

Shrink Rap Radio #60, November 15, 2006. Healing The Addictive Personality

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Jo Kelly)

Excerpt: *“Recovering from an addiction is really a deeply spiritual journey, because any time that we come to a place of pausing and say – wait a minute, my happiness is not out there, it must be in my relationship with myself and my relationship with my higher power, and that looking outside of myself has caused me tremendous pain.”*

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest Dr. Lee Jampolsky, who is both a friend and one of my former students. Having confronted and conquered his own addictions, he is the author of the book, *Healing The Addictive Mind*, which came out 14 years ago and he is currently at work on a follow-up book on that same topic, which will be titled, *Healing The Addictive Personality*. Meanwhile, he also has four other books in print and four in process. He has not had what would be described as an easy life. From the turmoil of addiction and loss, to living through and beyond disabilities and chronic health problems, he has grown and found purpose by using what he teaches in his own life. With humor and from the heart, Lee has a unique ability to help people discover and realize their dreams and full potential. He has become a renowned psychologist, and a widely published author, and a highly effective and entertaining presenter. His books are in fourteen languages and, combined with his international lecturing, Lee continues to touch and motivate people around the globe. His inspirational presentations span the fields of health, business, education, spirituality and psychology. He is a recognized leader in psychology and human potential; and he has served on the medical staff and faculty of respected hospitals and graduate schools, consulted management and CEOs of businesses of all sizes, and has contributed to the spiritual growth of numerous groups and organizations. His writings and teachings contain a deep understanding, yet have direct practicality. Simply put, Lee believes in a successful and balanced life. Thus you can find him enjoying his kids, friends, and many animals while playing and laughing as much as possible. Most importantly, Lee strives to come from compassion in all he does, and I think that will come through in the interview.

His website is <http://www.drleejampolsky.com/>

Lee’s book *Healing The Addictive Personality* was published in 2008.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Lee Jampolsky, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Jampolsky: Thank you David.

Dr. Dave: And I wish that my listeners could see, I wish we were on video, because I'm here with Dr. Lee Jampolsky – my former student, so you're Lee to me.

Jampolsky: Yes, well I'm Lee to most people.

Dr. Dave: OK, (laughing) I'm not going to “doctor” you a whole bunch in this conversation. But we are sitting at the dining room table in your lovely home in Carmel Valley – and for people who don't know California, or don't know Carmel – this is certainly one of the more beautiful areas in the United States.

And there are so many different things that we could talk about, because you have been writing lots of books and exploring lots of different areas over the years, but I know one of your areas of expertise is the area of addictions. I have heard from several listeners that they would like to have me interview somebody who had some expertise in the area of addictions.

So let's talk about addictions. I seem to recall maybe you even had some personal experience; maybe that's how you first got into this (laughing). Let's get up close and personal here.

Jampolsky: Word's out (laughing).

Dr. Dave: Yes. Let's start there.

Jampolsky: I think it's important to note, that regardless if it's books on addiction or other aspects of my work, that how I come to write about something is not really by being an expert on it. I tend to write about what I most want to learn about. And when I wrote the book *Healing the Addictive Mind* – it's been 15 or 16 years ago now, that book's now in 14 languages around the world.

Dr. Dave: Wow, congratulations.

Jampolsky: Thank you, it feels great.

And I'm now working on a book that will be out in October of 2007 called, *Healing the Addictive Personality*. And as you said I came to the field of

addiction and treatment from my own struggles, and I really began to look at – after many, many years of all types of addiction, ranging from drugs and alcohol, to relationship stuff, to work – I really came to begin to ask myself some deeper questions about what the nature of addiction is. And I come at it slightly differently than what many people think about addiction as.

There are few people out there who really want to or would like to consider themselves an addict. But if we really think about what addiction is, I come to the conclusion that anytime that we are looking outside of ourselves for happiness, we are setting ourselves up for a road of addiction. And that broadens the definition up tremendously.

