

Shrink Rap Radio #493
11th February, 2016

“My Shamanic Healing Journey”

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

Introduction:

My guest today is Nathan Ehrlich freelance multi-media journalist and Shrink Rap Radio listener. He reached out to me about a story he created on ‘Sacred Plants’ for the podcast Israel Story. For more information about Nathan Ehrlich please see our show notes on www.ShrinkRapRadio.com

Before we get into today’s interview, I’m doing something I’ve never done before in my many years of podcasting, which is to precede my interview with about twenty minutes of content from another podcast. As I mentioned in the introduction, Nathan Ehrlich is a writer and filmmaker and Shrink Rap Radio listener and he reached out to me about a story he created for the podcast Israel Story. Israel Story is Israel’s leading podcast and national radio show produced together with Tablet Magazine and they come to you via PRX, the public radio exchange. You can find all their episodes in English on iTunes, Stitcher or any of the other main podcast platforms, all under the name Israel Story. Now they’ve kindly given me permission to play Part 2 of their Episode #13 which is titled ‘Sacred Plants.’ I’ll say a bit more about Israel Story at the end of that segment and then have a live conversation with Nathan Ehrlich here.

Nathan’s narration: I’m on a porch overlooking a lake in a forest. Before me is a friendly mild looking man in his mid forties. He’s boiling cactus in a giant propane fuelled cauldron, taking large puffs of Mapacho – pure tobacco leaf cigarettes – and blowing the smoke into the pot, muttering healing words as the smoke and steam come together.

The other retreat participants begin to arrive and we form a circle at the edge of the lake around a large drum. They’re an eclectic bunch made up of different ages, nationalities and coming from different life circumstances. But all of us have come here for one purpose.

Drums – Sergey speaks.

Sergey Baranov: ‘Let’s tune in, let’s be quiet – silence. Let’s allow for silence now – no talking guys.’

Nathan’s narration: For the next three days we are going to drink large quantities of huachuma, or San Pedro, a psychedelic healing cactus from Peru. Even though this is probably my thirtieth ceremony, I pretend to be calm but I am not, not even close. I like to present myself to the world as a laid-back relaxed person but it’s a terrible lie,

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a coping strategy because I'm actually the opposite – a bald, neurotic, anxious, self-hating Jew. When I drink this stuff I'm like Larry David on steroids, or LSD. But yet here I am scared silly. Why do I do things like this – travel to the Peruvian countryside to seek out this medicine? It's a good question and it's more of a story than an answer – one that begins in High School, when I was punching my friend and he was punching me back. It was not a fight, it was a game – a game called 'Dead Arms.' Dead Arms is where you punch your hopefully smaller opponent in the tricep muscle, alternating turns until one of you taps out. My friend was bigger. The next day he was showing off the damage he had inflicted on me to our classmates. It was etched into my arm in deep intricate blacks and blues. There were 'oohs' and 'aahs' and all my peers were laughing but when I got home and my father, who is a doctor, saw the wounds, he responded not with laughter but with alarm. Yes, anyone who gets punched in the arm by their bigger friend will be bruised but these bruises were ominous, so big they appeared cartoonish and that's because, we found out the next morning, I had a lethally low platelet count and that's because, we learned by the afternoon, I had leukaemia.

In the weeks and months that followed I had substantial doses of chemo and radiation to eviscerate my bone marrow and make room for a transplant from my brother. I vomited into pink plastic buckets, five to ten times a day for a hundred days and in this painful ordeal, my life was both spared and condemned. On the one hand AML leukaemia is something many people don't survive, succumbing either to the disease itself, or the toxic treatment. And on the other hand there are people who struggle through the treatment and emerge largely unscathed. And then there's the rest of us who are stuck somewhere in the middle and we – the scathed cancer survivors – we suffer in the in-betweens, with vague undiagnosable symptoms that doctors and therapists, even those who specialise in the late effects of cancer, write off as the complaints of crackpot hypochondriacs. You can find us – tens of thousands of us, maybe hundreds of thousands of us, maybe millions – on discussion boards and list-serves trying to figure out and help each other figure out, how we can heal, when the toxins we received continue to wreak havoc in ways that even many of the most accomplished doctors can't help.

We're like the mythical Greek centaur Chiron who was shot by Hercules' poison tipped arrow. Chiron survived the shot but was destined to live the rest of his eternal life with tainted blood. He was a healer and was dubbed 'The Wounded Healer,' an archetype, a repeating motif in the unconscious of the human soul that exemplifies how those who have suffered in life and have somehow managed to emerge from their suffering are the most powerful healers because it is they who can best teach others how to emerge from theirs.

Over the course of a decade I got through the treatment, healed the initial side-effects and built my immune system back up but then came the late side-effects. After telling the various doctors I would see about how I was falling asleep in journalism school and on trains to and from work, winding up at the end of the line in Bronx or Cony Island, or that I didn't take a shit once for nine days, they pronounced to me as though they had just solved a murder case, 'Nathan, you have chronic fatigue syndrome and irritable bowel syndrome.' And I would say, 'No shit, that's what I literally just told you, you just gave me a fancy name for it.'

It was at this point that I turned my back on Western medicine and started collecting healers of all stripes – hypnotists, acupuncturists, biofeedback specialists, bioenergetics, tai chi, Chinese herbalists, craniosacral practitioners, ayurvedists, nutritionists, physical therapists, yogis, chiropractors, homeopaths, dream analysts and a wonderful therapist. All part of my path that would eventually lead me to Peru and to this lake – and Sergey. And Sergey is – I'll let him describe it.

Nathan Ehrlich: ‘Sergey, I wanted to ask you, what do you call yourself? Are you a shaman?’

Sergey Baranov: No, I'm not a shaman. I'm a recovering Jew.

Nathan's narration: When I first met Sergey, I thought he was a Peruvian shaman and he kind of is but he comes in a Ukrainian-Jewish package, which was shocking. It was pretty wild to travel as far as Peru to have a one-of-a-kind cultural healing experience and meet a shaman who fled the same part of the world as my great-grandparents and for the same reasons.

Sergey Baranov: My name is Sergey Baranov. I'm originally from Ukraine. When you're hated you know, you can't live in peace.

In Kilmonisky (Sp?) Sergey would get beat up in the street.

