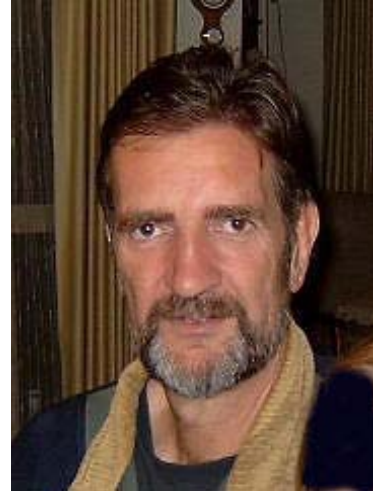


## Personal Biography

I was born in Holland to middle class parents. My family migrated to Australia when I was four years old, and I grew up in a country town in South Australia. I went on to study engineering at Melbourne University before leaving Australia to explore other parts of the world. I traveled overland via India to Europe, and spent the next eight years discovering my real interests in life – healing, travel, personal development and spirituality.



Shortly before leaving Australia, at the age of twenty one, an event occurred which would have a major impact on my life's direction. I met one of my soul mates, and fell in love.

Till then, I was inexperienced and naïve when it came to relating to women. The meeting with my soul mate threw me, unexpectedly, into the deep end of the vast pool of love.

Fortunately, the same was not the case with her. She was married with a young family, and was not looking for another connection. Our encounter was as unexpected for her as it was for me, but she was able to keep her head above water, and teach me how to at least dog-paddle and save myself from drowning.

We began an affair of the heart which continued for several years, most of it while we were living in different parts of the world.

To my surprise, I discovered that the love I felt for her was very different from what I had been led to expect. I had no desire to marry her, or possess her in any way. The love we shared was more than enough. In fact, it transported us to another world, where considerations of lifestyle and future plans were irrelevant. In this other world, my strongest wish was for her happiness.

Much of her own life was centered on her family. Her marriage, while experiencing the usual ups and downs, was reasonably harmonious. She had no wish to abandon her security for an unknown adventure with someone young and uncertain such as myself, and I understood and accepted this completely. Our love came to be something that did not belong much to this world.

After a couple of years of traveling around Europe, I settled down in England, and started to meet other women. I was still in my early twenties, and not looking for a long term relationship. These early connections had a certain innocence about them at first. I was discovering more about myself – especially those aspects that had not been a big part of my earlier relationship, such as sexuality. This brought a new dynamic into these relationships. However, having had a soul-mate connection as my first real love affair, I was unprepared for the kind of human frailties and insecurities that started emerging. I imagined that the love I had already experienced was something that would just keep happening again and again. This turned out not to be the case.

The young, single women I was meeting, whatever other qualities they might have had, were generally insecure. They seemed more concerned with whether I loved them, rather than their feelings for me. It seemed as if they wanted to get something from me, rather than simply to open up and share. At first, I couldn't understand this mentality. I found it puzzling and baffling.

I kept looking for the love that I knew was possible, and a pattern started emerging where signs of insecurity in a partner were met with disappointment in me. This created even more insecurity in them, till I ended up with a rather desperate, clinging, hysterical person. Whatever positive feelings were there in the beginning soon faded.

This all changed a few years later when I met my first spiritual teacher. His name was Osho, and he had an ashram in India, and a following around the world. His disciples were both male and female, and there were women there who had devoted considerable time to understanding and developing themselves through meditation and personal development. They had an inner strength and self-assurance that was very appealing. After some time, I entered into a relationship with one of these women, and discovered that suddenly the boot was on the other foot. I was the one who was feeling insecure. I was the one wanting to know where she had been, and why she didn't seem to care about me.....

This experience brought me down to earth very rapidly, and I felt a new empathy and understanding for the women I had previously rather heartlessly rejected. I also realized that whatever had happened in that very first relationship, the reality of actually living with someone created challenges that I had previously not had to face.

My spiritual teacher encouraged me to explore both the difficulties and joys of being in a relationship. Insecurity, attachment, possessiveness – all were issues to be faced, rather than glossed over or denied. It was a painful time of discovering aspects of myself which blocked the flow of love – and letting them go. He also encouraged us to explore Tantric methods for transforming sexual energy into love and bliss.

These early years of self-discovery were a time of upheaval for me. I was confronted with the negative effects that a Catholic upbringing had had on me, and spent some time undergoing therapy to free myself of a family tradition of fear and guilt. Out of it, a new way of relating emerged, which was more realistic and open-hearted.

