



Conscious Life presents
**HEALING TOXIC
RELATIONSHIPS**

Cultivating Sacred Relationships

Guest: Miranda MacPherson

Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or psychological condition.

[00:00:09] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm really happy to be talking with Miranda Macpherson.

Firstly, Miranda, welcome. Thank you for joining me.

Miranda Macpherson

Thank you for having me, Alex, it's a delight to be here and with everyone.

Alex Howard

It's always a pleasure when we have some time together. I always know it's going to be a good interview when we're already 25 minutes into our time together and I haven't pressed record yet. So there's a lot that I'm looking forward to getting into.

Just to give people a bit of a frame around Miranda. Miranda Macpherson shares a feminine approach to surrender and nondual realization based on the practice she calls ego, relaxation.

Her wisdom and palpable transmission invites others to become more graceful human beings through inquiry, meditation, devotion, and psychological integration.

Grounded in extensive study of the world's wisdom traditions inspired by Sri Ramana Maharshi, of course, in miracles and the diamond approach, something that Miranda and I have shared in interest in.

Miranda has been guiding others into direct experience of the sacred for 30 years. Miranda's the author of a number of books, including *The Way of Grace: The Transforming Power of Ego Relaxation, Boundless Love and Meditations on Boundless Love*.

Miranda is also a kirtan musician with a mantra album and I believe another album is on the way as well.

Miranda, you've always struck me as somebody who is, what I consider, a real truth seeker. That has had different chapters in both their own personal evolution but also informing their

professional work. And I was saying to you before we started recording that for me, there are some people that they find their thing, and then that's just for the next few decades, that's their thing.

[00:02:03]

And I've always appreciated in you this evolving truth seeking and understanding. And there's many places we could go in this interview. But maybe just for a bit of opening this up, how has that been important for you? And in a sense, to me, it also strikes me as one of the important ingredients for love and intimacy, that willingness to be open and to constantly be evolving.

Miranda Macpherson

Well, for me, it really comes down to love, and that ever since I can remember, I have felt this deep love of wanting to know what's real and to live in touch with what really matters.

And, of course, that's an ongoing question. It's not like, oh, what's real is a fixed thing. Truth is an ongoing revelation. And part of the mystery of life and being human is that we grow and evolve and learn.

And, for me when my heart is penetrated by a deeper truth than what I knew before, it's this feedback loop, my heart loves the truth, loves God, loves what really is, and so wants to yield to it.

And I find that a juicy way to live, and it keeps me on my toes. And to me, it's just not meaningful to just develop a brand of spiritual work and hold on to it, because what if you discover something deeper that might be more beneficial to your students? I love my students. I want them to receive as much as they possibly can and to keep evolving and growing and learning and being a deeper and deeper embodiment of goodness and truth and love in their life.

And so, I'm going to yield to whatever I keep discovering about what serves that. That's what turns me on. And I think it's what's helpful to others, too.

Alex Howard

Yes. And then what strikes me about that is that the place from which one is coming from in one's life as a teacher, but also the place that one's coming from in relationship. And one of the things you put in the notes that you shared, in sharing the interview, was the difference between trying to get love vs being love.

And something about are we coming from a place of forcing and wanting and making things happen vs. a place of being that? Say a bit about why that's so important.

Miranda Macpherson

Well, yeah. I mean, that's really the quintessence of the spiritual path. Where are you coming from? Are you coming from being an ego, relating to yourself as a separate somebody in a world? And when we are in that, and when we're grounded in that view of who we are and what the world is, then our relationship to love and relationships is one of getting. It's like getting and trading and agreements. It's like a transactional thing.

[00:05:27]

And, of course, that creates a very, very limited way of being in relationship that ultimately doesn't usually end in a lot of fulfillment or spiritual growth.

Whereas I really feel that when we recognize that our own heart at its depth is an ocean of love, love is the natural effect of a human heart. And love is also what heals us, what helps us to thrive and what makes us beautiful, noble human beings. What also inspires us to rise beyond our attachments and our self centeredness, which we all have.

And so when we start to go deeper inside ourself and work with the material that we each need to work with that limits our experience of love as what we are, then we gain more access to the innate love of our nature.

And then what's natural is we want to share that love, of course. And we want that love to be deepened. And, that's obviously a much richer and more rewarding way to be alive. And it's what turns relationships into a spiritual path.

