entanglement. So going through the death/rebirth experience you bring that memory into consciousness and you complete that process. You really separate from your mother. You become an adult in a different way.

The western culture is really a culture of adolescence. If you look what kind of Hollywood movies are being made, how people behave in relation to weapons and solving of political problems and so on, it's more like toddlers who are getting these incredibly powerful weapons to play with. 100,000 people, sure we'll straighten them up.

Dave Asprey: It's not a pretty thing. Do you think that Holotropic breathing can serve as that rite of passage for teenagers?

Stanislav Grof: Definitely. I mean it has all those elements. Similar things have been used, breath has been used as one of the ways. There are others. They went out of their way to create safe and effective ways of creating these Holotropic states. This involves fasting, sleep deprivation, stay in the mountains on a vision quest, or desert, or in the Arctic in a cave. It involves the all night dancing, drumming.

Dave Asprey: I think I've done all those things.

Stanislav Grof: Fire walking.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, did that with Tony Robbins a couple of weeks ago. Those are important.

Stanislav Grof: So they really value these experiences enormously, and they should because they really have tremendous potential in many different ways.

Dave Asprey: So, rites of passage are missing, and I don't think that I would recommend that parents use substances to bring this about in your kids, for all kinds of reasons. That it's not necessary when there are even things as simple as, "You're going to spend two days in that cave, we'll be back for you." That's plenty scary for a 13 year old, even if they don't know you have a webcam watching them. This is

largely missing. But you mentioned something kind of in passing that I think is critically important. In fact, let me poll the audience. How many of you experienced something to do with your birth when you were doing Holotropic breathing? Just give me a show of hands. Roughly 20% of our audience. The first time I did Holotropic breathing-

Stanislav Grof: Many of had it the first time?

Speaker 4: Yes.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, so is that normal?

Stanislav Grof: So you see, when I was in training analysis for seven years when in the fourth year I was sort of touching on some material which were from the nursing period in my dream. That was considered really successful psychoanalysis with people in psychedelics, or in the ... You get to birth sometimes in the first session.

Dave Asprey: In the very first session.

Stanislav Grof: It's a very, very powerful way of accessing your unconscious.

Dave Asprey: It's interesting, because you become aware of the sensations you had at the time. It was something that really helped me understand some of the patterns I have in my life derived from very, very early childhood experiences, which is still I would say largely not accepted by some schools of psychiatry. Certainly, if I talk to my parents about that, they're like, "You can't remember it, therefore it has no effect." How do you respond to the people that say it has no bearing?

Stanislav Grof: That it has no ...?

Dave Asprey: That those very, very early childhood birth related things just have no bearing, they're too early to have had an effect. How do you respond to people who say that?

Stanislav Grof: Say it once more exactly.

Dave Asprey: Some people say what happens when you are born has no effect on you later in life because you can't remember it. How do you respond to those people?

Stanislav Grof: Well let's look at the situation, the medical profession, it has not been accepted that birth is a psycho [inaudible]. Which is bizarre, because there's general agreement actually that what happens right after birth, nursing, is extremely important. What kind of nursing you have, what kind of mothering you have. Even child psychiatrists and obstetricians accept the concept of bonding that the look between the newborn and the mother can influence the whole relationship. Now how will it be possible that birth, that could be 20, 30, 40

hours where this is a potentially life threatening situation, or a person died in the birth canal, had to be resuscitated, how come this would not be a psycho-trauma?

I cannot relate to that kind of logic. Of course, there's a powerful ... I think we talked a little bit before, we have this meek kind of psychology where it is about nursing, toilet training, and Freudian analysis, and things that happened in childhood and so on. Then we suddenly are surprised when there is a Holocaust, or Stalin's archipelago or what happened in Tibet when Chinese ... Or when you watch the ... I watch the tube and I think it's a different species. I don't relate to what they're doing in Syria and so on. So where is that coming from? In my experience, it's this perinatal level, there's the memories of hours of birth canal struggle, vital struggle.

Then there's the whole also of the dimension of the psyche that also has not been accepted by academic psychiatry, which is the Jungian, of course. Very, very powerful insights about the archetypal dynamics and so on, collective unconscious. So that's where these kinds of impulses coming from. They aren't coming from early childhood.

Dave Asprey: They're coming from birth, not early childhood?

Stanislav Grof: The post-natal is important, but some of the other things are paramount important. If you think about it, let's say we will compare a situation where you just broke up with a woman. You're really, there's a trauma, it's one kind of trauma. Four of us will take you to the swimming pool and hold your head under water for a couple minutes, so that you get a sense of the impact of the trauma. With birth you could have hours you cannot breathe. You're squeezed and you experience pain and so on. That is recorded in the organism, and then if you had good childhood, good mothering, it creates a kind of buffering zone.