Alongside these developments, other changes were also taking place. Since abandoning my Christian beliefs during my late teens, I had a great thirst to find some deeper meaning in life. During my 20's, I went from being Agnostic, to Existentialist, to just plain confused. I found the materialism and the lack of joy and spiritual values in Western society depressing. I became interested in the philosophies of the East – Taoism, Zen and Tantric Yoga all contained something profound and subtle, as well as a positive regard for human nature and our divine potential that was different from the pessimism of Western thinkers and philosophers.

Meeting Osho brought these ancient Eastern teachings to life for me. When I received initiation from him, he pressed his thumb against the centre of my forehead, looked into my eyes, and said 'The truth shall set you free'.

It was from Osho that I learned the ancient Indian approach to life and spirituality. The yogis of India had taught that our basic nature consists of three aspects – truth, consciousness and bliss. To know truth is to know consciousness, and to know consciousness is to know bliss. This was, for me, a startling and life-changing teaching. Up to that point, my search for truth had only taken me into pain and depression. Discovering the truth of my own neurosis had been painful. Undergoing the process of healing was also far from pleasant. Seeing the reality of how our society functions was depressing. My longing for truth had not brought me any happiness, let alone bliss.

It was Osho who made me aware that there were deeper layers of truth that I hadn't yet explored. Hidden beneath my neurosis were wellsprings of energy and joy which he showed me how to awaken. And by exploring the nature of the mind, and its relationship to consciousness, I began to discover in my own experience that our deepest nature is bliss.

His greatest teaching to me, however, was to make me understand that truth was not about intellectual knowledge. It didn't matter how many books on Eastern philosophy I read – unless I realized the truth of myself, I was merely accumulating borrowed knowledge. The truth of myself was to be found in my Being, and the way to access this was through the heart.

So through Osho's teaching the two strands of my life – the search for love and the search for truth – came together.

I entered a new phase of relating to women – a phase in which the relationship became part of our spiritual path. By being truthful with each other, deeper layers of the heart were revealed. Honesty sometimes also brought challenges and difficulties, especially when there were hidden attachments or expectations that had crept in. Yet as the love and bliss that we shared deepened, I would occasionally glimpse the divine nature of my partner – a breathtaking moment in which her inner beauty and radiance became manifest.

I was learning to recapture, in a conscious way, the love that had so suddenly and spontaneously arisen with my soul-mate many years ago. I started to see that truth was not just about this or that philosophy – it was much more about being honest regarding who you are, and how you relate to another. This is the kind of truth that leads to love, and to the deeper layers of one's being, including consciousness and bliss.

Osho died in 1990, and since then my journey into the heart has taken me to Australia, Thailand, India, Bhutan and Nepal. My longing for truth has meant that my relationships were never going to be based on the idea of endurance, comfort or convenience. I have had a number of significant relationships over the years, each of which, besides having its' own unique flavor, has been passionate, honest, heartfelt and transformational for both of us.

In Australia, I established a healing and counseling practice for several years, before taking up a position as a therapist and meditation teacher at a health resort in Koh Samui. In the past few years I have discovered the profound devotional practices of Tibetan Buddhism, after receiving initiation into Highest Yoga Tantra from His Holiness, The Dalai Lama.

My spiritual journey over the years has been one of cultivating both meditation and devotional practice. Meditation helps to still the mind, which creates the space for the deeper qualities of one's being to emerge – consciousness, compassion, love, bliss, tranquility. These qualities manifest through the heart. It has been my experience that, without an open heart, the fruits of meditation will always be lacking in any real juiciness.

I also discovered that one of the most direct, challenging, rewarding and fun ways of opening the heart is through an intimate relationship. Relationships can be about more than just sharing the mortgage and watching a movie together. They can be part of our spiritual journey. By opening up, taking risks, being honest and vulnerable, a relationship can take us into the deeper layers of our heart and being.

I have been fortunate to find work that has deepened my understanding of the journey of relationships. After working with people for many years through counseling and meditation, the ideas for a book were formed. Not much has been written about how to use relationships as a spiritual practice for opening the heart. It is for this reason that the book '*What Is Love?*' was written.

Since the writing of this book, my journey has taken me into other areas of the heart and being. A space is opening up which goes beyond the purely personal interests of a one-to-one relationship. Love is ripening into compassion, and meditation into an awareness of Emptiness. These themes are the ones that I want to explore in my next book