And I think that it really is one of the most important spiritual paths, because, let's face it, what good is opening into a nondual state of consciousness if we can't get along with one another? If we can't raise children who feel loved and cared for. If we can't help the next generation along to have a kinder ride of things and to have less unnecessary suffering than the ones before.

So, I think we intuitively know this. I'm sure what I'm saying isn't really big news to the listeners. I think our heart knows that's what matters, that's what's important. So the real question is how?

Alex Howard

It's how and it's really who is the us that is in relationship?

Miranda Macpherson

Yeah. That's absolutely right.

Are we defining ourselves as an ego based on our history, using our thoughts and our memories, and obviously the defenses that we formed as we were becoming a personality that we all have. Or are we interested to see if some of those defenses can come down a little?

And, of course, that feels like a great emotional risk, and we don't want to do it with somebody who isn't interested in that also, as that wouldn't be wise.

But if what we're interested in is the possibility of living real love in our marriage, with our family members, at work, and to being a presence of love as we walk through this world, which surely is needed right now so that our primary attention and life force can get directed not just towards making more money and buying more stuff and climbing the corporate ladder, but to actually benefiting our fellow human beings. Bringing fourth our gifts and our talents in ways that serve others. That's ultimately what satisfies the heart.

[00:08:52] Alex Howard

What strikes me when you're speaking is, in a sense, we all have this longing and this need to feel love. But if our perspective is, love is something that I get from you, and I either need to be a certain way to get that love, or I need to manipulate you a certain way, we're looking for that love outside of us, ultimately, as opposed to recognizing who we are is something more. Maybe speak a little bit to that.

Miranda Macpherson

Totally. Well, we can't help but do that at first, because as human beings, when we're very young and of course, our relating and our sense of self is developing when we're very young with our source figures, our mothering and fathering figures.

And, of course, we come into this world and we're so helpless and undefended, and we need them to transmit all the qualities of our essence to us. And so it appears, when we're very little, that our mother and our father are the source of the love, and their mirroring is the source of whether we're valuable and precious or not, of whether we're good enough or not.

And so, we all learn through our early experiences that it seems as if love is something we have to do or that we have to be a certain way in order to receive it, we have to become worthy or lovable.

And so really, what we're talking about is that that is part of the inevitable. It's often called in spiritual traditions, the fall from grace, where we fall out of our sense of self as an embodiment of love, as an extension of love. That love is our basic nature and that we don't have to become anything or do anything in order to be worthy of love. It's what's true and right.

So I often say to people, as most people have had the experience of holding a newborn in their arms. And if you have had that experience, nobody in their right mind thinks, oh, that baby isn't worth anything much. They can't even wipe their own butt, they haven't gotten a PhD yet, they haven't earned any love yet. And that's a crazy thought. We laugh because it's ridiculous. What's absolutely obvious and innate, is, wow. Reverence, awe for this pure soul that is now here with us. And what's true and natural is that they deserve the very best love and care that is possible just because they exist.

And so our heart knows this truth, but we get disconnected from it. And so we need to work to uncover what obscures our felt sense, that we are inherently lovable, that we are all inherently precious and valuable just because we exist. That it is not dependent on what we look like or what kinds of talents or capacities come through us, or whether others think highly or not so highly of us.

And so, there's work to be done for everybody in uncovering the fact that we are all precious and lovable and valuable.

And so usually what we have to meet is all the memories and the wounds and the beliefs and the history that obscure our felt sense of debt. And so really what that takes in my experience, I had a lot of this, I had a lot of verbal abuse as a child, not a lot of positive mirroring. I was very different from other members of my family. So I had a lot of those kinds of wounds that I myself really had to work through.

[00:12:47]

And of course, they showed up in the early relationships I started to have, you know, when I was a young person. And there was deep hurt and pain and rage lodged in my soul and psyche and deep feelings of worthlessness that were very painful.

And so it took tenacity and willingness, as well as seeking out some good support from some kind and skilled people that I could go to, to cry and howl and learn to stay present with myself and face those things and opened through them and allow healing and Grace and qualities of compassion and forgiveness to start arising to cleanse my mind of the conclusions that I had drawn from what I didn't get and the difficult things I got.

