

## Meditation with Dr. Richard Miller of iREST - Non Dual Perspective

On this show Dr. Richard Miller, Founder of iREST, and a clinical psychologist, author, researcher, yogic scholar and spiritual teacher, tells us about non-dual approach to meditation and its benefits on health.

### Full Transcript:

**Priya Menon** : Good evening everyone. Hello everyone and welcome to the Cure Panel Talk Show.

I am Priya Menon, Scientific Media Editor of the CureTalk/Cure Panel joining you from India and I welcome all of you this evening to a discussion on Yoga. Today is the 6th episode in our series of talks focusing on research and practice of Yoga for addressing health and wellness. We have had some very interesting discussions on Yoga as therapy on this cure panel platform.

We had Dr. Satbir Khalsa of Harvard University discuss the research being done in his lab using yoga as a therapy for different conditions and evaluating the benefits in clinical research studies; David Emerson from the Justice Resource Institute talking about his experience of using yoga to treat patients with Trauma; Dr. Larry Payne of Samata Yoga talk about yoga for people in their 50s and beyond and Dr. Carol Horton and a panel of myeloma patients discussed how practicing yoga helped them through their cancer diagnosis and treatments. In our previous episode Dr. Richard Miller of iREST was with us and helped us understand Yoga Nidra the iREST program and its benefits.

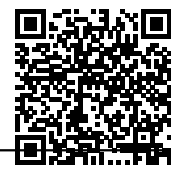
Today, Dr. Richard Miller of iREST is back with us and we are discussing non-dual approach to meditation and its benefits on health. Joining him is our panel of 4 experienced and distinguished yoga teachers.

In January, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study that said in some cases mindfulness meditation could be as effective as taking antidepressant medication. Usually our mind goes into default mode, thinks about anything other than the present moment, usually leaning forward into the future about what could happen, worrying, planning or ruminating about something in the past that's already happened. Meditation brings you into the present moment and sense what's actually happening right now. Dr. Miller is here with us to talk and share his views on meditation from a non-dual perspective. With that I will hand over the talk to our co-host, and resident yoga practitioner, Sharib Khan. Sharib you are on air.

**Sharib Khan** : Thank You Priya for the introduction to the show. Dr. Miller I am really glad to be back with you on the show. It is such an interesting topic. I am really looking forward to a very healthy discussion.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : It's a wonderful honor to be with you and Priya. Thank you very much for inviting me back.

**Sharib Khan** : Thank you for taking the time out. I want to just quickly introduce you to the audience and then get into the really exciting topic. So, folks, Dr, Miller is a Ph.D.in clinical psychologist. He is an author, researcher, and yogic scholar. He is the founding president of the Integrative Restoration Institute, co-



founder of The International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT), and founding editor of the professional Journal of IAYT.

He worked with Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the United States Department of Defense studying the efficacy of iRest, which is a program that uses Yoga Nidra technique. The iRest protocol was, and is continuing to be, used with soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and who have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Based on this work, Eric Schoomaker, Surgeon General of the United States Army endorsed Yoga Nidra as a complementary alternative medicine (CAM) for chronic pain in 2010, which I think is a significant achievement in this area and a great step forward for alternative and complementary medicine programs. iRest is currently supporting active duty, veterans and families of service members in over 30 VA or Military settings across the United States.

Dr. Miller and his organization have established iRest programs at various military sites, homeless shelters, prisons, hospices, universities, chemical dependency, mental health, Multiple Sclerosis, and cancer outpatient clinics, sites for pre-school children, as well as Yoga and meditation studios.

So, with that I will Once again Dr. Miller, really really pleasure to have you on the show. And I will move straight away into the topic of discussion. Can you enlighten us on what is non-duality or non-dual consciousness, and we will start from there?

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Well, I think of non duality as our ability to experience the underlying essence, out of which I might say, ourselves and the entire universe emerges, because we are not separate ultimately from that ground that we all come from. We can learn or experience it for ourselves and Non dual consciousness is really our underlying state that we all know as being or essence of awareness, but it is something that we don't usually turn into, because we are mostly relating to the objects around us, whether they are trees, other people, our thought or emotions are mostly externally oriented, but non dual meditation asks us to turn back in. And awaken or experience this non-verbal essence that forms the underlying essential nature of who we are. So, it has a sense of, when we are established in it or being interconnected with all of life. So when we look at a tree, we look at another person, we see the borders and the boundaries because that is what our eyes and our senses and our mind when they are working together do, they create a sense of border boundary and separation, and yet through meditation, through the practices we are able to perceive something, that isn't separate, that connects us all, and connect us to that underlying essence of being.

**Sharib Khan :** So, How is this concept, is it the same as the concept of interconnectedness or looking at nature and human beings as one, or is there a little bit of a difference in these two concepts.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Its similar and slightly different in the sense that when our mind conceptualizes things as one there is a tendency for the mind to visualize, that, and we tend to have ourselves as separate from what we are visualizing interconnectedness. Also have that same flavor of two things that are connected. The underlying essence of non-dual understanding is it goes beyond the intellectual sense of one or interconnectedness, where we are really feeling the very non-verbal, very deep existential way. The underlying essence of everything, and we know ourselves is not separate from that, in the Indian perspective, the word Advaita, which means non-dual, but actually it means "not two". When we use the word not two, our mind can't that word as we say, one, everything is one, everything is interconnected. There is tendency for us to still have our sense of self as an experience, who is separate from what we are experiencing, whereas, in the non dual understanding, we really do feel this underlying essence. It's not separate, but beyond the concept of, we would say of one.