So it's deep there, and you might not know about it unless you do something, do some experiential work, or spiritual practice or something like that. That material is there, and for many people, particularly if they had bad post-natal kind of a situation, it stays there as a very powerful force that creates nightmares and then even beyond that it can erupt in everyday life and create powerful psychological disturbances.

Dave Asprey: What I figured out when I did Holotropic breathing in combination with birth regression in the same week, was that I came into the world, I had the cord wrapped around my neck. So I was basically getting choked, but I didn't get brain damage or anything like that. Then as soon as I came out, I'd already been traumatized more than average, they put me in a warming chamber. Which means immediately taken away from the mother, and I actually viscerally remember the sensation of this. Just sitting there going, "Great, I don't know what just happened, but I'm all alone." Then I said, "You know, I guess then I'll just be alone." Literally didn't make good connections to people for 30 years because of stuff that happens very, very early, like right at birth.

When I learned about that I was kind of pissed off, like I wish someone would have told me a little earlier, because all this suffering was sort of unnecessary. Once you acknowledge or you see a pattern like that, you can do something about it.

Stanislav Grof: But the first thing you have to have a kind of theory that alerts you that something might be there.

Dave Asprey: That it's possible.

Stanislav Grof: If you have professional people who know, and they tell you that it's irrelevant because your cortex was not myelinated, as it is called, it was not mature enough to register birth and create a memory of birth. It was mature enough to experience bonding, so it didn't myelinase a few minute after you were born, it's still the same brain that was there in the birth canal. Unless we correct this we have a totally misguided psychiatry. We just don't have decent understanding what we're dealing with emotional psychosomatic problems, and we don't have effective ways of dealing with it. We either do talking, or we use just suppression of symptoms, which is not therapy. Increasingly psychiatry is becoming finding ways of suppressing symptoms, and not dealing with the reasons for the symptoms, the underlying problem.

Dave Asprey: Your work has highlighted how important the pre and perinatal period is, because you saw these patterns in your patients and you started studying this. I think it's blindingly obvious to people who look at the research today, and it helped me to write my first book, which is about what do you do for a baby in the womb, and even during birth to have kids who are ... Basically have better epigenetic expression. The implications of this are that we need to change how children are born. What is C section doing to kids? If you're born through surgery versus ...

Stanislav Grof: Well usually people say when I talk about birth trauma, say, "Why don't we take out everybody with a cesarean section?" It's just another type of trauma. Major trauma occurs. I'm very, very concerned about what's happening with cesarean sections. 15 years ago Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake and myself were invited to Argentina. There was a weekend which was new approaches to physics, new approaches to biology, new approaches to psychology. We had this fascinating discussion. The rate of cesarean birth was 75%, three out of four babies born cesarean section. Before we do that, we want to know what kind of impact this will have.

The general attitude which I was brought up with in my medical studies, and it's still true for much of the profession, is that it doesn't matter. It doesn't have psychological impact. You just want to deal with the body mechanics. When the baby's born you count the fingers, and check the blood groups, and so on. We used to put a few drops of some antibiotic into the eyes in case the mother had gonorrhoea.

Dave Asprey: That's still required by law in California.

Stanislav Grof: Fine, you know, whatever else was happening, no problem. Now it's different. You probably know that there is now association or prenatal, perinatal psychology annual conference. Also international conferences where there's a meeting of the people who do this kind of psychotherapeutic work and midwives and obstetricians, and they learn from each other. [crosstalk] discipline.

Dave Asprey: It was the founder of that group who did my birth regression, and led my first Holotropic breathing, Barbara Findeisen, probably someone you know.

Stanislav Grof: Barbara Findeisen is a great friend. She was running the Pocket Ranch where we were doing a lot of training.

Dave Asprey: There you go.

Stanislav Grof: She's very, very experienced.

Dave Asprey: I was very fortunate. She was the one that you guys might have heard me tell the story on Bulletproof Radio before where she said, "Tell me about your birth." I said, "I don't know, hospitals, vaginas." I said, "And I had the cord wrapped around my neck." She said, "Yeah, I thought so." She puts up this chart saying, "Here's all your strengths and weaknesses." And my whole personality, like a butterfly pinned to a board. I'm like, "How could you possibly know that?" She knows that because she said, "Well there's a science around what happens when you're born, it's predictable." So I was very fortunate to have just been connected with her right when I was ready to learn some more and to hear some things.

