



Radiantly You – Episode 64

The Way of Grace with Miranda Macpherson

{radiantriverwellness.com/64-grace-ego-spiritual-awakening-miranda-macpherson}

SUSIE: Good morning. radiant souls. Welcome to another episode of Radiantly You, I'm your host Susie Hindle Kher and I'm here with Benny Mathers, producer extraordinaire.

BENNY: My dear, how are you?

SUSIE: I'm doing great.

BENNY: So did you get your ballot in on time?

[A portion of this show has been removed from the transcript in order to focus on the relevant conversation with our guest.]

SUSIE: [01:41] I have a very exciting guest for you today. Most of the people who come to work with me and even who tune in to my radio show, for whatever reason, are kind of at a place in their life where the way they've been doing things isn't really working anymore. And they seem to have reached a crossroads - and the crossroads usually is involving some kind of an awareness that there's perhaps maybe something a little bit more. Maybe there's some inklings and some little sparks of spiritual awakening beginning to happen, but there's there's so much information and it can be really confusing and overwhelming.

So our guest today is going to help shed some light on this. Now, I want to start by saying that ever since Freud identified this 'ego' as a player in human behavior back in the early 1900's, like maybe 1910 or 20 something like that, we haven't really known how to treat this invisible, intangible and very vilified part of our humanness. And these days, it's like all the rage to just hate on your ego. There's so many resources and books and classes on how to kill your ego. Literally. I've heard that one. How to transcend your ego, how to get rid of your ego, and sometimes I kind of chuckle and wonder if ego isn't actually kind of enjoying all of this extra attention.

And if you are working toward a practice of spiritual growth and surrender, you'll almost certainly come across teachings about how ego creates the illusion of a false self that results in a duality - basically the illusion of separation from the Godhead, and that is a really big awareness to have, but where to after that, right? Should you become an ego slayer? Just shut out thoughts that maybe you think are coming from ego. I got to say it's not easy. I've been walking this path myself. And at this point in our human evolution, ego is here to stay.

So I was really intrigued when I came across a book by Miranda Macpherson called *The Way of Grace*, but it was actually the subtitle that captured my attention. The subtitle is: **The Transforming Power of Ego Relaxation**. When I heard Miranda talking. Oh my gosh, I felt like I had come home to a teaching that really aligned with my true divine nature. And I'm so excited that Miranda is joining us today. I think you're going to love her approach to surrender and this idea of non-duality based on a practice of ego relaxation as much as I do.

But super quickly, before Miranda hops on here I want to let you know where you can find the show notes and the archived recordings and transcripts for all of these Radiantly You radio episodes. So just head over to my website at radiantriverwellness.com. You can live stream or download audio for all the shows and you can sign up to get email notifications for past and upcoming guests. You can get all of the links and resources that I mentioned on the shows, and you can also find out how to work with me on your sacred healing journey of mind body and spirit.

So now that we've got the housekeeping taken care of, I am excited to tell you more about today's guest, Miranda Macpherson who has written a book called *The Way of Grace: The Transforming Power of Ego Relaxation*. Miranda is a spiritual teacher, she's a minister and an author who has been inspired by Sri Ramana. Maharshi, A Course in Miracles, the Diamond Approach, and her own extensive study of the world's wisdom traditions. Her depth is truly incredible and especially in this time, where so many people are calling themselves spiritual teachers and gurus and such.

I'm pretty selective about who I choose to let in as my own teacher, and I'm even more choosy when recommending or referring out to my listeners or my clients or friends, and I can honestly say that if you're looking to deepen your practice of surrender and connecting with divine, Miranda really needs to be on your radar.

Welcome Miranda, thank you for joining us today.

MIRANDA: [06:01] Thank you Susie. It's a delight to be here.

SUSIE: So before we get started, I just want to let everyone know that you can head over to Miranda's website to get more information. It's mirandamacpherson.com. I'm loving your book.

MIRANDA: I'm glad to hear that Susie.

SUSIE: This was sort of the approach that I didn't know I was looking for.

MIRANDA: [06:27] Well, that's what I was hoping. I mean, I've been guiding others on the path of awakening for 30 years now all across the world and most of the people that come to me are not new to, not completely new, to the path. They've done some kind of spiritual practice, and some people even done a lot of practice. But it's very easy to get confused and to trip up on difficult patterns and to honestly not know how to work with them in a way that is compassionate and efficient and effective. So that's really my specialty, is how to really guide you to let those inner doors open so that we can truly gain traction on the path and in so doing not fall into that trap of beating up on ourself in the name of awakening. It's a compassionate response we need at this time.