**Sharib Khan :** So accepting. Actually I am reading a book on consciousness and how it might be measured in the lab, and they were talking about how the *stethoscope*, where one eye can see one object, but cannot see the object that is shown to the other eye, but in the brain, even though you are getting the signal from both the eye, you don't see a fused image. You are constantly alternating between the objects being seen. So, I find this fascinating that brain is constantly in the flux of seeing itself and also being connected, seeing itself and also being connected, and its interesting to hear how non-duality gets processed in the brain.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** You bring up an interesting research point because in order to see the world our eyes have to keep moving in order to conceptualize our self as a separate individual, the mind has to keep moving. As the mind comes to rest, it comes to a stop, our sense of self which actually is discontinuous, it comes and goes, begins to go and we will begin to feel the underlying essence which we call non-dual. For many people as they begin to feel that underlying essence, and the melting away of their sense of separation, it's stepping them outside their normal view of reality and it sometimes can be a little unsettling, that as we rest in it and learn how to feel relaxed in that sense of "non two" Non-dual, we really do have a insight and a really deep awakening to our real nature.

**Sharib Khan :** Yup, Ok. Let me move to the next. How is Yoga Nidra practice of non duality, or non dual meditation, does it follow the same procedure of feeling and relaxing the body step by step as you know, you talk about in yoga nidra. Can you explain how Yoga Nidra and Non-Duality go together?

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Sure. If think of the word Yoga Nidra, Yoga is the underlying concept that represents our non-dual nature, our ability to feel our underlying interconnectedness with everything. Nidra, while it means a state of sleep, it actually means a changing state of consciousness, so yoga nidra is practice whereby we are able to experience our sense of non-separation, no matter the state of mind that we may, or the state of consciousness or the state of our body that we are experiencing. So in that sense our body could be experiencing pain discomfort, our mind could be unsettled by particular thought or emotion, but yet we are still proceeding an underlying sense of interconnectedness and non-dual. Yoga Nidra is a series of practices that help us embrace that understanding that helps quiet the mind, and see this non-changing essence of being that underlies the changing movements of the mind, the body and emotions. And you reflect it on one of the aspects of yoga nidra, is leaning how to deeply relax the body, relax emotions, relax the thinking mind, so we can come to a very deep sense of peace, or a very underlying sense of stillness that awakens this sense of non dual, and then yoga nidra helps us bring it back into our daily life, our relationships so it becomes an integrated life, where we are living this sense of non dual, even as we go about our relationships and daily life of object to object.

**Sharib Khan :** I am going to ask a couple of few more questions and get on to the panelists, and may be we will get to these questions later. Let me get one of our panelists on air. We will start with Dr. Carol Horton. Dr. Carol Horton is a Ph.D, is the author of *Yoga Ph.D.: Integrating the Life of the Mind and the Wisdom of the Body*, and co-editor of *21st Century Yoga: Culture, Politics, and Practice*. She holds a doctorate in Political Science from the University of Chicago, served on the faculty at Macalester College, and has extensive experience as a research consultant specializing in issues affecting low-income children and families. A Certified Forrest Yoga teacher, Carol teaches yoga to women in the Cook County Jail with Yoga for Recovery, and at Chaturanga Holistic Fitness in Chicago. She is a co-founder of the Socially Engaged Yoga Network (SEYN), a new organization dedicated to supporting yoga teachers, community organizations,



and other stakeholders committed to sharing the benefits of yoga with underserved communities. So with that I will bring Carol on air and let her discuss the topic with you Dr. Miller.

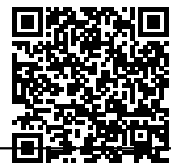
**Dr. Richard Miller** : Thank you.

**Carol** : Hi, Can you hear me. Thanks so much and its and honor to be on this panel Dr. Miller. So, I have a very pragmatic question. As i listen to you speak about non-duality and I know you are offering your iREST program in public institutions like VA hospitals. Have you encountered any issues in terms of proceed clashes between the articulation of a non dual reality and are there any institutional wariness of any sort of religious teachings, or sensitivities among students about ideas that might be seen to conflict with their religious beliefs. So, I am thinking, for example, of what happened in Ensenada. I don't know if you are familiar with that.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : I am. Yes