Dr. Dave: Yes; that seems very, very broad.

Jampolsky: Very broad. So what that means is that the origins of addiction are not in some chemical, or in some relationship, or in some thing out there that we ingest in our body somehow; but the origins of addiction really come from our own thinking. When we are in a belief system that says, my happiness is somewhere out there – in a substance, in a relationship, in an amount of money in my bank account – that when I see that my happiness is out there, I am going to be heading down the road of addiction.

Dr. Dave: OK. Now do I recall correctly – and this is backing off just a little bit from the theory for a moment – weren't you heading up an alcohol program for a while through a hospital? What was that job that you had some years ago?

Jampolsky: For a lot of years I was very interested in really looking at how we could bring treatment to the broadest number of people. So I was very interested in looking at outpatient treatment, and bringing it both to adolescents and adults. So I don't know – I'm not too good at timeframes – back in the 80s and 90s I guess, I started a few programs that are still in existence today.

But really, again those programs came and still are coming from the place of seeing that recovery from an addiction is really a deeply spiritual journey. Because any time that we come to a place of pausing and say, wait a minute my happiness is not out there, it must be in my relationship with myself and my relationship with my higher power, and that looking outside of myself has caused me tremendous pain.

One of the things that I do, I think, well is taking a broad amount of information from a number of different traditions, and incorporating them

into a program that works and is relatively simple. I don't necessarily think of myself as an original thinker, or as somebody who has more smarts than the next guy. What I try and do is use myself kind of as a guinea pig.

Dr. Dave: OK; and then synthesise.

Jampolsky: And if it works for me, then I begin to look at how it might help other people, and then document it through that way.

Dr. Dave: So what has worked for you?

Jampolsky: In the book *Healing the Addictive Mind* what I talk about a lot is when we see the patterns that we do repeatedly, and we begin to look at the origins of those and stop them, we get a lot of self insight. For example, I was very much involved in playing a number of games in my head that caused me a tremendous amount of pain for most of my life.

Dr. Dave: For example?

Jampolsky: For example, the “*When, Then*” game. Always believing that *when* x, y or z happened, *then* I would feel complete, full and happy. When I had enough money, when I had the right spouse, when I had the right letters after my name, when I had the right home, when I lived in the right place; whatever it might be.

I often times think of myself as somebody who for several decades had what I call a rotating carrot machine affixed to the top of my head.

Dr. Dave: (laughing)

Jampolsky: And it dangled a nice juicy carrot out in front of me; and I would work very hard to get that, very diligently, very hard worker; and when I would finally arrive at that carrot, it was a relatively ruthless machine because that carrot would drop by the wayside and I would be off to the next one.

Dr. Dave: A new carrot would rotate into place.

Jampolsky: A new carrot would rotate back up. So I was constantly in this “when, then” mentality. Similar to that game is often times the “*If, Then*”. If I had a different family, if x, y or z hadn't happened to me, if I had more opportunity in my life, then I would be able to be achieving the level of happiness that I would like to have.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Jampolsky: It simply doesn't work that way; and really part of recovery, and in my spiritual path is really taking that and owning it.

Dr. Dave: So you examined yourself; you saw that you were in these patterns.

Jampolsky: Correct.

Dr. Dave: And so what was the next step?

Jampolsky: One of the integral parts of the steps, if you will, is looking at what drives us to look outside of ourself for happiness. Why do we do that? Why don't we just claim our own peace, our own joy, our own happiness that's in the present moment? What drives us to look outside all the time to begin with?

What I really discovered, the more I looked at it, was guilt and shame. We don't want to look at our own "stuff". It is much easier to shove it under the carpet, shove it down, or blame other people for it than it is to look at it, examine it, forgive. And it's remarkable to me that when we actually begin that process – and to me often times it's a life long process – that that's where peace comes from.

