

Coming to Wholeness

An Interview with Connirae Andreas



By Rachel Hott

I recently had the opportunity to do a Skype interview with Connirae Andreas about her new work called the Wholeness Process (the first method in the Wholeness Work). We have known each other since the early 1980s.

I have always admired her intelligence and her capability to teach NLP and develop innovative processes. She is responsible for the Aligning Perceptual Position and Core Transformation processes as well as co-publishing many NLP books with her husband, Steve Andreas.

Connirae and I had a fascinating conversation in which she shared the answers to some direct and personal questions about the new Wholeness Work. I wanted to know more about her personal story – how she came to this work, which really is something new. She shared with me very honestly, and I'm passing on to you some of the highlights from our talk.

Rachel:

Connirae, I'm interested to know more about what motivated you to develop the Wholeness Work? How did this come about?

Connirae:

Well, what I'm calling the Wholeness Work is the result of about 10 years of development. And it really came out of my personal struggle. I had been very active in teaching NLP and writing for several decades, and all that stopped rather suddenly because I was faced with a set of very serious health issues. My health seemed to be deteriorating in strange ways, and at the time I wasn't sure I would come through it alive. So I was very motivated to find something.

In trying to find my way back to health, I explored solutions of all kinds – western medicine, alternative medicine, personal growth, therapy, and so on. From the beginning of this process, I started encountering people who said to me, 'Connirae, has it occurred to you what you're experiencing might be a spiritual awakening?'

Well, no, I had always thought spiritual awakening would feel good, and what I was experiencing was very unsettling. But I did begin reading the accounts of spiritual teachers and mystics from many traditions, to find out how they described the process they had gone through.

R: What were some of the accounts you read? Who were these spiritual teachers?

C: I read everything I could get my hands on that was a personal account, rather than conceptual or theoretical. I wanted to know what people experienced, not their ideas about it. One of the first was *Autobiography of A Yogi*, by Paramahansa Yogananda. I read the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, a European mystic from some time ago. Irina Tweedie's *Daughter of Fire*, Ramana Maharshi, Papaji's *Nothing Ever Happened*. (That one's a 3-volume set, which

my husband thinks is very funny. He said, 'So it took him 3 volumes to explain how nothing happened!') Those are just a few. There were many more.

R: Was there something in particular you were looking for in your reading?

C: I wanted to know whether what these people described as Enlightenment, or Awakening, had any matches to my experience. And maybe more important, even if it didn't, were there clues here that might help me in my situation? These people were talking about coming to a deep and profound sense of peace. They were saying the changes were beyond verbal description. Was there something in this that could be useful to an ordinary person like me going through a challenging time.

There's a lot more I could say about the process I went through, the things I tried, and the supports I received and appreciated along the way. But to get right to the punch line, to answer your first question about the source of this work – the initial inspiration for the Wholeness Work came from Ramana Maharshi (a teacher from India from the

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1900s). I had a good impression of him – that he was the 'real deal'. And his main teaching was to have people ask the question 'Who am "I"?' repeatedly.

Ramana's intent in giving this question seemed to be to assist us in discovering that we aren't a separate small self, but that we are actually a vast Self. This kind of idea is prevalent in literature on Eastern spirituality. 'You aren't separate, you are one with everything. You aren't who you think you are. You are a vast Self.' And for Ramana Maharshi, this didn't seem to just be about something we might call enlightenment. He was presenting this as a solution to all of life's problems. He basically said that if we realise this, then our problems in life vanish.

That sounds pretty good. But the only problem with this teaching was that almost nobody got results. Ramana's students would try this method of asking 'Who am "I"?', and for most of them it didn't lead anywhere. Well, perhaps they had more internal dialogue. So people decided the teaching was 'advanced', and that one had to be 'ready'.

I began doing some experiments based on this teaching. But instead of doing it the way Ramana did, my immediate inclination was to change the starting place. He was inviting people to directly experience something called a 'vast Self'. But this isn't where most people are, and I thought it would



work better to begin where people actually are. If people are experiencing themselves as a small self, then what is this? How can we find it?

