

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH DEEPAK CHOPRA

SUBJECT: SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS: ANSWERS TO LIFE'S GREATEST CHALLENGES

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**THERESA WERNER:** (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I'm the 105<sup>th</sup> President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through programming and events such as these while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). To donate to our programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit [press.org/institute](http://press.org/institute).

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's events. Our head table includes guests of our speaker, as well as working journalists who are club members. And if you hear applause in our audience, we'd note that members of the general public are attending so it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity. (Laughter)

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN audience and Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcasts from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using the hashtag NPCLunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we'll have a question and answer segment and I will ask as many questions as time permits. Now I'd like to introduce our head table guests, and I'd ask each of you here to stand up briefly as your name is announced.

From the right, Kimberly Mikec, Senior Marketing and Communication Manager, Control Risks; Peggy Eastman, President, Medical Publishing Enterprises; Marilou Donahue, Producer and Editor of Artistically Speaking; Robert Monks, business executive and a guest of our speaker; Nyia Hawkins, Producer, Associated Press and National Press Club Membership Secretary; Sally Quinn, *Washington Post* On Faith, and a guest of our speaker; Donna Leinwand Leger, *USA Today* reporter and former NPC President sitting in for our NPC's Speaker's Chair.

I'm going to skip our speaker for just a moment. Doris Margolis, Editorial Associates President and NPC member who arranged today's luncheon; Ambassador Elizabeth Begley, Senior Advisor of the Secretary of State; Jose Katigbak, Washington correspondent, *The Philippines Star*; Rachel Ray, culture writer, *Daily Telegraph of London*, Washington Bureau; Bernard Burt, Senior Editor, *Washington Spa Management Journal* and *Washington Spa Alliance*. (Applause)

Today, we have with us a global leader and pioneer in the field of mind/body medicine, Dr. Deepak Chopra. He works to transform the way the world views physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social wellness. Founder of the Chopra Center, he is dedicated to expanding humanity's understanding of the crucial connection between body, mind, spirit and healing. Dr. Chopra's thinking, vision and work have earned accolades from world leaders and numerous awards, including the Einstein Humanitarian Award through the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in collaboration with the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*.

Each year, he participates in a lecture at the Update on Internal Medicine Event sponsored by Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Dr. Chopra is a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Washington Post* on Faith, and a regular contributor to Oprah.com, Intent.com, and the Huffington Post. In addition, he hosts a popular daily show, Deepak Chopra Radio, on Blog Talk Radio. The show deals with areas of well being, spirituality, success, love, sexuality and relationships. He is a fellow of the American College of Physicians, a member of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, and an adjunct professor at the executive programs at Kellogg School of Management and Northwestern University. And a senior scientist with the Gallup organization.

In 1996, Chopra teamed up with Dr. David Simon, board certified neurologist and renowned Ayurvedic doctor, to found the Chopra Center for Well Being, now located in Carlsbad, California. Prior to that, Dr. Chopra had a very successful practice, served as Chief of Staff at Boston Regional Medical Center, and taught at the Tufts University and Boston University Schools of Medicine.

Born in New Delhi, he graduated from the All-India Institute of Medical Science, and in 1970 moved to America. He is a prolific writer. He has authored more than 60 books including 19 *New York Times* best sellers, and his books have been published in 85 languages. Dr. Chopra's most recent book, hot off the presses, is entitled *Spiritual Solutions: Answers to Life's Greatest Challenges* and provides the basis for today's

presentation. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcome Dr. Deepak Chopra.  
(Applause)

**DR. CHOPRA:** I'm delighted to be here at the National Press Club and this is not my first time, but first time with this very august company that you see on both my side and very privileged to be talking to you about my new book, *Spiritual Solutions*. So let me go a little abstract first and then make it a little practical. I would like to say to you that the most fundamental fact of existence, the most fundamental fact of existence, is not the existence of the universe or space or time or gravity. The most fundamental fact of existence is our awareness that it exists. Because without that awareness, it wouldn't matter that it existed. We are aware that there is a universe.

When you come into this world, you come with awareness and that awareness very spontaneously begins to unfold without you having to do anything. It's like a seed ultimately unfolds into a forest. I don't think you remember the day when you first became aware of the world, or of people around you, or even of yourself. And yet, that was a process that every child goes through; a very spontaneous expression unfolding of awareness from a seed of awareness, from a core seed of awareness, the blossoming of awareness.

