



Conscious Life presents

# ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

## Understanding anxiety with the Diamond Approach

Guest: Vince Draddy

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**[00:00:09] Alex Howard**

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Vince Draddy.

Firstly, Vince, welcome, and thank you so much for joining me.

**Vince Draddy**

Thank you, Alex. Nice to be here.

**Alex Howard**

I'm really excited to get into this interview. We're going to be exploring the Diamond Approach, I guess, in a sense, a methodology and a framework for both understanding anxiety, but also perhaps having a slightly different approach to working with anxiety.

To give you a bit of Vince's background, Vince has been a teacher of the Diamond Approach since 2002 and a student since 1990. He currently leads groups in the United States and Europe, and he has been actively engaged in spiritual work for four decades, including 2 years of study and practice in Asia. He resides in Charlottesville, Virginia, and is married with two children.

So I guess there's a couple of pieces to open up here, Vince, to start with. Maybe we should say in a moment a little bit about what the Diamond Approach is. Let's start there. Because before we come into understanding how the Diamond Approach uses anxiety, maybe just a few words about when we talk of this thing called the Diamond Approach, what is it that we're actually talking about?

**Vince Draddy**

Well, the Diamond Approach is, in simple terms, a modern spiritual path. So it's not based on anything. It's not a collection of things. It's our own path. It basically arose in the 70s by Hameed Ali and Karen Johnson, and the main practice is inquiry.

So there's not a belief system. There's not any special lifestyle you have to have. Mostly it's based on an interest in your direct experience. So in some ways, it's a mystical path because the orientation is your direct experience.

However, it includes a lot of the psychological knowledge that has exploded over the last 100 years. So it's not just we know there's a self, and the self causes problems for people, but we know the mechanics, the architecture. We understand also how to work with the self.

**[00:02:24]**

And that's what drew me to it, that it didn't require anything else, just a curiosity about your own experience. You didn't have to go live someplace else, you didn't have to have special powers. One genuine interest in one's own experience turns out to be able to open up to the mysteries of the universe and who we are and what reality is.

So there's a lot of teaching, many books, and I do those teachings and present those teachings, but always it fundamentally comes down to what are you experiencing right now? Everything is a support for that.

### **Alex Howard**

That's a great place to actually move to the next part of the question which is, from the lens or the perspective of the Diamond Approach, what is anxiety? When we're looking at it from that perspective of opening to direct experience and curiosity about that, how would you conceptualize the experience of anxiety?

### **Vince Draddy**

Before I get into how we see anxiety, I think it's useful to see, how do we even approach the question? What's the orientation? And so I would say three important things.

One, when we talk about anxiety, we're talking about suffering. Plain and simple. If you're feeling anxiety, you're suffering. First thing that's needed for any kind of suffering is compassion, kindness, love, acceptance, some version of that.

So I want to invite anyone who's approaching this question to start to bring that in first. And often it's easier to do with other people. You see someone else suffering, a natural compassion or kindness or love arises. Often more challenging with ourselves, but as we understand what anxiety is, the more understanding we have about it, usually it brings more compassion, more kindness.

So first, for everyone, I think that's vitally important. Second is to bring an open mindedness. Now, I'm sure in this conference, people are going to talk about the need for exercise, social contact, less time on the screen, good diet, time in nature, all these really important things. It's also important for people to feel personally well. Okay, all that's there, but what's right for me?

To have an openness rather than hearing it from someone else, to have an openness. I don't know, let me take in, let me be influenced by the teaching or the information, but keeping that knowingness around all this information that we have, which then makes it personal.

And I think the third thing is important is to be clear about what you want in engaging the question. For some people, it will be, I just want to feel better tomorrow or I want to get back to normal, or I want to be like everybody else, which is all fine.

You could also be interested in, well, what is the nature of anxiety? Who am I that's feeling anxious? What is the nature of reality that creates the situation where not just I'm anxious, but the world seems increasingly anxious? So I think it's helpful to locate where you are there. And that gives it a spotlight and orientation.

**[00:05:59] Alex Howard**

I think that's a helpful frame. I guess, then from that orientation, from that spotlight, how does one then make... You've touched on some elements already in what you said there, that perhaps anxiety is not just something to try and just fix and get away from. That maybe there's something that's important to understand a bit more.