With the Wholeness Process, we don't ask, 'Who am "I"?' and hope to get to a grand experience of some sort. Instead, we start with asking 'Where is the "I" located?' And this makes a big difference.

I'm going over this really fast here. Most people need specific groundwork to follow this, and especially they need groundwork so they can easily discover what I'm calling the small 'I' in their experience in the moment.

In the training, we lay that groundwork. Then, once you find this small 'I', you need to know what to do with it, or nothing much will shift.

So the Wholeness Process includes specific steps so that people actually experience this shift, going from the small self experience, to experiencing as a vast Self. And when this happens in the particular way that you are guided to with the Wholeness Process, a lot of other things start shifting too.

It's not quite as simple as I'm making it sound. There are subtleties. And yet with this method we discover that having the life we want, and the experience we want, is not as complicated as we thought either. It's accessible to us all.

R: You've said that you think the Wholeness Process might be the most fundamental and direct way that is possible to make change. Can you say more about that? Why do you think that's the case? ►



- **C:** Yes, I think it's because the Wholeness Process guides us to what I'm calling 'direct experience' and at this level change is easy. In contrast, most of us live our lives primarily in the world of meaning and interpretations. All of our life history has trained us to do this, and we think we need to. Most change methods work at this level of meaning and interpretation as well, and I think that is why they tend to be slow.

The meanings and interpretations we give to experience may be 'true' in one sense, but the downside is that they always involve some degree of distortion – often a lot of distortion. We have no idea we're doing it. And it's these distortions of reality that cause us a great deal of suffering.

When you go through the exercises in the 2-day Training, this becomes clear. It's an experienced insight, not a mental one. Whatever life issue someone begins with, once we do this process, they often begin to have new insights and understandings that are often beyond words. Some of it can be verbalised, but a lot of it can't.

- R:** Are you finding that this method can make a difference for people with health issues?
- C:** Yes, often it does. Of course it's not the cure for everything, and I always advise people with health issues to get the advice of a physician as well. Sometimes it brings about an immediate change in someone's health concern, and more often (with chronic conditions particularly), it's a gradual thing. And it's not really surprising that this helps. There's a lot of research showing that our response to stressful life events makes us more vulnerable to a range of health issues. And there's research showing that even simple forms of meditation can help somewhat. The Wholeness Work does a lot more than most meditation, because it's actually a transformative process. It changes the psychological structure that we used to get stressed out. That structure isn't there any longer, and our system can then recuperate.
- R:** Did this make a difference for you in your health situation?
- C:** Yes, it's helped me a lot. It isn't the only thing I've done, or the only thing that's been useful to me. But it's the thing I keep coming back to, because it's so simple and easy to do, and I can feel the changes that it continues to bring to me. It has been simpler, and also more profound, than anything I've done before. It was the inner authority method (a Wholeness Method from Day 2 of the training) that finally made a shift in my energy level so that I can

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do trainings again. My medical doctor told me at a recent check-up that he's amazed. He said that he doesn't see most people coming back from the kinds of symptoms that I had. I was glad he hadn't told me that early on.

I want to add that the method is useful for many things that are not related to health, also. It's hard to think of something where it isn't useful, because it helps with emotional reactivity, with sleep issues, with unwanted habits, with relationship issues. We're accessing something really fundamental in our psychological structure and directly transforming it, and this has so many effects.

R: What kinds of effects do you notice most consistently?

C: People have more sense of wellbeing, more resilience. They are free to enjoy life more. Our capacities are freed up to be expressed, so we can be more successful. This takes many different forms from person to person. One person shared that a deep sense of shame and embarrassment is now gone. Another said they aren't feeling hooked into a negative relationship any longer, and now attracting people they want to be around. Someone else got over hay fever, it's helped with anger, jealousy, anxiety, perfectionism, inadequacy. The list goes on and on.

Overall we are free to live more loving lives, even in whatever imperfect world we find ourselves. And this doesn't happen by 'bypassing' or ignoring the negative, but through a fundamental integration. We come to terms with ourselves and the world in a different way.

Postscript from Rachel: I have been waiting a long time for Connirae Andreas to come back into the NLP scene and I am so grateful that she is back, healthy and vibrant. ●