SUSIE: Yes, and I one of the things that I heard you say that I really liked was that true surrender isn't about amputating the ego, and that's a big focus of your book, *The Way of Grace*, is a sort of a gentleness to the approach. But I'm wondering, considering how villainized the ego is, [...] does a soft approach a gentle approach like relaxation work?

MIRANDA: [07:37] Yeah, well because when you think about it, who's trying to beat up who know. You know what, ego annihilationism as a method, where we're trying to beat ourselves into spiritual shape, where we're trying to bat away or push past things that we all have to deal with like fear, control, defense mechanisms, judgment, anxiety, you know, hurts and heartbreak. This is the stuff that every human being has to deal with as they turn more substantially within and learn to let go and so, you know, really what we need is to learn how to stay present. And to really open towards our direct experience, whatever that happens to be and just to be there kindly, and to relax the ego - the activity that's always trying to fix something, rearrange something, push past, and that's really our ego getting confused about the process of surrender.

Mistaking surrender as trying to amputate the parts of yourself that you think shouldn't be there, and that's just really not kind, and not only that but it actually gets in our way. So what I have found is that this practice of ego relaxation - learning just to be here, to soften, open, allow. To inquire into our direct experience with interest just to see what is and isn't true about it is gentler, kinder and more compassionate.

It's way more efficient because usually, just like a pet tends to relax and cease being so troublesome and boisterous when it's treated well, so do we. You know, our ego relaxes like a pet, it calms down, curls up in our lap, and then ceases to be such a problem. And then it helps us to recognize that the fact that we all have an ego isn't a mistake. You can't actually get rid of it. It's part of the mechanism of being human. And so the issue really is about learning to relax our ego fixations, not be aggressive upon ourselves for the fact that we have them.

SUSIE: That's absolutely beautiful and just even in listening to you talk, I can sense the softening - because it is our ego responding to something that it thinks is broken or needs to be fixed, right?

MIRANDA: [09:58] Yeah. So I have this lovely video that's going around YouTube right now called. "You're Not a Problem to be Fixed." Well, you know I made that video because if I still need to hear that - and it's very easy when we start to take a closer look at ourselves and the things we trip over, and start to think that, you know, we have to fix ourselves by spiritual means - and I know about that for myself for years. I, you know, I was sort of grappling with my own insecurities and fear and control and reactivity. And of course those things create problems, but to try to sort of go about fixing them is really missing the point. But really, the engine of those ego fixations and reactions is usually some kind of hurt or suffering or difficulty or vulnerability.

So it's way more efficient to just learn how to stay present in our body and turn the loving goodness of our own heart towards those things, and that actually resolves the suffering that creates the trouble. So not only does that make us, you know, more easeful, more peaceful. It also makes us more compassionate with everyone else and personally, I think that that is what our world so needs more of right now.

SUSIE: I completely agree, and as as more people are exploring, I guess sort of new and uncharted ways of spirituality, of identifying spiritually, I wonder what advice you have when we're kind of coloring outside the lines, so to speak. Because we're not we're not playing within the confines of an organized religion, right?

MIRANDA: [11:40] Well, yeah, I think that you know, that's historically pretty new. It's only really in the last 30 odd years that on mass we had even the opportunity to explore a spiritual path outside the confines of any "ism," and so there's great freedom in that, which is wonderful. We don't have to be so confined. We're not going to get ostracized so much from our community or our family if we choose to get into the Bhagavad-Gita or something. They might think that I'm weird, but it's not going to really cause significant problems in our life, for the

most part. But the shadow side is just picking a little of this, you know having a little sort of Baskin-Robbins sampling.

SUSIE: I love that.

MIRANDA: [12:22] Not really digging in with anything that's transformational and of course our ego can kind of use that as a way to sort of grab a bit of thing to kind of reestablish its own, you know, defense system. And so we do need a path, we do need a teacher, but a path and a teaching that helps us to really listen to the pulse of truth, to reconnect us with the innate wisdom of our own soul, and also to help us discriminate the difference between what is really true and what is a subtle defense. And so that's why I wrote this book, to really take my readers on a journey to help them settle egoically, to help them address the fears, the judgments, the concerns, the internal aggression. To learn to trust and become more humble and patient and joyful so that we can really do that deep dive through and beyond are familiar ego identity, that for most people kind of revolves around some felt sense of feeling not good enough. That we can too easily spend our whole life trying to offset or fix, but really that's a gate. And that the deepest transformation happens when we relax in and through that felt sense of not enough to see, yeah, you know, your ego isn't enough, actually. It's a structure. It's not bad. It's not wrong. You don't have to aggress on it.