**Vince Draddy**

So if you're going to have a Diamond Approach teacher on, it's going to be a spiritual perspective. And from a spiritual perspective, it's not like some people are anxious and some people are less anxious and some people are not anxious. Anxiety represents the fundamental disconnection that happens for all human beings, from our true nature, from reality, from God, however you want to call it.

So from the Diamond Approach perspective, it's a continuum. And to address anxiety, we want to look at, well, how did this disconnection happen? All spiritual traditions have talked about this for thousands of years. As it turns out, in the last 100 years, psychology has given a lot of the details about how this has happened.

There is when we're born, there's an openness, there's not a sense of self, there's not a sense of separateness from mother or the world. Slowly, little by little, because being a human being is very difficult, even with the best parents and the most loving holding, the consciousness still, it's too much, there's too much input, there's too much dysregulation, there's too much pain to actually stay in contact with one's self.

And so the infant, all of us slowly started to identify with these experiences and memories and images that form a self or a self image. And so now we're identifying with an image of ourselves which includes the body image instead of being in direct contact with reality. That is necessarily going to cause an anxiety.

Until that's resolved, until we realized that process which was necessary, was too much, we actually needed to disassociate, that's what the self is. An identification is a dissociation. We needed to do that.

And the spiritual path is, oh, that dissociation, that identification with an image which doesn't have a ground, which needs to be continued through our thoughts or activity, through our agitation, until we address that, addressing anxiety will be more or less, which is great, less anxiety for all of us is better.

But fundamentally, we have to look at what our identity is. Are we identifying with the self image which people call the self for an illusion? The Diamond approach doesn't really look at it that way. Okay, that's a natural step everyone went through. Brings us pain, suffering, disconnection. How can we, with kindness, openness and understanding, start to unpack it, start to touch into it slowly?

And so then we start to look at how anxiety manifests, and anxiety manifests through all the ways where we don't have a sense of basic trust. Our reactivity, our fear, our hatred, our projection, our anger, our self-hatred, all of those we consider not something to get rid of, but something to turn toward. We understand those are natural developments, even the super ego judging us all the way, is a natural development.

If we can turn towards that with kindness, openness, curiosity, and like in this case, say, turning towards the anxiety, but we see, what's anxiety? It's fear. We're fearful about the future. But rather

than turning away from the fear, we turn towards it, allow ourselves to feel it, and as you know, having been a practitioner for many years, we encourage people to sense their bodies.

### **[00:10:27]**

Part of the dissociation is dissociating from feeling the body. So sensing the body, bringing the kindness, allowing both the fear, the resistance to fear, resistance to anxiety, and then over a process of allowing and not directing process, we can start to see what's underlying it.

As it turns out, if we allow that, allow the space of that, what's needed for each individual soul tends to arise. So in the case of anxiety, often courage will arise or strength will arise if we allow ourselves to go to the root of it.

### **Alex Howard**

It's almost, I guess, in the heart of part of what you're saying is that part of what we're experiencing in anxiety is a sense that something feels wrong, like something is not right.

And I remember in my late teens or something, and I was starting to get into reading about psychology and developmental psychology. I remember one day it struck me that if we're all a product of childhood conditioning and the experience we've had in the ways that we've been shaped, this whole thing around me is a complete fraud. The whole thing is a façade.

And I remember thinking, well, oh my God, who the fuck is everyone? And it was terrifying in that moment to feel like the whole world around me was like... It was a bit like, it was around the time *The Matrix* came out, oh my God, I've just suddenly seen behind the Matrix. This whole thing.

And there was actually something very intelligent, something actually very true in that feeling of anxiety, that's it's actually a recognition of a fundamental truth.

### **Vince Draddy**

Yes. Which famously the existentialist, they got that and saw that. They didn't have the tools to take the next step, which is yes, that's true. We are living in a world that's created through having a self image. And not only that, we project that image onto the world.

I enjoy these scientists these days, cognitive scientists who are really pointing out... There's one guy, Donald Hoffman who talks about there's a 0% chance we're perceiving reality objectively. He's done millions of models. And the reality is you can't perceive reality objectively if you're identified with this self image that's mostly formed by age 6 or 7.

Unconsciously, most of the world is walking around with a 6 or 7 year old inside, even with lots of sophistication and development, and not completely but we're a mix, but that identification is mostly formed. And then we project onto the world that.

So we're not actually perceiving reality directly or objectively. So, of course, when you have experiences like you experience like, oh my God, it's not real. It's unsettling. And most people have some sense of that sometime in their lives. And if there's not a holding for it, a context for it, mostly you want to shove down, mostly want to avoid that.

