



Dr Ron Ehrlich: Hello, and welcome to Unstress. I'm Dr Ron Ehrlich. Meditation, well, it's on everybody's bucket list. So, or at the very least, on many people's things, I must-do list. It's a subject we have covered on a few occasions. Go back and have a listen to the episode with Dr Shankardev Saraswati a few months ago. Well, my guest today is Tom Cronin. Tom has developed several programs around Vedic meditation, which used to be referred to as transcendental meditation.

Tom is a man on a mission. And as you will hear, he's got many things going. One of those things is a new film coming out in the next week or so-called The Portal. I'm looking forward to seeing that. He also has many other projects to encourage people, young and old, to make meditation accessible, achievable, and doable in their lives. I hope you enjoy this conversation I had with Tom Cronin.

Welcome to the show, Tom.

Tom Cronin: Hey. Thanks for inviting me along. It's great to be here.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Tom, your project The Portal looks amazing. The book, the film. And we're going to be talking about that. But Tom, your background is a fascinating one because we talk a lot about stress. I know you talk a lot about stress. And yet, and your background was in a pretty stressful situation. I wonder if you might share that with our listener.

Tom Cronin: Yeah, yeah. I was a broker on a trading room floor, and I started in 1987, which was the height of the sort of big market sort of booming, with lots of debt in the world. And it's kind of eventually went into another place these days with lots of debt again. But back then in 1987, the markets were frenetic, they were fast-paced. And I was a young 19-year-old, and walked onto a massive trading room floor of 150 predominantly guys yelling and screaming, trading all sorts of different moving markets from currencies to swaps, and bonds, and cash, and bills, and electricity, and wool, and future.

So, it was pretty frenetic. And it was exciting, it was dynamic. And it was adrenaline-pumped. But what happens in that environment is you are pretty much sustaining for long periods that fight/flight response, which is that sympathetic nervous system state. Or S for stress response. And over time, that starts to leave quite a significant sort of marks on you, on your body. And they're like symptoms that start showing up as to the anomaly that's being incurred through this state for long periods. And that was anxiety, insomnia, and panic attacks, and eventually depression, and some agoraphobia, which is the inability to leave the house. I had to leave my job for a while.

So, it got quite traumatic after some time.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Wow, at 19 now, Tom, that's ... Yeah. You're pretty resilient physically, one would hope, at that point. But not the case.

Tom Cronin: Well, interestingly, at 19 I was. I just finished backpacking around the world and was supposed to do a degree in Journalism at Macquarie University. But I just applied for a bunch of jobs in the paper after having spent most of my money backpacking. And hadn't anticipated going into finance, certainly not in broking. But at 19, things were great. It was ripping along. 20, 21, 22. But over time, this deterioration.

And it wasn't just through the nature of the job. I added a lot of other factors to this. At nighttime, I got into the whole club scene, and doing a lot of drugs, a lot of drinking, and being up until sort of 3:00, 4:00 in the morning most weeknights. And then weekends, when most of my colleagues were either doing a round of golf, or sailing on their yachts, or sleeping, sitting on their sofa, watching TV. No, I was out in raves. In the sort of the warehouse party scene in the late '80s, early '90s. I don't know if anyone remembers that, but-

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Well, if they do, they weren't there. Isn't that the expression?



Tom Cronin: Yeah, that's right. So, it was not like my body had any recoupment time. I was the one causing a lot of this problem.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah.

Tom Cronin: [crosstalk 00:04:09] wasn't necessarily just the workload.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. That time, it's kind of the stock market floor, people running around with tickets in their hands. Computers hadn't happened then. Not at any great degree, anyway. And that whole scenario must physically ... The physicality of it, as well. Running around and getting orders in. A very different world to what it must be now. Not that it's any less stressful now.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. I wasn't on the floor. So, there was a futures floor, and a stock market floor. And then it did go digitalized, both the futures and the stock market. I was on a trading room floor for swaps, and bonds, and cash. And that was predominantly done on these very clunky ... They were, just the early days, the computers. They were big sort of clunky boxes that sitting on desks. And we had big Squawk Boxes on top of those computers. And we had orders yelling at us from traders and investment banks, domestic banks all around the world, giving us buy and sell orders for five mill, ten mill, 20 mill, 100 mill worth of tickets. And-