The great Indian poet Tagore said, "I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life. What was that mystery that opened me up like a bud in the forest at midnight? And yet I knew in a moment I knew that I was no stranger to this world. That the inscrutable without name and form had landed me in the arms of my mother." So, that is the unfolding of awareness. Soon, you become aware of yourself, you become aware of people around you. You become aware of the world, you become aware of the stars and the galaxies.

And in my view, that is what spirituality is, it's the expansion of awareness. And it's uncontrollable. Once it unfolds, you can't stop it. And it's not only a personal awareness that unfolds but our collective awareness that unfolds, and that's part of our evolutionary journey through space and time. So in biblical times, the awareness was a small part of planet Earth, the so-called fabled Garden of Eden in Babylonia, now Iraq. Today, we know that the universe emerged out of nothingness 13.8 billion years ago. That the cosmic horizon is about 47 billion light years away where galaxies are being ripped apart by an unknown force called dark energy and they're tumbling across the cosmic horizon faster than the speed of light.

And our awareness tells us, and our mathematics tells us, that there's the known which progressively expands as our awareness expands. There is the unknown, which also expands as the known expands. The more you know, the more the unknown looms. And then there's the unknowable, the unknowable not because of metaphysical reasons, but because of the limitations of technology and science. If something exists 47 billion light years away, and galaxies are tumbling across it, that's unknowable because by the time light gets here, the solar system will have burned itself out into the heat death of

absolute zero. So, as I said, the known, which expands, the unknown which expands, and the unknowable which expands as well.

So, when I started to write out this new book, *Spiritual Solutions*, I wanted to make sure that it was not about religious dogma or ideology, but by spiritual I meant the expansion of awareness, our own awareness, which is a spontaneous thing anyway. Unless you get bamboozled very early in life by the hypnosis of social conditioning, awareness would unfold spontaneously and it would unfold without limitations. Therefore, in the book I divide the book into three kinds of awareness. The first is contracted awareness. The contracted awareness comes from the experience of fear and the experience of being separate from the ecosystem, and by ecosystem I mean in a broader sense the web of relationships that supports life, because life is an ecosystem.

People ask, how did we-- you know, people when they talk about the Buddha, they always talk about the tree of enlightenment. I wonder if anyone has ever wondered why he got enlightened under a tree? Because when he saw that tree, he also, in a moment of insight, saw rainbows and sunshine and Earth and water and wind and air and the infinite void and the whole history of the universe in that tree. But he also saw birds and he saw worms and he saw roots going deep into the Earth and he saw the ecosystem of the forest in that tree. He recognized that the tree was the whole universe pretending to be a tree. And that was the expansion of the consciousness, the enlightenment, that we call Buddha's enlightenment or awakening. That he saw nothing exists by itself. That, in fact, every incident, every molecule, every atom, every biological organism, every tree, every flower, is a conspiracy of the total universe since the beginning of time.

And that was, as I said, Buddha's enlightenment. But we come with that potential, all of us. But then whatever the dialogue is around us, the social dialogue, the cultural dialogue, the religious dialogue, the historical dialogue, what happened 2,000 years ago in Palestine, that kind of dialogue, constricts our awareness and you have the first stage of awareness, contracted awareness.

If you want to think of somebody in contracted awareness, then you can read their body language. A child can read that. A baby can read awareness. Babies don't understand language but babies look at eye movements, they look at facial expressions, they look at whether you have a scowl or a smile, they look at your body, whether it's relaxed or contracted. They listen to your tone of voice and babies can tell. If the mother is in contracted awareness, then the baby goes into contracted awareness because of a phenomenon called mirror neurons. The neurons of a baby mirror the neurons of the caretakers, which are influenced by all the other factors I mentioned.

So, that contracted awareness, you feel separate, you feel contracted, and the thesis of my book here is that all problems surface in contracted awareness. All personal problems, all social problems, all global problems. So it doesn't matter what the problem is, whether it's a financial problem, a problem in relationships, a problem in achieving success, a problem in health or well being or higher consciousness. The problem itself arises because of contracted awareness.

