

# Simply Consciousness: An Interview with Tom Kenyon - Thrive Global

*Claudia Navone*

**Can you please tell us a bit about yourself?**

When I was eighteen years old I unexpectedly entered a spontaneous yogic trance in which I experienced Samadhi. This altered state is characterized by profound alterations in perceived time and space, a suspension of breathing (called kumbhaka in yoga) and a shift of consciousness from an awareness of one's self to an awareness of "awareness being aware of itself."

In other words, there was no sense of me as a person, but rather a sense of infinite awareness resting in an awareness of itself. There was also a deep all-encompassing sense of peace, universal compassion and unconditioned love—the likes of which I had never experienced.

As I had been raised in a Christian culture I had no idea what I had just experienced, but its profound nature drove me into a personal quest to find out what it was.

I discovered clues to its nature in the writings of the saints and mystics of the Great Contemplative phase of Christianity during the Middle Ages. And more clues in the traditions of yoga, Taoism and Buddhism from the Far East.

But the final piece that pulled it all together for me would not come from the various spiritual traditions that I had delved into in an attempt to understand my spontaneous dip into the infinite pool of transcendental consciousness. Rather this deeper understanding would come through the sciences—

specifically the sciences of neuropsychology and quantum physics. And secondly it would also come through my study of psychoacoustics—how sound and music can be used to alter awareness.

As of this writing, I have worked as a psychotherapist for 30+ years using music, that I composed, to generate altered states of consciousness. Early on in my career, it became clear to me that this approach deepened my clients' therapeutic experience and accelerated their rate of progress.

In 1983 I decided to create an informal scientific organization of researchers around the country under an umbrella I called Acoustic Brain Research. For ten years, we scientifically documented the effects of sound and music on the brain and its use as an integrative modality to enhance physical and emotional healing as well as a means to improve brain performance.

### **What is your definition of consciousness?**

This is, for me, a very poignant question because how one answers that question will inform how one views the displays of consciousness. By displays of consciousness I mean the external behaviors we engage in when we interact with the external world as well as our internal mental and emotional experiences—in other words, the realm of both the external reality we live in and our internal reality that influences how we perceive ourselves and our place in the world.

Based on my work as a therapist and researcher for over three decades, I have come to personally view consciousness through two very different lenses.

The first of these is Neuropsychology, which generally looks at consciousness as a result of physiological activity in the brain. When there is no physiological activity in the brain, mainstream neuropsychologists, by and large, would say there is no consciousness—as consciousness is a

process that arises exclusively (i.e., solely) from brain activity.

While this is certainly true for our day-to-day experiences, there are certain states of consciousness that seemingly transcend or operate independently of physiological brain activity.

I use the word “seemingly” because there is, at this moment in time, no scientific consensus regarding the validity of internal experiences that are generated when there is minimal or no physiological brain activity.

I personally believe that as a result of more open-minded scientists turning their attention to the

phenomena of non-ordinary states of consciousness, a scientific consensus of the brain will arise that will include not only physiological activity as a source of consciousness but also transcendent activity that is generated from other aspects of the self that are outside the domain of brain physiology.

These types of personal (i.e., internal) experiences include—but are certainly not limited to—such things as near-death experiences, remote viewing, altered states of consciousness that occur during psycho-therapeutic hypnosis, some types of dreams, some forms of deep meditation and certain types of contemplative prayer where one’s experience of time and space are radically altered. It is not uncommon for persons who enter these types of non-ordinary perception to have what might be termed “spiritual experiences.”

As a therapist/researcher, I personally find it more resourceful to explore these types of experiences through the lenses of Transpersonal Psychology and Neuropsychology rather than through the spiritual dogmas traditionally associated with these types of numinous experiences. My reason for this preference is that spiritual dogmas are, by their nature, territorial and narrow in their view. When approaching expanded states of consciousness, I find it more helpful to consider them through methods of inquiry that are open ended (i.e.,

intellectually expansive) and evidence based. Working with clients to integrate these types of powerful transpersonal experiences has led me to believe that these non-ordinary encounters with expansive states of consciousness can be a remarkable source of deep insight and, in some cases, increased mental and physical wellness.

### **How did your awareness process start?**

My first Samadhi experience unveiled a vast internal world that was both infinite and self-aware. And while in this state of mind I perceived that all human beings possessed a similar transcendent aspect—whether they were aware of it or not. My “process” began when I tried to integrate such an expanded state of consciousness into my daily life as a human being, which—by its very nature—is restricted by the limitations of a physical nervous system that perceives a narrow bandwidth of the electro-magnetic spectrum—or to say it another way—we are only aware of the tiniest sliver of reality (whatever that might be). Furthermore, as biological organisms we are clearly constrained by the confines of time, place and circumstance. Our biological lives are linear with a beginning and an end point.