**Carol** : And some very conservative Christian parents were concerned about the teaching of yoga in schools, because, they felt that the underlying philosophy was simply not in accord with their religious beliefs. So, is it something you are open about in those situations, is it acceptable and easy to get it in there or something you need to adapt, depending on the institution and/or the students you happen to be in the program with you.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : well, it's a great question, and I know you are bringing the work into jail systems as well and working with underserved population as well. To me, what I work with is how to make any delivery of the teachings that I do very secular in nature. Coming in, I am offering actually a series of tools where the people I am working with use them for their own exploration. There is no sense of coming in with a prescribed agenda or some philosophy that we are trying to impose, or, different concepts. We are actually asking people for instance, to relax deeply, taking to a general relaxation that does not conflict with anybody's values. And then we are asking them – So, when you are this deeply relaxed what's most drawing your attention in your body? Is there a particular emotion or a thought that arising for you and can you describe it. So, we are actually helping them move into their own experience and become familiar with it. We are also asking them what I call interviewing questions where we will say – Do you all know for instance what it's like just to be on a summer's day when you are just relaxing between two events and you are just being. And everybody says yes, doesn't depend on meditation experience. I have worked in homeless shelters, VA centers, all the vets say, yes, what it's like to be. And so, I ask them what's your experience when you're being, for instance, when you are just being what time is it is, and they will all say – Well, it feels like there is no time. It's timeless. And I will say does being need anything, and they all say – No, being is just fine the way it is. Do you need to be anything special to be? And they will say no, we don't need a teacher. We all know what it's like to be. So, as they experience that sense of being, and then I ask, what is it like for you when you are just being – They will say – I feel very present, I feel very relaxed and at ease. I feel a sense, as a vet said the other day – I feel at home when I am just being. And then I can use their words back to them so they have given me basically the words that I use in helping them reveal the deeper aspects of themselves. So, there is no sense of imposing. I have gone into a very conservative Christian churches, I have gone into homeless shelters, VA centers, jails, And I find, because I am not imposing upon them and I am really helping them discover themselves, they don't feel a sense of this being something that is adverse



or against their teachings. And the feel of housekeeping, I would say, I get all the time, is this feels like something that is helping me to know myself and my own religion or spiritual values even more than I did before. So I love it, if we as teachers, taught a class, when everybody is twilling out of the room, if they could speak to it silently and say – thank you very much for teaching me today. It is all like you made this class just for me. I think, then I have done a service. So, when I don't use non-secular language – like I don't necessarily use the word Yoga or Yoga Nidra, I don't use Sanskrit terms. I just come in as a human being relating to another human being offering them some – what I think as exquisite tools to help them get to know themselves.

**Carol :** That's great. Thank you so much. Should I ask another question or do you want to move on to another panelist?

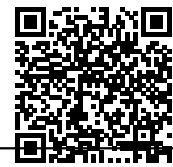
**Sharib Khan :** No. You can go ahead carol.

**Carol :** Ok. So, I have another question, which is really a yoga practitioner type question. I am curious, how you think about the relationship between yoga nidra, sitting meditation and yoga asana practice. I think there is a widespread belief among more serious yoga practitioners that asana is the least serious practice or has the most – the least steps. Seated meditation is the most advanced practice and yoga nidra may be, in between there. And I wonder, if you think that, that way of thinking about things is really a useful hierarchy today when we are bringing such a wide range of yoga related or yoga and meditation type practices to a very wide range of people, for a very wide range of reasons.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** I don't see these as actually as separate practices, because in each, when we are practicing movements, say, hatha yoga or tai chi or any movement, I think as ways we are learning to sense our body and enter into a very deep engaged dialogue or relationship with our body. As we are, when we sit to meditate, we have to have a familiarity with our body and our emotions, as when we are doing yoga nidra. So, I am really seeing them as one underlying essence, which we can nourish in each of these practices. But each offers in a way a different perspective, but we are actually trying to get people or helping them experience themselves or their underlying essence of being or very deep sense of peace. That's had a – kind of ideal level of pragmatic or practical level – I understand that many people – like myself – I entered in through the realm of hatha yoga, which introduce me to my body my mind my senses. Then the yoga nidra practice deepen down, and then sitting meditation allows me to drop away any kind of external circumstance and I can really dive deeply into myself. So, if I were to place some, you know, I think, they are along a continuum, one supporting the other, and the underlying essence of being that each one is trying to get at is present in each practice. So, when I teach hatha yoga, I actually am teaching meditation yoga nidra. When I am teaching yoga nidra, I am teaching body sensing and meditation and when I am teaching meditation I am teaching yoga nidra and body sensing. So, I use all three approaches in every encounter I engage with myself or another. I don't keep them as separate practices. I don't know if that is helpful to you.

**Carol :** No, ya, I think that is very helpful.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Ya, and I also think there is a way in which we can say, denigrate one practice as



opposed to the other. I think for me its more how do we find the richness in each practice, and then employ that when its helpful and let it go when its no longer necessary.

**Sharib Khan** : Thank you Carol. I will bring on our next panelist Jennifer. Jennifer grew up in Sunnyvale, California. She has a Master's degree in Urban & Environmental Policy from Tufts University and before that she went to UC Santa Cruz for Environmental Studies from UC Santa Cruz. She spent two years as an Environmental Education Volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic and she taught 3rd grade, summer science & language arts camps. She is currently working on my memoir titled Never Give Up and talking about Buddhism, Family & dealing with Schizophrenia. She has been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) for the past 25 years and she draws on these teachings for encouragement, strength, and inspiration. Jennifer you are on air, please go ahead with your question.

