

Shrink Rap Radio #349 May 3rd, 2013

“Intuition and Dreams”

Dr. David Van Nuys Ph.D., aka ‘Dr. Dave’ interviews Dr. David F. Sowerby, PhD
(Transcribed from <http://www.shrinkrapradio.com> by Gloria Oelman)

Introduction:

My guest today is Dr. David Sowerby, one of my colleagues from Sonoma State University and the very first person I interviewed on Shrink Rap Radio.

Today we’ll be discussing his new book on intuition and dreams. David F. Sowerby PhD is a consultant and an adjunct faculty member in the psychology departments at Sonoma State University and Dominican University of California. Dr. Sowerby has published research in the areas of intuition and hypnosis and is the author of a book on *Intuition, Dreams and Healing*. He has taught psychology at various San Francisco Bay area universities and graduate schools, been interviewed on television, radio, podcasting and for newspapers, worked as a psychotherapist in Canada, as an academic administrator, manager and sports instructor, served on community development councils – local and national – and played competitive sports – local, interstate and international. You’ll find a link to Dr. Sowerby’s website in our show notes at [Shrink Rap Radio.com](http://ShrinkRapRadio.com)

Now here’s the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. David Sowerby, welcome back to Shrink Rap Radio.

David Sowerby: Nice to be here David, thank you for having me again.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, here we are in my home studio and nobody can see you nodding your head. You’re smiling nicely and nodding your head and unfortunately nobody can see that and it’s hard to believe it’s been eight years. You were the very first person that I interviewed.

David Sowerby: It’s gone by very quickly. I was thinking about that this morning, it’s hard to believe it’s been eight years. I think your program has come a long way since then.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and it’s kind of shocking to me too, to reflect on it and at the time that I interviewed you, I didn’t have any particular very strong dream about where it was going to go or what it was going to be. I guess I must have had a pretty clear image because it hasn’t changed all that much.

David Sowerby: It’s expanded nicely though, I think you have listeners from all over the world, if I’m right?

Dr. Dave: Yep, that’s been very gratifying and I think some of the equipment here in the office has changed and you know what the other interesting fact is that I don’t think I have ever interviewed anybody else here.

David Sowerby: I was going to ask you that, so I'm the only one – special treatment.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well I'm really happy to have you back here again and to have a chance to talk about this book. I think you've been working on this book for about as long as I've known you?

David Sowerby: The book has been in progress – I've been building it for a while – the writing actually happened very quickly but I had a lot of nudges from my dreams over the years to write this. In fact the dreams were insisting that I get this done and the sooner the better, so the greatest challenge in writing the book was not the writing but actually carving out the space to do it in my busy life, so it was actually quite a joy to write. The writing process was very enjoyable and I was in some very nice receptive intuitive states when I wrote it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, at one place you talk about the feeling of it almost being channeled, or maybe actually being channeled but not in the sense that you were taking dictation from a voice that you could hear in your head.

David Sowerby: That's right, there was no inner voice that I heard. I got this word, by the way – 'channeling' – from various dreams I had, so they surprised me a little bit because the original dream I had about this book being channeled was back in 2002 and after I wrote that dream down, I kind of stopped in my tracks and I thought the dream indicated that I was already in the process of channeling a book and I was writing it and I didn't quite know what to make of that dream to be honest but I began to think about how I could write a book and how I could base it on the dreams that I had received and then gradually over the past fourteen years, as you know and it's mentioned in my book, I received eighty three dreams that told me specifically to write this book and other books in the future and it gave me so much information and very specific information, about the topic, the title, who the audience should be, how to write the book – all these details. So it felt like these things were handed to me almost like a gift and I did need to do the work and sit down and draft it up. It was an interesting process. Just so you know and so the listeners are clear on this – the way I'm using the word 'channel' simply means... I think we're all channels in different ways but channeling in this sense just means that I believe the information that I've received, much of it was from a higher state of consciousness, or a higher source and that source has much more expansive knowledge of reality than my conscious mind. My bias at least is that the waking mind – waking consciousness – is somewhat limited and if we can get ourselves into certain altered states then we can receive information that is new, insightful and very, very practical with respect to any area of life.

Dr. Dave: When you say information that is new, did you find yourself surprised at times by what you were writing?

David Sowerby: I did. In fact, I was thrown sometimes. I'll give you an example of this, I'm not sure if I mentioned this to you before but I had so many dreams, many more than eighty three, that I was considering including in this book and I was writing along and I had reached about a hundred and seventy pages or so and then all of a sudden I had about ten dreams back to back on several nights in a row that said 'stop

writing.’ And it threw me because I wasn’t planning on stopping writing and then I did stop and started to think about the fact that I had been guided right from the beginning about what to put in this book and how to write it etcetera, so I thought I would take these dreams seriously. My conscious mind had other plans but I decided to think about it carefully because this information kept coming to me. It wasn’t just one dream, it was around ten, so I did take that under advisement and decide to step back and I read it and I thought it seemed to fit together nicely, so I thought ‘okay, I’ll listen to my dreams and do what they’re saying.’ That was the whole theme of the book anyway, so I was consistent with that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and the book really beautifully illustrates your process because I've known you for some years now and I've known a lot of people who are involved with dream work and gone to conferences and kept my own dream journals for probably thirty or more years but never for myself, nor the people that I've hung out with, heard so much of a strong sense of guidance. You're able to say ‘my dreams told me to do this and my dreams told me not to do that’ and I've marveled at that, felt a little jealous. Gee, my dreams aren't telling me all these things and yet your book so beautifully illustrates the process. I could have drawn from your verbal reports in the past that your dreams were just saying ‘okay now, you do this’ very explicitly but what you illustrate in the book is you have a dream and then you work it line by line and you go into the dream with the assumption ‘okay this dream... particularly when it comes to dream incubation, which I feel like I've had mixed success with, it never feels like it works for me as well as it should and so part of the trick I think I've learned in hanging out with you and reading what you've written, is the first step is to take the attitude ‘that this speaks to my question.’