Sergey Baranov: Just coming on the streets and ‘Are you a Jew?’

‘Yes.’

‘Here's your fist in you face.’

Nathan's narration: His parents were excluded from the higher paying jobs so they did what many Jews from the Soviet Union did, they moved to Israel.

Sergey Baranov: Well it's kind of ironic because when we went to Israel, we were told that we were home. It's a Jewish country, now you are home and no more persecution, no more hatred. So what happened when we came to Israel, we became Russians and the local population didn't accept us. We said ‘Well, we are Jews, we came to our homeland.’ ‘No, it's our homeland, you get out.’ So same thing begun, same absolute thing like I had in the childhood, now same thing we got in Israel. Just kind of felt like a bad movie, you know. It's like you're watching bad movie once again.

Nathan's narration: Sergey never felt welcomed in Israel, so he moved, first to California where he was duped into a cult and then to Mexico, where he met peyote shamans and then finally to Peru.

Sergey Baranov: I saved for my ticket and I went to Peru you know and since then I live there and my life completely changed there. You know I went through all these memories from childhood and countries and all this mess and suffering and everything and I thought ‘man, from all that, I'm here and I do what I love and I walk my spiritual path using sacred plants and I live with people who love me and who I

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love. I mean, this is happiness – to me it's a definition of happiness and if happiness means something else I'm not interested.

Nathan's narration: Before the ceremony Sergey recruits some of us to help him prepare the medicine – cracking the cactus into pieces.

Sergey Baranov: They're doing something that I'm supposed to do but I'm too tired so... Well, they basically parting the big chunks of cactus that I was drying for a few weeks and this is what we're going to brew in a minute.

Nathan's narration: And some of it gets ground into a fine green powder so that it can be eaten.

Sergey Baranov to participant: That's how you break and crush your fears and sickness and depression, that's how you crush it.

Participant's voice: Yeah, I wanna do that.

Sergey Baranov: Just crush it you know.

(Nathan's narration): The majority of the cactus gets boiled and reboiled until it is in a thick concentrated liquid ready for drinking.

Sergey Baranov: San Pedro is a post-Colonial name – it's St Peter and according to the Biblical story, that was the guy who received key from heaven. The original name of this cactus as it was known here for thousands of years, it's huachuma, which means 'vision.' Shamanism it's the first religion of humankind, through certain plants you connect with spirits and you bring healing into your people, to your patients. For the Western mind anything which is not seen with your eyes will be hard to believe in, so plant spirit might sound a little bit strange to somebody but there are plant spirits and this is experiential, this is not something you should trust me or somebody else. You just need to experience that for yourself what it is, 'cause it's not describable. It's not enough to take medicine, it's not enough – you have to help people to guide them through the act, by creating environment, safe environment for people to relax and just to think about their life and finding their solutions to their problems.

Nathan's narration: We drink the liquid in the morning when the ceremony begins and then Sergey serves spoonfuls of booster powder doses in the afternoon. But each morning as I sit there waiting for my turn to drink I contemplate backing out. It's a terrifying proposition to have your ego shoved aside but I've journeyed too far to get here to back out now and not just physically – spiritually and psychologically as well. So I drink my cup.

The path has taken many turns. Almost a decade after my diagnosis I left my doctors behind in Boston and settled down in Brooklyn where I met a rather unconventional therapist named Cartee (sp?) who helped me take a hard look into my psyche. After working with her for a year or two when things began to get deep, I had the following dream:

Cartee was captaining a ship. I was on board and we were at sea. In the middle of the night she led me up to the top of the mast where there was a platform to stand on and a giant searchlight. She flicked the massive switch and shined the light at the sea, which illuminated and became as transparent as a swimming pool and the aquatic life under the water, these strange creatures of the deep, they became visible to me. Together we saw my own unconscious laid bare with fierce clarity and then I dove in.

And sometime shortly after this dream I surfaced with some memories, like the time when I was five years old and had my first play date with a girl. As soon as she came over I was so excited I pulled down my shorts and underwear to my ankles and began laughing hysterically. But her mom, she didn't find this to be very funny and so neither did mine. There is another memory: when I was ten I was really bored at my Jewish day school. I never cared much for religious doctrine and certainly not for the Talmud, so I wrote an expressive story in creative writing class about a lawyer who committed suicide. This again brought on the authorities. The school called my parents and I had to see a shrink who had no clue how to talk to me. I perceived the whole thing as being terribly shameful. It's not that these incidences were so harmful in and of themselves but they pointed to one big childhood takeaway; do not reveal your real self. It's rotten and dangerous. Whatever you do, hide. Keep it all in.

So my therapist and I had discovered this about me – that the me that presented myself to the world wasn't me, that the real me lay somewhere deeper inside and that this might be playing a role in why I was still not healthy. This was an empowering discovery but still, no matter what my therapist and I did, I wasn't able to lower my defences, drop the façade and become that Nathan that lay hidden inside of me. It was like Cartee and I were digging, making strides for a few years but then 'boom' we hit a barrier, or maybe it sounded more like this – *pinggg*.

Here, this guy's a professional, he can describe it better than me.

Neil Goldsmith: I'm Neil Goldsmith, I'm a psychologist here in New York City. I'm a psychotherapist.

Neil says when we are born, we are all like a well with a glowing spring at the bottom but through cultural conditioning, poor parenting and various physical and emotional traumas, it's as though leaves fall into our wells and dry up and harden over our spring.

Neil Goldsmith: So you go to a psychologist and your psychiatrist and you say 'Listen, you know I need some help.' So he says, 'No problem, no problem, let me get my pickaxe out.' And he takes the pickaxe and it's almost like, you know, the roadrunner in Wile E. Coyote – the cartoons – and he takes this pickaxe and he puts it over his head and he pulls it down at full strength and he hits against the top of those dried hardened leaves and it goes *pinggg* and he tries again and it goes *pinggg*. And a few sparks of concrete fly away and he says, 'No problem, twenty years or so, we'll be down to the bottom of this.'

Nathan's narration: But Neil, as well as many other anthropologists and
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psychologists that I began reading in my quest for healing, all say there is a solution, or at least a short cut to getting around that ping sound and that is psychedelics – entheogens, visionary plants.