**Jennifer** : Ok. Thank you for having me. Happy to participate in this call this afternoon. I guess I have one question I was interested in, how with iREST meditation. I found this information, I was wondering, what is the process or what is meant by the neutralization of stress, negative feeling emotions, beliefs, images, memories. How is that actually neutralized, I guess with meditation, because I know that the negativity is the negative feelings and emotions, can go away but, they will come back from time to time. So, it's not something that goes away permanently. So, I was wondering, what that means or how that works.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Ya, thank you for the question. It is a good question. I don't think its so much as neutralizing the core principle, I think in daily life, meditation and these practices, is learning how to listen and how to welcome what's present. So, as you say, an emotion rightly comes and goes, thoughts come and go, body sensation come and go, we are learning how as they are coming, to welcome them, listen to them I think of as messengers, what information do they have to tell us. Responding to those messages and through those responses engaging in life in way, the emotions serve their purpose and move on. They may come back later with new messages. So, we are not trying to get rid of emotions thoughts, body sensations. That is an impossible task. We are not in a way trying to neutralize or more learning how to be so comfortable with our body our mind our senses, that as each is coming, there is no aversion, we are not trying to keep them away, and as they are leaving we are not trying to hold on to them. So, there is neither attachment or aversion or we might say, there is neither also a fained neutrality to them. We are really trying to learn how to be responsive as human beings, through meditation, through our emotions.

My feeling is meditation, in its first movement, really helps us become a fully functional alive human being, where we are really responsive to our emotions, to our body sensations or thoughts. We are engaging them all day long, and so when we go to bed at night, there is nothing leftover, there are no residues. It is because we really met them during the day responded, and moved on. Then, what I find is the mind becomes more at rest. Emotions don't come with the intensity that they would have, when we were resisting or refusing them. So, we find a deeper peace or deeper stillness, that some people may phrase as a neutrality. But, I think of it as deeper aliveness, this deep resonant dynamic stillness that we come to, that points to our deeper nature or non-dual nature of connectedness with all of life. So, then we feel this deep sense of stillness, of peace as we go through life, and we are then, I think of ourselves as a fully functioning human being. We are both functioning on all cylinders with our emotions our thoughts, we are engaged with other people, we are responding to the world, and we are living in a deep peace, a deep sense of stillness that carries us through all of the different experiences we are going to have in life. So, I am aware that one of the practices that we have in yoga nidra, which is contemplating opposites, when there is say, a feeling of sadness or say anger, we can contemplate its opposite.





I will say the opposite of sadness might be happiness or peace, the opposite of anger might be peace or love or joy. By contemplating opposites at the same time, it helps us in an interesting way, become more comfortable with the original emotion. As we contemplate the opposite of fear, which might be peace, it helps us come back to the fear in a new way, and become more comfortable with it. Then we ask people to hold both opposites simultaneously what they often find is not a neutralization, but a resolution that leads to a deeper insight. And a deeper understanding that as they hold that understanding, it gives them a better sense of how to move through life. As an example, one woman I worked with, had a very deep feeling that something was wrong with her, she was unlovable. She contemplated the opposite as I am lovable, and as she lived with both feelings and contemplated both opposites of unlovable and I am lovable, she came to a new resolution realizing, there was an underlying tone of – I am love itself – which enabled her to tolerate being unloved and because she came from an abusive family background, abuse was often coupled with love, she found she could tolerate love in a whole new way and did not link it to abuse. And so, by contemplating opposites of I am unlovable and I am lovable, she came to a new resolution within herself, that enabled her to go back into her life in a whole new way that was unexpected for her. So, I would not neutralize, I would say, it enlivens us to really meet ourselves, in a very deep way.

**Sharib Khan :** This is really very exciting and interesting stuff Dr. Miller. And, Jennifer I will add a, I will want to get some more details from Dr. Miller. So, you used the word “resolve”. To my understanding, on how the mind works is that, usually at a time when you are not engaging it with something active, a lot of the unresolved issues start to take up the attention of the mind. So, as we are practising this, you were saying this through this practice, we are able to create base. So, while you say response how is the response through thinking or its through specific actions, how does the process works?

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Well, you are raising a couple of very vital points I think. When we do these practices, whether it's hatha yoga, yoga nidra, meditation, it does open the door to the unconscious and all our unresolved issues and emotions and thoughts. Slowly as we resolve the uppermost ones, it makes room for the lower ones to begin to emerge into consciousness. I often think of these pez candy dispensers where you take one pez out and the next one comes up, it's the same thing with our emotions. So, a lot of the early work in meditation and these practices is to become comfortable and learning how to work with the emerging emotions or repress material, so that we have tools to meet it in a way that both helps us meet it and resolve that and take actions into the world that we might otherwise before been refusing to take. As we resolve more and more of these underlying emotions, when the mind comes to a rest, there is no new material that is emerging and we spend more time at rest or at peace or in this deep stillness. And initially meditation for most people is that they are trying to find this peace, they are trying to get this deep stillness into their lives. Later on we come to the realization that peace and stillness have always been here waiting for us. We were just distracted or overwhelmed by the emotions that were lying on top of that. Later on that deep stillness impregnates our entire lives, so eventually even when long repressed emotions emerge it does not displace that deep sense of peace or stillness. So, we feel it in midst and of our activities in life. First we are trying to find it, later on it has found us, and it's always in matter of speaking, with us, no matter where we are or what we are engaged in doing.