David Sowerby: That's right. Dream incubation is something that I have witnessed that anyone can do it. I don't think that we have to be specially gifted at working with dreams to do it and in fact I've worked with people, some of my students and clients, that went from not remembering any of their dreams at all, to remembering one dream per night that would actually answer their questions explicitly. And I think part of it has to do with simply practice and staying with it but part of it has to do – this sounds maybe like the cart before the horse – but it has to do with believing that the process will work, having faith that it will work and then when we do receive a dream on a night where we've asked a specific question... there's no guarantee of course that the dream is in fact addressing the question and I always recommend that people approach it perhaps in two ways. The first way would be let's assume it does answer the question, so we look at every part of the dream through that lens. Literally every word, every phrase in the dream and then you can look at the dream again and say ‘let's assume it doesn't answer the question.’ Maybe it's related to something else and both possibilities can occur and I think that as a general rule if the dream does not answer the question it could be that there are other compelling things going on in our life that are over-riding our question, that may be are more important than our question. Our psyche's telling us ‘maybe you should be looking at this instead. Your question may be interesting but maybe not as important as you think at this time in your life.’ The other thing I want to add to this too, is that I've worked with thousands of people now with their dreams and with their incubated dreams and what I've observed, which is very typical and it happens to me as well, is that when I wake up, or someone wakes up with a dream, sometimes at a first glance you look at it and there's disappointment – ‘this doesn't answer my question. How come?’ So what

happens for me sometimes – I leave it on my desk and I go to work and sometimes on the way to work or in the middle of the day, it will just dawn on me. I'll have a moment of intuitive awareness and say 'Ah, but it did answer the question but in such a way that I wasn't expecting.' So sometimes it's... as dreams often are cloaked in symbolism and it didn't present the information like I anticipated but it did answer the question and I think one reason why we miss the intent of the dream is that we do have preconceived ideas of what the answer is supposed to be, or maybe the direction we'd like to go in – the answer we would like to receive. So when the dream doesn't give us that, maybe gives us something different, we're thrown by it and we can't even recognize the truth even when it's laying right in front of us. So sometimes when I look at someone's dream and the person says 'this is irrelevant to my question,' literally within a second or two after looking at the dream I can see the connection because I think I'm so used to looking for it but I do maintain the position that I do try and be scientific about this in the sense that I will look at a dream and try not to have any assumptions about what it might mean. I think this is one of the perhaps errors that some people have made over the years and I may make it myself at times too, that I don't think we can assume that any particular dream means something, or as Freud famously said that dreams reflect our unconscious wishes. Well I think that is certainly the case sometimes but not always so I don't think we should assume the dream falls into a certain framework unless we ask a very pointed question. So if we do ask a pointed question – the dream incubation question – it increases the likelihood that we will get an answer in that direction for the simple fact – and I think this has been known to you for years, that the state we're in right before we fall asleep profoundly influences the types of dreams, the number of dreams we have etcetera, the content of dreams. Freud figured that out years ago so the fact is that when you are just falling asleep if you were very focused and even take the time to meditate on a particular question, you devote some time and energy to it, you're quite likely to dream about that area. It's almost as if to say, if you're going to go on a journey, you say 'I'm going to go on a vacation.' Well before you go, you don't just hop in your car and say 'well, we'll see where the wind takes me' although some people do that but more common is people will say 'I am going to go to this destination' and so you've decided before you start your journey and that's what you're doing before you sleep.

Dr. Dave: They might have gone online and researched. I'm not that way but I have friends who go on vacations and they go online and they've arranged everything, they've planned everything out just elaborately, you know.

David Sowerby: That's right. Well the basic idea to make it nice and simple is that you are going on a journey during your sleeping hours and you can decide where you're going to go and the intention is everything here.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, but also the preparation that's why I was going to, using your metaphor of the person who's planning a trip and I have the impression that the preparation that you put in, in terms of the time, the intensity of your desiring, the earnestness and there's another kind of pre-preparation that I think we need to touch on. It's very clear to me that you have a strong spiritual orientation, from very early on and so I have the impression that that really has a lot to do with the fact that your dreams speak so much to you and so clearly is that you've really, whether by inborn nature or what I don't know, you've carved out internal space in your life – a

sensitivity and receptivity to this internal space... It seems like you got onto a spiritual path at a fairly early young age. Maybe you could tell us about that, when did you kind of 'get the call' if you will?

David Sowerby: Well, this is completely relevant to what the book is about. I mean the book is about spiritual development and so forth and I was interested in spirituality at a very, very young age as young as I can remember. I think my parents had a strong influence in that regard because they were both quite religious but I – and I touch upon this in the book, in the beginning – that I asked too many questions that upset my parents. I think they were somewhat traditional in their beliefs etcetera, so I was asking a lot of important questions about the nature of God and I was born into a Christian family so I had a lot of questions around the church and so forth. I was never comfortable with some of the answers I was hearing so I took it upon myself – I remember this actually – even in the sixth grade I went and sought out the counsel of spiritual teachers around me and that at time they were the priests of the church that I attended and I would ask them some of the big questions – the existential or religious questions and so there was a hunger from a young age.

Dr. Dave: And you were challenging some of the dogma, right – some of the traditional dogma of the church?