Neil Goldsmith: So with psychedelics, it loosens, it softens – the leaves begin to fly away and after a while you can get in touch with that glow again much more rapidly than without these substances.

Nathan's narration: Getting in touch with the glow – that's what I needed.

Neil Goldsmith: In the early 1990s the US Government had meetings deciding that they would now again treat psychedelics like they would any other new investigational research drug and there's three wonderful studies being done at Johns Hopkins Medical School, NYU Medical School and UCLA. These are cancer patients generally, who have terminal diagnoses, who will have maybe six months to live and in the last months of their lives, they take psilocybin in this gentle psychotherapeutic way.

Nathan's narration: Psilocybin is the active ingredient in hallucinogenic mushrooms. The participants are placed in comfortable rooms, administered the proper dose and rather than be guided by a shaman, they are guided by a therapist.

Neil Goldsmith: And the results have been extraordinarily positive. They come in touch with perfection, with their God, with the universe, with love. They release their anger, they seek rapprochement with their estranged brother-in-law, or the like, or their parents, they forgive and they begin leading their lives for the last six months of their life, rather than leading their deaths for the last six months of their lives.

Nathan's narration: While western medicine may be administering psychedelics for therapeutic purposes in the decades to come, they're not there yet. I gave NYU a call but it was a no go. You had to be dying to get into the study and thankfully I was very much alive. But I was suffering. I had to take 60mgs of extended release Adderall just to get out of bed, or take a shit. I was also about to turn thirty and get married and I wanted so desperately to be off drugs and healthy.

In my early twenties I'd become a voracious reader of all things healing. I'd read that there was a vine in the jungle called ayahuasca, which when combined with another plant allows the psychoactive ingredient DMT – dimethyltryptamine – also nicknamed the spirit molecule, to cross over the blood-brain barrier. This process allows one's body and mind to reorganise its neural network, thereby having healing potential for all sorts of mental and physical disorders. I had filed this away in the back of my mind, occasionally reading about people's experiences with the vine in on-line forums and never thinking that I would be bold enough for such a venture. But at this time in my life, when I was about to get married and still having symptoms from an illness that began back when I was 16, I just decided 'fuck it!' I'm not having a bachelor party; I'm having a bachelor sojourn. Healing exists for me and I have to go find it. I don't need strippers; I need a completely different kind of female presence. I need ayahuasca, the great mother plant. I'm going to Peru. I just had to tell Shula my wife-to-be.

Nathan Ehrlich: Do you remember when I told you that I was going to go to Peru because there was an hallucinogenic vine down there that I wanted to use for purposes of my health? Why are you making that face?

Shula: You have to ask open-ended questions. It's the first rule of being a journalist. You should start over.

Nathan's narration: I rephrased.

Nathan Ehrlich: Do you remember how you felt?

Shula: I remember you mentioning it sort of like vaguely that you were interested in it. I think you were sort of nervous to tell me that you were really going to go to Peru to do it because you knew I wouldn't be happy about it. I didn't have specific feelings about the vine itself, necessarily, more the fact that you were going to be away for three weeks and in a country on your own and you don't speak Spanish.

Nathan Ehrlich: Did you think it was weird?

Shula: No, not for you. (laughs) I mean you've tried a million sort of weird type of healing things.

Nathan's narration: Shula might not have thought so but I thought it was weird. I've undertaken a few bold ventures in my life beforehand but this one had a more brazen flavour. I bought a plane ticket, flew into Lima and hopped on an eight hour bus ride north to the heart of the Andes, where the retreat centre was. Almost every evening for a week, fifteen of us tourists would gather together in a big yurt in the pitch black at the foothills of the twenty thousand foot snow capped mountains, with the shaman that had been bussed up from the Amazon jungle.

I brought a recorder to one of the ceremonies. Hear that? That is me taking long deep breaths as the shaman begins to sing the traditional ayahuasca chants called the icaros. Ayahuasca is a spiritual teacher and like one of those old school ruler-hitting teachers, she can be a little harsh – except she doesn't use a ruler, she uses vomit. Like a snake shedding skins from the inside out, you purge those hard and stagnant layers of your psyche. Step-by-step she closes down your story spinning head and pries open your heart. It ain't easy. An hour after drinking the medicine at the first ceremony a wave of severe nausea came at me. The problem was the vomit buckets they'd handed us for just this situation were the exact same pink plastic ones they had given to me in the hospital. I couldn't do it. I couldn't re-enter that space. The whole ceremony I was sick, nauseous beyond belief and I could not purge. But the next ceremony, I came armed with a plan. After the shaman poured my cup, I gestured for more until the cup was full and the shaman and the entire room of people were laughing at me. That did it. That night the puke and shit came flowing out of me both ends, black as oil and I had a vision in which the ayahuasca vine was whispering to me saying "This is chemotherapy."

I had other visions too, like about how alive a single plant or a teaspoon of soil is, or how poorly we treat the earth. I filled an entire notebook with my experiences but talking about it always feels cheesy. So I'll just say that these ceremonies provided a

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taste of exactly what Neil Goldsmith, the New York therapist, was articulating. The hardened leaves inside me were clearing and at long last I was catching a glimpse of the spring in my well.

When I got back home, I got married – something I was initially very ambivalent about. So it was with great surprise that I absolutely loved my wedding. It was on a beautiful mountain in the Catskills, overlooking the Ashokan Reservoir and I felt loved in a way that I thought I was too hardened and cynical of a man to feel. I believe that ayahuasca was very instrumental in this opening of my heart. Slowly my chronic fatigue was resolved – I could poop again and no more Adderall. I had a great year. I continued participating in ayahuasca ceremonies in the Peruvian Andes. After one of them though I headed south to Machu Picchu in the sacred valley where I got wind of a shaman who worked with a visionary called San Pedro. I didn't think I'd be able to talk to him though, since, as my wife gently pointed out, I don't speak Spanish. But I figured, what the hell. I picked up a pay phone in Cusco and I gave him a call. That was the first time I spoke to Sergey. To my pleasant surprise, his English seemed pretty good. We arranged to meet at the bus station in the town square of Calca where he lived. While we were introducing ourselves, sizing each other up and working out the logistics of doing a ceremony, he asked that we convene later because he had to pick up his daughter at kindergarten, only he didn't say 'kindergarten' he said, 'gan' and my ears did a double take. 'gan' in Hebrew means garden and is short for kindergarten. Had this Peruvian shaman just spoke in Hebrew to me?