### **[00:13:54] Alex Howard**

You talked about earlier around, what's often missing that's needed is a basic trust. Say a bit about what basic trust is and how that allows us to turn our attention towards our experience as opposed to feel the need to move away from.

### **Vince Draddy**

Well, one way of looking at basic trust in relation to anxiety is that basic trust is the fundamental understanding that we're not separate from anything. So we're not this separate unconscious, 6 or 7 year old functioning in the world.

Basic trust feels basically the love of reality and can rest in it. So that's why in tight communities or families where there's more holding, there's more love, there's more sense of basic trust. If you grow up in an environment that's more chaotic, where there's less holding and there's less love, there's more distrust. Lack of basic trust.

It's important to acknowledge the fact of that if we're disconnected, if we're identifying with something that we're not, there's naturally going to be a lack of trust.

The way the Diamond Approach looks at it is, the lack of basic trust, I should say basic trust is the effect unconsciousness, or we would call it the soul. Basic trust is the effect unconsciousness of love. So the more love there is felt in the system, given to the system, that love also means a sense of connection, and then there'll be more basic trust, naturally.

We can't think ourselves the way to it. And that's why I wanted to start, anytime you're looking at this question of anxiety or any difficulty, kindness, compassion has to be the starting point. Because it's difficult, we're talking about the fundamental suffering of humanity.

### **Alex Howard**

You also said that one of the key practices within the Diamond Approach is a sensing practice that as one starts to experience anxiety, the invitation would be to start to sense one's body. Say a little bit about that and why that's helpful and perhaps a little bit of how one might do that.

### **Vince Draddy**

Well, the first thing to look at is, mostly we don't want to send our bodies. And people don't think about that or some people say, oh, I do sense my body, I feel my arm, I feel the muscle. But when we say sensing our body, it's connected with the self image which has implicit in it, the body image. And when I say image, again has to do with dissociation meaning, moving away from the pain.

So we often say, sense your arms and legs, sense your belly, but it's important when we talk about the importance of that, to realize there will be resistance. That's natural. The consciousness that formed to say, no, it's not good to be in touch with my body, that was too painful. It's not conscious. But I was hungry, I wasn't getting fed. I needed to be held, I needed to be seen.

For the infant and child, it's too painful so we literally need dissociate not feel the body. Coming back to the body starts to get us in touch with the natural ground. But it's not like that. It's a process.

**[00:17:35]**

So by being in touch with the body, you then become in touch with the immediacy of the experience. The body doesn't lie. When you touch into the body, that's it. It's not an image, not only an image. You're sensing into the immediacy of the experience. And then when you're working with the immediacy experience, you can start to enter into reality.

Now, where are we now? 2022 and you and I are doing what? We're looking at each other like this, thousands of miles away, which is fantastic and beautiful way to have this understanding spread. However, you can see what happens when we're looking at screens which more of us do more and more. Energetically, what happens? We're moving up into our heads.

I think one reason there's more anxiety means there's less contact with the body. A lot of us have to do less physical work. We don't have to go to the store. Sometimes you just click on Amazon. You don't have to get up and walk to the store, go someplace, have people do chores or there's more time. Of course, we spent the last couple of years locked in.

So anything we can do to reduce this movement up into the head, supporting your self image, the better. Because that also supports the disconnection. And disconnection won't increase the anxiety.

### **Alex Howard**

How about the discomfort or the resistance that arises? Because I think one of the things that's often difficult is that, as you spoke to, people have learnt to disassociate or to speed up or to go into their mind to get away from what feels uncomfortable.

And so as we start to slow things down and as we start to connect and perhaps, for example, anxiety, that actually means being more present to the anxiety in one's body, that can feel difficult sometimes.

### **Alex Howard**

And I'm curious as to what you find actually... How one should orient themselves with that, I guess, is what I'm saying. Because often the temptation is just to go back to the strategies that then allow us to once again disconnect.

### **Vince Draddy**

Well, I have to come back to the fundamental thing, kindness. It's natural to resist. And we actually know why. Coming back to the roots of that, why. So first the kindness, like, oh, yeah, I don't want to do this. It is painful. And one of the fundamental things that I approach is allowing.