David Sowerby: Yeah. I'm not so sure that I was in much of a position to challenge those things in the sixth grade but yeah, a lot of the things that had been presented to me as dogma was unsettling to me or it didn't make sense to me even at that age, so I began to question and ironically I was quite skeptical and this may not come through in my book but I've always considered myself someone who needs proof. So I had countless discussions with my mother about this because she had a very strong faith and I envied her for that and I basically had spirited discussions with her saying I need proof, I can't accept these things unless I've got reasonable explanations and some kind of proof and to me the proof came later for me when I would go into different states of consciousness and I would actually feel, as I would phrase it, the divine spirit move through me. And perhaps one of the most convincing proofs, if there is such a thing, is that I would actually feel my whole body energized. It would feel like energy – I still feel this on a regular basis – it descends. It starts at my head and then it sometimes is localized on my scalp but it's a wonderful feeling. It's pure love, pure joy and it comes right through my body and when I experience that, that feels like I've touched the divine or something that is unseen by, as William James said, you can feel the spirit. It's not something that is amenable to the physical senses and yet it's translated as James phrases it, the spiritual energies descend from higher realms and they enter into the mind and in the body and then you can actually feel it in the body itself and it can change your state of mind, your emotional state. And so to me that's, as a general rule, been my most convincing proof of the spiritual world is the states of consciousness, the feeling I have both when I'm awake and also during various dreams that I have which are quite supernatural, if you want to use the term. The other thing I want to mention so the listeners are clear on this, is that every one of my family is a scientist as well.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, didn't you become an engineer?

David Sowerby: I started to study engineering along with...

Dr. Dave: We have that in common. So we both have the sort of scientific bent on the one hand and then are drawn to the softer side of things at the same time but go ahead.

David Sowerby: So the basic thing for me was that I was born in a family where there was religion on the one hand and then science on the other and I loved both of them and I have always thought that one of my major reasons for being here is to understand how these two approaches to life or reality have something in common. They have not always been best friends throughout history these two approaches but I wrote this in my book but briefly, I think what they have in common is that they are interested in truth or reality or what is actually real and they have different ways of going about it. Religion using the process of revelation, or what I would call intuition, you've received the truth and then science is trying to make observations and then look at patterns and then reach conclusions. So it's a process of investigation and trying to find, sometimes physical proof but it depends what you're studying.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, to me ideally both are empirical. In other words, you are observing – observing and experiencing. In the case of science you're looking outside yourself and looking at patterns and trying to understand the patterns that you see, kind of testing the truth of those patterns, see if they can be replicated, verified etcetera but it seems to me that spiritual seekers can equally hold that kind of an attitude and following formulas that maybe have been handed down through the ages and well, 'let's see what my experience is.'

David Sowerby: That's right. Ultimately it comes down to – when people have a strong sense of faith – it comes down to their own direct experience and the problem with that of course from the psychological point of view, is that it's subjective, so it's difficult to verify and I know that you know this, that this was one of Maslow's observations when he began to study peak experiences. He realized that when people had these peak or transcendent states he said that they were profoundly transformative so they were worthy of study and yet he said they were difficult to verify because we must rely on people's self reports but this is done throughout psychology, we rely a lot on people's self reports. So my interest in studying spirituality or intuitive experiences and related areas is to compare people's experiences, their reports and see if there are any common denominators. So I'm offering my story in the book as my experiences and I'm just putting them out there and letting people do what they wish with it anyway.

Dr. Dave: I should actually let people know that you are... I mean one could get the feeling that you would be in a white loin cloth (laughter)...

David Sowerby: I thought about wearing that today but I changed my mind at the last minute (both laugh).

Dr. Dave: ...and I have to just let listeners know that David Sowerby is a very handsome, conventionally dressed looking, athletic young man.

David Sowerby: I actually do dress relatively conservatively but I have to admit that

some of my interests are quite non-conservative. In fact for a book to be published on intuition and dreams alone, those are not topics typically that people in the West are very interested in. Some people are, within psychology and other related fields but the western world is quite mesmerized, as I would put it, by physical reality and the external world, so even though I'm at home surrounded by technology and so forth I'm much more at home with the inner world which is to me the kind of origin of all these things external anyway.

Dr. Dave: Yes and as I read your book I got so much clearer a sense of that because you go into a lot of the people who have influenced you – you've been influenced by such an eclectic range of sources. Scanning your reference list in the back of the book, they go from Carl Rogers, to Jung, to Maslow, who you just mentioned, from Alice Bailey, who was an esoteric writer, to William Blake, from Sri Aurobindo to Edgar Allan Poe, from William James to Yogananda and so on. So it's a most interesting collection of influences and written works that have had a powerful influence on you.

David Sowerby: Well I have to say that this began when I was young because I remember when I was in high school, there was never one group of people that I liked to hang out with, I liked to hang out with everyone. Every group, so I've always been interested in a broad approach to things and when I think about some of my mentors over the years, I've had several people that have profoundly influenced me, they themselves have been sometimes scholars who have drawn from a wide range of literature. I was very impressed with that and I've very much been interested in the idea that reality is one and then it kind of divides itself, much like a tree. Like we have the tree of knowledge, the different branches represent the different fields of literature and science and the arts etcetera and I feel like there are connections amongst all these different fields.

Dr. Dave: Well, you and I share that and I think that's reflected in Shrink Rap Radio and the diversity of topics and personalities, which seems to be something that a lot of listeners out there appreciate.

David Sowerby: I definitely noticed that when I've been looking at your program and listening to the various interviews.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, now I think this work that you've written here – your book – which is titled *Intuition and Dreams* it seems to me that some of the foundation for your work on intuition is the doctoral dissertation that you did at the Transpersonal Psychology... and I never know if it's the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology or the Transpersonal Psychology Institute?

David Sowerby: It's the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology – it's now renamed itself, it's Sofia University but that's where I really took my work and really focused on how intuition could be recognized and how it could be interpreted, so that you could use it in a very practical way in your life.

Dr. Dave: And you did a qualitative study there, maybe you can kind of give us an overview of that study you did.

David Sowerby: Yeah, so the basic idea I was interested in was... I mean I could talk at length about this but I'll give you the short version of it, that originally what I was interested in was... Maslow, Roberto Assagioli and some other people had caught my interest, that they were studying people that were very, very developed and Maslow used the term 'self actualization.' Assagioli, who's one of my favourite writers by the way, I have dreams about him as well and he talked about 'self realization' contacting the higher self or what he calls the transpersonal self. So ultimately what these sparked within me was an interest to study people who were so developed and so healthy that hopefully they could shed some light on the topic for me and for other people,. So how did these people get so well developed, how come they're so psychologically healthy? So I originally thought I would do my dissertation on enlightenment and...