I was talking to somebody recently, a couple of days ago, and I realized that – and I don't mean to make myself sound like I'm *there* or I've *arrived*, but – there are certain things on my spiritual path that I go, "Wow, that is so different than it used to be for me." I used to be terrified; I used to be very uncomfortable in my own skin; that's why I used drugs and alcohol to the extent that I did. You mentioned we have known each other over 30 years – you were really integral and responsible for me to begin this journey, which I've had tremendous gratitude through the years about.

Dr. Dave: Thank you.

Jampolsky: But shortly after I was at Sonoma State – where you were a Professor, I went to graduate school – I remember I had to give a presentation in front of 12 people that lasted about 5 minutes; it was really nothing. To have the spotlight on me for even that small a period of time was so terrifying that I literally dropped out of graduate school.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Jampolsky: And I moved to a small town and I told myself I was going to write; and really what it was, it was an excuse to isolate even more, and I escalated my drug use back then. All because I was so ashamed of who I was, and uncomfortable with who I was.

Today I make my living by speaking in front of large groups of people.

Dr. Dave: Yes, you do (laughing).

Jampolsky: And how I got there was a journey away from this whole concept of looking outside of myself for happiness.

Let me give you a humorous example: let's imagine for a moment that I come here, and I have this new found drug, great new pill; you don't have to worry about any side effects, it's not going to make any difference at all, you won't even know that you took it. The only thing that this drug will do is that for the next 24 hours everybody on the planet will be able to see every thought that you have, every nuance, every dream, every unconscious motive. It will be open public information. How many of us are going to go, "Me first! Let me at that pill." OK, it's slightly humorous, but.

Dr. Dave: It depends upon whether or not you get high; (laughing) does that go along with it?

Jampolsky: You know the interesting thing – and this may sound somewhat clichéd – but to me the greatest high is letting go of shame, the greatest high is forgiving, the greatest high is not having any more secrets, the greatest high is being able to look at somebody else's eyes and feel who they are and not be hiding who I am, the greatest high is getting up in the morning and not feeling like I have yet another day where I have to pretend to be somebody else. And how I get there is by forgiveness, being present, letting go of that level of shame that I had for so long.

I started this by saying I recently was talking to somebody and in that conversation I said, "You know, somehow I have come to a place where I really, truly don't have any secrets." That doesn't mean that I have to go around telling everybody every little thing about myself.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Jampolsky: But for the first time in my life there is a sense of freedom that comes from: I'm not hiding behind anything. There is nothing around that if somebody knew, that I am going to think, "Oh my god that person knows that." And that to me is a tremendous release. You can't describe that amount of relief, because for probably 40 years I did the opposite – always feeling I needed to hide.

Dr. Dave: Yes. So if you were to develop a program today – and maybe you have, or maybe you are – to reach out to people with addictions, what would that program look like? For example you use the term "higher power" which immediately of course made me think of the twelve-step program. I don't know if that's played a role in your own evolution or not. What would your program look like today?

Jampolsky: I certainly utilize and advocate for people to use the twelve-step program if that works for them. That program obviously without any dispute has helped more people in recovering addiction than anything else.

Dr. Dave: Is that true? It seems like I've have heard that; I don't know if that is something that has been substantiated by research or not.

Jampolsky: You know – yes and no. This is kind of another subject but I am not very trusting of research done in the field of chemical dependency. Because the information that you are getting – people who are answering the questionnaires are usually people who are doing well. The guy who is back sucking on a crack pipe isn't the guy who is answering the questionnaire.

Dr. Dave: OK (laughs).

Jampolsky: So you are not always getting accurate information, so I am always a bit suspect of any of the programs that say, we have this great success rate – I am kind of like, "Well who are you interviewing". So that's a side note on that.

What I try and look at about programs is that: the programs that work, what are some of the key ingredients that make that happen? As I mentioned before, for myself and sometimes for other people I like to look at things in the rawest, most simple and basic form. To me it's not – let me go into this by describing a questionnaire that I gave once in a recovery center and went through this question.