Stanislav Grof: She's a wonderful, wonderful lady.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, just a great human being. She runs something called the STAR Foundation, which is still operating. It scares me when you talk about the evolution of humanity and all, if you look at the C section rate, or you look at just the typical, very traumatic birth that we put people through today. You want people to grow up to be well-grounded, well-adjusted people if the first thing you do is you basically bring them into the world and smack them in the face a few times and say, "There, how about that?" Which is roughly what a hospital birth looks like unfortunately these days, at least in the west. It's kind of frightening. Do you think that the way people are born and have been born for the past 20 or 30 years affects global politics, affects [crosstalk]?

Stanislav Grof: I believe that what happened in the '50s, I think, when obstetricians started using routinely anesthesia and twilight sleep and all those things, that it is somehow related to the fact that we have this drug epidemic.

Dave Asprey: Interesting.

Stanislav Grof: If you imagine there's something called imprinting, which is known from ethology, which is the study of animal instincts and stuff. The things that happen right after you're born are extremely powerful influences on your life. For example, there are people like Konrad Lorenz or Nikolaas Tinbergen doing these experiments. You have little ducklings and there's a period of about 16 hours whatever moves around becomes the mother. So if you remove the mother and you walk around in red rubber shoes they will follow rubber shoes, not the mother. They actually used it in a wonderful movie which was called Winged Migration. Everybody wondered ... Has anybody saw it?

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Stanislav Grof: There's incredible shots, close-ups of birds flying. How did they get this? They imprinted these little birds on this four-seater plane, so they always following the plane, wherever the plane would go. These are incredibly strong influences. Now if you ... Let's say you are in the birth canal, and it's a very, very difficult situation, but there's a successful completion, it actually leaves you with a kind of cellular imprints of optimism. I can deal with life if challenges come in the future, I have done it before, I can do it again. Now if you couldn't complete it successfully, you needed the forceps or the plumbers-

Dave Asprey: Suction, yeah.

Stanislav Grof: Suction cup and so on, that gives you a feeling we hear from people, they say, I get involved in projects, I can work in the early stages, but I lose somehow confidence just before the completion. I have to bring in some kind of assistance into it. Now if you are in a difficult situation the birth canal, and suddenly the solution comes with a drug, it's a powerful imprinting telling you, you are in trouble, if you're uncomfortable in the future, go for drugs. Do not stay there and see if you can somehow resolve that situation. I believe that it creates a generation that's dependent on drugs. I mean I have medical training, I know that sometimes you have to do it, but this was done unnecessarily. I talked to a lot of mothers who wanted to deliver naturally, and they were sort of basically given the drugs anyway.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, there's no doubt that drugs can be necessary, and C section can save lives, and there's nothing wrong with doing that when it's necessary. I'm very concerned about doing it optionally because of the things we just talked about. There's even something else called self-attachment that we did with our kids. Which you talk about those early patterns, and I look at our bodies, even our brains primarily as pattern recognition systems. We pick up patterns with more fidelity as we mature, but we remember patterns. What we did with our children, as soon as they were born, we set them on Lana's stomach, near the nipples, but not too close. You can actually see a baby who's minutes old, as long as the room is calm and dark and peaceful, it doesn't work if there's

blinking monitors, and fluorescent lights and strobe lights, and needles in your heel to see if you're bleeding, or whatever else.

You can actually see the baby will taste the amniotic fluid on their hand, and the nipples will smell like amniotic fluid, and the baby will actually slowly find its way. It's like it's very first motor movement is to find food, and then they actually attach themselves to the nipple. You can see this look of triumph from a little baby like, "Yes! I got the nipple." I hope that did good things, I'll tell you when my kids are 40. But those experiences they do set up patterns that really matter. I think just by acknowledging that it can matter, we can start studying it more, and we can start acknowledging this in medicine.

Now let's say that you're like me, and you had a pretty ... The technical term is a pretty fucked up birth. There are people who have far worse births than I do, and people who have much better ones, but I would say no one goes through the birth canal without getting smashed a little bit. What do we do about that? People listening, people in the audience here, how do you go about resolving those traumas [crosstalk].

Stanislav Grof: Well they're different things, if it makes sense, we are thinking individuals. Does it make sense that the hours in the birth canal would not be a psycho-trauma.

Dave Asprey: Let's assume it is, yeah. If it is a psycho-trauma, what do we do about it, given that we all have it?

Stanislav Grof: We recognize that we carry this, and there are ways that we can get there, we can complete it. We can experience the emotions, we can release all the pent up energies. A lot of people carry enormous amount of blocked energy. The [inaudible] character armor and all the pains in shoulders and back and so on, without any kind of medical finding. No structural, these are all jammed energies that we carry. All this can be ... It's the software, I mean it's negotiable, it's workable, until it starts creating some changes, like arthritic changes. After years of tension in the jaws you develop real structural damage to the [inaudible]. Then it's too late to try to do some kind of experiential work on it. For years, when you're young you can free your jaw, you can free your shoulder. You can free your lumbar area.