Dr. Dave: There's a little topic (laughter).

David Sowerby: That was the key topic that I was really interested in, I thought 'why waste my time, why not go for the gusto?' (both laugh) So anyway to make a long story short, I quickly realized this would be pretty much unfeasible to do because I wanted to interview people that were enlightened and I thought 'how the hell am I going to find people who are enlightened? Do I just bump into people at the grocery store and ask someone if they're enlightened? Do I rely on the reports of others, if I hear of some spiritual teacher passing through? Do I make the call?' And I realized there is so much subjectivity involved in this, this was virtually impossible to do, so I wrote about this in my book but I was actually listening to an interview on the radio, someone that I saw and he was a medical intuitive, so he could diagnose people's condition and all he needed was the person's name and there are many people who can do this now and people have been studied in laboratories and he was studied as well but to make a long story short, the topic was about medical intuition and when I heard this interview on the radio a light went on in my head and I thought 'that's what I'm going to study – intuition' because it was much more feasible. Everyone experiences intuition, it's a word that's used in common parlance. There are different approaches to what it is and how to develop it but I thought 'that's what I'll study' and what I'll do then is try and find people who are profoundly intuitive because I didn't want to interview just everyone, or anyone because they wouldn't necessarily be an expert or a master of it. So the way I chose these people, I ended up interviewing twelve people that I thought were exceptionally intuitive and my committee forced me to come up with a list of criteria which in the end was quite helpful, various things that hopefully they met. So some of these people were tested in laboratories and proven to be accurate with their intuitive ability, others I had seen as clients and I had witnessed their abilities, others had been recommended by professors, etcetera. So basically what I did was I interviewed these people and I actually interviewed myself because I was using what's called the heuristic method of doing research, which means you study your own experience in depth as well and trying to find the common denominators about two basic research questions and those were 'How do you recognize intuition when it shows up and how you distinguish it from other types of awareness, or states of consciousness?' and then finally 'How do you interpret it correctly?' Because in the beginning of this, I believed I was having these intuitive moments in my life only to find out later that I was actually not, these were not intuitive moments. They were kind of... I was clouded by my emotional state, which was quite intense at times and I thought that perhaps that was intuitive. Other times

my wishful thinking or projection would cloud my awareness but in the end the conclusions – there were several conclusions but the basic conclusions were that intuition and what I was expecting and hoping to find was this, I was hoping to come up with a nice, short, succinct list of signals of intuition so, when you experience this ‘ah, that’s intuition’ but that’s not what I got. As I read the literature, as I interviewed these people, the list grew and grew and grew and what I quickly realized is that everyone seems to experience this in a different way, everyone has a different intuitive signature if you want to call it that. So the tricky part about this is that now we’re getting into subjective experience but what I realized in the end was that if people studied themselves in a scientific way and that means that if you think you have an intuitive experience, you write it down and you write down as much detail as you can about the experience and then you see if you can – this is in keeping with William James’ philosophy of pragmatism – how do you know something is true? Well, you test it by its consequences, so a lot of things are kind of abstract, so it’s hard to know if they’re true or not but if possible, can you find some supporting evidence that your original experience was true and if you can find that evidence then you can go back and study the original state that you had written down in detail and you can say ‘aha! That was an intuitive state because now I have the proof.’ So if you do that over time you start to collect a whole series of intuitive experiences that were verified and then you find the pattern and everyone’s pattern is a little different. So for some people their intuition shows up – and this is commonly used – people talk about this ‘gut feeling.’ They get this feeling in their stomach literally about something. It could be that their stomach turns – ‘I have a bad feeling about this.’ Well people are so different ‘cause I don’t get that, I don’t get the gut feeling. What I get typically is when I discover something or I go into an intuitive state, I have energy move through my body, that’s one of the typical signals for me. Not everyone gets that.

Dr. Dave: And you mentioned a tingling in your scalp.

David Sowerby: That’s right, so it starts at the top and then it descends, sometimes through my whole body and then another signal that developed for me over the years was that if I would be thinking about something and then had like an aha! moment – that moment of discovery – I began to hear, this was actually when I was doing my doctoral dissertation this new signal developed, I would hear a high pitched ringing in my ear and originally I thought it might be a medical condition but then I realized that I would get this ringing in my ear whenever I would make an important discovery and I quickly thought that perhaps the – this was my interpretation at least – the high pitched sound was coming from a level, or a plane, or a level of consciousness that was higher, so that was what I was actually hearing, it was being translated into a physical sound. So anyway the bottom line was that the people need to study themselves carefully over a period of time and then you get clear on what your signals are when it shows up and then you begin to interpret the experiences and some of them are quite literal by the way, so if you have a dream – there are many of my dreams that I share in the book, there are literal pieces in there. I get people’s names and I get names of books etcetera so those are....

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that blows my mind. You get a lot of very specific information, you say that ahead of time, precognitively, that turns out to be true – people’s names...

David Sowerby: Yeah, so what that suggests is that we're capable of accessing any information whatsoever provided we're interested in it and the passion is there, the desire is there to really understand this. This is how I think scientific breakthroughs are made, that scientists are so passionate about discovering something, they throw their all into it and I had a professor, for example, years ago that I worked with and he was producing so many experiments and he was really doing great work and I said 'how do you come up with these ideas?' and he said 'I read and I read and I read. I read everything I can on the topic.' That's the literature, if you typically write. In the research for the social sciences, that's the first stage. Then he said 'I read everything I can and then I stop' he said 'I just drop it' and he says 'then when I'm going for a walk or I'm in the shower, the idea pops into my mind.' There's the intuitive moment.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, boy for me it's the shower. I just... oh, boy, the shower is just so reliably... I just get what seems like really great ideas.