Dr Ron Ehrlich: [crosstalk 00:05:10]. It's mind-boggling, isn't it? These kinds of-

Tom Cronin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And you're in this kind of tribe of people where that kind of behaviour is just normalized.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. And it's interesting. The computers have changed, obviously, they're a lot slimmer now. But the markets themselves and the nature of that market's still quite the same if you go into a trading room floor. There's my old company, you can still go onto that. And a lot of guys are still there, doing a similar sort of job. Groups of people trading these different products around the world.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Because when people work in an environment, it's kind of it's their tribe. It's what has become the way of life for that. And I can imagine in that kind of environment, this is just the way it is. And this is what we do. This is what working life is like.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. And since you used the word tribe, it is quite tribal in some respect, as well. Because you're competing against other brokers for the business. And so, it is very much us and them, and win/lose mentality. Which we touch on in the film, a little bit about the systems that have become established in our society, which is this win/lose paradigm based on tribal culture.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: That's so interesting. I was talking to somebody on the podcast a few months ago, and I never had thought of evolutionary theory as being political. But this survival of the fittest model that we've kind of all grown up within the west, the Darwinian model, is a really powerful metaphor for the capitalist system, isn't it?

Tom Cronin: It even transcends and goes beyond the capitalist system. It goes into the school, the sporting. Schools are ranked for NAPLAN, and that's a [crosstalk 00:06:47]. It's a win/lost paradigm within sports. Every weekend we know we go and cheer a team on that one's going to win, one's going to lose. It's survival of the fittest [inaudible 00:06:57] every area, of real estate agents competing against each other, radio stations competing against each other, TV stations competing against each other.

That's the inbuilt culture that's been established over thousands of years.



Dr Ron Ehrlich: That's the beauty of doing these podcasts, Tom. We're not in competition with anybody.

Tom Cronin: [inaudible 00:07:15].

Dr Ron Ehrlich: But the interesting alternative to that is the idea of synergy. Because when you think about evolution when two cells got together, there was synergy. And they formed something greater than the one cell. And then that formed something more complex, et cetera. So, the survival of the fittest is one way of looking at evolution. But synergy is the way it all happened. And it kind of leads us down a very different path. But I just want to get back to you'd reached a point were physically ... And I'm guessing you're now only in your mid-20's. Is that right?

Tom Cronin: Me now personally, or-

Dr Ron Ehrlich: No, no. Not now. No. When you [crosstalk 00:07:52]. When you went ... Yeah.

Tom Cronin: Things started to go quiet around sort of 25, 26, 27. And then things hit rock bottom around 28, 29.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah, because-

Tom Cronin: That was when the wear and tear started to impact the body. After a good eight years of doing the same thing over and over again.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. And honestly, when you get to that age, of 28, you're getting a long ... Isn't it funny, you probably thought you were old at 28. And reflecting, you probably feel younger now than you did then.

Tom Cronin: Oh. I feel I'm 52 now, I'm fitter and stronger, and healthier than I've ever been. But that's just simply a very shifting dynamic in the way I live my life, the way I think, the way my brain functions. But at 28 and 29, I always put forward that the symptoms of really just the mechanism that the body has to give you an indication that you need to change what you're doing.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. And so, at that point, you had ... And has happened for a lot of people. It often takes a crisis of some sort to force change. And I want to talk to you about what brings on change. But there was a crisis. What was your physical, mental state at that point?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. The crisis was quite intense. It had gotten to a point of, and we talk about this in the film, [inaudible 00:09:07] is a point where you're meeting at a fork in the road, and your current trajectory, the current path, can no longer be sustained. It has to be one way or the other, which is a breakdown or breakthrough. And so, that crisis for me looked like extreme, extreme panic attacks. Just waves of fear and dread, which were incredibly debilitating and crippling. A lot of anxiety. A lot of feeling a deep sense of hopelessness. And my biochemistry at this point was completely depleted of melatonin and serotonin, and oxytocin, the biochemicals to sleep, and happiness, and love.