Dave Asprey: One of the ways of doing this is Holotropic breathing, and some people watching may not be familiar with this at all. You have a website for Holotropic breathing.

Stanislav Grof: I have a personal [inaudible].

Dave Asprey: What's the URL they could go to, to find out what it is?

Stanislav Grof: It's my full name, if you want to go there, StanislavGrof.com. There are all kinds of ... Many other things, interviews and papers, and there's access to a photo

gallery, the whole history of Transpersonal movement, all the major characters involved.

Dave Asprey: Okay, it's S-T-A-N-I-S-L-A, Stanislav, L-A-V.

Stanislav Grof: L-A-V.

Dave Asprey: G-R-O-F dot ...

Stanislav Grof: G-R-O-F dot com.

Dave Asprey: Dot com. We'll put that in the chat field Bulletproof team who is monitoring this will do that, and it'll be in the show notes for you as well.

Stanislav Grof: Also books, a lot of books.

Dave Asprey: The Holotropic Universe is one of your books, I think that explained this really well. If people were to read one of your books to get an understanding of your life's work, what would the top book be?

Stanislav Grof: There are two books, one is called Psychology of the Future. This is deliberately kind of provocative title. I was writing books like Beyond the Brain and Spiritual Emergency, and it's not sufficiently eye-catching, so if you call it Psychology of the Future people will notice, they will either get excited and curious, or they get pissed off that you think that you know what the psychology of the future should be. It's called Psychology of the Future. That has chapters that each of them, or most of them have a book behind them. So you get a sense of what the content is, because people says with Freud, this kind of research takes you into many different areas. He started with psychoneurosis and then he started looking at the psychopathology of everyday life, and Chaucer and then art and revolutions.

So when people have experiences like this it takes you into very, very different area. Some new understanding of death, for example. A lot of people have mystical ... One book is called Cosmic Game, where people ask questions like what is this universe like? Is it really just a material system, or does it have some kind of blueprint? Is there a superior intelligence? If there is something like god, what is my relationship to god, and so on. So there's a whole lot of people who traveling and they get these kind of insights into philosophical questions, metaphysical questions. There's insights into violence.

Dave Asprey: I would highly encourage you to pick up one of Dr. Grof's books, because he spent an enormous amount of time studying these things. I would say one of the world's leading authorities on these non-ordinary states, and looking at them from a well-grounded, western medical place, as well as from a non-ordinary state. I've certainly learned a lot from your work. I still want to go back to the question though, if someone's listening to this like, "Oh wow, it turns out

I was breach, or I had birth trauma. I just heard this, now I know that that might explain why I'm pissed off all the time, or whatever else." Now they're sitting there feeling probably kind of angry that no one told them this before. What's the next step if you realize I may have birth trauma, and I may want to do something about it. What's the first thing that a person should do when they figure out, "All right, I want to work on this."

Stanislav Grof: Well there are a lot of possibilities. I was listening to a little bit of your history, and you are finding ways, all kinds of ways. I don't know if you would consider it useful, what you have done. I would think so.

Dave Asprey: It was terribly useful, I just want to offer more actionable advice. I was lucky, a friend said, "Dave, you should go to this ranch place, and I'm not going to tell you what it is, because if I tell you, you won't go." I'm like, "Let's see, I just got out of a really bad relationship, I don't really know what else to do, but I'm completely unhappy in my career, even though I'm really successful. I have to do something, so I've got nothing to lose." I was lucky that a friend sent me to the right place. I could just as easily have probably shaved my head and joined a cult or something, I have no idea. I'm glad I didn't go that path. So for someone who's listening and saying, "I want some guidance." Is finding a transpersonal psychologist a good idea as a place to explore?

Stanislav Grof: Obviously. I believe in experiential self-exploration and therapy more than talking about myself, which I had done for seven years.

Dave Asprey: Sure.

Stanislav Grof: If you ask did, "Did it change you?" I say well, "I changed, but seven years is a long time, they will change anyway." I loved every minute of it, I was analyzing my dreams, and every slip of my tongue and so on. But if you ask me, "Did it change you?" I wouldn't find any significant relationship between what I was doing on that couch, and any significant changes in my life. If you ask me, I was already asked actually, "What did your LSD session do for you?" I said, "Well, that was a different story. There was one person walking into that room in the morning, and another one walking out in the evening. There's no question in what did that." There's a significant difference in the power. If it's really used properly, the significant power in the efficacy of those approaches.