Dr. Dave: Good.

Jampolsky: One of the questions was: which lectures did you find most helpful – and then it had a list of them – and this was people who had just gone through the program. And when I was scoring it, I realized that there were several lectures that were no longer being given that got the highest ratings (laughing).

Dr. Dave: Well that says something about the value of research (laughing).

Jampolsky: Exactly. So I began to say, well it's obviously not all the smart stuff that we are saying to people, and the content of lectures and information we are imparting; people aren't even basically remembering that; and if they do remember it, then chances are six months from now it's going to be even a more vague and distant memory. So I begin to go, well what is it? What are the ingredients that really, truly help people. One of the elements of humanistic psychology and existential psychology has this in it I believe. When people experience a sense of true acceptance from another human being, it creates a ground for change to occur. When people for the first time are able to breathe in to a relationship, or a group, or sit in front of another person and have the experience that this person knows all the crap that I've done in my life, all the people I burned, all the people I ripped off, and they are looking at me with love, and they are looking at me and they are seeing something of value in me. That creates magic; that creates change.

When you ask me what element would a program that I would develop today have, that would be the number one element. Because I don't believe for a second that I can tell any addict, or any person for that matter, some type of information that is going to change their life. I do believe that the way that I see them, and the way that I hold them in the moment does have the capacity to change their life. In my experience far too many treatment centers, psychologists, psychiatrists don't see this and don't realize it. So too much emphasis is based on, "how is behavior changing?"

Dr. Dave: Let me push you on this a little bit, because years ago I had some involvement with Synanon; and addicts, heroin addicts, crack addicts and so on are notorious for being manipulative, for being dishonest, deceitful, conning. So the question arises in my mind, how effective will giving them this unconditional love really be.

Jampolsky: I don't know who said it; it might have been Marianne Williamson in one of her books: that forgiving somebody, seeing the light in somebody doesn't mean that you give them the car keys and go out to lunch with them. Seeing the light in somebody, really seeing who they are,

doesn't mean that you don't hold them accountable for their behavior; it doesn't mean that you look at them and say, "Oh gee now that I'm seeing love and light in you, you are not going to manipulate, lie and cheat me". It means that I see beyond their behavior but I still hold them accountable for their behavior.

I kind of look at it as the difference between the light, and the lampshade. You might walk into somebody's house and there sitting on the table is the most hideous lamp that you have ever seen in your entire life: the lampshade is paisley, or whatever it is, it's just ugly. But if I ask you, well Dave how does that light work, what is that lamp? You may say well there is some electrical current that goes through there and it creates a light. You would be identifying what is in common with all lights, not the lampshade. In the same way, when I sit in front of an addict who is new in recovery, if you will, and perhaps manipulative and lying and in denial, and all the things that you described, I try not to identify with the behavior (which is the lampshade) which is a long list of hideous behavior.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Jampolsky: OK. I try and identify with who they really truly are beyond and beneath that.

I think our culture to some degree, in the medical model, has done a disservice – and I'll be talking some about this in my book, *Healing The Addictive Personality* – they have done a disservice in some ways, and I hesitate to say this because some people will take offence to it. I do believe that sometimes the disease model, the medical model of alcoholism and chemical dependency certainly has a health, and I do believe there is a genetic predisposition etc, etc. However too many people use that for, "oh I've got a disease, I'm off the hook."

Dr. Dave: For an excuse, right?

Jampolsky: And they don't use it as an opportunity to see beyond it. One of the things that I try and help people with, regardless if it's around chemical dependency or if they are struggling with a physical disease or some type of personal challenge, is help them to look at, "what is the lesson here?" What is the lesson here for you to learn? When I woke up some from continuing to use drugs and alcohol, I began to ask myself – and I have been doing so for the last several decades – what is the lesson here for me to learn? The lessons always have to do, for me anyway and I think for most

of us who are on a spiritual path, is how can I become a more loving and forgiving and kind person through this experience?