**Sharib Khan :** And when you talk about response are you saying that any feeling or emotion that comes we respond to it through thoughts or through actual action?

**Dr. Richard Miller :** I think of them as actual action. In other words, the thoughts or an emotion, say an emotion arises. Let's take anger, as an emotion, because most people are familiar with it. When we feel



angry, it's usually because we have an expectation, that isn't coming forward. In other words, we are expecting something to happen in life and life gives us something else, we get irritated. The anger, if we really learn to welcome it, helps us understand the expectation we are having. See that life is offering us a different alternative and when we engage actively that alternative, the anger has served its purpose, the expectation melts away and we are back into life. For instance, a couple of years ago, I was in Chicago, trying to get a plane and I came to the doorway and they slammed the door in front of me. The stewardess was on the other side, and I said open the door, so I can get on the plane. She said no, once we have closed the door. That is it. I could feel a piece of irritation because life was giving me something other than what I wanted. But I quickly turned to the person who was manning the gate next to me, and said, is there another plane and she said, just a couple of gate down. I engaged that action when I actually got on a plane, but as I was leaving, another person showed up, who had also been shut out of that plane and they started going into a tantrum and engaging their anger rather than using the anger to see the expectation to see what action do I need to take. So, if, when I am working with people in meditation or privately, I am always asking them, when they have an emotion or a thought or a body sensation, what is the action that this is calling you to take into your life. And sometime that action will be just to stop and be still, other times it may be to call someone to write something a letter or to take a new job, for instance So, to me its action and it's not just in thoughts, its actually in our body that we feel it as a whole bodily response

**Sharib Khan** : Ok. Jennifer if you have anything else, please go ahead. Sorry I came in between.

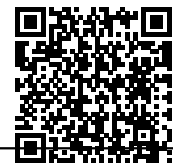
**Jennifer** : No problem. I was just going to actually comment that it seems, there is something very similar concept in Buddhism that I am familiar with. It's called the oneness of self and environment and it is sort of the same idea as non-duality. Its, there is a, it is translated from the Japanese, there is a word that means two but not two – so, which is referring to the self, the person and everything in the person's environment. And it is the idea that not quite of opposite, but if you think of like a coin, how a coin is one coin in itself, but it has the heads side and it has the tails side.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Right. To follow that there is, say the emotion and the response we have, they are not two, they are actually one. And I often tell people within us, we all have the perfect response to each moment, if we could just clear out the obstructions, the emotions or the thoughts, that get in our way, we see the perfect response. And by taking it there would be a sense of harmony. So, I agree with you. Life looks like two sides of a coin, but it's one coin. It looks like myself and life happening that is separate from me, but my response is not separate. It's life, me, and the response – all together as one unit not separate.

**Jennifer** : Right. I think its, there is a part of our lives, or dimension of part of our lives, that at the most fundamental level, we are not separate from our environment or everything else around us. It's just at a very fundamental level that we really are not aware of, unless, you know may be we are taught or we are trained or learn how to become aware of it. So, there is at a very deep level, that is the level, that there is the oneness that is spared.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Yeah. At a very fundamentally neurological level, developmentally, our body, our mind our senses – their job is to create a sense of separation – separate objects, environment vs our self, and we may then loose touch with that deep sense of not being separate from our environment, meditation and these wonderful practices. By their nature or design to help us re-awaken to that underlying essence where





we are not separate from our environment, and then, my sense is the only way that we can destroy the environment, that we can go to war, is because we en-culture a sense of separation. And as that sense of separation dissolves, and we are deeply moved by feeling of non-separateness from nature in our environment. There is no way we could be destructive or go to war. It no longer makes sense. So, these are core practices that really instill a deep sense of our underlying realization that everything around us – trees, rocks, all the people- they in way are ourselves in another form, and it creates deep relationship.

**Sharib Khan** : Well, Thank you Dr. Miller. Thank you Jennifer. I am going to, actually, ask few a questions and then bring our last panelist. I wanted to frame all of this discussion, and having talked a little bit about, how this actually impacts our health. Like what are some of the physiological or neurochemical changes that we have shown that happen because of this. And, can you tall a little bit about that and then I will bring on our last panelist Morgan.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Well, I think you are getting at the neuro-science. We see for instance, when people experience depression long term, or anxiety or long-term stress, or posttraumatic stress, there are actually organic changes in the brain. The Amygdala structure, the limbic system tends to increase in size, people become more dominate in destructive emotions and their hippocampal structure tends to shrink, and grow smaller, where they lose their sense of connectedness and responsibility, and are unable often to see the consequences of their actions. As they meditate, just the reverse happens. They feel less hijacked by their emotions. Their Amygdala, limbic system comes back to normal size. Their hippocampal areas grow in size. Their neo-cortex and the front of the brain thicken. Interestingly, when we meditate it actually takes us out of the way we normally hold time and space. If we look at a person in MRI, when they are deep meditation, we see parts of their brain go offline and new parts go online and it actually disrupts their sense of separation time, space and takes them into this dimension of timelessness where they feel a sense of non-separation. And we see changes in cortisol levels decreasing; the immune system gets turned on. To me, one of the best things somebody could practice for immunological diseases – fibromyalgia, cancer, multiple sclerosis – is meditation yoga nidra. So, the research we have been doing with people who are undergoing treatment for cancer or who have long term multiple sclerosis, we find deep health in helping them cope with their treatments, as well as, sometimes we find their immune system turning on and enhancing their treatment. In the VA, we often see vets telling us that they need less medication or they have gone off their medication. So, there are lots of physiological changes we see, just in helping a person relax.