It doesn't have to be psychedelic, there's re birthing, there's the Holotropic breathwork, all kinds of other ways of working with breath. I would recommend going to ... Once you go to a workshop, you get a sense of what it could do. But then if you want to work with it, you would have to join a group that's meeting regularly and continue. Especially a group that's involve the same people, a trust develops in the group and people actually support each other. So you use all that healing energy which is in the group as well.

Dave Asprey: One of the things I noticed when I learned about Holotropic breathing, for people who aren't in the audience, because you all experienced this, but people listening. What happens if for several hours one person does special breathing exercises that put them in an altered state of consciousness, while another person basically watches over them and takes care of them, and they change places. You're listening to music that helps you to see things, and you go places and you experience things that are not easy to put words to, but it's an altered healing experience. Can you talk about the psychology and the role of being the person who's watching, or watching over, or helping someone doing the work, versus being the person doing the breathing? What's the reason for having both?

Stanislav Grof: I spent a lot of time and also Christina, my late wife, around Swami Muktananda [inaudible] yoga both in India and in different places in the world as he was traveling. He actually came to San Francisco and had a group in the ... What is it? As you cross Golden Gate Bridge and [inaudible] the Palace of Fine Art, is it?

Dave Asprey: Yeah, the Palace of Fine Arts, right.

Stanislav Grof: The big hall of 1,500 seats or so. All the psychiatrists, psychologists came to pick the brain of this yogi, he's traveled 40 years in India. They said, "What could I do with my patients?" They wanted techniques. He said, "No, you don't understand, you work with yourself, and then these things will come automatically." So people paid much less attention to changing themselves than finding some kind of technique. So each psychotherapy gives you a different technique, but unless you change yourself as an instrument, it's not going to do very much. If you just look at the situation, we have any number of schools, psychotherapy, each of them tells you something different. There's no unanimity, no agreement as to what are the most important motivating forces in the psyche, why symptoms develop, what they mean, and what do you do with your patients? What kind of technique you are using.

If you want to do therapy you flip a coin, you choose a school, each school gives a different story what's wrong with you, and you'll be asked to do something different. If I am a beginning psychiatrist I look at the market, and then one of the schools starts talking to me, like for me it was Freud. Wow, that guy has got it, this is where I'm going to get my training. It says more about me than about Freud. What is the alternative to this? If you work with non-ordinary Holotropic states, you activate, you engage a self-healing intelligence. In other words, something starts coming up. If you look at it, it's going to be just what you need.

If I'm doing verbal therapy and I get to figure out what is relevant, what isn't relevant, I've got a problem, particularly if I know something about different schools. I usually tell a kind of anecdote, a story from my own analysis. I had an analyst who was, I want to say an elderly gentleman, he was probably in his 70s, much younger than I am, he looked ancient at that time. Mistake was that he fell asleep once during the session, and you had to do something to try to bring him back into the process. There were about seven of us, psychologists,

psychiatrists, about the same age. We talked about it, and we were making jokes and so on. We could also have seminars when we were borrowing books because the Nazis destroyed them and the Communists. So we had to borrow books from his library, we were discussing cases, stories, and so on.

Then one of us asked the question, just purely theoretical, "What happens if a psychoanalyst falls asleep if I keep free associating, does analysis continue? Is the process interrupted? Does it require a really awake and aware analyst?" Should you be refunded because money is so important in psychoanalysis? He couldn't say this doesn't happen, he knew we knew, so he had to do something about it. So he said, "Yeah, it can happen. Sometimes you're tired, you're recovering from a flu, you didn't sleep enough, yeah it can happen." He says, "But if you are in this business for a long time, you fall asleep only when the stuff that's coming up is irrelevant. When something important comes up you wake up and you're right there for your analysis."

He was from Russia, and he loved also Pavlov, the Nobel Prize winning guy who [inaudible] conditioned reflexes, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. Pavlov talked a lot about inhibition of the cortex, and he said sometimes when your cortex is inhibited like in sleep, there can be a waking point. That certainly is true in hypnosis, the hypnotist can get through to you. Pavlov's favorite example was a mother who can sleep through heavy noises, but when her own child starts moaning, she wakes up and she's right there for the baby. It's just like Pavlov's mother, when something important comes, you wake up, you're right there. Well I thought about it, and I thought, important according to whom? Is that according to Freud, is according to Reich? Is it according to Fromm? Is it according to Karen Horney? All the people who created these different schools.