And some people might object to that and say, “Problems can also create contracted awareness.” So somebody says, “Your husband is a philanderer,” you might go into contracted awareness. Or if you just lost your money in an account, because Mr. Madoff ran away with it, you might go into contracted awareness. So here’s the key; problems give rise to contracted awareness, and contracted awareness gives rise to problems. There's no cause/effect relationship. They're interdependently polarizing from a deeper level of dysfunction, either in personal or collective awareness.

So, doesn't matter. The problem could be war or terrorism or eco destruction or global warming or social injustice or economic crisis. The problem arises in either personal or collective contracted awareness.

Solutions emerge in expanded awareness. So if you want to imagine somebody in expanded awareness, it's perhaps when you fell in love, or perhaps a mother looking at a baby with the eyes of love. Or, perhaps a Mother Theresa who experiences not only love, but compassion, empathy, joy, understanding, and equanimity even in the midst of that crisis. And in that expanded awareness is a new intuition, a new insight, a new creative impulse, choice making, a new imagination, new contexts, new meanings, new stories. They emerge in expanded awareness. And you want to look at the body language of somebody in expanded awareness, they're relaxed. Their body language, the tone of the voice, their eye movements, all of the things that a baby reads, they are different.

So, in the book, even though I give advice to people who are asking questions, the key understanding is that nobody listens to advice. They hear it, but nobody follows it. And the only solution to a problem is not to look at the problem, or not even to look for a solution, but to expand the awareness. It's like looking out of your room outside, and you have a small window. That's all you're going to see, what the window allows you to see. Or, you have a much bigger window or you have many windows. Or, perhaps another analogy is using a multimodal user interface like your computer with all these icons. And as soon as you open or click on one icon, a whole world opens up for you. Whether it's the website of the National Press Club or right now C-SPAN or Amazon.com or deepakchopra.com, these are windows to a wider reality.

And so when you expand your awareness, you open up multiple windows; then you see the context, the relationships, the meanings and hence the intuitive insight for the solution. I don't think of intuition as some kind of extraordinary supernatural ability. Intuition is just a form of intelligence that is more contextual, which is more relational, which is more holistic, that does not have a win/lose orientation, that goes beyond direct cause/effect rational thinking.

And we now have a lot of data to support that. One of my guests today was going to be Jim Clifton who's the CEO of Gallup Organization. We can share this data with you without a shadow of doubt, that the best way to get rid of your enemy is to not go to war with your enemy but to improve their capacity for well being. And if you do that, they will not be your enemy. We have data to show to you that if you have a happy friend,

your happiness will go up by 15 percent and your happy friend has a happy friend, it goes up another 10 percent. And if your happy friend's happy friend has a happy friend whom you don't know, it keeps going up. And the reason is we are part of the web of inseparability or interconnectivity. And this is becoming obvious now through social networks, through Twitter, through Facebook, that unbeknownst to most people, the social networks are creating a global brain for a planetary civilization.

What is happening in Syria is your business, what's happened in Tunisia is our business, what happened in everywhere, Egypt, what happened in Libya, what's happening in Afghanistan, it's your neighborhood, it's our neighborhood. And if we think that we can actually solve these problems economically, we can't. Through education, we can't. Through war, we cannot. The only way we can solve these problems is through expansion of awareness and realize how interdependent everybody is, not only economically which is becoming obvious. I mean, China is economically dependent on the United States now, so why is China an enemy? They're dependent on the United States. And the United States is equally dependent on China.

So when you recognize that the interdependence that exists, but also the physical and emotional interdependence. If somebody says something mean to you on Twitter, your blood pressure will go up, okay? So every mental event will trigger a neurological response which will trigger a physical response. We are dependent on each other for our physical and emotional well being. And now through the new planetary mind, the global mind, the social networks, it's becoming very obvious that we are regulated by, we regulate, we monitor and are monitored by the web of existence that exists throughout our planet.

And our identities are going to be changed. We're going to transcend national identity, cultural identity, religious identity and acquire a global, possibly even a cosmic identity. May not happen in our lifetimes, but it's certainly unstoppable. This is where solutions will emerge.