And just a lot of adrenaline, and cortisol, and norepinephrine, and just feeling very, very lost. Very, very dark. Very, very hopeless, I guess. Was a bleakness and hopelessness about it all. Just the crippling anxiety and panic attacks were just ... Yeah. Very brutal.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: I like that expression, Tom. Breakdown or breakthrough. So, what was the breakthrough? Because that's what happens obviously. You're here now. What [crosstalk 00:10:10]. What was the breakthrough at 28?



Tom Cronin: Yeah. It was a big shift, a significant shift. At that point, I had been sent to psychiatrists, and doctors, and put on pharmaceutical drugs, and told that I was having a bit of a mental breakdown. But it was at that time that I found meditation. And it was quite a significant shift. Literally within a week of me learning that technique, I started to get not just incredibly excited about a new possibility for the way I live my life, but to have these experiences of immense restfulness, and inner peace that was starting to be experienced through the practice. It was phenomenal, what I'd been looking for, seemingly, in other areas of my research. Drugs, and alcohol, and parties, and clubs. I started to find in this incredible solitude and silence, that I found in the meditation.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And not in a very long time. A week is hardly what you would describe as a long time. It takes a lot of medications, if they work at all, a lot longer to work than that.

Tom Cronin: Oh, that's what blew me away. I just couldn't believe that this was not a mainstream technique that the world was embracing because it was just ... And I was fortunate enough to have a wonderful teacher that had a lot of sort of scientific background behind him. He was a neuroscientist. So, he shared with us the understanding of the body, and the biochemistry, and sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. And I was just blown away that this simple technique of getting the body out of the sympathetic nervous system and into the parasympathetic nervous system, that's the piece and the rest of the digest state. And how much change starts to happen when the body gets into that state. And that's what was happening to me.

So, yeah. I became a very big fan and advocate of meditation, much to the annoyance of a few people in my local vicinity then.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Oh, yeah. It's tempting when you find that epiphany, to become very evangelical.

Tom Cronin: Yeah.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: It's a great way of alienating all your friends and family, isn't it?

Tom Cronin: Yeah.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: But what was it? There are so many different types of meditation. We're going to go into what the film was about, and I know you traced some stories, here. And I want to explore that. But for you in this instance, what was the kind of meditation that you followed?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. I did do a lot of research and I [inaudible 00:12:35] a lot of different techniques. I wanted to know the ins and outs of all the different meditations out there before I kind of really settled on one. And but I did come across this transcendental meditation that's now partly called Vedic meditation, it's two different groups teaching the same thing. And so, at the time, it was transcendental meditation. And it was the ability to go ... What I liked about it was this transcending capability. The ability to go beyond. And that's what transcend means, to go beyond thinking, go beyond the limitations of physical and emotional forms, as well.

And that experience was quite profound and unique for two reasons. One is that the level of physiological rest was incredible because it allowed my body to start restoring a lot of balance during that deep rest achieved in the transcending experience. But it's also because it gives you access to this state of awareness, this state of consciousness that isn't polluted with the thinking process. So, you're aware and you're awake, but you're not having a thought. And that's quite a profound state to experience.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. No, I've explored the TM area, as well. Meditation is, for so many people, on their to-do list, isn't it?



Tom Cronin: Yeah. It's becoming more so, just out of the need of the time. Our nervous systems are more and more stimulated, and we're becoming more and more stressed.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: What do you think some of the impediments are? What's holding people back?

Tom Cronin: Look, we've created incredibly charming lives. We think it's kind of normal to have Uber Eats, and Uber, and, and Netflix, and pubs that we can go and drink as much as we want, and the food we can eat as much as we want. And it's incredibly charming life. We've got Instagram and Facebook. So, there's a lot of things pulling our attention outside of us that is very luring for the mind, and our nervous system, and our emotional state. And so, that's something that the reason why Buddhist monks will go into renunciant states, and pull away from all of those distractions.