So if you would be doing verbal therapy, the attention of the therapist is shaped by their specific training, what is important, what isn't important. There's no agreement in these schools. So what happens in this Holotropic state is Holotropic state creates a situation where those contents in your unconscious that have a strong emotional charge, and they are close enough to the threshold of consciousness, they emerge for processing. So it's not up to me to decide what is important, what is important. I have to work with whatever comes up in this process. We have to learn to support the process that people are ... We're not the fixers that are coming with a brilliant interpretation, diagnosis, stuff like that. It's basically a process of self-healing.

It's a feminine method, the masculine method you try to figure out what is happening there and what do I do? This is more like midwifery, you are there, the process has its own intelligence, and you're just supporting it, and you help it when it gets stuck. A good obstetrician does the [inaudible], when they see how do I get the baby out? Go there with the forceps and wrestle it out. This is a self-healing intelligence. This is why these states that appear to be, from one perspective, pathological, are really powerful movements in the psyche to heal itself, to get rid of traumatic imprint. The story of incarnation could be very heavy. People can have prenatal problems, there could be RH incompatibility

where the immunological forces of the mother are attacking you already in the womb. There could be all kinds of traumas that the mother has, if she's abused by her husband, or she's sick, or emotionally disturbed.

Then you have the birth trauma, and whatever happens to people in the nuclear family, there are all kinds of dysfunctions in families, and so on. We carry a lot of trauma. So in these kinds of states the organism is trying to unload, is trying to get rid of this. When you start developing symptoms it's really an opportunity. Something is halfway out. Fritz Perls was doing it, he would ask you, "What do you feel now?" You tell him what symptom you have, and that's where you start. You're trying to do something to help it out, which is the opposite of what you do in allopathic medicine, you do something to keep it down. [crosstalk] to which there is a lot of birth dynamics in the psyche, this would be like when the head of the baby starts coming out you sort of push it back, prevent it from coming out.

Dave Asprey: It's a lot of information to absorb for someone who's first hearing this information, and says, "Wow, this stuff matters at all." Assuming that they got over that initial credibility gap, now we're suggesting that they might want to explore non-ordinary states. I would like to list some non-ordinary states that I'm aware of. Can you tell me good, good, bad, good?

Stanislav Grof: Okay.

Dave Asprey: So this is kind of a menu for people listening, or people in the audience, if you wanted to explore altered states that may allow you to get in touch with the visceral emotional side of things from a more feminine perspective than the, "I'm going to think my way through this." The one thing that Barbara Findeisen taught me was, "Dave, those are feelings, feelings don't have a reason. You can't think your way out of a feeling, because they don't listen to thoughts." So drumming, like drumming circles, Shamanic drumming, useful?

Stanislav Grof: Yeah, it's an ancient ...

Dave Asprey: All right, I think you're going to say yes to this one, blinking lights.

Stanislav Grof: Michael Harner is a very close friend.

Dave Asprey: Michael Harner, very famous guy who uses drumming.

Stanislav Grof: He's a close friend, he's living in Mill Valley where we do [inaudible 01:10:48].

Dave Asprey: Oh, excellent.

Stanislav Grof: He came to many of our month long and other workshops. Started the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and trained a lot of people how to work with Shamanic techniques.

Dave Asprey: Beautiful, so would definitely do that. You already talked about fasting, at least in the context of caves, or just fasting by itself for 10 day fasts, is that useful maybe?

Stanislav Grof: Definitely. In spiritual practice they tell you if you want to have spiritual experience you have light diet, or you fast. Again, a lot of people over do it, they think they want to make it in this lifetime, and people do crazy things with sleep and with ... You can overdo everything. Certainly light diet and fasting is important.

Dave Asprey: Okay, we talked about sleep deprivation, so staying up for a couple of days in the context of becoming more self-aware, not partying, might be helpful?

Stanislav Grof: Well, I like sleep too much. I had great difficulties when were in Ganesh [inaudible] in the Muktananda Ashram, the best time to meditate and to feel good is three o'clock in the morning. I always felt I feel fine the way I am, why would [inaudible] cold morning to meditate to feel good. I haven't done much of it myself, sleep deprivation.

Dave Asprey: Okay. How about Vipassana? Like extended periods of silence.

Stanislav Grof: Great.

Dave Asprey: Great.

Stanislav Grof: Again, another great friend, Jack Kornfield we have done over 30 seven-day retreats where we combine Vipassana with Holotropic breathwork.

Dave Asprey: Wow, that's got to be mind-opening.

Stanislav Grof: It's like a retreat with silence and meals and stuff, and those are very, very powerful transformative experiences. Jack is phenomenal, his sense of humor, he's a great teacher. We had amazing synchronicity. About two years ago I went to China for the first time to do the [inaudible] psychology and do the breathwork. What happened somebody who programmed my trip took me to the Beijing University on one particular evening, and then I found out that somebody who was organizing Jack Kornfield's trip tried to put him on the same podium on the same evening. He was attending some Buddhist conference in Singapore, they said, "Jack we have a possibility for you to make a side trip." So then finally we had to share the discussion, Kornfield/Grof discussion.