Then there's a third level of awareness which I call pure awareness, which is what the great spiritual traditions talk about. Moments of transcendence, so unity consciousness when you're not only connected with all that exists, but you feel at one with all that exists; the true spiritual experience that the founders of the great religious traditions, whether it's Jesus or Buddha had, when they felt at one with all that exists. The experience of transcendence, which is beyond the subject/object split. The consciousness that it is at the heart of all creation that differentiates into observer, process of observation, and that which is observed. And when you experience that, those are timeless moments of transcendence, unity consciousness. Here, there are no problems and therefore no need for solutions.

Here, at this level, which every child, by the way, comes through this. You know, the great Indian poet, whom I like to quote, Tagore, he said every child that is born is proof that God has not yet given up on human beings. Every child that is born is proof of pure awareness. At this level, there are no problems and there are no solutions. You are

part of the evolutionary creative stream of the universe. And so, at this level, every moment is an opportunity for creativity.

That's the thesis of *Spiritual Solutions*. It's a short book and it tells you what happens in contracted awareness and what happens in expanded and what happens in pure awareness and how to move from one to the other, irrespective of the problem. Of course, most people's problems are either financial these days or relationship. And they focus and struggle so hard to solve these problems that then they get sick and then they wonder why they're not experiencing well being with all the successes they've had. And spirituality in terms of higher consciousness comes last.

So, it's a template, it's a little template, the book, and it's about opening windows but recognizing that awareness actually has no boundaries. It's a field of infinite possibilities, infinite imagination, infinite creativity. It's where we harness the full potential of intentionality. And it's also field of unpredictability. And thank God because if everything was predictable, there would be no creative impulse. Creativity arises from the proliferation of uncertainty, unpredictability. Nietzsche said, "You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star."

Okay, so I see that my time is up, but that's the basis. And I hope that the day will come when people will realize that there are only spiritual solutions, there aren't economic solutions. There aren't any other solutions, solutions lie in finding our own self. And when you find your own self, you recognize that the world in every moment is a mirror of where you are in your evolution.

So just before I finish and I'll then open it up to questions, as you're listening to me, may I ask you to do something right now. And that is as you're listening to me, turn your attention to the one who's listening. So that still presence that you feel, that's your core consciousness, that's pure awareness and the possibilities there are infinite. That part of you hasn't changed since you were a baby. Thank you. (Applause)

**MS. WERNER:** Can an entire nation be in contracted awareness? And if so, how would a nation emerge from that?

**DR. CHOPRA:** Can an entire nation be in contracted awareness? The entire planet is in contracted awareness, and has been, because it's part of our evolutionary process. We have a history of war, terrorism, social injustice. It's what you read about in history, it's what you read about in religious textbooks. And from time to time, there have been luminaries like the Greek philosophers, like Socrates and Plato, like some of the prophets of the Old Testament, like the great Jesus and Buddha and some of the eastern sages of the Upanishads, and, of course, the Chinese philosophers, who have spoken of expanded awareness.

But they've been few and far between, spread out over centuries of time. The good thing now is that because once again of our technology, and I'm the biggest enthusiast of technology. I'm wearing all kinds of gizmos that connect me to the world

right now, and I think technology is the next phase of the human evolution. It's going to take a quantum leap. If you don't know, the capacity of technology is doubling every year. So in ten years, it'll be a million times more than it is today. Remember, the internet is only 1995, okay, 15 years. In 20 years, it'll be a billion times more than what it is today. It's beyond our imagination. And technology, God finally said, "I'm fed up, I'm going to use technology." (Laughter)

**MS. WERNER:** What steps can people take to cultivate expanded awareness?

**DR. CHOPRA:** There are four levels of existence; being, feeling, reflecting and thinking and doing. So we start out as human beings, not as human doings. If you look around you, everybody is a human doing, mostly, and it's a mindless doing. And there's very little human reflecting, what we call thinking is not reflection, it's just about me and mine. And feeling is all contracted anywhere and there is no being. So reverse the order. Go back to being. From there, evoke the finest level of feeling. Remember, or think of somebody that you love, or have an experience of that. Or evoke compassion by thinking of somebody who's suffering and having the desire to alleviate that suffering. And then reflect and then act. It's a sequence. J

**MS. WERNER:** You say that technology is doubling and that it's more of an impact on our lives. But with that, technology causes stress. We're no longer detached from everything. We're constantly, when we're on vacation, we have our Blackberries and our cell phones. Do you feel that that's adding more stress to our lives and how should we deal with it?