Because that is a very charming proposition, the life we've created. And becoming more so. So, that's what's making probably number one, the most challenging part about going within and turning their back, and their attention, their senses away from all of those things. But also, time. People say that they don't have the time because they're filling their life up with all of those charming things that they don't feel that they can park something aside to make space for meditation, which is the antithesis of what they're doing out there, which is being charmed by the outer world.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Now, obviously this film that's coming out, now, tell us a little bit about it. It's called The Portal. But how did it come about? And let's talk a little bit about the film itself.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. I credit an online meditation program, which is kind of the world's first. It had never been done before. I did disrupt a little bit of the sort of the TM model and put a style of meditation into an online format. And we felt a great way to share this technique with the world, and let people know about the power of meditation, was to make a film about it. So, rather than making a film that just talked about meditation, and we interviewed scientists and meditation teachers. Rather than doing that, what we wanted to do was show the power of meditation through personal stories.

So, we researched about 300 personal stories that have all had ... It had to have three components to the story. One was that it had to have a crisis. One was that they had to use meditation to move through that crisis. And thirdly, that they had to have sort of a global appeal in this story, the nature of their story so that everyone in the world could relate to one of the stories in the film in some way, shape, or form.

So, we scoured the world for those stories, and found, weeded them down to about six, and we found these amazing compelling stories that have all had an incredible transformation using the power of meditation.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Can you share a teaser of one of them with us?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. We've got ... I'll share a couple of them real quick.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: [crosstalk 00:16:31]. I didn't want to spoil the film. But-

Tom Cronin: No, no, not at all.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Didn't want to be a spoiler. But if you can [crosstalk 00:16:35]-

Tom Cronin: They're all on the website.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah, yeah. Great.

Tom Cronin: So, we've got Due, who's a Vietnamese refugee that came across to America on a refugee boat and nearly died in the early stages of her life. And she eventually, after living a very challenging childhood in a very poor area of Philadelphia, won a scholarship to Harvard, thinking that that was the ticket out of her problems. But that's when her problems started. Because she noticed not just through the immense pressure of the degree that she was doing, but the big difference between her and the privileged elite that she was living her life with, she felt incredibly isolated and alienated. And suffered quite immense depression and suicidal tendencies at Harvard.

We've got a wonderful, beautiful African American soldier that had PTSD from his time serving the USA in war. We've got an American track athlete, Heather, who broke her back after just winning the nationals at the 800-meter championships, and about to head off to the Olympics, and winning lots of scholarships at some of the top unis in America. And then literally a few weeks later, broke her back jumping off a cliff at Lake Tahoe.

And James Doty, who was an entrepreneur that lost 75 million dollars in the tech crash. Amandine, who's a wonderful United Nation human rights lawyer. And suffered extreme PTSD after serving the UN in places like Afghanistan, and Syria. And became a yoga meditation teacher after discovering the power of meditation to live through her trauma and PTSD. So, yeah, there's one other one big, beautiful story. But we'll keep that one quiet because we reveal that one in the film, which is very exciting.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Okay. Well, you've covered a few bases there, haven't you? Because of alienation. Mental health is a huge and growing problem in our society. And the irony is the term we're connected with the world, with friends, and likes, and all of that. But we're not connecting with the person sitting right next to us. And that's complicated even more, I guess, by being a refugee and an immigrant. But you don't even have to be that to be alienated and lonely and depressed, do you?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. I was actually [inaudible 00:18:55] restaurant just the other day, and I was watching in that restaurant, three different couples were sitting in that restaurant. And at different tables. And none of them was engaged with each other. They're all playing games or scrolling through feeds on their phones. And it's not to judge them in any way, but just to observe where our society's heading, and what we consider to be integration and communication, and spending time with each other. Things are changing. And yeah, I think we're seeing increased levels of loneliness in our world.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Because meditating [inaudible 00:19:28], these things aren't new, are they? They've been around for a while. Can you give us a little bit of a potted history of meditation? Like when did it all start? Because it's an ancient practice.

Tom Cronin: Yeah, it goes back for thousands of years. The Bhagavad Gita explores a lot about the meditation, and that was written, gosh, around 3,000 years ago. And it starts in these ancient times. We're talking five to ten thousand years of people know that when you quiet your mind, using whatever technique you want to use, what different meditation styles, there is a level of awareness and blissfulness, and lovingness, and deep serenity that prevails. And it's only now that these techniques are going from being renunciations, sort of remote regions, to the mainstream, where people are starting to go, "Well, I want to experience that, as well."