So there's anxiety and then there's resistance to feeling anxiety. We don't have to punch our way through the resistance. In the Diamond Approach we allow whatever arises. So if you can feel the anxiety, that will be useful, if you feel like I'm going into my head, I'm dissociating, I'm wanting to get chocolate, you stay aware of that resistance as well.

As it turns out, anything arising in our consciousness or our soul, when it's met with a kind, curious, open attention, it will start to reveal itself. Even the darkest, deepest, hateful, shameful places, the stuck places, the pushing away, no arising in the soul, no resistance can withstand kind attention.

**[00:21:11]**

And so that fundamental approach, like, okay, there's hatred, there's self hatred, well, we know self hatred is a defense. It makes sense. It's a defense against feeling the powerlessness so we don't have to push it away. So this kind of fundamental allowing with kindness, really, I can't emphasize how important that is.

### **Alex Howard**

You said something else earlier, which I think is an important gateway into what I want to explore next. You said that in the methodology of the Diamond Approach, when we stay with what we're experiencing, what we need will reveal itself. You gave the example within the context of fear, that what that may be is courage will reveal itself.

Let's explore that a little bit, because I think this is also one of the places where, so far what we've been talking about in terms of meeting our experience with the kindness and curiosity, people may have been familiar with some of those elements, but I think this is really, at least in my experience, as someone that was a student of the Diamond Approach for 15 or so years, I met my wife there, this was the piece that the Diamond Approach, for me, spoke to and I think speaks to in a way that really other approaches don't. And I think it's an important piece. So let's inquire into this a bit.

### **Vince Draddy**

Great. Thank you. Because I paused at the deepest part, our disconnection with ourself and then seeing that we're not the self image gives us freedom. That can feel a long way away so what's needed in the Diamond Approach, what the Diamond Approach reveals is that along the way, there are essential qualities that serve as allies for us.

So going into the fear, as it turns out, and we allow the whole of it, the fear of it, that, oh my God, anxiety is bad, but the emptiness is worse, the space feels worse because there's nothing. All of those have to do with the survival instinct. We actually identify with the anxiety.

So when anxiety starts to open, we get even more terrified somewhere. If we can allow the space, as you say, strength will arise. And when I say strength, I mean the felt, immediate, palpable sense in one's body of strength or power or will or love. So we're back away from the dissociation into realizing, oh, these are qualities of my consciousness, not something I had to earn, not something I had to work for. These are actually available underneath my fear, my hatred, my rejection.

All of these are part of our consciousness, and they're actually needed. So for most of us the Diamond Approach, you've been doing it for 15 years, I've been 33 years or something like 32 years. It's more of a gradual path where we just realize, oh yeah, this understanding develops this kind of capacity, or I should say contact with this capacity.

And so having more strength, having more courage starts to build the basic trust to start to confront or I should say, meet the challenges or in particular, what we're talking about, anxiety here. So you have some help from your own nature, from your own consciousness, which we need, we need the will, we need the strength, but not our mental ideas of it, not this efforting. We get to find out, oh, there's a relaxed strength in us. There's a relaxed power, there's a relaxed courage.

And these along the way help support us in, in the Diamond Approach I would say spiritual journey, but you don't have to be in a Diamond Approach, this is for everyone in this case, dealing with anxiety.

**[00:25:07] Alex Howard**

Can you say a little bit about, I was going to say the importance of that but that sounds perhaps a little bit too loaded, but the value of going through these places of deficiency?

So you mentioned, for example, that going into a place of nothingness can almost be more painful than being in a place of anxiety because of that intense place of deficiency. But it's really going through those places that actually that deepest potential, true nature is able to reveal itself.

To load the question up a little bit more, from my own experience working with this approach, that sometimes actually going deeper in actually, at least for a little while, in that moment it could make the anxiety much more intense, actually, that there's a treasure that lies on the other side of that.

**Vince Draddy**

Well, what's worse than anxiety? Terror.

**Alex Howard**

That's the word I was going to use.

**Vince Draddy**

I don't want to scare people off. Feeling anxiety, feeling the agitation in the soul or consciousness, is a kind of anxiety. That's how we actually unconsciously know ourselves. People sometimes don't understand that.

But when I say as youngsters, as infants and children, we moved away from the pain, but we also identify with that agitation, that suffering, that becomes how we take ourselves to be. So it's basically undischarged tension. Nobody, even the greatest parents, can't feed their child perfectly, can't hold their child perfectly, can't meet their child perfectly. So a tension builds. But if it doesn't get discharged, what happens? It becomes part of your consciousness, and that's how we identify.