**DR. CHOPRA:** It's a copout. Technology is neutral. If you think technology's causing your stress, it's because you're a stressed person and you're using technology to increase your stress, okay? With technology, we can heal the planet and with technology, we can destroy it. And this is very important for us to recognize. We're worrying about Iran and its capacity for nuclear weapons. Why, with the technology that's coming, right before our eyes, a high school kid will not only be able to find depleted uranium through the black market, but make a nuclear bomb, okay? With the technology we have, you'll be able to use your Blackberry in a few years to interfere with pacemakers and with respirators and cut off the electricity in a city like Washington or poison the food chain or cause a nuclear plant to leak.

So don't worry about Iran right now, okay? Worry about the diabolical uses of technology not because of technology but because of contracted awareness. If our awareness was expanded, we'd use the same technology to heal the world.

**MS. WERNER:** In the news recently have been a lot of violence where people just lose it and go off on shooting sprees, both domestic, child abuse, and so on. What would you say to these people to help them think more clearly?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I think you cannot help somebody think clearly by saying something to them. But you can help them by helping them. When you increase their



capacity for well being, and I keep coming back to this, because well being is more than physical well being and emotional well being or spiritual well being. There's financial well being, there's career well being, there's social well being, there is community well being. When you put all these buckets together and you recognize that we have the know how, we have the tools to improve well being, I mean I have great sympathy for President Obama trying to get the health bill go through the Supreme Court. But do remember, all our discussion about health reform is not about health, it's about insurance. Your health depends on you, not on the government, and not on insurance companies. And it depends on you and the level of awareness with which you function in this world.

So if we want to get rid of those problems, we have to have immense empathy and understanding that without condescension that people are doing the best they can from the level of awareness they're in. And the best thing we can do is expand our awareness and their awareness as well, and we have the tools to do it.

**MS. WERNER:** What treatment do you recommend for our military veterans suffering from post traumatic syndrome? And do you feel that all men and women who have seen battle need psychological help to return to normalcy?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I do believe that war is a failure of our creativity and that, yes, that anyone who has to kill, even in a uniform, doesn't like to do that. It's not something that a human being wants to do, to inflict death or suffering to another human being. So it causes a lot of trauma to participate in that, to witness that, in your mind. Unless you demonize the other, it's impossible to kill them. You have to demonize them in order to kill them because if you didn't, you'd realize they're just like you.

So yes, everybody needs treatment because we are living what we call normal, is the psychosis of the collective mind right now. And unless we recognize that, we will not solve the problem. It's not normal. It's the psychopathology of the average. And yes, our veterans need immense compassion and treatment, mindfulness programs, meditation programs, programs where they are given emotional nurturing because they've sacrificed a lot for making us feel safe, even though with our limited awareness we recognize that the problem is much bigger than can be solved symptomatically.

**MS. WERNER:** What do you think is the main impediment to our spiritual healing?

**DR. CHOPRA:** The main impediment to our spiritual healing is lack of self awareness. And as I said earlier, being bamboozled by media, by entertainment, by education, that there are external solutions to our fundamental lack of awareness. The more we teach our children, and not teach them by telling them what the right codes of conduct are, but being examples to them so that their neurons can be mirrors of our neurons, children learn through that.

And so the best thing we can do is to increase the awareness of our children through our own behavior.

**MS. WERNER:** Can you address the role of sensation and deeper embodiment and spiritual development?

**DR. CHOPRA:** You know, as Abraham Maslow said, there are seven levels or hierarchies of needs. But you could easily say there are seven levels of awareness. And they're based on the needs; survival and safety, achievement, self esteem, love, relationships, creative expression, insight, intuition and transcendence. So the way to solve these problems is to meet people at the level of awareness they're at, and then very gently, lovingly and with great compassion and empathy and no condescension, move them just one level. There's lots of work, by the way, being done in this and there are little groups working in Palestine and Israel in the Arab world, in India, in the United States, that are using these techniques to take people from wherever they are and move them. You can't take somebody in kindergarten and give them a PhD. But you can take them to first grade, and that's what you need to do.