And the other day, I was teaching a billionaire guy that had sold his businesses and is a very successful person, in what we would consider successful in today's world. But was incredibly unhappy because he'd ticked all the boxes that he thought he was supposed to tick. Family, wife, beautiful house, no debt, lots of money. And yet, according to what are perceived to be all the boxes you're supposed to tick, it didn't give him the fulfilment he thought he should be experiencing. And that left him with a deep sense of lack.

And so, that's when he starts looking for a meditation to look within and find what's inside himself. And so, we're seeing this come out of ancient traditions and religions, like Hinduism, or Buddhism, or even, not that it's a religion, but the Vedic sort of traditions. And into corporations, and



households of the world. And that's a really exciting time that we're starting to see these transition into humanity realizing their fullest potential.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: So, the film tracks these five, or six, actually, people through their crisis, through their meditation. And follows their story to redemption, almost. Breakthrough. Breakdown or breakthrough.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. We want to follow the ... What's the film model that you ... The hero's journey.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah.

Tom Cronin: So, there's the setup, which is their life story, and their conditioning, and their programming. And then there's the crisis and the night of this all, and then there's the redemption, the way they take the elixir back to humanity and, yeah, we wanted to sort of try and fit it in that sort of template of what film's generally made of.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And what [inaudible 00:22:06] if people ... Because of all of the other confusion ... Not confusion. But the other thing is mindfulness versus meditation. What's the difference?

Tom Cronin: Yeah, and I think that's subjective. I'll give you my interpretation of it. And I'm sure some listeners might have a different one, and I respect that and appreciate it. I'm all for open discussion around these things. But my interpretation of these two is that I meditate when I have my eyes closed, and I look to withdraw my sensory world. I look to withdraw my mind's attention to the inner space, where there are silence and stillness.

So, if you think of silence and stillness, it's the absence of noise and motion. So, that's always there. It's just that it's like the blue sky's always there. It's just that sometimes, there's these clouds sort of masking over the top. So, that's what I consider meditation. And then, mindfulness is what I do outside of that eyes closed experience. That is how am I eating my food, how am I brushing my teeth? What thoughts am I entertaining while I'm driving my car? How am I speaking? Am I speaking quickly? Am I speaking slowly?

So, it's being aware in the moment of what I'm doing, how I'm doing it, who I'm doing it with, the very conscious interaction with the world.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: I've also heard it said that 20 minutes of meditation is equivalent to two hours of sleep. Have you followed that at all?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. That would depend on meditation. And some teachers will even say, and some science will even say, it's equivalent to four hours worth of sleep. And that's just the profound state of metabolic rest that is experienced when the mind is still. And yet, the mind is awake. So, we can have minded being still, but mind being asleep, and that's what we do at night. And then the mind is still, and the mind is awake. So, it's conscious and alert. So, if someone clicks their fingers, or opens the door, you'll hear it instantaneously.

But being in that state of deep restfulness mentally leads to a profoundly deep state of physiological rest. And that's where the body starts to restore balance.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: So, the film's coming out soon, is it not?

Tom Cronin: Yeah.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: [crosstalk 00:24:13]. When's the start date, when's the launch date?



Tom Cronin: Launch is nationally on October 17th. There are some Q&A's that we'll be touring around Australia in Sydney, starting on the 10th. And then we go around the capital cities for Q&A's. But nationally, it does start on the 17th.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And if people were kind of ... As I said, it's on a lot of peoples' to-do list, meditation. And they're wanting to get started. Apart from going online, obviously, and doing their online course, how would you tell them to get going?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. [inaudible 00:24:46]. People say, "Should I start just doing a couple of minutes a day, doing some breathing, and stuff?" Look, my best recommendation is always if you're going to do it, do it the best way possible. Do it so that you immerse yourself in it. Rather than do it so that it's kind of, eh, maybe here nor there, you don't have a good experience because there's a good chance you may never go back to it if you don't get a great experience. So, I do recommend finding a teacher and finding a style that you resonate with. And there are many different styles of meditation. I choose to use one or teach one because I found that the most effective for me personally.