Sergey Baranov: Yeah, yeah, that's true, that's true, that's true. Yeah, that's strange, it's a kindergarten, which somehow I said 'gan' without even... I didn't speak Hebrew for like fifty (fifteen?) years now. You thought I'm Peruvian that's right, I said 'No, I'm Russian Jew.'

Nathan's narration: Having made this connection, Sergey moved around his schedule so he could guide me in a ceremony the following day. It was a beautiful, lovely encounter and by the time it was over, I had a tremendous sense of trust in this man. It wasn't just our similar backgrounds – there was something else that made him feel like a brother to me and I think it had to do with the fact that he too once found himself close to death. It didn't happen in a hospital room though, it happened in a desert, under a night sky, after drinking.

Nathan Ehrlich: Can you talk about the story of – was it a rattlesnake or a scorpion?

Sergey Baranov: Scorpions, yes.

Nathan Ehrlich: Can you tell the story of the scorpions?

Sergey Baranov: Sure. In Peru I was working with sacred cactus – San Pedro also known as huachuma – and at the same time I was going to Mexico working with another sacred cactus called peyote.

Nathan's narration: Sergey had met some Indian shamans in Mexico and was invited to take part in a series of peyote ceremonies in the middle of the desert. They all drank the peyote and were sitting together on mats on the desert floor when Sergey felt something out of the ordinary. And it was not an hallucination – it was a sting.

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Two stings, in fact

Sergey Baranov: I didn't see the scorpions, they were crawling under my pants and this is when I felt stings on both thighs, about an inch below my genitals. I jumped off my mat and I started to panic.

Nathan's narration: The scorpions in that part of Mexico are notoriously deadly.

Sergey Baranov: So the shaman I was with said 'don't panic, you will make it worse, just try to keep calm.'

Nathan's narration: There was nothing the shaman could do to get the venom out and Sergey's body began shutting down.

Sergey Baranov: These scorpions, their venom is neurotoxin. It targets your nervous system and shuts the whole body down. Including all your breathing organs like lungs and all the muscles that move air, so first you choke, You can't breathe, can't move a finger, you can't open your eyes, you can't talk, absolutely you don't have saliva, nothing. Everything's dry and pain and itching and burning and you just want to get out of your body, you just want to be outside of it but you can't, you are totally chained into it, you can feel like your soul actually getting frozen and ready to leave your body.

Nathan Ehrlich: Did you think you were going to die that night?

Sergey Baranov: To be honest I don't remember that thought *but* I do remember laying down and thinking 'The whole thing can't end to me like this.' It was very sad to die. That's the feeling I remember. I realised how much I love life and I only started to walk my path and here I am – dies. And out of this love to life, I actually pushed the death back and of course the great medicine of peyote helped me on a physical level. Without the medicine I would be dead for sure because it blocked the venom from killing my liver – as I see it now, I mean, eight years later. This is what they call a rite of passage, so I feel sanctioned by that experience.

Nathan's narration: I'm stumbling now around the lake, looking for a place to get comfortable while trying to operate my audio recorder – not an easy feat when you're deep in the medicine.

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, man, not sure I'm going to be able to work this thing. So we took the medicine like three hours ago, I'm just feeling really warm, light, 'Aah, so glad to be here.' But the warm feeling didn't last. I was sitting by the lake when I started to feel my health problems – the severe bloating in my stomach, the terrible pains in my neck and then my mind started yelling at me: 'What's wrong with you, Nathan? Why did you get cancer? Why do you keep making yourself sick? Why are you even having these thoughts? It's beautiful and peaceful here and you're a head full of terrible noise. Why can't you relax? What the fuck is the matter with you?'

Nathan's narration: At this point gave up. I needed help, so I went looking for Sergey. Thankfully, he hovers nearby, precisely for moments like this.

Nathan Ehrlich: I just wanted to ask you about... I started getting really anxious.

Sergey Baranov: (sighs) Anxious about what? Man, you're all the time getting anxious. What are you anxious about? You're O.K.

Nathan Ehrlich: I know I'm O.K. but I just started like...

Sergey Baranov: Like, how it's anxious, explain me?

Nathan Ehrlich: My mind starts going like a million thoughts a second and I can't...

Sergey Baranov: Thinking about what?

Nathan Ehrlich: I don't know.

Sergey Baranov: What do you mean you don't know?

Nathan Ehrlich: I'm not comfortable – it's just a sensation of not being comfortable.

Sergey Baranov: You feel a sensation of not being comfortable?

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah.

Sergey Baranov: With yourself?

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah.

Sergey Baranov: Man! (both laugh)

Nathan Ehrlich: What? Is that something totally new for you? You've never heard of people being that way?

Nathan's narration: I remember it took Sergey a minute to understand where I was coming from.

Sergey Baranov: Well it's kind of, you know, extreme, I would say, you know. (both laugh)

Nathan's narration: But in the process of explaining my state of being he got me to laugh at myself which was a huge relief and then he was able to say something that would be a big take home for me and something I really needed to hear.

Sergey Baranov: You need to start accepting yourself for who you are. I think this is where it is. I think this is it, I think this is the healing – to start accepting yourself as you are. As you are with all your problems, with all your defects, if you have some and that's how you see it, you know. With all that problem you have inside, you know, it's O.K. it's *you*, you know. Nobody's perfect, everybody have problems. I'm full of my stuff too, you know, so that's O.K., I accept myself. I want to be a good person but I want to be me first. So you have to be you, you have to want to be you. I mean, this is serious soul healing.

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Nathan's narration: As the ceremonies wound down and day turned to night, we drummed and feeling unguarded, light and energised, even I was on my feet. Listen, that's me chanting into the night.

When I ventured back home to my wife and two cats, I was radiant and amidst this glow, I decided to take on a new challenge: I enrolled in a four year therapist's training program at the Gestalt Centre for Psychotherapy and Training in New York, beginning to dream of my own version of Sergey's path – Nathan's path. Perhaps it is not set in the sacred valley in Peru, serving hallucinogenic cactus but maybe in the Hudson Valley as a therapist, allowing my life's challenges to inform my practice.