Dave Asprey: Wow.

Stanislav Grof: We've never met casually in any other city, unless we planned it together. Of all places to meet in Beijing on the same evening, was incredible synchronicity.

Dave Asprey: Totally random, right?

Stanislav Grof: This was a magical time in China. There was another synchronicity which was when Christina and I started the International Transpersonal Association we were looking for some kind of logo. I said, "What is this Sacred Geometry?" We came up with the nautilus shell. So on all the conferences, number of conferences, all the program and all the correspondence, always the nautilus shell. We were doing breathwork in [inaudible], which is the birthplace of Confucius. One of the participants came to me and said, "Stan I had a dream about you." I said, "What did you dream." She says, "Oh, my grand-grandmother appeared in the dream and she said we have a very precious stone for generations in our family, and it actually should go to Dr. Grof." She had a little velvet, blue velvet bag, and opened it up and it was a nautilus shell.

Dave Asprey: Wow.

Stanislav Grof: Now the nautilus is a marine mollusk, so it was from the ocean obviously, but it was found on the top of Mount Everest. I studied since the Himalayas were made, the way they see it was a crash of tectonic plates and so they lifted all this oceans to the tops, so they're finding these marine fossils on the top of ... They were all [inaudible] volcanic, so there are several different layers. So this thing is over 50 million years old symbol of the nautilus that we're bringing transpersonal psychology to China, and here comes this nautilus from the depths of the ocean and the top of Mount Everest. So the Chinese press talk about how great Holotropic breathwork is, but they were just totally blown by this synchronicity. We showed our stationary and then juxtaposed the image of the nautilus.

Dave Asprey: Wow. Has Holotropic breathwork taken off in China?

Stanislav Grof: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Good.

Stanislav Grof: Yeah, they really love it. They love the freedom of it. We don't have any rules for what people can do, what they cannot do. There are certain things that we don't like in our workshops. A lot of people when we were at Esalen took off their clothes, which was not a big deal because there was integrated bathing, and so on. If somebody does it in Hyatt, if there are some journalists there, this is what people are going to read about, somebody took off their clothes. But otherwise, the only rule is people don't destroy anything, or nobody gets hurt. There are no other rules, you just ... No behavior, no manifestations are crazy enough that we would think that it's inappropriate. We've seen powerful healing in the most strange ways. People talking in tongues and chanting mantras, and getting into lotus positions, or asanas.

Dave Asprey: I can tell you the first time I did this one of the women in the room, I heard about this afterwards because I was in an altered state myself. But apparently she ripped off all of her clothes and danced naked the entire time, and had a

profound healing experience. Like hey, no judgment here, that was what she needed to do. Stuff like that happens.

Stanislav Grof: That's very, very liberating, it's very liberating if you're part of a species that hasn't come to terms with its physiology. Like Janet Jackson sort of exposed her breast, it was for a week on the television.

Dave Asprey: It was a Holotropic induced wardrobe malfunction. On that-

Stanislav Grof: People actually found the liberating part of Esalen was the nudity there, feeling comfortable about your body.

Dave Asprey: It can be really important. We're coming up on the end of this episode of Bulletproof Radio and there's a question I've asked all guests on the show, and I'm really intrigued to hear what your thoughts are. If someone came to you tomorrow and said, "Dr. Grof, based on everything that you know, everything you've experienced, I'd like you to give me three pieces of advice that'll help me be a higher performing human. I'm going to be better at everything I do as a human being, the three most important things I need to know." What would they be?

Stanislav Grof: I would go with Jung in the first place. Jung said that you would not have a fulfilling life if your orientation is only outside. So spend some time in some kind of focused self-exploration. He talked about the fact that we have something that he called Self, sort of a higher entity, another instance, written with capital S. Then in these I would say Holotropic states, you cannot with it and get guidance from the collective unconscious. He talked about the integration, what is it? He did the active meditation. Little geriatric moment.

Dave Asprey: That's all right. You're allowed, any time you're over 80 you can-

Stanislav Grof: Somebody can be processed, individuation.

Dave Asprey: Individuation, okay cool.

Stanislav Grof: Individuation process. So you then live your life as a synthesis from what is on the outside responding to external circumstances, and then what you get from inside. You know, you combine it. During that combining, whatever you do in the external world with some focused self-exploration using that whole range of methods that we now have. You can experiment with them, like you do, and then find one of them might be your way.

Dave Asprey: Okay, so that was one.