And that was both spiritual, psychological, and energetic. I did really important breath work that was very important in letting the frozen trauma come out and shake through my body and getting in touch with those very painful emotions that had caused me to shut down. In allowing the Grace of true forgiveness to cleanse my mind and restore the sense that I, and my parents and my family and all of my ancestors who did not get what they needed, get seen for what it is. And for us all to return to understanding that we're all innocent, even though we've made mistakes and passed down hurts and distortions that have been hard for one another.

But that does not obscure the truth of the fact that there was still love there. And that ultimately, I remember the day when I was able to say to my father, all that's gone on between us that has been so painful and difficult that I've had such a hard time to come up through, and I'm sure you have too, all that matters now is that I love you, and I want you to live a beautiful life and for the rest of your days, to be sweet and kind. That's all I care about now.

And I really meant it. And the day I found myself saying that to him, unrehearsed, was the day I knew in my heart I was free from a very deep body of pain and suffering that had not only been hard for me, but that had spilled over in painful ways in my intimate relationships with men.

And it made such a difference to my marriage, my first marriage. It made a difference there. And I have not had to continue that negative pattern in my present marriage.

So there's been tremendous transformation, healing, and also learning that I am so grateful for.

Alex Howard

Often what makes it hard to get to that place of forgiveness or to get to that place of deep vulnerability is all of the layers of defensiveness that we start to build up. The ways that we often develop as children, to protect ourselves from those vulnerable places. Say a bit about that defensiveness because I think that often also then plays up in intimate relationship.

Miranda Macpherson

I'll continue speaking about my relationship with my father because that's a practical example I'm sure most people can relate to.

So, my dad, what I experienced from him was a lot of verbal abuse, and it was very painful. And I was also aware that he didn't have an easy childhood either. That I knew his mother, my

grandmother, and there was a tricky personality there. So he'd probably had it much, much worse than I had. So I could see that it really was something that went back generations.

[00:17:15]

But all I knew was the intense suffering and the feelings of unworthiness and self hatred that I was struggling to emerge beyond that played itself out in negative ways of relating in my early relationships as a young adult. So I was really going to work on this.

And I remember one day when I landed on a workbook lesson in a course in miracles. And this lesson, I think, is the archetypal lesson on forgiveness that that tradition has to offer. And it's called "Let Miracles Replace All Grievances".

And in the exercise for that particular lesson, it asks you to choose someone in your mind that triggers anger, resentment who has been untrue to some expectation you have of them for whom you carry pain. And then it's brilliant. It says, you know the one to choose. They're in your mind already. It was so profound.

And so, immediately I'm sitting there on the meditation cushion, and there's this image of my father in his most angry, but it's completely blown up and exaggerated. And this huge vision is dominating my consciousness. And I'm sitting there on the cushion and my body's starting to shake and I'm feeling the worst and deepest pain that I'd always felt in that relationship.

And then it asks you, okay, so now we're going to apply this prayer to that relationship. It says, so we're going to open to the possibility of, what it calls the Holy Spirit, which is really the dynamism of healing Grace, the spirit of wholeness, which is the way that Grace works in that tradition. And it asks you to say this prayer, "Let me behold my Savior in this one. You have chosen as the one for me to ask to lead me into the Holy light in which he stands, that I might join with him".

Well, I've got to tell you, that was the point at which I wanted to rip up that effing book and throw it down the toilet or burn it. It just felt so outrageous.

Alex Howard

Always a sign we're on the right track. Right?

Miranda Macpherson

Yeah. So thank God I knew that. So I'm saying to myself, you don't have to agree with this. You don't have to like it. But you do have to just sit here and do the practice.

So, again, that's my willingness that had been developed sufficiently to know you're having a reaction. Just do the exercise and be open and see what happens. So I do this exercise and I'm just going through it, and my super ego is going nuts going, this isn't going to work. This is crap. I'm just going, yeah, whatever. I'm just doing it anyway.

So it asked for three practice periods that day. The second practice, and I'm shaking and my body feels like it wants to vomit. It was very profound realizing how deep this hatred, unworthiness, feeling this pain was viscerally in my nervous system. It was quite profound to realize that. They

call that trauma these days but that wasn't the language I was using when I was 22. This is when I was 22 years old.

[00:20:31]

So then I show up on the meditation cushion for the second practice period that day. And I'm doing the thinking of my father and all that had happened, all that I feel and I'm saying the prayer, and all of a sudden I just sort of feel neutral. I notice, oh, I'm just feeling neutral. Okay. I still didn't have any hope or belief that a miracle was going to take place, but I'm just showing up and doing what's asked of me, which is this practice, whatever.