The radiance of Sergey's retreats wears off quickly for me, although I've mostly healed the constipation and fatigue and feel my heart has been opened and my spirit awakened, for mysterious reasons, my stomach is severely distended and I'm having numbness, light-headedness and balance issues, to the point where it can be incredibly difficult to go to work and to go to school. We think maybe it's a nerve thing.

(Sound effects)

Nathan Ehrlich: Is that the sound of my nerves?

Technician: That's the interaction between your nerves and your muscles.

Nathan's narration: So I keep on going to appointments, having blood tests and attending ayahuasca ceremonies whenever I can.

I have tried Western medicine, Eastern medicine but it's the medicine of the South – shamanic medicine which despite, or in spite of, my difficulty and suffering has fanned an ember of hope into a burning flame. And that glowing, emanating heat reminds me that healing is out there for me, or perhaps in there, lying dormant deep inside, right on the verge of being unleashed.

Dr. Dave: Well, that was Nathan's story on sacred plants and I was so intrigued by his account as presented on the Israel Story podcast that I really wanted to lead off with it here. Again, Israel Story is Israel's leading podcast and National radio show produced together with Tablet Magazine and brought to you by PRX the Public Radio Exchange and you can find all their episodes, in English, on iTunes, Stitcher, or any other main podcast platforms, all under the name Israel Story. I mention this again, in exchange for their kind permission to use that excerpt. In addition to Episode #13, I listened to another one of their episodes, #2, which is titled 'Love Syndrome' and it is an incredible story. I highly recommend it to you. It recounts the saga of an unlikely couple who meet in Alaska, have a Down Syndrome baby and go on to adopt other children with Down Syndrome and other disabilities. It's an extremely inspiring and uplifting account. So be sure to check that one out on the Israel Story podcast.

Now, here's my interview with Nathan.

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Dr. Dave: Nathan Ehrlich, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Nathan Ehrlich: Thank you, Dr. Dave, I must say it's very surreal to be talking to your voice. Usually I'm just listening passively, so to have it speaking at me is trippy.

Dr. Dave: Well, welcome to surreality. I can't say it – wow, that's a hard one for me.

Nathan Ehrlich: It is tough, yeah – 'surreality.' Here we are.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and in fact you have been, I guess, a long time listener to Shrink Rap Radio – do I have that right?

Nathan Ehrlich: I have, yeah. A friend of mine turned me onto it and I've been listening ever since I heard the interview with Monika Wikman, I've been listening almost weekly.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you dropped me a line saying you have listened to the Monika Wikman interview about twenty times and so I wanted to ask you, what was it in that interview that was speaking to you so deeply that you listened to it over and over again?

Nathan Ehrlich: Ah, it was especially those first twenty minutes, too. It was her faith, I mean, her bravery in the way she went about to heal herself and I don't know, the sort of fortitude and the faith and the belief and the ultimate transformation that took place – all those things happening together are just, together like one brilliant, hopeful story, that I look to in moments of anguish.

Dr. Dave: Well I should go back and listen to it again because it's been quite a while.

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, my God, it's astounding.

Dr. Dave: I feel that way actually often about the interviews that I do but usually I don't have a chance to go back and listen and anytime that I have, I've been kind of astounded by how much was there.

Nathan Ehrlich: Hm. I think it was like episode 280 or something like that.

(Transcriptionist's note: It was #344 March 28th, 2013 *Archetypal Phenomena Surrounding Death*)

Dr. Dave: Oh, good that will be helpful people that want to find it because I think I interviewed her at least two times and maybe three

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, I think three.

Dr. Dave: O.K. So, you've been on quite a journey because I just re-listened to the piece that you did for Israel Story and it was good to be able to share that segment with my audience and I was glad that Israel Story allowed us to do that. How did you come to produce that for them?

Nathan Ehrlich: Actually from a friend. There's a guy I went to High School with named Yochai Maital, we went to High School together for one year back in sophomore year of High School, which remains sort of a very uh... I'm blanking on the word to use right now but influential year, developmental year, you know, we were eighteen together. So that friendship kind of stuck and we've been in touch ever since. He's from Israel, lived in Israel his whole life but he spent one year in High School in America. Fast forward to a couple of years ago, he's visiting me and he's like 'Nathan have you ever heard of *This American Life*?' I was like 'Yeah, Yochai, I've heard of *This American Life*' and he's like, 'I'm going to start that in Israel.' I was like, 'that's great, man, really proud of you' and you know, whatever. Like two years go by and then he calls me and he's like 'Hey Nathan, can you come film Ira Glass for me?' Ira Glass is the producer of *This American Life*.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yeah, I'm a big fan of *This American Life*.

Nathan Ehrlich: I was like 'You want me to come film Ira Glass for you? He says, 'Yeah, he's promoting our new show.' I was like 'Oh, damn, you guys are doing well for yourselves.' (laughs) So as it turns out, they went to get help from *This American Life* and Nancy Updike who spends part of her time in Israel was really helpful to them in getting their show up and running in Israel and they started producing English episodes and I told my friend about this interesting Israeli shaman I'd met when I was in Peru and it went from there.

Dr. Dave: Wow! That's a really amazing story in itself and what I wouldn't give to have Ira Glass do a promo for me.

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, I was very impressed by these guys. It's four guys who were friends when they were younger, they went to camp together or something and they started this venture like four years ago or so and they produce episodes both in English and in Hebrew. It's pretty impressive what they're capable of right now.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and I actually listened to that promo and Ira Glass is saying 'Oh, you're the guys who ripped off *This American Life* and they said 'No no, no, we didn't rip it off' and he said 'Yes, you did.' (laughs) I couldn't tell if that was tongue in cheek, or maybe a little bit of both.

Nathan Ehrlich: Dry humor in there is what I think it was.

Dr. Dave: O.K. Now, in your 'Sacred Plants' documentary that you did for them and you know I just listened to it again to kind of prep myself for our conversation right now and I was freshly blown away by the remarkable journey that you've been on, as well as the way that you were able to tell the story and do it in such an intimate way and such a self-revealing way, which is something I always have a lot of respect for. Well, in that documentary, you describe yourself rather unflatteringly as a bald, neurotic, self-hating Jew – does that still fit for you as your best self-description?