So fast forward 30 years, 40 years, whatever, you go to the beach, Canary Islands or Hawaii, if you look at people sitting on the beach, they're off work, they have enough money, maybe their relationship is good. You work with people, you know there's not an absence of anxiety there. And you can tell that by the internal dialogue, the constant internal storytelling, even if it's not unpleasant, if you look closely, it's an agitation, it's a frustration, it's got anxiety in it.

So to your question, so we start to look at that and be curious and open, well, why am I thinking this way? Or why am I worried about the future? Why do I keep thinking about this conversation that I'm going to have? If we go into that, we see this fundamental identification and agitation, and below that is a spaciousness.

Now, some traditions called it emptiness. It's true. It's emptiness. It's also a spaciousness that's our nature. But as you're pointing to, we have to actually feel and get close to the actual terror of dying, because the spaciousness and the openness does not have the anxiety. The love, the power does not have the agitation, which sounds great to all of us.



**[00:28:49] Alex Howard**

Until you get there.

**Vince Draddy**

Unconsciously it's going to hit the survival instinct, which is aligned with the self image. And so if the agitation is going to fall away to the survival instinct, that means I'm going to fall away. It's going to be death, annihilation. It's quite a big thing, which is why we need a lot of allies, the development of these, essential qualities that are part of our nature to help us. Or you can meditate for 30 years and maybe good luck.

**Alex Howard**

But I think what's also important, Vince, and the reason why I wanted to make sure we steer the conversation to this piece as well is that it is the fundamental piece at the heart of anxiety. There are lots of aspects. Someone can have anxiety about an exam they can have their, hormones are dysregulated and their system can be agitated. Of course, there's lots of pieces to this.

But in terms of that more existential or that deeper anxiety, certainly my experience has been, and it's only my experience that I can really speak from, is that the true, I don't mean liberation from anxiety like there's not anxiety anymore, of course anxiety still happens, but the true answer to that question, perhaps that I was speaking to in my late teens about this world being a fake and a fraud, the answer to that deep sense of unease is going in and through these places, not trying to hide away from and get around these places.

**Vince Draddy**

I appreciate your perseverance and staying right here.

**Alex Howard**

I know it wasn't in our plan.

**Vince Draddy**

No. Well, it's good. But you did the Diamond Approach for 15 years, so you're correct in what you're saying. I also want to speak to people who don't know the Diamond Approach and even the idea like, I need to go through this terror to get to it. Yes, true, but the way to that is something you developed over many years, which is let me see what's here right now.

That opening to the emptiness will happen. It will happen. And with that, whatever capacities you have at that moment, that's what you have at that moment. And you want as much kindness as possible.

So what you're saying is absolutely correct. And I want to also not put an idea in people's mind, oh, now I need to go through that anxiety, through that terror to get to the spaciousness.

**[00:31:32] Alex Howard**

I think particularly what you're speaking to is if someone's intention is to force their way through, it's not going to happen anyway. But how one is learning to relate to their immediate experience is really the key to this.

**Vince Draddy**

Yes. I think sometimes people who have been doing spiritual work, like for you, for a long time, almost you forget how implicit now it is in your orientation. Like, oh, yeah, there's this emptiness. I need to turn, I need to out of my love for being real or being myself, I'm going to turn towards it and look at it. That's quite a development. It's quite a development. A lot of people, after doing work for many years, take it for granted.

So, yes, you're absolutely right. And we talked about before we started, it's not just the emptiness that's fearful or that's terrifying, it's the goodness, it's the love. Once we open up to the spaciousness or open up to the freedom, open up to the power, because those essential qualities, those allies don't have the agitation, that's also a threat to our sense of self, the survival threat.

And the more we understand, like, oh, that's just what happened. That's just how it developed. There's no need to judge it, no need to judge my anger, my hatred, my self hatred, or my fear of the emptiness. That's natural. The more you understand it, the more kindness can happen.

And then there's more holding for what you're saying is, I develop more capacity to not know and allow myself to feel the anxiety, to feel the terror, feel the emptiness. But it's quite something.

**Alex Howard**

What also comes to my mind as you're speaking is that, of course, a significant part of how we've learnt to relate to our immediate experience is what we were taught by primary caregivers. So if they were harsh or critical or disinterested in our emotional life and experience, of course that's what we learn to do to ourselves.