But that feeling that most of us struggle with so much isn't what we think it is, it's really a gateway to come to abide in. The infinity, the boundless truth of who you are, that isn't just a concept. I want people to know that they can actually experience that for themselves and from there, you know, really learn to listen and find a way to live a new, more graceful way of being, to become a more graceful human being in our world, but from consciousness that's not bound by it. But without being a flake, you know, while being grounded and real in this realm, and so that's really what I've offering people. This book is a map, a transmission and a practical how all at the same time.

SUSIE: And it takes us on a journey through the four dimensions of grace, right? Where we begin to melt away the ego consciousness or relax it. Do you have an example of one of those?

MIRANDA: [14:50] Sure, well, the four dimensions of grace. First, we have to relax out of the fear, the judgment, the control. And we actually relax out of it most effectively when we recognize that we all exist within and as part of something larger, and it's possible to really feel that, as if we're sitting in an infinite mountain of infinite love, infinite support that makes it possible to relax out of those worrying thoughts and judgments that so often blight our way. But also we relax into a deeper field of holding - and that's the blessings of grace - we learn how to open, to receive the blessings that are always here for us. Like most of us don't recognize that

right now, as we're drawing breath, the life-giving oxygen that arrives with our breath is really a gift from the plant kingdom to the human kingdom, and that we can really receive love, blessings, in and amidst the ordinariness of what's here right now in ways we just might not have thought about it. And that can help us immensely to open up to deeper spiritual states, to gain access.

Grace is also the presence that transforms you. So it's like a tango partner. It's dancing with your sincerity, your genuineness, your humility, your willingness to engage real practices, but ultimately often these breakthroughs come when we're not looking. They come in the middle of the night, or all of a sudden we wake up one morning and we just don't feel so bound up anymore. We just feel freer or more peaceful. So that's the third dimension of grace, the transforming power of it. But ultimately the fourth dimension of grace is about becoming a graceful human being. Living gracefully in the everydayness of life. Becoming more graceful in the way we go about our business at work, in the way we respond to other human beings. In the way we tackle the the uncertainty in the challenges of our times collectively. And also how we just basically embody more love in and amidst the way we walk through any given day.

SUSIE: I want to let folks know if you're just tuning in, our guest today is Miranda MacPherson. She has written an incredible book that is a guide, a roadmap to authentic spiritual awakening, really. It's called, *The Way of Grace*, and you can check it out at the website thewayofgracebook.com. And Miranda, you were telling me earlier that if they go to this website, there are some bonuses.

MIRANDA: [17:34] Yeah, well, I'm really someone who likes to really give a lot of practical support to my students. And so this is a website, where if you buy the book you can basically receive three free bonus gifts, which are a beautiful lecture for me, a chant, a mantra that will help you just find peace in every moment, and further writings. And then there's also all sorts of other bonus material that people can access there, as well as videos to watch. So it's really a plethora of additional resources to plug you into the means and help you receive what you need to flourish and thrive and really getting traction on your path.

SUSIE: So one of the things that I'm intrigued by is the difference between spiritual growth versus the ego kind of cherry-picking what you've called spiritual goodies to fix its problems. Can you help us, just with maybe even an example of how we can how can learn to differentiate these?

MIRANDA: [18:37] Right, well, if we're growing spiritually, there's certain things that will just start happening. Number one, we become more settled. We feel more peaceful, we find ourself becoming more humble, we find ourself becoming actually more joyful without being so

attached to this or that having to happen. We find ourselves becoming more compassionate, more accepting of other people, and also more accepting and compassionate with ourselves. So if those things are happening, that's pretty good evidence that whatever practice you're working with is taking you in the right direction. If you're becoming more judgmental, feeling more isolated, getting more tense, feeling that you're kind of in some battle with yourself, then something is clearly off. Or if your experience is that you're getting caught in us versus them, good people and bad people, then that's clearly taking you in a direction that is not closer towards that which is ultimately unifying and true, because reality, your grace, is always going to bring you back to being in the unified condition and being connected to all the noble qualities of your true nature and our deepest humanity. And basically that shows up in your behavior.

SUSIE: And I guess then, if it was more of an egocentric thing that we were doing, maybe it would it would kind of reactivate our defenses and bring us back to that suffering, right?

MIRANDA: [20:11] Absolutely. And then there'd be more pride, more judgment, more ego inflation. Or a feeling of danger and fear. You see, those are hallmarks of being controlled by ego and not really seeing accurately.