Nathan Ehrlich: I'm less self-hating than I used to be. I wouldn't be able to put this out there if I was really self-hating.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, good, I'm glad to hear it.

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Nathan Ehrlich: I am still bald. (both laugh)

Dr. Dave: The men's hair club purports to be able to do something about that but I don't know if I fully believe it.

Nathan Ehrlich: I'm pretty neurotic though I would say but at least I'm sort of in touch with where that comes from and how to navigate it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah and I gather there's been some emotional, psychological and perhaps physical healing as a result of your explorations in shamanism. How would you describe your current health status on any or all of those dimensions – emotional, psychological, I guess, spiritual and physical?

Nathan Ehrlich: Alright, let me start with the good news.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, good. (both laugh)

Nathan Ehrlich: Let me start with the good news. Spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, I'm like so vastly far ahead of where I was just a couple of years ago and way more grounded just you know, way more centered, I know myself way more intimately and I tend to be self-doubting when I start saying these things but it's truly the case. And what's been difficult is that while I did get over some physical humps – I was suffering a lot from fatigue and from constipation – those humps seem to have gotten better but I have this lingering sort of problem that's been really bad lately. I was just at the doctor last night, so you're getting a sort of slightly beaten down version because I just had this really disheartening appointment last night and the doctor was very cold to me as is often the case with Western doctors and so I'm suffering from this very weird condition where my stomach is all bloated and distended. I look a few months pregnant and it's started to sort of manifest into my nerves. Actually they think the distension comes from a nerve atrophy in the muscle tissue, like around my stomach and then it's sort of been branching out and it's sort of affecting my balance and a lot of things. It's affecting my skin, it gets burning and stuff, so there's a lot of like weird symptoms happening in my body right now and so I've kind of been on an investigative journey to figure out what to do. I've been to gastroenterologists and neurologists and so I'm really just trying to keep moving forward with trying to figure out what's going on even though it's been so hard.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well I'm really sorry to hear that but you have been so persistent across the course of your life in chasing down what you need to move along.

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, totally. I mean this goes back to why I found that Monika Wikman story so powerful – is I'm always kind of going on, you know, running on hope. There's like this sort of a constant tension between hope and despair. And if you can ride the wave of hope, then you're good, you can get through a lot and then when you have appointments like I just had last night and you get pulled down into that despair angle a little bit and you're in a sort of pit and you just gotta climb out again and keep on going, you know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, a good description. I'm sure there are listeners out there who Shrink Rap Radio #493
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can really identify with what you're saying and what you're going through 'cause at some point we all have to deal with the fact that we have physical bodies and they don't always behave the way that we wish they would.

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, my God, yeah but thank you for letting me air that out because it's a weight on my shoulders right now.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I can understand that so happy to do that. So getting back into the more optimistic view of what's gone on...

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, let's do that.

Dr. Dave: At this point in time and this is maybe not the best time to be asking you this given what you just shared – what's your overall assessment of ayahuasca in your healing process because there are lots of parts of your life that sound like they have been healed. So tell us about that.

Nathan Ehrlich: Ayahuasca has been extremely helpful to me. So my first venture to ayahuasca was about two and a half years ago and as I say in the podcast, I decided to go ultimately because I felt like I got to a place in therapy where I knew a lot about myself and how I operated and why I sort of had the patterns that I seem to have. But it's like I knew all of it but it's almost like knowing all of it can even make it worse because you're just like 'Oh, I'm that way' and you stay that way and you just say 'Oh, this is how I am.' And you know you sort of dig these ruts that you can kind of end up digging them deeper like just by going over them over and over and over again, you know. So I decided to take the plunge and go to Peru because I thought it would help sort of shake things up and help me change the patterns, I guess you would say. Now I think some people have these experiences where it's like a magic pill for them. I've heard some cases like that. I found it to be more of like a practice, where it clears things for you and clears things for you and clears things for you but you have to stay very conscious to keep clear and you have to... I think one session with ayahuasca can be extremely powerful and extremely altering and extremely reorienting but also I feel like it's like a practice and it's like therapy, like you sort of got to keep, not necessarily drinking ayahuasca but you've got to stay conscious, you know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Nathan Ehrlich: I don't know if you want me to talk about the experience itself, or like what do you think would be most useful?

Dr. Dave: I'm not sure. At first I thought I wanted to hear more about the experience but I think we've all been hearing about it and so, for example, I know there's a lot of throwing up, which is a huge deterrent for me. (both laugh) It's really hard for me to imagine going into it 'cause that's one of my least favourite experiences. And I gather that you have found places where you can continue the practice of ayahuasca and I won't press you beyond that but I know in this area and in other countries beyond Peru there are people who are conducting ayahuasca ceremonies and have sort of ayahuasca communities so that you've been able to kind of continue.

Nathan Ehrlich: I will say this about the ayahuasca trip that I went on in Peru and the group that I've sort of continued to practice it with, is that like one of the big reasons that it's been so healing is like one essential element and that is love. And these communities are sort of the – aside from maybe my therapist – the first sort of time that I've like connected with people who are just like pure love and they're just like, they're intention and attention towards me, is just for my wellbeing – there's nothing else wrapped up in it. You know ayahuasca can be used for harm, it can be used... you know it's not... you can go to Peru and end up in a bad scenario if you're not careful and don't do your homework and so, the key ingredient to any shamanistic practice as far as I've experienced it, is love. And I think that is the key ingredient to any therapeutic practice as well. I think love is the ultimate healer and ayahuasca and San Pedro are tools to help you get deeper into love I guess.

Dr. Dave: That's interesting. I haven't heard anybody else talk about it in that context and what that brings up for me too is trust. It's a real risk to enter into a psychedelic experience and I know from my own past experiences fear and trust issues and who can you trust and how much can you trust them...

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, it took me a long time to understand this about what my therapist said that what she was actually doing was loving me all along, all through our therapy and the reason I felt so amazing after five ayahuasca ceremonies or seven days of being in the mountains doing it, was the fact that these people just were these like pure loving beings towards me and that is the same sense that I get around the people that I've now joined this Gestalt community and those people are pure... you know it's sort of like I learned the lesson of like which people are best for me and like the people that are working on themselves and the people that are really loving and don't have like too many barriers in the way of their hearts. If you can find those people and be around those people they will be healing for you in ways you can't imagine.