And part of what you're speaking to is, in a sense, the antidote to that is this place of, you talk of love and kindness, I guess also curiosity. Maybe, because we've touched a little bit on the importance of sensing and coming to the body, perhaps let's become a bit more explicit about the practice of inquiry and how that way of opening to and exploring our immediate experience can also be very helpful here.

**Vince Draddy**

Great. You're a good interviewer, Alex. So this path is not using force, not using effort. It's more using our natural curiosity when it's freed. I mean, look, if you can't pay the rent next month, there's going to be anxiety. Your interest might not be first into inquiry, but if you relatively feel safe enough, your environment is safe enough, there's enough holding, then we can start to tap into what everyone has some level of curiosity about. Who am I? What is reality?

When we have the level of curiosity, then we can understand, as I've been pointing out, that this dissociated self image we identify with is natural. Then we can turn to every experience we have whether it's joy, whether it's hatred, whether it's anxiety. And say, what is that? Maybe I know what

spiritual teachings say. I know what my therapists say. I've read some books about this, but what actually is it for me?

**[00:35:30]**

So, as you say, that can start by sensing the body, turning our kind attention. And then when we say inquiry, sometimes people think of inquiry like, I have to do this. It's another doing. When in fact, inquiry is simply a reflection of our own love for our nature, our own love for reality.

How does that show up? That shows up through interest. I like how every time you mention your relationship with the Diamond Approach, you always mention, I met my wife there. What does that tell me? Oh, you love your wife and you're interested in her. And when you meet someone like, oh, what happens when you meet someone you're interested in? You start asking them questions, you want to know about them, you want to enjoy them and find out more, where they're from and all that stuff.

We can have that same attitude towards ourselves with a lightness and openness, curiosity. Spiritual work can be, it doesn't have to be just grinding through the structures and issues. Wait, why am I feeling anxious? So you take a breath. When you ask the question, why, rather than, I need to get the hell away from here, the possibilities start to open up.

It's like in modern physics, there's no looking at an object, there's no eye looking at an object. That's over in modern physics, everyone knows that's not a thing. Same with us. Once we turn towards ourselves and have a different approach, our experience starts to shift and starts to be open.

So inquiry is really a curiosity, but it's really a love towards whatever's happening. Oh, here I'm feeling anxious. I stay with my anxiety. Whoa, I feel all these contractions in my body. My perineum is tight, my solar plexus is tight. Let me breathe in. What happens if I bring my attention there? And you start to see, oh, I'm tight. This reminds me of how my mother related to money. It reminds me of how my dad related to my emotions. You start to see that, oh, and start to feel the pain of it or whatever is whole history.

As we allow that what happens is what you've been pointing to, is you start to see through that and space starts to open up. When space starts to open up, that makes the room for the essential quality that's needed in any given moment. That no teacher, when I'm sitting with students, I don't know what's supposed to happen with them. It's unique to everybody. But we find out time and time again it happens, that what's needed arises with the proper approach.

**Alex Howard**

I think there's also, what goes through my mind as you're speaking, is that a key ingredient of anxiety is a sense that something is not okay, that we're not safe, that we're uncomfortable with the unknown. And the very practice of inquiry is one of becoming comfortable with the unknown and the unfamiliar.

In a sense, it's its own antidote somehow to anxiety, I guess. Because what you're learning to do is to be open to and present to whatever's happening, but building a sense of, to use the term basic trust we touched on earlier, that whatever that is, is going to be okay, which in a sense, is the very thing that's missing in anxiety, that something's going to happen, that's not going to be okay.

### **[00:39:17] Vince Draddy**

Yes. And the way that happens, as you're pointing out, is through your direct experience of it. That's why when someone is suffering anxiety and another person says, it's going to be okay, it's only going to go in so deeply. This way we start to know it from the inside.

Because the anxiety is so deep, so unconscious, so young, the anxiety you feel about your conversation with your boss tomorrow might be the anxiety that you felt by not getting fed enough when you were 6 months old.

Yes, you're right. The comfortableness with not knowing, but we also want to include feeling, oh my God, I desperately want to know, in that process, because that will arise, too. So we don't want to make that some ideal like, I should always be in this complete not knowing state. Ideally, yes, because that's actually how reality is.