**MS. WERNER:** Is there an emotional component in causing autism? And do you think there's an increase in autism cases due to the increasingly impersonal world in which we live?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I would hesitate to give a dogmatic opinion on this because the causes of autism are not clear. It is true that we have a much increased incidence of autism now than we had when I was in medical school, for example. And it could be multiple things. It could be our food. I hope you realize that industrial food production with pesticides and insecticides and now genetically modified food, these technologies are basically interfering with millions of years of evolution. The insecticides and pesticides in food are derived from things like Agent Orange. They're petroleum products and they're going right into your food right now. And they're basically products derived from war. We are ravaging the Earth with war, with artificial industrially produced pesticides and insecticides.

With genetically modified food, we are causing a mix of genes that we have no idea what the long-term consequences could be. I'm not saying these are the causes of autism, but I think we ought to be looking very carefully at how we've destroyed the ecosystem which then recycles as our own body. Your body is the recycling of the Earth. Your circulation is the recycling of the waters of the Earth. Your breath is the recycling of the air that we breathe in. And the trees are your lungs, because if you didn't breathe, those trees wouldn't breathe. And if the trees didn't breathe, you wouldn't breathe.

So why do we call that the world? We have a personal body, we have an extended body and they're both equally ours. Until we expand our awareness again to the fact that there's no such thing as a biological organism and an environment, they're both the same thing. We are, we are, the environment. You're pure consciousness in which an environment has been imprinted. So, I don't know what the causes of autism are, but I do know it's increasing and I do know it has something to do with how we are wreaking havoc on the ecosystem.

**MS. WERNER:** Where do you do your grocery shopping? (Laughter)

**DR. CHOPRA:** My wife does it. But mostly in local markets. You know, in fact if you, again, look at the data, only 20 percent of the food-- only 20 percent of the food in the world comes from industrialized, mechanized food production factories. Eighty percent still comes from local farmers taking care of their local produce in the world. So, it's not too late to go back to supporting your local farmers market. Every city has them.

**MS. WERNER:** You've written about boundless energy, restless sleep, perfect digestion, and overcoming addiction among other hot topics. Would appreciate specific guidance in those four areas. (Laughter)

**DR. CHOPRA:** Addiction is the number one disease of our civilization. Addictive behavior. So that includes addiction, of course, to drugs, to alcohol, to cigarettes, to work, addiction to drama and sensationalism, addiction to what can go wrong, addiction to skepticism. And the first thing you can do is become aware that this is the number one disorder, which leads to everything else. You know, all the major epidemics of our time, whether it's cardiovascular disease, a number of the emerging epidemics of cancer and many other illnesses, come from an addictive society and an addictive world.

And the first thing you can do is become aware of it. And the second thing is to recognize that you cannot get rid of your addictive behavior unless you find a more addictive experience from a higher level of consciousness. I hope that makes sense. I used to smoke cigarettes 30 years ago. And I'm here because of that. Had I not addressed that, I wouldn't be speaking to you today, okay? So I took my addiction and put it to use. I'm now addicted to spirituality.

**MS. WERNER:** So we should just trade one addiction for another, but make sure that it's a healthy addiction?

**DR. CHOPRA:** The eastern wisdom traditions say that you incarnate in this life because you're addicted. Otherwise, you wouldn't be here. You come because you're addicted to some experience. So go back to that hierarchy of needs that I said, addiction to survival, addiction to sensation, addiction to success and achievement, addiction to this particular way of having a relationship, and then we move further. Addiction to creative expression, addiction to insight, to imagination, to intuition, to inspiration. And finally, addiction to the mystery that we call God.

**MS. WERNER:** You said your addiction to smoking led you to your addiction to spirituality. How did one lead to the other? Were you looking for a way to quit and you found the spirituality of it the solution?

**DR. CHOPRA:** Well, I was in my residency and I was actually beyond my residency, I'd just started my practice but I was also doing a fellowship at the same time. I

had many patients in the ICU, I had many patients in my office. At the end of the day, I'd seen about 45 patients and this is what the average doctor does today as well. You spend five minutes or ten minutes with each patient and you don't listen to them, you're in a hurry to give them a prescription. And you're not addressing the underlying causes of the illness and that's what we're going to do with our health insurance once we have it. You know, more efficiently serve the needs of the medical industrial complex.