Dr. Dave: Wow, that's a really good statement – I'm just going to make a note of the time that you said that. It reminds me of in my doctoral program in the mid-sixties, I got involved in something that was called the Encounter Group Movement at that time.

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, I remember you talking about that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and that's gone away, I don't think people do that anymore.

Nathan Ehrlich: O.K. It reminds me of Gestalt but go on.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well it was definitely influenced I think by Gestalt because the two were happening at the same time but I got that sense in – here I was in graduate school and I was feeling very unvalidated by my professors and questioning 'Geez should I be here? Am I smart enough?' All that stuff, right? And then having this group experience over maybe kind of a marathon length of time – all day and all night and coming to the place of feeling really held and admired by a group of people who had been strangers and that we were able to get down to that sort of core level with each other. That was a real transformative experience for me.

Nathan Ehrlich: We just had one of our Gestalt intensives where we go away for the weekend together and do 'hot seat' kind of style therapy and it is so bonding. It is really so bonding. I mean as soon as people start opening up the way that they do in those kind of sessions is just kind of like, it just creates this amazing sort of circle of trust, like you said.

Dr. Dave: Right, right because we need to see one another's vulnerability because we project onto other people that they've got it all together.

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Dave: Right? I know it's always been key to me is seeing other people's vulnerability and of course one way to do that is by sharing your own. As a long time listener you're probably aware that that's something that I do here...

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, that's one thing I appreciate.

Dr. Dave: ... as much as I can. I'd not heard of San Pedro before and it's funny I just haven't heard of it and I haven't heard people talking about it, which is surprising.

Nathan Ehrlich: I guess it gets a little less press than ayahuasca.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, which may be is a good thing. How is that experience different that ayahuasca?

Nathan Ehrlich: San Pedro, it's more of a... I have less experience with it than ayahuasca but it's more of a male energy. You drink it or take it in the sun during the day whereas ayahuasca's at night typically and you usually are outside in nature, you can move around. There's a little more sort of flexibility and you're kind of like, I don't know, working with nature in this sort of very different way and as the shaman that I worked with San Pedro with described it, he said when you work with San Pedro you work with the whole, you're connecting to nature in this very deep way. Whereas with ayahuasca you're sort of working with these specific plant spirits where ayahuasca opens you up to these different plant entities that are allowed to then come in and work with you. And San Pedro has this more sort of like all encompassing zone, I guess you could call it and it's a little more flexible. I feel like you can work a little more with it whereas ayahuasca just takes over, you know. You kind of just have to totally go into surrender mode with ayahuasca, whereas San Pedro you can kind of stay a little bit more in tune.

Dr. Dave: O.K. I understand you're currently working on a video documentary about a New York photographer, musician, shaman and agoraphobic by the name of Michael Reed.

Nathan Ehrlich: I am indeed.

Dr. Dave: And I saw one of your video clips about him that you referred me to on Vimeo and it looked like he had progressed in terms of maybe overcoming his fear of going outdoors. Has that continued to hold?

Nathan Ehrlich: He has progressed but he's still very much a... sort of keeps himself a little bit of a prisoner in his cave as he calls it. He does go out – often when he does go out it has to be with somebody else present but he definitely went out a bunch in the printing and arranging of his photographs and in trying to get his photographs printed and he hung a bunch in a bakery not that long ago and so through the work that he's done, taking photos out of his window, which are these extremely beautiful images of Manhattan, he has the sort of taken more of an interest, I guess, in going outside but you know, ultimately he has some very deep seated sort of issues that keep him kind of locked up and in the past he's had life partners which have made him be able to be more extraverted in the world. That's one of the things that drew me to him is that he used to be a race car driver in his past and he was a photographer – he's taken these pictures in Italy back in the seventies and sixties that are extremely, extremely beautiful, more sort of like conventional, journalistic, beautiful pictures than the ones he takes now are sort of more artistic and out there. So he's had this huge evolution in his character and actually he sort of talks about how he was like... he grew up like Mitt Romney – he was like a staunch republican and he thought he was always right and he was sort of this kind of severe kind of character and he thought he was always... yeah he was just like... he's just gone through this big arc.

Dr. Dave: Wow!

Nathan Ehrlich: And now he's this shaman and he has this healing capacity that when he first started to discover he thought he was actually insane and he didn't know what it was and why it would happen and he didn't understand it and he sort of began to investigate healing modalities as a way to understand whether or not he was crazy or not.

Dr. Dave: Interesting.

Nathan Ehrlich: The way I met him is really kind of interesting. I was bringing lots of dreams to my therapist and she said to me 'You know you bring so many dreams to me and like we don't have time to work on them all. Why don't you check out this dream group led by my friend Warren Falcon?' So I was like 'Alright I'll check out this dream group.' I tend to be really sceptical so I was like you know expecting him to be sort of new agey and crazy and I went to this dream group and I read one dream to the group and Warren, the guy who leads the dream group told me more about myself than most of my friends would know, off one dream.

Dr. Dave: Wow!

Nathan Ehrlich: And I was just flabbergasted and I was like 'Oh, my God, there's something to this whole dream thing.' I just thought they were kind of fun. So I continued to go back to the group and now the group would meet in this strange apartment that had instruments all over the walls and masks and weird photographs and stuff and that's because Michael, the subject of my film now, was in the group and it was his apartment because he wanted to be part of it, so it was led in his apartment. Michael would not share dreams typically, he would share these images that he had been taking out his window of the city – and of himself, he would take these strange selfies before they were called selfies, I guess. I was at journalism school at the time, in a documentary seminar and that is how the project began – the

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more I began to find out about Michael, the more intrigued I became and the more fascinated I became by his character.