Even more so, when they go into prolonged meditation or many periods. I was just reading a research article by Riche Davidson, who does a lot of work out of Wisconsin with MRI. And he was showing that in one session of meditation we can affect quite profound changes and even more so, with each session that is added, and we can get irreversible positive changes. For instance, in 6 sessions that can be life changing.

I have often seen people with chronic pain. In one session or over multiple sessions, one – their pain disappears, or it ameliorates and lessens or at they found tools with which they can work with. So, there are some really profound direct and immediate consequences of doing say yoga nidra or meditation in general, on chronic pain, depression, and anxiety. Its a very incredible intervention. If it's given in the right way, because we always adapt it to the individual.

Even when we are working in groups, we are always looking at the individual within the groups. So, everybody is in a way getting a meditation that is tailored for them and what they are experiencing.

**Sharib Khan** : Thank you so much on that. Actually we have both Catherine and Morgan to go. So, I am going to quickly get them on air. We are running a little out of time. So, our next panelist is Morgan Dix, who



for the last 19 years, has been an intensive student of meditation and yoga. He is an entrepreneur who combines his passion for spiritual practice and writing to help educate others about the benefits of these ancient practices. He is the Co-Founder of the media platform About Meditation (<http://www.aboutmeditation.com>). And I will let him ask his questions. Morgan you are on air.

**Morgan :** Hi There. Can you hear me. Hi Dr. Miller. Its a pleasure to be on the air and an honor to be part of the panel. Thank you so much. And I find your work very inspiring. I wanted to ask a question. Your work with iREST integrates your experience with a several years, several thousand-year-old traditions and your expertise as a psychologist. And as I understand it, the inquiry exploring this juncture of eastern dogma in yoga and western psychology, that is really been developing, you can say, on one hand, the 60's or the 70's, when you first got interested in this whole area. And then if you count, you could say, when *Devasya Nada* came to the west, almost a hundred years ago, and his impact on people like William James, you could say, really there is been an inner mixture that has been going on for over a century, and that arc of development, that per se, I find intriguing and promising. And being newly exposed to your work, obviously, you are a pioneer in this area, and it is inspiring to learn about your work. I spent many years in Neo-advaita tradition.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Yes, I saw that.

**Morgan :** In our tradition, really once individuality, in some respects with, suppressed and renounced, really for the sake of keeping our minds fixed on God or Consciousness, and of course that has its benefits. And I learnt a lot from that approach. And yet, In retrospect, with some depth inside I question the ultimate efficacy of that approach, for our time for post- modern human beings. And I also saw some outcomes to that approach that were not so positive in particular, a kind of reductionism, which led people to a limited range of acceptable behaviors, responses and self expression. So, in that light I was particularly moved, when you spoke, and certainly you have been speaking to the whole panel today, but when I listened to your last Panel about how the iREST protocol, really, it has the flexibility to respond to unique needs of each individual. And in fact, I got the impression, correct me if I am wrong, that it really has, it has to take the different needs of each individual into consideration, and there on unique situation to have added impact. So, I would love, in the context of what we are speaking today, exposing people to non-dual consciousness, I wondered if you could speak really to that element of the tailored approach. Why you think that really specific response to an individual and their unique needs is so important and what does that look like in practice. That is really my first question. And, if I may quickly add a second one, just, how you see, I mean this kind of credible evolutionary art between eastern traditions and western psychology. What you are seeing, what you are excited about, obviously your work is an expression of that evolution in significant and promising ways.

**Dr. Richard Miller :** Well, let me see if I can speak directly and distinctly as possible. We have to take the understanding that at one level there are no separate individual. There is just nature giving rise to what looks like separate individuals. So, in the words of the Dalai Lama, it is not as if the self ever existed, we are realizing this self as actually an invention of the mind. It does not actually exist as, except as a concept. So, when we are working with the individual we realize that each is a unique expression of nature, and my desire is always in the unique expression of each individual, trying to really bring out and unfold their unique flowering. As we might look at separate roses, they are all roses but each has a distinct scent and a unique expression. So, when I think of meditation or yoga nidra specifically, it has to tailor to the individual as a unique expression of life. And each individual has their specific, I would say, purpose, and so we are trying to expose what that purpose is. So, we are not trying to contain them into a imposed actions that we think they



should be doing. We are trying to find out what actions and the way of living life, that when you live them, you really feel yourself one as a unique expression. But as a flowering of that underlying unity that we all come out of. So, I keep in mind that it looks like they are individuals, but in fact it is just life expressing itself. So, it has to be tailored to the individual. You know, it duck tails with the evolutionary art that I do see happening. And recently I understood that even Thomas Jefferson and others when they went to Europe back in 1700's and before, they were being exposed to the ideas that had impregnated Europe that it comes from east. So, there is a long arch here that is coming to fruition now. And my sense is, if we think of all of humanity on a bell curve, there are some, we might call outliers who are really deeply experiencing the sense of non-dual reality and the underlying, I might say Oneness, or non- separation of all of life. Most of Humanity isn't doing that, but my sense is that bell curve is slowly moving.