David Sowerby: Well, see it's nice to know where we experience this and so if you have a vexing problem maybe it's a good idea to take a shower, you may... Just going back into that environment, just by association may take you back into a similar state of consciousness, so what I'm basically suggesting here is that we can actually induce these states at will once we get accustomed to practicing them over a period of time. That's what happened to me, the intuitive moments began to open up in my life and then I was able to cultivate them primarily through intention so, dream incubation or with meditation, or other types of intentions.

Dr. Dave: And you've mentioned altered states of consciousness but you're not a drug guy, right?

David Sowerby: No, I think my interest in drugs has come primarily from indigenous cultures who have successfully used drugs to help people heal over the years. In this part of the world certainly we have prescribed medicine that's intended to help people to heal but those are abused and then so-called recreational drugs are also abused and I think in a lot of the indigenous cultures, the sacred plants etcetera are treated much differently and people approach the altered states differently. So my interest in altered states began when I especially started to go into my own intuitive states and then the main reason for being interested in altered states is that the altered states will give you a different perspective on reality. Not necessarily better but different and if you're in a good altered state it will expand your perception of reality typically bring new insights and can actually be healing in and of themselves so many of the states I've been in that I would label as intuitive are profoundly healing. The feeling that I have is tremendous peace and love and it's really a very soothing kind of a feeling – tremendous joy – so those states themselves are states of profound oneness and wholeness and harmony. So the interest in altered states is something that transpersonal psychology has used as one of its cornerstones. They're worthy of study and not just so you can get high but so when you get high you go to a higher state of consciousness. So I think that's one reason why a lot of people get addicted to drugs because the state is obviously very desirable but if... I would contend and I think other people, for example Stan Grof and others would say similar things that if we can get to these states without the use of drugs then it's probably easier on our body first of all, we don't have to worry about the law on our tail and perhaps they're

more natural anyway and we're not to deal with side effects and all these other types of things.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. One of the things you've shared with me over time and we're not focusing directly on the book a whole lot here but it's really... at another level we are because these are all things that come through in the book and the way that you've written it which is, I don't know if we've already said this or not while we're recording here but your approach to the book is absolutely unique. I think it will have a special place in the literature of dreams and intuition because your process is such that you're taking the reader through 'okay here's the dream that is telling me how to write my book. Here's the dream that's giving me some corrective about writing my book' and you not only tell the dream but then you work the dream so that the reader can see 'oh, okay this is how you get those, quotes, messages.' It's a fascinating approach and I think it's an important contribution so anybody who is interested in this conversation that we're having, I think you're going to love the book. I recommend it highly.

David Sowerby: Well, let me just comment briefly and I appreciate you saying that and the idea to me was that I tried to be true to the guidance that I was getting in my dreams because I have come to hang my hat on them and so I would contend that not all dreams are the same. Much like thoughts we experience in waking consciousness are not all the same. You know during the day many of the thoughts that pass through my mind are just not that important and every once in a while on a good day I'll come up with a good idea and so that would be like an intuitive moment, a significant kernel that I need to grab onto and so after studying dreams for years, it's pretty obvious to me now which dreams I have that are clearly intuitive and which are simple remnants of the previous day, some insignificant experience that I had and the dream is simply a memory, a fragment of that. So the idea was that I had so many dreams that told me explicitly that the way the book should be written is that... and this is quite amusing to me, I hope you find it as well, I think I told you this, that I had a particular dream that you were in and in the dream you told me to include parts of my dream journals.

Dr. Dave: I love being in your dreams (both laugh). I feel very honored.

David Sowerby: Well I was very happy that you showed up in the dream because you're a trusted friend and colleague and also I see you as a symbol of creativity. I think that is one of the things that is very apparent about who you are and the way that you go about things – your program itself is an example of your creativity. So the interesting thing was that I received many dreams of a similar nature and they kept saying 'this should be a memoir, this book should be a memoir. Include what you've written in your dream journals, analyze your dreams and go into detail and tell readers exactly how you wrote the book and how you worked with your dreams.' So I really got into the minutiae of this, there's a lot of detail in there and that's significant because in one particular dream I was told explicitly that in the details is where you will find the truth and I think sometimes we miss the details and when they escape us sometimes we miss important pieces.

Dr. Dave: And there are a lot of details but I wouldn't want people to get the impression that this is like a huge tome because it's actually pretty compact – 157

pages not counting the references that I mentioned in the back, a few pages of references but 157 pages you've managed to really boil down a lot of wisdom and also provide a primer, if you will, or maybe more advanced than a primer, of how to do this process.

David Sowerby: That's right. The thing that I mentioned in the beginning of the book was that when I first sat down to write this, my plan was to write a book that would explain to people how to work with intuition and how to work with dreams, essentially, especially the intuition piece. As I mentioned to you before our interview today, when I actually sat down to write for the first time I began to get numerous dreams that insisted that I write a memoir and insisted that I share these examples of my own personal intuitive experiences, so in the end my original goal was accomplished. The book is 'how to' and it's done primarily through examples and I try to put it in perspective and summarize some of the key ideas at different places in the book but you know some people call that 'the case study method.' I remember year ago when I was at a university there was a famous business school, that's all they did, they just did cases, they didn't do a lot of the theoretical approach that's often used in academia. So it's a legitimate way to really learn something, to do it over and over again with real live examples.

Dr. Dave: I'm just taking a moment to look at some notes that I made about questions that I might want to ask you. I've not been looking at those and we've been having a perfectly fine conversation, which I think is partly because we know each other and also there is something, I have to admit, about being in person. Most of my interviews are not in person. I think we've ended up covering a lot of what I wanted to talk about here. I wanted to get as many of your stories out here as we might and I know you've had dreams that gave you guidance about foods that you should eat, about health issues in your life. I even remember you sharing one about the rain was getting into your house and creating an ongoing problem and you had carpenters and people out and you couldn't figure out a solution and then somehow the dream contributed to that. Are there any examples that come to mind that you'd like share of either food, illness or home repair?