Today, by the way, if cancer disappeared, it would be the downfall of the pharmaceutical companies, right? If there was no war today, our economy would collapse. We've built great economies on suffering and the perpetuation of suffering. And so I used to ruminate about this a lot and I was trying to help my patients and I was not helping myself. And one day I remembered, I mean it wasn't that it was one day. They say, again, in the eastern traditions, it takes a long time for a fruit to ripen. But then one day it falls. So that day I remember very clearly, I just participated in the resuscitation of a patient in the ICU. We had done CPR, intubated the patient, put in a pacemaker, finally saved this person, for that moment anyway. And then we all came outside and we smoked cigarettes. And I said, "What am I doing?"

**MS. WERNER:** How do we overcome the very wealthy lobbying groups that you mentioned, like the pharmacy companies, industrial chemical engineering, foods, drug, clothing, to have a healthier food supply?

**DR. CHOPRA:** It's not going to be easy. I'm in Washington and I have the privilege to speak to you and we're a free country so I guess I can-- and I'm on C-SPAN, I can say anything I want now. But there are 28 lobbyists for every congressman in the city. And who pays them? Who are they representing? Okay, so we have a very interesting time right now in our history. When you have something called the Occupy Wall Street movement, don't ignore it because it's expressing something in the collective unconsciousness right now in the collective unconscious. I'm not saying capitalism is bad, capitalism is good. It represents free markets, free enterprise, entrepreneurship. It's a great idea. But human beings can take any idea and ruin it through cronyism, through corruption, through influence peddling and through power mongering. And that comes from contracted awareness.

So it's not going to be easy, but it's happening. You know, we are, again, thanks to social networks, we're becoming aware of what's happening. I don't think the Occupy Wall Street movement, or what's happening in Syria, what happened in Tunisia, or what happened recently in India against corruption with Anna Hazare, that these are disconnected elements. If you go expand the window, you'll see that the soul is connected. There is a new consciousness emerging. It may not emerge, at least maybe not emerge in my time, but if we are lucky enough to escape the combination of-- you know, right now we have a very devastating combination, contracted awareness and modern capacities. In biblical times, big deal. You went across the river Euphrates and you killed your enemy. But now, we have the same mental attitudes, but we have these amazing capacities to disrupt.

So if we can somehow walk through this time, this particular time right now, the collective creativity, the collective intelligence, and hopefully the collective understanding of our inseparability and our total dependence on each other, will lead to a new planetary civilization.

**MS. WERNER:** When did you realize that traditional medicine doesn't provide all the answers to healing?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I think any physician realizes that, that when you have two patients with the same illness, they see the same physician, they get the same treatment, they can have completely different outcomes. Your body's not just a physical machine. If a doctor thinks a body's a physical machine, then he becomes, or she becomes, a superb technologist, a superb technician, who knows everything about the human body but a lousy healer because healing is wholeness. You know the word healing, holy, wholeness, health, it all means the same thing. It means looking at yourself as an integrated whole. And the integrated whole used to be mind, body and spirit. It's not, it's mind, body, spirit, relationships, social systems and ecology.

**MS. WERNER:** What is your writing routine like, especially with your busy schedule?

**DR. CHOPRA:** Especially when?

**MS. WERNER:** With your busy schedule?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I'm never busy, it's my body that's busy. And I separate myself from my body. I write two hours every day, early in the morning. I wake up at four, I do a little meditation. Well, a lot of meditation. Then I write. And when I'm traveling on the plane, I'm either writing or reading. And now because, thanks again to Kindle and all these iPads, I travel with about 350 books and if I get bored I read something else and if I get bored with that, then I write something. But I write every day.

**MS. WERNER:** If you get up at 4:00 in the morning, what time do you go to bed? What is your daily routine like?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I usually go to bed by about 10:00, so I have six hours of sound sleep. When I go to bed, I've had a productive day and I've discovered that the best way-- somebody asked about sleep-- okay, the best way to have restful sleep is to have a fulfilled day.

**MS. WERNER:** What do you read for pleasure and for enlightenment?

**DR. CHOPRA:** For pleasure, I read fiction. And for enlightenment, I go into silence, don't read.

**MS. WERNER:** *Ageless Mind, Timeless Body, Ageless Body Timeless Mind.* How can we defeat entropy and believe enough to offer a palpable resistance to the process of physical alteration and to reinterpret our bodies?