Stanislav Grof: Then I think the other thing important is the recognition of the dimensions of the human psyche. We talked about it today, knowing that we have the perinatal level, that we have the transpersonal level. Find ways of connecting

with it. Spirituality of the kind that I was talking about. That sort of non-chauvinistic, non-denominational mystical kind of spirituality. Cultivate it any way you can. I believe that enriches life enormously. Joseph Campbell had another great one, it was following your bliss. Choose something that really works for you. Even if you momentarily are not getting any kind of monetary or other kind of [inaudible], just stay there, pursue, nourish yourself.

I have been extremely lucky, since my graduation I have been doing what I was fascinated by, interested in, and I was always surprised that they gave me money for it. I was doing what I wanted to do anyway.

Dave Asprey:

It's fascinating that you got put in this direction when you received that box from Sandoz Pharmaceuticals and had that experience, and said, "Wow, this is happening." When my brain wasn't working, and I was having some career problems actually as a result of it, I ordered the first batch of Smart drugs I ever received. These were very hard to find in the 1990s. I had to order them from Europe, and they came in a brown, unmarked box, and cost a lot of money. I opened up these nootropics, and the very first box that came out of it was Sandoz Pharmaceuticals. They were the manufacturers of Piracetam, the medical grade stuff, which is a smart drug I've taken for 20 years. That was one of the things that turned my brain back on, enough that I could learn all the things I know about human biology and psychology and everything else.

When you talked about opening the Sandoz box, that just came right to mind because if I hadn't of had that experience, I certainly wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today. It's pretty profound sometimes how just a little thing like that can make a difference. You've made though a lot more of a difference. I think the work you've done in the field of psychology isn't recognized enough. I'm hoping that by letting people understand just how broad, and how important your work is here on Bulletproof Radio, that we can get a few more people working with Holotropic breathing. And just understanding that the stuff that happened that you can't, or at least you think you can't remember, might have a real important effect.

It's easier to work on that stuff to make yourself happier and just better off, than it is to do a lot of other things like seven years on a couch, or a few weekends of doing really intense special breathing. You might find that it is, I'm going to call it a shortcut, but it's actually much deeper, and maybe more impactful than you're ever going to get with the long struggle that you otherwise would face.

Stanislav Grof:

You know, rather than giving one kind of advice, I would mention something else, we did about 30 month longs at Esalen. Then of course you know the 30 seven-day retreats with Jay. But people would spend a month at Esalen, everybody did eight Holotropic Breathwork sessions, and we were bringing people like Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, [inaudible], all the people, the rising stars in the '60s and so on, and yogis and shamans and so on. Then there was the integrated [inaudible] and there was also a lot of bodywork that people

would get all kinds of Trager and Rolfing, and so on. But we get a lot of letters from people who say that turned their life around. They can go back to that point and they started going in a different direction which turned out to be very fulfilling.

It's not a one-time thing, but it was like they experienced things, and they're now very interested in different kind of books. They were interested in going to different kind of lectures, and different kind of workshops. Then it started from there, it started snowballing, and suddenly life became something completely different, became very fulfilling and interesting. Something that wasn't there before. There's certain problems, it has to be done in tandem if you have a partner, because this can also break relationships. If somebody starts becoming interested really intensely in the spiritual pursuit, and the other person does not and maybe makes fun of it, and criticizes, this can really be enough. It's such an important fulfillment in life that people who discover they want to have it, and want to have a partner that would support that.

Dave Asprey: I'm happy you said that, and I've seen this over and over, not nearly as much as probably you have, but if one part of a couple, if one of the people goes on a spiritual path and the other person is unwilling to at least embrace and accept that, you can almost predict what's going to happen, they're going to split up.

Stanislav Grof: On the other hand, if both of them do it, that can just bring the relationship to whole other level.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, it's something you have to do together, but if your partner won't, quote, let you do it, you need to evaluate why that is anyway. On that note, it's a great honor to have you on Bulletproof Radio. Thank you for coming and presenting at the Be Unlimited Bulletproof event. I really, really appreciate your time and your work.

Stanislav Grof: Thank you very much.

Dave Asprey: We're going to take a break for 20 minutes, Mark? Do I have this right? A break and then an audience Q&A, is that the plan? We're done with our live broadcast?

Mark: Yeah, I think we're done with the live broadcast.

Dave Asprey: If you liked this on Facebook, would you share this with someone who would care? Hit like, that's what this is all about. If you could take the time to do that. I'll go through and our staff will go through and we'll answer some of your questions from the comments. But just likes and shares actually matter, especially for this depth of knowledge. It's a rare thing and I'm happy you're here and you had some time to watch it.