David Sowerby: I will share the two examples you mentioned, I'll touch on them briefly. The issue where I had a leak in my home was quite upsetting because we couldn't locate the source of the leak. I had several contractors over and anyone who's had a home that's had a leak knows that these leaks travel sometimes, they start one place and they end up somewhere else.

Dr. Dave: Oh, they can travel through the walls.

David Sowerby: Yeah and along beams etcetera, so sometimes locating the source is not as obvious as you may think. In any event, I had several people over and they could not locate the source and so finally I thought well I might as well ask my dreams to tell me where the source is and they did pinpoint precisely where it was and then after I had the dream, I asked a contractor to look at that area and lo and behold that's exactly where the leak was beginning. So it was very helpful and this is what I would say is very practical. I've always been a very practical person so that's really my interest in working with my intuition and my dreams to point me forward. Life is quite mysterious and often we don't know which direction to go in, we have difficult

decisions to make but those types of experiences are very satisfying for me when they happen.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yeah. I bet.

David Sowerby: I did mention this in the book and since you touched upon it I will mention that over the years I've had numerous dreams now that have instructed me about how I should eat, what to eat, what to avoid and this has also been extremely satisfying and extremely beneficial to my health and the interesting thing is that these dreams began at a time when my health was not good. I had a bit of a health crisis in my early thirties and I had kidney stones – I mention this in my book and I call this the key healing crisis of my life. At that time and I feel quite indebted to Gayle Delaney for this, I have mentioned her before to you and I know that you've interviewed her...

Dr. Dave: Yes, I have.

David Sowerby: ... well she wrote an excellent book about dream incubation and I read her book and I immediately latched onto this approach that I could ask a simple question before I go to sleep and wake up with the answer. The first night I tried this it worked and so the interesting thing is I needed some answers because I was very fatigued, I didn't know what was wrong with me and the dreams that I got told me what was wrong with my body, they told me I had a kidney weakness and then after that the dreams started to tell me what to eat, so to date I've had fifty seven different foods that have appeared in my dreams that I'm supposed to eat, that are supposed to be good for me and twenty one that I should avoid and so what I did was...

Dr. Dave: Can you give us an example of a dream that has a food that you should eat and a dream that has one that's telling you to avoid because I want to know how that works.

David Sowerby: Sure here's an example of a dream. So, one particular food that I'd been told to eat – and I think the average person would probably do this anyway but I'd been instructed to eat nuts and I've been instructed to eat not only nuts in general but specifically walnuts. As you may know they're rich in various oils etcetera, they're really quite healthy. So one dream I had, I dreamt of one of my friends from high school and he was an extraordinary athlete and he was incredibly healthy, so he's a symbol in my dream then – he's a symbol of health and vitality but he's also a symbol of wholeness because his character to me was actually quite sound, he's a person of integrity. So he appears in my dream as a symbol of health and wholeness and in the dream, he eats nuts, so I wake up from the dream and I say to myself 'I believe the dream is telling me that if I want to be healthy and whole then I need to eat nuts.' So that's how I interpreted it, in other words the dream is literal and symbolic simultaneously. So, what should I avoid? There's lots of things here but one thing that came up over and over again in my dreams was wheat. For example, I wrote about this in my book, where if I were at a gathering somewhere and people were serving pizza or bread or something like that – I used to really love eating bread and I thought 'oh, I'll just not do what my dream said this time and I'll have a piece of bread.' Invariably whenever I did that, I would have a dream that night that would say, do not... literally sometimes, the dreams would just appear in words and they

would say ‘do not eat wheat.’ So my dreams typically come to me in the form of words, or concepts and sometimes they come as direct knowing, where there’s no image, there’s no word but I just know.

Dr. Dave: When it comes with words is it like somebody says something in the dream or you see printed words?

David Sowerby: I sometimes see printed words and sometimes I just know. For example one time when I got someone’s name in my dream, it gave me the spelling of the name – this is even hard to explain, this is called direct knowing, so it meant that I just knew. There was no form to it, it didn’t appear as an image I didn’t hear it, there was no physical sense that was associated with the dream experience, so occasionally I will hear a voice in a dream. For example – this is always very satisfying to me – I’ve had dreams where Carl Jung actually talks to me in my dreams and...

Dr. Dave: Give him my regards (laughter).

David Sowerby: ...I will. So I have a strong affinity for Jung and his work and it’s not surprising to me that when I began to dive into his work in some depth he began to appear in the dreams and sometimes would... one time he told me a joke. It was really interesting, it was quite a variety of things but typically though my dreams do not have images, sometimes I see images but it’s quite rare. I know that a lot of people dream in imagery and beautiful colors and so forth. I do get those occasionally but that’s not my dominant form of intuition, at least in the dreams.

Dr. Dave: It’s more, you say, either the direct knowing or... I mean how do you know that you’re having a dream if you’re not getting these pictures that most of us are seeing.

Dr. Dave: Well, I could ask you right now what are you feeling at this moment and what would you say?

Dr. Dave: I’m feeling connected and having a good time with you here. So I’m feeling... my interest is prickled, you know.

David Sowerby: So how do you know that? (Dr. Dave laughs) Are there images that go along with that?

Dr. Dave: No. No, not particularly.