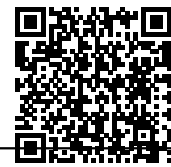
So, what is going to happen in 10,000 years, another 20,000 years – my sense is – our brain is developing in such a way that more people will naturally be living in that non-dual state than less people. And, you know, we know that Ego – which creates a sense of separation, is new on the genetic scene. It did not exist couple of million years ago or a million years ago. It's a new invention of the neo-cortex. So, I think we are all in that evolutionary movement where is the ego as a structure going to be, say in 20,000 years. It may come as a unique expression that is helping us have a sense of separation of individuality, but at the same time realizing that we are not or actually all one part of nature expressing itself.

So, I always keep that in mind, who is this person in front of me. They are all flower of life, how do they need to flower? I don't know how they should. I know that they do, if we can really help them explore themselves, that flowering comes out very beautifully.

**Morgan :** Thank you so much

**Sharib Khan :** So, I will bring our last panelist Catherine. Thank you so much Morgan. I forgot to add that Morgan, actually, has been with EnlightenNext foundation or organization for along time. Thank you for that interesting question. Catherine is our last panelist and she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 1996. Since then she has used Tai Chi and mindfulness meditation to support her immune system and deal with side-effects related to treatment. She has also followed this personal interest to become a Neuroscientist specializing in investigating brain mechanisms underlying the effects of Tai Chi and mindfulness on aging, pain and other clinical situations. She is assistant professor at Brown University School of Medicine and Director of translational neuroscience at the Brown University. Thank you so much Catherine for taking your time, and please, you are on air, feel free to ask your questions from Dr. Miller.

**Catherine :** Great! thank you so much. I really appreciate and happy to be learning about this wonderful work that you have been doing. I actually just have one question, that I think is a pretty practical question. I studied the effects of mindfulness on the brain and on illness. And this weekend I presented at the international meeting about the effects of doing different breath focus, doing the breath focus in different body locations. Presented a neuro model on that. And which is interesting but isn't that relevant. There were numerous teachers at our sessions who talked about some of their – these are mindfulness teachers – who talked about some of their students, who start out very avoid-ant of the body. And the examples they mentioned were perhaps obesity, or a history of Trauma. And so, for some people, specially people with a history of Trauma, the experience of simply sitting and focusing can be, as I am sure – you probably know better than I – can be quite flooding emotionally. And these teachers talked about sort of techniques for sensing when this is happening and managing, and also for being able to say, there are people for whom sitting for these practices, probably is not appropriate for them at this moment in time, given where they are in their process. And so, I wanted to find out, sort of, how you discern, you know, to make modifications, or to



even suggest to someone that, you know may be, brisk walking practice or something might be better for them. And how do you sort that out?

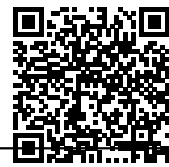
**Dr. Richard Miller** : It is a good practical question. I think this is why again it's so important, even while I am working in a group, I am, say if there are 12 people in the room, I am trying to relate to 12 individuals and what does each need. And I try to have individual conversations and also meet with people individually. So, I can help them explore, so as you say it rightly, sitting meditation for many people just does not work. It's unethical and causes more agitation. For them, it might be a lying down meditation or as you say some engaged walking or body movement practice. A lot of people who have had physical or sexual abuse, by beginning to sense their body reawakens a lot of emotion and it can flood, as you say, their system. So, I am always looking at how can we create continuums of experience from very benign and gentle, to help them begin to welcome their body, learn how to relate to it in a way that they can see it is a friend and not their enemy.

And slowly engage in deeper and deeper practices of body sensing. So, its really the engaged conversation is really helpful. Having them to describe, so, I will give them, introductory, just brief practices to see, how do they take it, how do they handle it, and then build sequentially over a period of time.

We have had wonderful success, I think, primarily, because we don't have people first sitting in meditation or moving. We just have them lying down and helping them learn to basically relax. We tell them, its OK to fall asleep. So, even during meditation we have people snoring at times. We are helping them learn that there are many ways of approaching meditation that is unique to them as individuals. So, its hard to generalize, because I have got to have the person in front of me. But just add the same adage I keep coming back to – We are always working with the individual. I have a whole quiver of tools, I think of it as a tool belt, which tools are appropriate for this person. While I have one, that I tend to take out to try immediately, like body sensing with a person lying down and just sensing their hands, I am looking for them to describe their experience, so then I can begin to tailor the practice specifically to them. Where we might not have them doing breathing right way, we might have them doing something else or there is a particular breathing exercise we might adapt for them right away. But, its that interactional relationship, I think, that really is important in student teacher relationship, where the student really does feel , we are listening to them, we are trying to understand them deeply. We are trying to help them discover the practices that are just right for them. And we understand that this can take time and we have all the time that they need to meet them. So, compassion, caring, empathy, I think, are all part of developing a good relationship.