So then the third time I showed up on the cushion that day, it was about 5pm and all of a sudden it was as if these hands kind of pierced through this transparent veil upon which this image, distorted image, of my father's angry face and all that that triggered and represented. This hand just peeled open the veil and behind it I saw my father as he would have been as a young man about my age. And I saw, oh, that's what I'm asked to join with him. I am not asked to join with him from the place of my ego that feels justified in being right, that you're the bad guy and I'm the good one.

I just saw, I was being asked to join with him, not from my ego to his ego, not to condone or judge or comment on what happened or didn't happen, and whether it was right or wrong. I was asked, the course of miracles was asking me to join with the Holy light in which he truly stands and join there. Essence to essence.

And it was so beautiful. I saw the beauty in him that I had known was always there, the goodness in him. All of these memories of when I was much younger and how we had had sweet moments that I had entirely forgotten. It all came flooding back. The love that was real that couldn't be threatened, that was the deeper truth and always had been and always will be.

And ah, there were tears flooding down my face and I was able to come off that meditation cushion and write him a non-defensive honest letter, just telling him where I was. That I'm really working on things at my end. I wasn't ready for contact yet. But that's how hard it must have been for him to have had a daughter who always had barbed wire around her heart when it came to him. Just try to protect from being hurt again from another angry, unkind word that would devastate her and how hard it must have felt on his end to have felt that rejection, that being pushed away. And that I could own my part in that. And then I let him know I will not stop until you and I are in right relationship and are able to be together in a real, authentic and peaceful way.

Alex Howard

Something that's very beautiful...

Miranda Macpherson

It's beautiful. This healing.

[00:23:42] Alex Howard

Something very beautiful about what you're saying as well is the place where you were doing your work of forgiveness and feeling the depth of your heart are in there, but you are also able to recognize that you still, at that point, needed distance and needed boundary.

And I think that sometimes people think that the defensiveness is I can't go here because if I do, I have to be in a relationship, and I'm not ready for that. And I think that recognition of being able to open one's heart, but also recognize the need...

Miranda Macpherson

The truth of what's wholesome.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Miranda Macpherson

Of what's workable, of what's appropriate.

And so that came with the forgiveness.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Miranda Macpherson

The clarity of, okay, I tell this truth. I just share where I am. But I don't have to immediately merge before that. I don't have to do that. And so that's part of the way I've come to understand Grace moves. Grace always brings forth what is needed.

And sometimes what is needed is forgiveness. Sometimes that's also clarity and discrimination about what's wise or what's not quite unrightful timing as well. And so all of that came through my willingness to practice in that spot that had so much pain and suffering in it, from which I was very bound at the time.

Alex Howard

But it's also an important point, the recognition that for you to be truly free in relationship with men in your life, you had to go to that panic place of your greatest pain with your father.

Miranda Macpherson

Absolutely. Yeah. Well, hello. I mean, how can we really genuinely be really here now, fresh from the imprints of those so profound of the past, of our source figures? How can we truly relate to another as a living mystery, rather than through the lens of what psychologists would call our object relations of our parents? Which is usually what's going on.

[00:25:58]

And then we are not hearing and seeing and relating to one another at all or relating to images in our mind. And that's a challenge. And that's a bummer, because inevitably, once the flush of hormones have calmed down a little bit, what you're really dealing with is this.

And so it's a tremendous gift to your children, to your partner, to whoever you marry or don't marry, to be willing to be thorough in these very deep imprints that inevitably have to do with the people that raised us because they were the God and the Goddess at first. And so we can't help but be influenced in how we relate, particularly in intimate relationships, from those very important relationships.

Alex Howard

I love what you say about that thoroughness, because I think particularly in some of the psycho-spiritual teachings that have gained traction in recent years, there's almost a celebrating of doing things very quickly, of finding bypasses.

Miranda Macpherson

Sudden enlightenment.

Alex Howard

Hacking your way around things. As opposed to the recognition, certainly it's part of what touches me as you speak, it's certainly been my experience that the more you do the hard work, actually, ultimately, the more depth and the more connection there is. But it is hard work.