David Sowerby: But it’s a feeling?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

David Sowerby: So it’s kind of a subjective state and we try and put words to it. So what I would say it’s an inner state and then we put the words to it and the words are simply representations of the states themselves. So what happens to me when I wake up and I remember a dream, I remember the state that I was in – I would call it a state of knowing. That’s what intuition is, it’s a state of recognition and it’s a state of knowing and it varies though. Not all my dreams are the same and just to open it up a

little bit, when I talk to participants in my research and numerous clients and students and others, people dream very differently and remember their dreams differently. I do believe this is a function of both peoples' individual personalities but also the way that their memories work, so the ideas that some people – my mother for example had extraordinary images in her dreams and I was jealous, I didn't dream that way. And other people have very poignant emotion typically in their dreams and some people hear beautiful music in their dreams. Obviously some of the great composers throughout history have done that, so there's a lot of variability in terms of how people experience intuition in dream states and during waking life. Just as a very brief description, they can show up as a thought, as an emotion, as a desire, as a body sense, as a body movement or as a behavior, they can come as an inner image for example, as direct knowing, as a memory that may come back to us at a certain time, so all of a sudden something triggers a memory. The flooding of that information into consciousness could be termed an intuitive moment, where we receive information that's helpful to what's happening in the present moment. So there're lots of different forms of it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Now Jung made the distinction between what he called big dreams and little dreams. How does that fit with what you're saying and with your experience?

David Sowerby: Well, I have been inspired by that distinction and I love having big dreams. Big dreams are worth writing down. People ask me often 'do you write all your dreams down?' I used to but I don't now and typically what I write down now are dreams that I think are either big dreams or they're significant enough or relevant enough to warrant my attention. So if I have a dream I don't think is that important I won't necessarily write it down unless I'm asking an incubation question before I go to sleep, so as a general rule the big dreams as Jung would put it and I would completely support this idea, that we remember them for a lifetime. They're so significant and interestingly enough the detail is typically remembered years and years later. I've talked to many people, many students and clients who've had big dreams and they happened ten twenty, thirty years ago and they can still recall them just like that.

Dr. Dave: Good point. Yeah.

David Sowerby: So those dreams to me are like gifts from heaven so when they show up we need to honor and them and really try and understand 'why has this dream shown up?' It's not just a coincidence probably and it probably has important information for me perhaps in the present and perhaps even for the future. So those dreams to me are just absolutely wonderful and I can't get enough of those and I think the big dreams come when we're ready for them. I argued this in the book – that essentially we get what we seek. If people are really interested in discovering something, eventually they probably will, if they put enough time and effort and energy into it. So I think the big dreams come as a result of continued effort to understand some aspect of our life. For example, even though I mentioned this previously, when a scientist makes the discovery, the moment of discovery does not happen by chance, in my mind. The scientist is primed and ready and prepared and there's been sometimes... and this is what one of my professors said, the guy who is doing all the experiments and the publishing and he said 'people think that you just

write these things quickly.’ He said ‘they don’t see all the hours and hours and hours of work that went into it, the ground work for this.’ So to me it’s the same when we have a poignant intuitive moment we deserve that moment. That’s the way I would put it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. There’s a lot of research on creativity as I’m sure you’re aware that shows that there’s a lot of spade work that has to happen first and then there’s an incubation period, not necessarily in the sense that we’ve been talking about dream incubation but that there’s a lot of ground work and spadework that’s done, maybe sometimes going on for years. And then there’s a period of withdrawal, resting and then something can emerge out of that, some new synthesis but all that work and time has been put in. So I’m seeing that too in the sense of your spiritual life, or people’s spiritual lives in general, that if somebody invests that kind of time, the odds go up that they’re going to have the sorts of experiences that you’re talking about.

David Sowerby: That’s right and I think I’d like to add one more thing in terms of the advent of certain types of dreams, for example. So the scientist is going to dream about whatever his or her research is invested in and the spiritual seeker is going to have spiritual dreams, the businessman is going to dream about how to make money, so we all have different ways that we go about our lives and our dreams reflect that so we go by affinity to the levels that we go to during waking life. So for example if I’m trying to cultivate a certain state of consciousness when I’m awake, which I would call spiritual, which would be a sense of peace and love and joy, then if that is the state that I’m in more frequently during the day, chances are I will experience those states during my dreams and I would argue this. And this came to me during my dreams but I’ve read a lot of material that would support this, that the higher states of consciousness are the pleasant states – the joy, the happiness, the ecstasy, all those things. The lower states would be the frustration, the anger, the fear, the paranoia, etcetera, etcetera. So the idea then is if a person is struggling, during either a phase of life, or over the course of one’s life and is experiencing a lot of fear or anxiety during the day, typically you would expect dreams of fear and anxiety. So, one of the things that I really like is the idea that before I go to sleep at night I do not have to be the victim, so to speak, of my dreams. I’ve spoken to many people that say that they’re plagued by nightmares and I always think it’s important to understand what those dreams mean and analyse them and understand what they’re telling you but I also believe too that we needn’t go to those levels necessarily we can decide that we’re going to cultivate a state of peace or whatever it is and we would do that before we go to sleep and then our dreams typically change profoundly. So it’s a degree of intentionality, setting the course of the journey and the direction and I think that’s a very important part of what I’m trying to convey – that we do have an active part here. William James said this, just one more piece, he said that ‘your will takes you to the door and then when you get to the door, then other forces take over.’ So the role of intention, or volition, or the will, in intuition is that we do have a clear sense of what we want to find. So we ask, we search and then we get to the point where we, as you said incubate, then we open ourselves up and we do this quite literally, we say ‘now I am open to receive whatever the universe wants me to receive,’ or etcetera, so that we can actually get direct information then and this would be new information.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Now I know that you’re a husband and a father and you’re teaching, an employee so you’re not immune to the frustrations and challenges of life.

David Sowerby: Absolutely (both laugh).

Dr. Dave: So unless we give the wrong impression of perfection here, how do you deal with that stuff?