But I don't want to discriminate and, I guess, influence people too much. I think it's about doing your research. There are so many different techniques and so many different teachers in those techniques. And you might resonate with one teacher more than another teacher in one particular technique of meditation. So, look, we've got this wonderful gift called Google. And look for techniques and teachers that you resonate with, styles that you feel you ... Some people love the breath, Buddhist-style meditations, Vipassana-style meditations, as opposed to the mantra-based transcending meditations. And I respect that, as well.

So, I'm here to just suggest A, find a professional that's qualified in that space to support you in that learning, so that you understand the theory and the prac around the experience. And that's what we teach, is that it needs to have the experience, but also a lot of theory that comes with it. A lot of people are just jumping on apps and learning from books, et cetera, or watching YouTube videos. But I recommend having a lot of supporting information that comes with learning that technique. Because what you're talking about is you're talking about your mind, you're talking about your consciousness, you're talking about your physiology and it's going to start to change all of that if you're going to start meditating.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: TM is very much a mantra-based meditation, is it not?

Tom Cronin: Yes, that's right. You'll get a sound, or a mantra, that has ... It works as a device to take the mind in the direction that it doesn't normally tend to go in, and that's inward. As opposed to outward. So, the mantra just has an ... It's a simplifying effect that can take the mind, yeah, into the quieter states. Away from stimulation.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And are there a finite number of mantras to draw from? Are there five, ten, 20? Or is it just kind of an arbitrary sound?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. No, they're specific mantras that they would use in the TM or Vedic meditation, primordial sounds. Sort of in areas. And they are called bija mantras, B-I-J-A, and that's a mantra that can take the mind into transcendence. There are lots of mantras out there, thousands of mantras. But not all of them are transcending mantras. Like, "Om Namah Shivaya," or, "Om mani padme hum," are mantras, but not for transcendence. That is to surrender the mantra altogether in that deep state.

So, with the vedic transcending style of meditation, there's, I think, roughly around sort of 20, 30, that they choose based upon their age group.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: And is it a sound that has to be made physically? Or is it just a silent sound in your head?



Tom Cronin: Yeah, it's a silent sound. So, what's happening with the mantra is it's taking the mind away from the world of form and phenomenon. And so, for that reason, we don't want the mantra to be too established as itself of form or phenomenon, otherwise, we'll get trapped into that world of thinking objects and things. So, the mantra's very subtle and it has no English sort of connotation to it. So, the mind can't really grasp onto something with that mantra. It's more of a device that sort of syncs the mind into sort of these deeper delta brain wave frequencies.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: So, the resonance of the internal sound is the key. And the mantra bringing you... Because I guess one of the challenges in meditation is the mind. And it's one of the challenges in life. But certainly for the 20 minutes or so of meditation, the mind is a big challenge, isn't it?

Tom Cronin: Yeah, the mind doesn't want to not think. The mind loves thinking. It's one of the most fascinating and exciting propositions for the mind, is to analyze, process, worry, get angry, project, reject. It's just caught up in that whole process of being engaged. So, that's why it makes it a lot easier using a mantra, because it's something that we put in front of the mind, like a carrot in front of a donkey. It makes it a lot more effortless. And easier to get the mind to do something it simply doesn't want to do. It doesn't want to not think.

But if you can lead it to something that's incredibly blissful and charming, which is the state of transcendence, then the mind will spontaneously let go of thinking because it's found this incredibly blissful and satiating experience.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. Look, it's fantastic. And it's something that I know everybody that you speak to, and [inaudible 00:29:53], "I've tried it. I'm going to do it, I'm getting back into it." So, Tom, I will say you've got so much stuff on. And we hear so much about youth mental health. Particularly teen mental health. And you've got a program, teen program. Can you tell us a bit about it?

Tom Cronin: Yeah, I've got a teen program called Chill Out Meditation. Which is an adapted version of [inaudible 00:30:16] that sort of practice of a kind of like the vedic meditation, where they get their mantra, or they get a mantra for sort of youth sort of age group. And it takes them through 14 days of meditating for 14 minutes a day. And it's just to help them get into the rhythm of embracing that time out. And with children, I've got teenagers myself. And it's so difficult for these young kids to know how to get time out. They don't know how to do it.