Miranda Macpherson

Yeah. Well, that's why humility is an important virtue that every wisdom tradition recognized is crucial for real spiritual maturation. And so I personally feel that humility is so important, no matter where we think we are on the path, no matter what we think we know. To keep coming with Holy, empty hands with that naked purity that is continually willing to see more, to learn more, to be changed. So that what never changes, which is the pure essence, has more and more and more and more room to unfold and express itself.

Alex Howard

You've mentioned before we started recording about this piece of writing that you've done previously of *The Vows of Ego in Relationship*, and I think it's a really lovely way of bringing this to life. So I'd love you to share that.

Miranda Macpherson

Just before I share that, I'll give a little bit of context, because as an interfaith Minister, and I was ordained when I was 25, and then my teacher asked me to create the first nontraditional interface seminary in England, which I did. I passed that on, handed that on to other people 15 years ago when I left the U.K to come to America.

[00:28:50]

But within that time I was training people also to help people get married and do it consciously. And I've been married twice. I'm happily married to my husband, Bob Duchmann. But in both of my wedding ceremonies I experienced that sense of the sacred marriage, what's often called the 1+1=3 principle, where there's the entity of the togetherness that is not just the one and the one, it is also this body of love and relationship that is mystical and profound.

And so, to me what's really key when two people get married is the promises they make to one another. And as I've taken so many couples through this, and also been through it myself twice, I realize we all have unconscious vows too. Our ego has vows in relationship.

And so I was kind of having a little fun thinking, if I write them down, what would the ego's vows in relationship be? So I came up with a few things.

Number one, I vow to make you my chosen one, into an idol, to be my source of happiness, peace, security, stability and worth. I vow to lose myself in our relationship and then resent you for my own self betrayal. Therefore, I vow to blame you for the difficult feelings of unworthiness, insecurity, lack of fulfillment, anger and discontent that I feel.

I vow to use our relationship to practice and perfect my skills of judgment, projection, giving to get, reinforcing my perception of myself as a separate somebody who doesn't get what they want. I vow to focus my attention on whether or not you're meeting my needs and living up to my expectations. And as long as you fulfill the demands and desires of my ego. I'll love you and be nice to you. But when you don't, I'll feel justified in criticizing you and trying to change or control you. All of this so that I don't have to feel vulnerable. And I get to avoid doing the more humble aspects of bringing my own fears and hurts and misunderstanding from the past to awareness.

And I vow to emerge from our relationship more angry, cynical, defensive, shutdown and convinced of my unworthiness than when I entered it.

I know. It's painful isn't it? When you just kind of.

Alex Howard

Totally. I mean, it's funny because it's so true. I mean, that's also why it's humorous that we've all found ourselves in those places.

Miranda Macpherson

Of course we have.

Alex Howard

There's something about making that unconscious, really explicit and naming it, which is it's funny. But you're right. It's also really painful to recognize that that is the place we can come from.

[00:31:57] Miranda Macpherson

And part of why I wrote that down, and I've often shared it with many people, is that often we feel shame when we find ourselves coming from that place. And shame thrives in secrecy, doesn't it? But when we just bring it to the light and see it and look at it with compassion, accept, yes, we're capable of this, and we don't want to feed it if we can. If we can learn to feed something deeper, nurture the deeper part of ourselves, work through the obstacles that block the possibility of that, then obviously that's better for everybody.

Alex Howard

So what would be the opposite of some of that?

Miranda Macpherson

Well, I mean, there's a lot we could say about that, but some principles that I have found to be valuable and that have helped me to really live love, be love in the relationships that matter the most.

And in my marriage, now, I've been married coming up to 12 years, and I do regard it as a daily spiritual practice. And a great blessing is, I would say, to offer our love and support and nourishment in service of the other's deepest awakening.

So for me, when I view the relationship as a gift and I view that it's not just for fun, although it is for that too, it is to rise into who we're here to be. And then it changes it from let me get from you. You're an object for my fulfillment to no, let me offer my love to support you, to rise into who you're here to be. And that we love one another toward that goal.

I always say to my husband when he's in his position about something, I love you, but I'm not going to support your ego. Why would I? I don't want you to support mine. I'm going to support you in the deepest truth, in you being full of integrity and you being real, because I know that's the truth in you. I'm here to love and support that. Encourage you in that direction. And I love it if you encourage me in that direction.