### **Alex Howard**

It also goes back to something you said earlier, which is that I actually want to know the truth. And sometimes that truth is wonderful, and sometimes it's not. But regardless, I value truth more than I value in this moment, feeling comfortable.

And I guess that's also part of what my observation of people is often what shifts over time, that they come into some of these approaches just wanting to not be in pain. And then somehow the orientation moves to, and maybe that's because some of that pain gets easier to be with, I'm not sure, but it becomes more, I just want to know what's true. And that's a different relationship to it, isn't it?

### **Vince Draddy**

Yeah. And I think that's what you're pointing to. It's fine to want to be done with the pain. That experience of having less pain will build this basic trust that we're talking about. More basic trust, when there's more holding, then we can start to look around a little bit more. Like there's more, oh, okay, I'm okay here, let me start to look at the deeper questions. It's hard to look at deeper questions when you're so racked with the anxiety.

But for everybody it's different. I have a friend who is a photographer, and he lived in Sierra Leone in a village for 3 months. He lived with people who basically woke up in the morning, didn't have food for the day, so they went out and looked for food. On a good day, you got food for a day or two, on a bad day there's no food. Like eating or not eating.

He lives in San Francisco, he said, those folks, we don't idealize that life, but basically their nervous system was more relaxed than his friends working these great jobs in San Francisco. Because there's a community, there's a tribe, there's nature, there's movement, there's embodiment, there's love, there's holding.

And so many of us spend a lot of time on this screen working, moving money or making decisions or sending emails that don't have that feel, and they don't have this personal contact. And that's part of what builds the basic trust.

The Diamond Approach is not something where someone does all this by themselves. The connection, even the connection you and I have, okay there's something here like, oh, we feel this.

There's a holding, there's a mutual respect, a liking. That's absolutely essential. We can't do this kind of work really by ourselves. I don't see it. Maybe that's possible.

**[00:43:12] Alex Howard**

There's something also which we haven't had time to get into, but there's also something about that real holding of someone that gives us the support to be able to go into those places. I think you're right, I think it's really important.

I'm going to ask you in a minute, as a closing question, how people could find out more specifically about the Diamond Approach, but before we come to that, maybe you could just summarize one or two key pieces from what we've been saying, that someone that feels touched by what you're speaking to, about how can they start to work with some of these key principles?

**Vince Draddy**

I think it's important for people to find their interest in themselves, to find their own care about themselves, even if they have all sorts of self loathing and judgment about themselves. Each one of our souls, we're all the same souls. We're all born as this kind of majestic, mysterious being.

Now, for all the reasons we've touched on and some we haven't touched on, how that gets shut down, how we get disconnected from it. I think if people can touch back into this basic interest, like I'm suffering, there might be another way. And one way the way we've been talking about is what if I turn towards myself? Knowing all the judgments here and fears and the anxieties here, if I have some curiosity towards myself, some goodness towards myself, that's a great place to start.

When you feel that desire and you get clear, I start at the beginning, what do you want? The more you're clear about your desire, the more things start to unfold, the more you end up joining an anxiety summit like this, or you pick up a book or you meet someone and slowly that starts to happen.

**Alex Howard**

It's beautiful. Vince, for people that want to find out more about the Diamond Approach, perhaps want to go the next step with some of what you're speaking about, what's the best place to go and what's the best starting point for that?

**Vince Draddy**

Well, go back on your computer. As much as possible when you go back on your computer, sense your legs, sense your feet, sense your belly and go to [diamondapproach.org](https://diamondapproach.org) and they give ways to engage. There's a place, 'Ways to Engage'.

So there are groups around the world these days and of course now there's even online groups, I run a group in Holland, I haven't been there in a couple of years but we still lead it online. And they're teachers you can work with individually.

So there are various ways and we're all figuring it out together. COVID opened up all these possibilities that we didn't know about but ideally you have a teacher that you meet with regularly, you have a group because work like this requires a lot of support.

But [diamondapproach.org](https://diamondapproach.org) is probably the best.

**[00:46:25] Alex Howard**

Fantastic. Thank you so much for your time in this interview. I really appreciate it and I really want to, I don't normally give personal endorsements but I will give a personal endorsement here. I really want to encourage people to go and check out the Diamond Approach in this work. Certainly in terms of my life and my anxiety, it was the thing that was probably the most ultimately impactful so I really want to encourage people to go deeper.

**Vince Draddy**

Great. Really wonderful to be with you, Alex. Thanks for having me.