And every single spare moment, they're filling up with their phones, and Snapchat, and Instagram. And so, this just helps them compartmentalize a little bit of mental rest, I guess. Mental time out.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: I think, yeah, you've got teenage children. It's interesting. Because we had a psychologist, Jodie Lowinger, last year from the Sydney Anxiety Clinic. And she shared with me a statistic that shocked me. My kids are in their 30's. Kids. Anyway, they're in their 30's. And she said one in four children under the age of 18 are diagnosed with either anxiety or depression.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. That doesn't surprise me. What we are doing, we are testing and trialling, like guinea pigs, on our children of the world, a new era of cellular phones, information overload, narcissism through Instagram likes, and Facebook fans, and friends. Just EMS, wifi modems, radiation from phones. This is completely uncharted territory.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. Navigating that as a parent of a teenager, or even younger now is a huge challenge. The need to be connected constantly is just mind boggling, literally mind boggling.

Tom Cronin: Yeah. It's amazing. I noticed that, as well. I-

Dr Ron Ehrlich: [crosstalk 00:32:20]. How do you navigate that with your kids?

Tom Cronin: Yeah. And look, it's difficult. They're very different, my two children. They're twins. One's a boy, one's a girl. And my daughter likes to spend hours reading and doing art and walking the dog. And she's very much into ... Because of my son's very social. She's much more introverted, whereas my sons' very social. So, he's just constantly with friends, messaging friends, and wanting to be engaged with people in some way, shape, or form. And if it's not in person, then it's through the medium of a cell phone.

So, we try to emphasize the importance of time out, and a lot of it's just letting them explore themselves, and work out how things are working out for them. And I think a lot of it is children grow through osmosis. They do. And so, a lot of it is by letting them observe how we behave. And [crosstalk 00:33:12] my wife and I both take time out each day to meditate. And we let them see that.

Now, they don't necessarily ... My daughter comes to yoga with me. And she does meditate at times. My son's got no interest in it. So, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. And look, I wasn't meditating at that age.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Sure.

Tom Cronin: So, I don't expect them to, either.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah.

Tom Cronin: So ...

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Well, Jodie did say that modelling, which is exactly what you just said, is critical.

Tom Cronin: Yeah, yeah. It's not just for our children, it's for our friends, colleagues, anyone. I've got a man in mind that's stressed about his partner. And I said, "Well, look, are you representing the ideal scenario that you want her to sort of adapt and embrace, adopt and embrace?" And he wasn't. And I'm like, "Well, she's got no guide. She's got no one to sort of show her what's an alternative, then how does she know how to get there?" So, we have to kind of be the world we want. What is the saying? I think it was Gandhi. "Be the world you want to see changed," or something like that.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah, yeah. [crosstalk 00:34:13]. Yeah, yeah. Well, modelling is even ... And actually, extricating the technology from the bedroom because sleep is such a big issue in health. And with 24/7 connection, literally, that must be hard. Are there rules around that in the house?

Tom Cronin: Yeah, we do. We turn off our wifi modem every night. We turn off, all the phones go into aeroplane mode. We did have a rule, up until a certain age, where the children had to leave their phones in the kitchen overnight. My daughter still leaves hers out of her bedroom. She doesn't want it in her room at night. So, all of us put our phones ... My son, I'm not too sure about him. But he knows the importance of turning it off and not getting on it. So ...

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah, yeah.

Tom Cronin: He assures me that he's pretty good with it.

Dr Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. Now, and you've got so many things going, Tom. This movie coming out, and the [inaudible 00:35:05]. Tell us about The Stillness Project.

Tom Cronin: Okay. The Stillness Project was [inaudible 00:35:10] about seven years ago, when I became a meditation teacher. And when I first started meditating, you got to remember that there was no internet. And the only way you could learn to meditate was literally ... The technique that I learned, anyway, was to sit with a teacher, in the locality of that teacher that's in their space, and learn from them. It was quite expensive. This technique isn't a cheap technique to learn.

But what I found was when I started blogging and doing videos on YouTube, the internet arrived, and I could reach all corners of the world. And people all over the world started asking me how did I heal my depression and my anxiety, and panic attacks. And I told them it was through this meditation technique. And people were begging me to teach them. And I had this conundrum where I was faced with preserving this ancient tradition or giving these people access to it, a modality of learning a form of de-excitation and reorganization of their body that didn't involve me having to be there with them every day.