So I also want to support my beloved's freedom and fulfillment as if it's my own. Because so often we think of love from the perspective of ego, of lack and holding on. But love is synonymous with freedom. We all want to love, be loved, but we all want to be free to be who we are at the same time. And we often have a very deep inner conflict that we have to choose one or the other. We have to choose the boundedness or the freedom to be who we are.

But if I remember, no, I want to support my beloved's freedom and fulfillment as if it's my own. What that does for me is it helps me evolve out of self-centeredness. And also, it's a joy to see my beloved happy and being himself and fulfilling himself. I know I'm happier when I'm fulfilling myself, and I really appreciate it when they're not threatened by me trying something new, getting into a recording studio and seeing where we can go with a mantra album. Why not?

Alex Howard

But one of the things that often happens in relationship is that people get overtired, they get overworked, and they get more and more disconnected from themselves, so increasingly we get

caught in those habits of relating from our ego, not from our deeper nature. Maybe say a bit about what are the practices that really support meeting each other from that place?

[00:35:54] Miranda Macpherson

Yeah. So of course, we want to embrace whatever difficulties arise, and difficulties do arise as gateways into deeper wisdom. And so this is part of a spiritual principle. It's about turning whatever happens into the path to regarding the challenges that COVID might bring. The financial issues that we might bump into. Health issues we might bump into that affect everybody in the relationship. To regard them as gateways into deeper wisdom and to approach it with an invitation to grow wiser and deeper in practice with these things.

And when I say practice, what I mean is to do our best to practice openness, courage and compassion in the face of our defenses.

I know for myself when I've gotten triggered in something and I'm not happy with something my husband has done or said or not said or done, there's always this feeling of righteousness. And you should be, you're the one who's defensive. But now look at our defenses. Let's own my defenses for a moment. Let's own where I'm being demanding, where I am presuming I know what direction you should be evolving, where I presume I know how you feel. Rather than being present and asking some good questions and really genuinely being open, let me try to understand where you're coming from.

There are so many times, in my first marriage, when I found myself reactive, and what I recognized was in this moment, I'm too caught in my position of judgment, I'm right, and you're wrong, that I'm not capable of having a reasonable conversation about this issue. So I learned, zip the lip, go for a walk.

I would walk out the door. And at that time, prayer was a really central part of my practice. I hadn't had that awakening in Ramana's cave yet. So I would be praying very deeply. And my prayer would be pretty earthy and I think these kinds of prayers sometimes are the best. I'd be praying. Dear God, right now I'm really caught. I really do believe that I'm right and that everything would be fine. I feel perfectly peaceful if he would just see his bullshit and do it differently.

And I know I'm completely insane that this is not reality. Only I am very, very attached to my position here. I really need help. And help me to be open to the help, because I realize I'm defending against the help right now. So please don't let me walk in through that front door until I'm remotely capable of relaxing my position a little bit to the point where I'm able to ask a question and let him speak before I've wrapped it all up in my mind as guilty over there.

So I found that very helpful. And I noticed that when I would pray with that kind of honesty and sincerity. And for me, there's always, love is a God and truth. They're not three things. So that's to me why I think praying like that, it always brought me closer to my own heart and to truth, because I just can't lie. I can't be BS when I pray, I have to be honest.

Alex Howard

I love that piece of owning where you are in that moment as well.

[00:39:22] Miranda Macpherson

You have to. You can't pretend. It's not possible.

So it's like, yes, that means you've got to be in touch with where you are and at least just move your body, take yourself out in nature, give it some space and time. But whatever you do, don't just keep going at it from where you are, because the result is going to be emotional violence, and surely you know it by now. Did you want to feed that? No.

Sometimes you're not capable of not feeding that. So just take yourself out for a walk, move your body, breathe, pray, sit under a tree, listen to a guide, chant, whatever helps you to just settle down and get real in an honest, courageous and compassionate way.

So that's why I'm saying practice openness, courage and compassion in the face of your defenses. Then try to see what's really at the root.

Alex Howard

What I hear you say as well, is there's something about really, even almost particularly in those moments, maintaining that personal responsibility but also that curiosity, what's really going on here? Not what's my story? But what's really going on?

Miranda Macpherson

And what's really going on is ouch. Some variation of ouch.