But from the standpoint of our transcendent natures we are not bound by our localized nervous systems, nor are we bound by time and space. There is no beginning or end point. And this aspect of us is infinite, self-aware and by its innate nature compassionate.

How to bring these two realities together was—and still is—the task for me. And how to be a conduit for the expression of all encompassing compassion in a world filled with so much strife is one of the hallmarks of the task. This, in a nutshell, is my process.

### **What are you the most aware of in your daily life?**

On a daily basis I am most aware of how unconscious I am. Unconsciousness is a self-perpetuating process.

And much like entropy, it is something I must continually work to overcome.

**What was the deepest internal change that you have personally experienced from transforming your consciousness and how it did impact your life in both spiritual and practical ways?**

The deepest internal change I have experienced is that my perception of the world has been altered (and continues to be altered) in positive ways. As a result of regular contact with my own transcendent nature I am generally more resourceful and creative as well as compassionate (both to myself and others).

If I contemplate the changes in myself over the course of my lifetime, I can clearly point to my innate transcendent nature as a factor in these changes. Another factor is the quality of my relationships with others. When I am in a higher expression of myself I feel that I interact with others in more positive ways. And when I encounter others who are coming from higher expressions of themselves, I am elevated by their presence. This embodiment of the transcendent self into our day-to-day life (i.e., interacting with each other with greater insight, creativity and compassion) is highly beneficial both to ourselves and to society.

**What is the best advice, words of wisdom that you would like to share with our readers about the importance of becoming more conscious?**

I would like to divide my answer to this question into two parts: the physical world where we live our day-to-day lives in and the transcendent world that is unaffected by our worldly experience.

Part 1: The Physical World

Becoming more conscious is a path not often taken, and in fact for many people being self-aware is something to be avoided at all costs.

But without awareness we cannot make the best choices for ourselves. This certainly applies to our psychological life, which is the bedrock or touchstone of what motivates us (i.e., what we do and why we do it). If we aren't psychologically self-aware we can easily wreck havoc on ourselves and others without even knowing it.

But being aware of our social interactions and our cultural biases is also important because we are all shaped by the collective. Finally, in today's rapid techno society, I think it is vital to be aware of who is using that technology to affect us and why they are doing so.

## Part Two: The Transcendent

For those who make authentic contact with their own transcendent natures, a treasure trove of deep insight, heightened creativity and spiritual wellness awaits them. The only question is how do you make contact?

Making contact with the transcendent has been a focus of mine for decades now. And there are innumerable ways to do so.

One way, of course, is to follow a spiritual tradition that imparts reliable methods for making contact with these higher realms of consciousness. Virtually every spiritual tradition in the world uses meditation and/or contemplative prayer as a means to make contact with the transcendent. Scientific research has verified that certain types of meditation and some forms of contemplative prayer make the brain/mind more receptive and can, indeed, generate transcendent experiences.

Another way to alter your awareness is through the use of specific types of music that create a calming and receptive state of body and mind, which makes your transcendent nature more accessible.

If you choose to explore music as a method for altering awareness, listen to music that makes you feel calm and relaxed. Ideally, your choice of music will not have lyrics since words stimulate activity in your left cerebral hemisphere. And in order to alter your consciousness it is best to increase activity in your right cerebral hemisphere. Pure sound or music, without words, has been shown to accomplish this task beautifully giving you greater access to non-ordinary states of consciousness.

Gently focus your attention on the music and become aware of mental, physical and emotional impressions that arise as you listen. These types of impressions can allow you to access aspects of your innate transcendent awareness.

Many of my psychoacoustic sound meditations are available, free of charge, for your own personal use.

You can find them in the Listening section at [www.tomkenyon.com](http://www.tomkenyon.com)

### **Please inspire us by telling us about your current project or projects?**

In response to growing social awareness about the prevalence and the damaging effects of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, I am making one of my sound healing meditations more available to the public. It is called Healing Regrets, and it is highly effective at assisting the listener to release personal regrets as well as transform and help heal emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse.

You can listen to it and/or download it, free of charge for your own personal use, by locating it in the queue in the Listening section or by typing into your browser: <https://tomkenyon.com/healing-regrets>

**What is the biggest problem in the world today?**

I think that climate change and the accelerated loss of plant and animal species throughout the world—referred to by scientists as the Sixth Mass Extinction—are two critical issues that threaten the very survival of human civilization.

In order to deal with these unprecedented challenges facing humanity I think we will have to acquire greater problem solving abilities, enhanced creativity and greater wisdom. We will have to think and act outside “the Box” of previous conventional thinking and ways of being in the world.