So, that's when I created an online program called Faster Deeper Bliss, which was an adult's version of this online program, a 21-day video program. And then The Stillness Project was kind of born out of that, with a vision to inspire a billion people to meditate daily. And make meditation available to the masses, and inspire the masses to make it part of their lives. So, that was The Stillness Project, was to get stillness into the lives of people all over the world. And it's a vision that we still are unravelling and folding out to this day.

Dr Ron Ehrlich:                   What a thought, a billion people meditating every day. And that's global ... I guess that's the global meditation that you speak of.

Tom Cronin:                       Yeah. I just figured that if we want to see a change in the world, we have to shift our state of consciousness. And we have to do that not just once, or three people. We have to do it in a big way. Otherwise, we're going to keep doing the same things over and over again. And not seeing a different result. And that's the kind of trajectory that we're kind of on. We keep doing the same thing, and I don't think it's a great path that we're going to keep walking if we keep walking that path.

Dr Ron Ehrlich:                   It's a great thing to aspire to, to get us all doing it, and getting imagine that energy.

Tom Cronin:                       Yeah. I think it would be great to see. I want Daniel Schmachtenberger in the film, he said he contemplated life on an enlightened planet. And I kind of thing that would be quite an amazing thing to aspire to, as a species collectively. If we all started to contemplate what that might look like.

Dr Ron Ehrlich:                   Look, we're going to really ... We'll have links to the site for those online courses. And also to the movie. I know there's a book associated with it, as well. Just wondered if we might just take a step back for a moment. I just want to finish up. We're all on this health journey together. I think you've identified some of the challenges. But what do you think the biggest challenge is for people on their health journey in life throughout the modern world?

Tom Cronin:                       Health is, it's an ongoing balancing act. And we have to navigate that on a daily basis, on an hourly basis. For me, I listen in to my body, and I'm a lot more tuned into my body these days because my mind is much quieter. So, I can feel the subtlety within my body about what it needs. One of our greatest challenges, we generally have very dictated and busy minds. When I say dictated, it's that the minds are programmed to think in a particular way. "You should go to the pub after work." Or, "You should do this." Or, "You should do that." And we have this indoctrination and this program. And it puts us on this automatic pilot.

And we have this very poor ability to tune into what our body needs. And when we meditate, what happens is we're able to listen a lot more. [inaudible 00:38:55]. If I'm tired at 2:00, 3:00 p.m., I have the ability and the blessing of the nature of my job that I can go and have a nap. Or I'll go and meditate. Even when I was a broker, I would go and have a nap in the park if I was tired. And it's about listening to my body and listening to what it needs. And tuning into what food it needs, and what supplements it needs.

But most of us have just got this busy mind, and we're not able to see the wood through the trees. And that's part of the problem, I think.

Dr Ron Ehrlich:                   That's a great message to leave our listener with. Thank you so much for joining us today, Tom. And we'll have links to all those things that you've got going. The trailer looks amazing, I'm looking forward to seeing the movie. And thank you for joining me today.



Tom Cronin:

It's a pleasure, thanks for inviting me along.

Dr Ron Ehrlich:

We will have links to Tom's web page and all his programs. And of course, his new film, *The Portal*, is one that I'm looking forward to seeing. Now, don't forget, we have our own Unstress app, which you can get from the App Store or Google Play. And it's got some great resources on it. So, have a look at that. We've also got some exciting new programs coming up. So, watch out for that, as well, now. Please don't forget to go onto iTunes and leave us a review. I'm just getting my head around promotion. And, if you get up to a hundred reviews, the profile of your podcast is elevated significantly.

And I would love this podcast to reach tens of thousands of people. Well, maybe even hundreds of thousands. Or millions. Who knows? I hope you agree that the subjects we cover are important ones for your health, and the health of the planet. And as you know, if you're a regular listener to this podcast, the two are inseparable. I hope you agree that that's an important message to share with lots and lots of people.

So, until next time, this is Dr Ron Ehrlich. Be well.

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