**DR. CHOPRA:** First of all the title, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, of my book, ageless body referred to your extended body, the body of the universe, which is not only ageless, it's evolving. And timeless mind referred to the spirit, which is timeless, okay? So I just wanted to correct that.

But having said that, there are at least 15 biological markers of aging. And these include blood pressure, bone density, body temperature regulation, fat content in the body, cholesterol, HDL ratios, immune function, hormone levels, sexual activity, hearing, vision, the number of wrinkles because it relates to the thickness of your skin. There are 14 biological markers of aging. And we now know that all 15 can be reversed. In fact, we were at the moment doing a study with the scientists that come from Elizabeth Blackburn's group, Elizabeth Blackburn is the scientist who won the Nobel Prize in the year 2008 or '09 for a previous discovery called telomerase, which is the enzyme that controls the length of telomeres at the end of your chromosomes that tell you about your biological clock. So when a telomere decreases to a certain level, that's what we call biological death.

And Blackburn and associates have shown that within three to four months of mindfulness practice living and meditation, your telomerase can go up by 30 percent. At the most sensitive biological marker of aging. So we know today that by changing your expectations of what it means to age, by living in an environment where healthy aging is occurring, where people don't think that at 65 you have to go to Florida and languish in a nursing home after that, the more productive you are, the healthier will be your biological expression. The more you think of your body as an energy field and the more you experience the body as an energy field, the healthier your aging will be.

But there are other things; exercise, sleep, very important. I'll give you a hint. In the 24 day, you divide your time into the following activities. Sleep time. Now, there's all this research that shows that sleep is very important for your biological rejuvenation and biological energy and biological health. So sleep time.

Play time, creative time, relationship time, down time, focused work time. These are the ways you change your relationship to time. And the way you change your relationship to time is also by going into the timeless, which is meditation, going beyond your internal dialogue.

There are at least ten different ways to influence biological age. And these include everything from changing perceptions to rest to sleep to meditation to exercise to mind/body coordination, to yoga, to breathing techniques, to relationships, very important because an unhealthy relationship can totally screw up your biological markers. So there's a lot of truth when people say, "Oh, this person's in love, they look much younger." Well, they do not only look younger, their biological markers are younger.

So when you say today's 80 can be yesterday's 60, it's true. If today's 60 can be 40, it's true. But that's just the beginning. We now have evidence that people can reverse their biological markers by up to 25, 30 years. And of course we all have to die. If we didn't, then the world would be doomed to eternal senility and we don't want that. We don't want that for the world. But biological age is much more flexible than it used to be thought to be. Remember, the average age of a human being in the Roman empire was 28 years. In the last century in the United States, the average age of a human being was 58 years. Today, the fastest growing segment of the population in the United States is over the age of 90.

**MS. WERNER:** We're almost out of time, but before asking the last question I have a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First, I'd like to remind you of the upcoming luncheon speakers. Tomorrow, we have Douglas Shulman, Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

**DR. CHOPRA:** That'll accelerate your biological age. (Laughter)

**MS. WERNER:** April 11<sup>th</sup>, we have Michael Weiner, Executive Director of the Major League Baseball Players Association who will discuss the new baseball season. That would be play, that might help. April 16<sup>th</sup>, Alec Baldwin, actor and spokesperson for the Americans in the Arts will be here to speak. And secondly, I'd like to present our guest with our traditional NPC mug. It should extend your life. (Laughter)

**DR. CHOPRA:** Thank you.

**MS. WERNER:** And I do have one last question. You are speaking to a roomful of people who find you inspiring. Who inspires you?

**DR. CHOPRA:** I've had mentors all my life. When I was growing up, my mother used to read to me all the great mythologies of India, the stories and escapades of all the great goddesses and gods. In school, I went to a Catholic Irish Christian Brothers school, so I learned all about the great teachers of Christianity. My friends were Buddhists and Muslims and Sufis. And as I grew up, I became aware of people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela and these are the people I read about and get my inspiration from.

**MS. WERNER:** Thank you. How about a round of applause for our speaker? (Applause) I want to thank all of you for coming today. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff including its journalism institute and broadcast center for organizing today's event.

Finally, here's a reminder that you can find more information about the National Press Club on our website. Also if you'd like to get a copy of today's program, please check out our website, [press.org](http://press.org). Thank you all very much, and we're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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