David Sowerby: I was thinking about this the other day because I go through periods in my life like everyone else where life is difficult, it's sometimes overwhelming. My life is full and I have developed such a sense of trust in my intuitive guidance... when I go through those periods of frustration, that is absolutely when I need to access my intuition deliberately, otherwise I may continue to flounder or experience frustration and I contend from direct experience, that the more frequently we try to access our intuition, the easier life becomes. That doesn't mean that we're not going to experience pain and struggle but it means that we will experience less of it. So the idea here is that if we're open to intuitive guidance it can guide us literally at every moment in our life but we do get stuck and we do get fixated on things and that actually prevents the information from dropping into awareness. So the rigidity in a way is the exact opposite of intuition. Intuition is akin to the flow state, or these peak experiences Maslow described. I'm citing an example of someone I knew years ago who was very successful at life, very busy and he had a family, he had various occupations etcetera and he's one of the busiest people I've ever met and he was profoundly intuitive and I was very drawn to that when I asked him. I said 'how is it that you do what you do and you seem to do it so effortlessly?' He said 'intuition' and it threw me, I wasn't expecting that answer but as I watched him go through his life, I knew him quite well, he almost glided through life. I watched him speak a number of times and I saw him give several lectures – sometimes even when he lectured, his hand would move like this...

Dr. Dave: Up and down.

David Sowerby: ...up and down from high to low and I realized when he was in the groove he was channeling his lectures. They were so inspiring that they were just coming through him and I'd seen him give some lectures where he wasn't quite on track but other times it was clear to me that he was being inspired and I could tell just by the fluidity with which he spoke and how eloquently he spoke.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. That's great, I've never been able to fully trust that process. Sometimes I feel like, I've wondered 'what would it be like to just go in totally unprepared?' (laughter) I get so anxious about preparation. What would it be like if I just went in totally unprepared and just trusted that process? I have had the experience, as I'm sure you have, of in the midst of lecturing, even a prepared lecture, maybe something that I've given many times, something new will come out, a new twist or something and sometimes it's kind of stopped me midstream 'wow! That's a great idea, I've never said that before!'

David Sowerby: I think that's more likely to happen, ironically, with more preparation. So the more prepared we are, we're almost ripe and ready to receive then. I tried to figure out and many people asked me this question over the years, 'is there any relationship between experience and intuition?' My answer to that is two fold – on the one hand, experience is not necessary for intuition to occur – you can get

information that you've had no exposure to whatsoever and in fact it can be in a completely different department of life than you are schooled in and on the other hand the more we practice and master something, the more likely intuition is to occur because the more likely we are going to get into that state of being what people typically call 'out of mind.' You get into a state of doing it almost automatically and then so what that does is it puts you into a more open state where you begin to trust and let go. It's almost as if when you get into your car you do everything relatively automatically so the idea here is that your mind is free then. So often when people are driving, or they're in the shower, they're doing things that are habitual things – those are often times when they have intuitive hits because that's when the mind is free, not as much of the mind is engaged in the activity, so more of the mind is able to pay attention to new inspiration etcetera.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well we're probably getting to a place where we should begin to wrap it up and I'm suspecting that – and I think you may have indicated this in something you said – that your dreams might be suggesting another book to you and I hate to put you in that place of 'so what have you done for us lately, you wrote this book, what's next?' (laughter) Do you have a sense that you're being driven towards another book and do you know anything about that?

David Sowerby: Well, I am. The topic isn't clear to me yet but what is clear is that I have files, like file drawer cabinets filled with dreams and they're all arranged by subject matter. So I arranged these all one day before I wrote this particular book on intuition and dreams and I realized that there are numerous books just sitting there waiting to be written that have already been channeled. It does take the time for me to sit down and work with each of those dreams to see what may come from them but the directions would be in similar areas that I'm interested in – intuition and dreams and spiritual development, creativity, consciousness – related areas but I think what I will do is once I have given some talks about this particular book and gotten the word out there I will sit down and say 'okay, I will ask my dreams to tell me what is the next book about?' and I will ask for direction and I will trust that it will come. So one of the things I would like to almost conclude with would be that I do at this stage of the game, trust my intuition and I trust it even more than my waking consciousness but it wasn't always that way. It came over years and years and years of proof that these things are actually guiding you and that the results are so fruitful that I don't need any more convincing. So now I'm able to recognize the intuitive dream, or the intuitive state when I'm awake and when I get those moments, I revere them. I basically take the time and effort to look at them and say 'how is this directing me at this time?' So whenever I'm stuck in my life, I ask my dreams to guide me and so I will do that when it's time to write the next book, I'll say 'where should I go now with this?'

Dr. Dave: Yeah and it's important to take a little time to savor. I mean, the book has just come out, so you need some resting time in between, as you say, maybe give some talks or go on the lecture circuit, or whatever – more interviews probably. Well, I feel so privileged to know you, to have you as a friend and to be able to share this kind of conversation.

David Sowerby: Well, thank you David, I really appreciate you having me on your show and I always enjoy our conversations. It's always very stimulating, so again my

appreciation.

Dr. Dave: It's no accident that you were number 1!

WRAP UP:

I must say I always feel uplifted after a conversation with my friend David Sowerby. I think I'm about twenty three years older than he is, so we are at different places in terms of the arc of our careers. Mine is winding down and his is still taking off. I feel very honored to be held by him as one of his wise elders. I think that came through in the dream that he shared with us, which I had the honor of appearing in and even though I'm the older one of the two of us I really feel that there's a lot that I can learn from him. He's a natural teacher and also I think a spiritual teacher. He's not someone who puts on airs about being spiritual, rather he's very down to earth and matter of fact. I hope that came through and I hope that as his star rises which I'm pretty sure is bound to happen, that he never loses that sense of humility and openness that he embodies. David and I had lunch after the interview you've just heard and I'm just now remembering something that I meant to bring up but forgot, which is he seems to be fairly knowledgeable about William James. I must confess that I'm not that familiar with the work of our founding American psychologist, William James, especially when it comes to his writing about spiritual pursuits. I have to follow up with David and see if he might be interested in an interview in which he would focus on that. Does that sound like something you would be interested in hearing? If you're someone who is interested in the spiritual path, in meditation, in dreams, in developing your intuition, then I really think this is a book that you will be very interested in. The title is *Intuition and Dreams. How to Realize Your Healing Potential in all Areas of Your Life.*

Thanks to my good friend and colleague Dr. David Sowerby for inspiring us with his remarkable insights on dreams and intuition.