SUSIE: So one of the ways you help your students, and you do this in the book also, is a process of self-inquiry and, you I wonder if you could touch on that and maybe some of the other practices that you share in the book.

MIRANDA: [20:40] Yeah, well, self-inquiry has been used by many many philosophers and teachers. Socrates, I believe, was the first. Where you know, just penetrating into deep questions, not just with our mind but with a whole being. And of course one of my deepest influences was Sri Ramana Maharshi, an Indian saint who was very famous for bringing everything back to the question "who am I?"

But you see, is not about answering the questions. It's about journeying into the question mark. So I give throughout the book, in pretty much all of the 16 chapters, beautiful inquiry questions that I invite my readers just to be with and journey into and notice the feelings that come up in their body, the heart, and the mind. For example, I've got a big chapter on trust, which is so powerful and pivotal for helping resolve anxiety. And so one of the inquiry questions that I give is, "What limits your capacity to trust the loving goodness underlying your life?" So, if you were to sit with that question, or have a friend asked you that question, without trying to answer it in a logical way, but just letting that question ripple through you. And if you were just to allow whatever comes to come, then you might notice limitations like hurts from the past coming, that have evolved into beliefs you have about how safe it is or isn't. You might notice that the mistrust actually comes out of your past experience, or maybe your ancestors' past experience.

And if you don't make that right or wrong, we just acknowledge it kindly with, 'thank you,' and let it breathe.

Then what happens is that this inquiry starts to open up your inner doors. It opens up space inside you and then we can go further and deeper than our ego limitations will with questions like, "What's holding you right now?" And if you were to take that question in, "what's holding you now." and if you were to stay with that question for like 10 minutes or even take it out on a walk with nature and really journey into it, then what's likely to happen is your whole consciousness could start to open up and perceive there's so much more love here, there's so much more support and goodness. That every bird birdsong is like an embodiment of this loving holding that is coming up from life itself. That the ground beneath your feet is full of love. That my voice, perhaps, is reminding you that love is here, that you are held by this lovingness, that doesn't have to come through any personality, that's always here, and that you can receive it right here and now. And as you receive and recognize it, you will notice that softening, that opening, that relaxing starts to happen your ego settle into the felt sense that loving goodness is primordial and already here.

So that's just an example of the kind of practices that readers will find in every chapter of my book, that guides you into what it is that I'm talking about. And by the way, the book is also available in an audio book and the good news is that it's the full unabridged version, read by me from beginning to end, and guess what? I'm guiding you through every meditation.

SUSIE: Oh my gosh, awesome.

MIRANDA: [24:21] Not only that, but they let me - and I was so excited, right - they let me create the music beds behind the meditations and I'm also a musician.

SUSIE: You play the harmonium, right?

MIRANDA: [24:32] The harmonium and I sing. So, it's me playing harmonium and my vocal overtones that back a lot of these meditations, that really just guide you into grace deeper and deeper and deeper.

So you asked about other methods that I use. So inquiry is one of the major ones that I use, but I also use meditation, and there are many different kinds of meditations that help bring about a deep ego relaxation and openness to particular kinds of grace. And they're in every chapter of the book. And I also use prayer, and you don't have to be religious to pray, you know, there are a lot of different ways to pray and I guide the reader to find their way to pray, which is really

about just feeling into, you know, the depth of your heart what matters most to you and really just offering the sincere intentions of your heart and opening to the grace that really wants to bring about the fulfillment of what is most true in you.

SUSIE: Miranda, thank you. I actually feel like this interview has been a meditation, I'm feeling really good.

MIRANDA: [25:43] Good, now you're getting a transmission of grace.

SUSIE: I feel like I really am. I love your teaching. For our listeners, please head over to Miranda's website, mirandamacpherson.com, or go to thewayofgracebook.com to find out more about her book and about her teachings, her videos. And I'm so excited that that audio is read by you because just your presentation is very meditative in and of itself. So thank you so much.

MIRANDA: [26:11] So maybe just before we go, could I maybe mention also Miranda Macpherson Teachings, which is my Facebook page. And we're basically helping people to form book study groups. So you can learn about that on my Facebook Miranda McPherson Teachings, and I'll be giving another Facebook live offering next Monday at 12pm Pacific Time. So if you really like what you've heard, then you know, be part of this. There's so much resources I'm offering to people right now.

SUSIE: Wonderful. And thank you everyone for tuning in. Join me next week when I'm talking to Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox about his new book, which is all about naming the unnamable God. Take care, and I'll be talking to you soon.