A little somebody in there who feels hurt, who isn't feeling seen or heard, or there's some need that that little one who we were back when our personality was evolving, they didn't get what they needed and is upset about it.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Miranda Macpherson

Right. That is basically some variation of that. So if we can just stay present with the ouch, the sensations in our body, the grief in our heart, the loneliness, the sadness, the not knowing what to do. These are very vulnerable feelings. But if we can stay present and remind yourself, I'm now a grown human being and I'm not gonna die by staying present and feeling these feelings. I might feel like I'm going to die, but I actually won't.

Alex Howard

Yes. And that gets easier. Because one has the story this is going to annihilate me, and then it doesn't. And then after a while...

[00:41:42] Miranda Macpherson

The fact that it doesn't become part of your wisdom body. And so it helps you for the next time, it develops more musculature, more robustness, more resilience, more capacity to just stay present and undefended with your direct experience. Not the story about who's right or wrong because of your experience, just your direct experience. And just be interested in something arising that is wiser, that brings some insight or learning or some way forward. That is not your or my way, but the way.

Because ego is always your and my. But truth is always the way that serves. And often that's been another prayer when I've been in really tough spots in either of my marriages, and there's been this battle of wills, essentially. A competition about whose needs are the more important ones that should be given the priority. I mean, that's basically the variation of the story.

And so, the fight is about who's going to win. And my way or your way. And there's reaction, no way. My way, not you. So it's like what I have found often is turning to beloved God, help me lean into whatever the way is that best serves us all. That moves us into truth and love.

Alex Howard

In a sense, it brings us full circle back to where we started, of where is the place from which we are meeting relationship? Is it us trying to force and manipulate or make something happen? Or is it us getting out of the way and letting something happen through us?

Miranda Macpherson

Yeah. And along the way of all of that to remember also to recognize that it is such a gift. When I think about who I've fallen in love with or who's fallen in love with me, it's like it's so precious and so mysterious, how it really is Grace drawing us towards one another to exchange gifts, to help one another heal, to learn, to grow and just to nourish and love one another and share and celebrate life.

And I think if we've learned anything over this last 18 months and, you know, I've lost friends to COVID, to cancer in the last year, I'm sure others have to, life is precious and that it's important to take pleasure in the goodness that we have to stay close to what you really cherish about one another, to put our attention towards nourishing one another, being good to one another and to unabashedly celebrate the good times as well, to really take pleasure in the sacred mystery of life and to cherish it.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful. That's beautiful.

Miranda Macpherson

And accept that we will forget. That we'll all break our vows.

Alex Howard

But that's ok.

[00:44:53] Miranda Macpherson

Totally. The last of the vows that my husband and I made for each other, after saying all these lofty, beautiful things and we said, and when we forget and stumble on ignorance, this too, we embrace as our love.

Alex Howard

Beautiful.

Miranda Macpherson

So there's acceptance and forgiveness of the messiness and just coming back to truth as soon as we can, doing our best and letting that be good enough.

Alex Howard

And in a sense, there's a sweetness in that, isn't there? Within intimacy and relationship, that I love you as you are, even when you screw it up, because we have a commitment to do the best we can.

Miranda Macpherson

And I screw it up, too. And I'm sure I'm going to screw it up many more times. I don't want to hurt you in my screwing it up. And sometimes I probably will. And for that, I apologize in advance and I'm just growing up in the present moment to do my best, to live love with you because that's what matters.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful.

Miranda, I'm mindful of time but for people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best way? And what would you like them to do?

Miranda Macpherson

The best way is to go to my website, which is mirandamacpherson.com And Macpherson is spelled M-A-C-P-H-E-R-S-O-N.

And I've got a pretty extensive website, and there's a lot of downloadable goodies for people that I consciously have provided a lot of resources for people. So if you really take your time with that website, there's a store in there. And within that store, there's a sanctuary, downloadable sanctuary of tons. There's a whole course on meditation, there's mantra CDs, there's all sorts of different kinds of meditation practices, teachings for people.

I also run a global Sangha. Something COVID has done has taken work that I was doing locally, global. Right now we're full, but we're offering audio only membership so that people can receive the teachings and the practices at low cost. So I'm pumping out a lot.

[00:46:58]

And also I hope that people would read and enjoy my most recent book, *The Way of Grace*, and I'm a very rubber meets road practical, down to earth kind of teacher. So there's practices in each of the chapters that I know people will find useful if they apply them.

Alex Howard

Wonderful. Miranda, thank you so much for your time. I really enjoyed this. Thank you.

Miranda Macpherson

Yeah, me, too, Alex, thank you so much.