Dr. Dave: So what are his, so to speak, shamanic credentials? I mean you don't go to graduate school to become a shaman— at least not that I'm aware of. (both laugh)

Nathan Ehrlich: Well he has none, I mean it's all feeling. The way he describes it – I don't remember the exact story – but there was a woman that he had coffee with or something who was telling him that she had this, I don't know if this is how it happened or not but basically he had this dream about this woman that he knew and in this dream all this healing energy was coming out of his hands and it was like a healing gel and it was going into her back and into her low back and all over her back. He talked to her like two days later and like sort of just mentioned something about you know wondering how she was doing and she was like 'You know I had all this back pain but you know it just mysteriously up and went.' And like a light bulb like went off inside his head and he was like 'Holy shit! What the hell was that about?' So these kinds of experiences kept happening to him and he slowly just kind of... he didn't like wish them away but he was sort of freaked out by them and he kind of nurtured them slowly and now the way that he works with images is through instruments and so he's got these gongs and percussion instruments and so he sort of goes into this kind of trance state and using these rhythmic instruments and has these kind of strange visions that correlate to your life and I had a like an extremely powerful... before I started making the film I went to him for a healing and it was the most extraordinary thing I've ever... like it was magical. There wasn't like something physically that happened but I went into this, you know, this waking dream state and this whole visionary sequence happened while I was lying on his couch and it was just, you know, wild.

Dr. Dave: Wow! Now you're calling your film *The Wounded Healer*, is that right?

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: And it was a kickstarter project. Has the kickstarter project... did you reach your financial goal, or are you still collecting the money, or where is that?

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, it would be great if I was still collecting money, this would be helpful. (both laugh) I reached my financial goal; I raised a little over sixteen thousand dollars.

Dr. Dave: Sixteen?

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, sixty would be nice but it was sixteen and now I'm kind of working on it, you know. I have a lot of footage amassed and I'm starting to really kind of get into the editing process pretty heavily. Occasionally, I've had some projects that come along like this past documentary that sort of takes me away from it or occasionally Michael sort of goes into these depressive funks, or I go into these depressive funks (both laugh) and the project sort of stalls and stuff but I feel like there's some new energy to it and I hope to like really get it done in the next year or so.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, great. So I guess people can find it on Vimeo. Without giving the long URL what would be the best search term to find it on in Vimeo.

Nathan Ehrlich: Well if they go to my website, they just go to <http://nathanehrlich.com> they can click around there and find it.

Dr. Dave: O.K. and Ehrlich is spelled e-h-r-l-i-c-h. And you're also working on a novel?

Nathan Ehrlich: I'm also working on a novel. Some of the writing for the project for the radio documentary – and by the way the radio documentary is called ‘Where the Wild Plants Are,’ it’s the second act of ‘Sacred Plants,’ of Episode #13 on <http://israelstory.org/en/episode/13-sacred-plants/>

Dr. Dave: Yes, I'm giving them lots of references as well but good of you to do that.

Nathan Ehrlich: O.K. and uh... sorry I lost my train in my plug there.

Dr. Dave: We were talking about the novel you're working on.

Nathan Ehrlich: Oh, yeah, so some of the writing that I put into that documentary came from sort of looking into my novel but the novel is written from the point of view of a teenaged boy. It’s called *Jeremy’s Journal* and the teenage boy is in the hospital. The first chapter is him getting diagnosed with leukaemia and it sort of traces his journey through the hospital and where he meets... there’s a love story in there – he meets a girl who comes to visit him a lot in the hospital but he’s also meeting a therapist, who’s like totally different from western style doctor who’s sort of introducing him to the dream realm and stuff and he’s having these visionary sequences from some of the drugs that they give him and sort of this like young adult like Carlos Castenada in a hospital, kind of thing and like a sort of coming of age tale all wrapped up in one.

Dr. Dave: And of course this has no relationship to your own life. (both laugh)

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, the first chapter is my life essentially. It’s exactly the way I remember it being diagnosed myself when I was sixteen but then it will sort of spiral off from there and you know it’s sort of... I'm kind of like putting these influential healing characters into one therapist character and I'm kind of like... I don’t know, I feel like I'm sort of searching for my own healing through this novel. And maybe I'm searching for my own healing through this documentary, through Michael’s story.

Dr. Dave: Well, I'm struck by the theme of the wounded healer and the fact that you’re now in a Gestalt therapy training, so it seems like this is an archetype for you at many levels.

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, it’s sort of been a slow awakening process, I've been going through for the last many years. As much as I, like, wish my health problems away they’ve kind of made me who I am and so, you know but I'm so sick of them. (both laugh)

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well I hope that we can stay in touch and that I can see how your story unfolds because I already have played this long – I guess about twenty minutes – from the ‘Israel Story’ piece, I feel obligated to kind of end our session here.

Nathan Ehrlich: Yeah, totally. O.K.

Dr. Dave: But there’s so much more that we could discuss and maybe there’ll be occasions for doing that and I look forward to seeing how your projects come to be.

Nathan Ehrlich: Well, thank you so much for having me. I know typically you have more accomplished people than I so...

Dr. Dave: I don’t know about that.

Nathan Ehrlich: I’m very proud that you reached out and very happy that you reached out and if anybody out there knows of any like, amazing, beautiful doctors in the New York area go ahead and email me by my email address through my website.

Dr. Dave: O.K. Nathan Ehrlich, thanks for being my guest on today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Nathan Ehrlich: Thanks so much Dr. Dave, I really appreciate it.

WRAP UP:

Well it’s too bad I caught Nathan the day after getting disturbing news from his physician. On the other hand this is real life we’re dealing with here and he was candid enough to share what is going on for him. In fact his willingness to be transparent is one of the key things that makes him credible, I think. Aside from the very revealing and wonderful documentary that he created for ‘Israel Story,’ the thing that most impressed me about my conversation with him was his observation on the importance of love in both the shamanic community, the Gestalt therapy community and therapy in general. And as I pointed out, it takes trust to let that love in and that trust takes courage. In fact I’m impressed by how much courage Nathan has shown overall on his journey. It takes a lot of courage to meet with strangers in strange corners of the world and to open one’s self up to psychedelics and rituals and shamans and other wounded souls and all the dangers of the road. I think it also takes courage to be the sort of artist that Nathan is as a filmmaker and writer and to be a beginner in learning the ins and outs of Gestalt therapy. Overall he’s shown a dogged and courageous determination to discover and reveal his inner self and to learn to be comfortable in his own skin. I look forward to hearing your reactions to this interview and again you can follow Nathan on his website at <http://nathanehrlich.com>