**Catherine** : I think, this is, I love what you just said about the tool kit and you know, approaching each person individually and with a compassionate spirit. You know what, I am a part of the contemporary studies initiative at Brown University and one of my colleagues is actually, looking at adverse effect of some meditation programs, and it seems like there are certain programs where there is a spirit of pushing and breaking through and doing different things with the breasts that can be quite aggressive, and I think your program sounds like, you know, having people understand that there might be this other pathway and that all these modifications seems like, may be very helpful to people.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Ya, The bottom line for me is self enquiry. And welcoming. How can this person feel like we are welcoming them just the way they are, where they are and how they are, and beginning to help them find who they are to enquiry vs. telling them these are the practices you need to do. I have got no idea, what the practice is for any person, when they first come to me. So, it's a discovery we are on. But as you a said,



I have a tool belt, so I can offer different tools, but when they tell me, this tool does not work, my first response is great! Now we know that this does not work, you want to try this or what feels right to you. So, it's always a collaborative relationship we are building with our students.

**Catherine** : Well, I am very excited about this. And I think there are certain, right now there are some ongoing projects to interview healers and teachers and learn, you know, so that we can transmit these ideas more generally. Especially if people are finding that they are in yoga or meditation program that is not agreeing with them at a deep level. And there are other places.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Ya, And I remember when I started out, i had only a limited tools, so I could offer only a few things, I think that wisdom as we grow old and we have a lots of tools, it would be wonderful to put ourselves in these kind of environments where we are passing them on to the next generation, so they can get as many tools as quickly as they can, so they can help their clients.

**Catherine** : They don't have to reinvent the wheel.

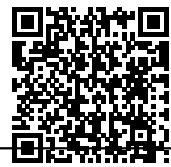
**Dr. Richard Miller** : No, exactly.

**Catherine** : Thank You. Its very helpful, and I will talk to *Wildy Brighton* about this and one of us might be in contact.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Oh, wonderful, because I know Wildy, So I would love to be in contact.

**Sharib Khan** : We do have some callers in. I just want to wrap it up quickly. We are definitely going above time, and we still have a few questions that were submitted, that I would have liked to bring up, but, before we end, I want to see if somebody in the audience would like to ask a question. And if so, please press 1 on your keypad and we will bring you on air. And, If not, you know, I will try to wrap things up. Dr. Miller that you so much. This was a wonderful discussion. Thank you to all the panelists – Morgan, Carole, Jennifer and Catherine, for the questions and the discussion. And as we wait for somebody to press 1 on the keypad, I will try to ask some of the questions we received from via email. So, can you talk of, somebody wants to quickly know how non-duality can be used in psychotherapy, and seems like you talked about this in a conference in San Francisco, few days back. So, can you talk a little bit about that Dr. Miller.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : I can, and the conference of use of non-duality and psychotherapy. I helped found the organization years ago, and it's a wonderful organization and we meet every year. Non-duality principles are to me very useful in psychotherapy, because we don't see the client as someone separate from us. We are forming an empathic bridge with them as we are working with them, and in a way we are listening to win, as they are learning to welcome themselves as I have been saying, learn these different tools, how to be meet



and greet and really be with their emotions and thoughts. There is a natural stillness that begins to come, that many therapists who are not oriented will miss it and not understand what it is.

When I am working with someone, one to one, and I can feel that presence coming into the room, I will often ask them to just take a moment and comment if there is anything else they are experiencing right now, they might not have noticed. At times they may say, now that you say it, it feels like there is wonderful kind of silence or stillness here, and then I will say, can you take time and really sense that and invite it into your body and into your room. When we are oriented with these meditational perspectives, we can weave in experiences that a client is often having, that a non- oriented therapist, might otherwise miss. We do know that when clients are interviewed 75-80% of them say, spirituality is a part of what they are bringing to the psychotherapy hour, and if the psychotherapist is not trained or oriented in this perspective, then they could be doing their clients a disservice.

**Sharib Khan** : Well, thank you so much for that. I think we have really gone above time, so I will end the Panel today with that final question. Thank you once again Dr. Miller. Thank you to all the panelists – Morgan, Carole, Jennifer and Catherine. We will have the recording of the show available for you all to look into and others as well. We look forward to the next panel and will keep everybody informed. Dr. Miller – thank you so much. I am really hoping to come down to San Francisco and get a chance to actually enroll in your iREST program training, workshop or something very soon.

**Dr. Richard Miller** : Well, I look forward to seeing you. I thank you Sharib and thank you Priya for the show. Thank you for bringing me on and all of our guests who were asking questions so deeply – Carole, and Jennifer, and Morgan and Catherine, thank you for being part of the show.

**Sharib Khan** : Ok folks. Bye Thank You.