And if I am able to embrace and do that, then I stop blaming, I stop having an awful lot of shame, I stop giving a lot of power to all of my guilty thinking. I stop pointing my finger at governments, people, spouses, kids as being the source of my problem; and I begin to focus on, “Lee, what is it you can do this moment right now to shift your focus from being fear based in pain, to being more focussed on love and compassion and kindness.”

Dr. Dave: Some of my listeners might be wondering when you have referred a number of times to spirituality and your sense of spirituality, whether or not that’s rooted in Buddhism, or Christianity, or daily meditation, or daily prayer, or some other practice. Do you care to reveal anything along those lines?

Jampolsky: Sure. When I talk about spirituality, it really isn’t the same as talking about religion or theology. When I talk about spirituality I am really referring to what I believe to be the need for a universal experience of love, forgiveness, kindness and compassion. That is beyond what some of us tend to think about certain dogma associated with certain religion. I certainly think there are many, many paths that one can embark on that are spiritually rich and can be truly life changing experiences. I try to look not necessarily at one path, but what the world spiritual traditions have to say that are in unison, in common, and that are perennial truths. So spirituality to me is both a very personal relationship that I have, but also is a universal relationship when it comes to really tapping into an experience where you are feeling compassion and love beyond what you might think you are personally capable of.

Dr. Dave: OK. The first book that you wrote some time back was called *Healing the Addictive Mind* and you are working right now on another book 14 years later, about addiction, and the title of that one that is coming up?

Jampolsky: *Healing the Addictive Personality.*

Dr. Dave: OK, so what is the difference between those two books; what was the central thesis of the first book, and what’s the evolution been now into this later book?

Jampolsky: I think some of it is reflective of my own path. Although I still stand by, and feel that *Healing the Addictive Mind* is an important book, the tone is of *Healing the Addictive Mind* is a psychologist writing to whoever

may read that book. So although I do share personal stories and my own pain and recovery in *Healing the Addictive Mind*, I think 15 years ago I still had a fair amount of guardedness up. I was still in my role as psychologist. And much of how my own path has come is that I really do believe that to the level that I effect truly deep change in people, is to the degree that I am willing to be truly vulnerable and open and share my own path. And I think *Healing the Addictive Personality* won't be done til March, so I can't really say how it will all unfold, but my intention is that you will feel just much more of my own heartbeat in the book than perhaps you did in *Healing the Addictive Mind*.

Dr. Dave: That's interesting as I hear you say that, it sounds like you don't have that book really mapped out as exactly what you are going to say, but that it is going to kind of emerge out of your inner process. Is that right?

Jampolsky: People often ask me how I write – I'm fairly prolific – we were talking earlier, I have go four books under way right now, two of which are contracts for things I have always written and it comes relatively easy to me. I kind of laugh at myself sometimes, because I always write an outline and I never follow it.

(laughter)

It gives me some sense of an idea for the overall aspect of the book, but most of my writing really does emerge as I am doing it. I like what Ernest Hemmingway said one time, that a mark of a truly great writer is not how much they write but how much they are willing to throw away.

Dr. Dave: Do you throw away stuff?

Jampolsky: I throw away a lot. Actually I'll tell you how it works for me. Last summer I went to Mexico with my kids, and they were in school during the day, and I was going to write this particular book in health psychology. And as I kept writing, for the first time I felt like I was hitting this writer's block, and nothing was coming out, at least nothing that was worthwhile. So I stopped, and I kind of said, well what is going on here? And really took a more contemplative stance to it, and the message that I got was quite moving to me, especially when I began to listen to it. And it was, "Lee you have studied a lot of psychology, a lot of spiritual traditions, you are a fairly disciplined guy, you read a lot. You need to stop all of that." And I was surprised, because I have always kind of even prided myself on, I spend x amount of time every day reading, meditating, praying; and the message was very clear – stop doing all of that. I kind of hesitated, and as I was more

receptive to what that was all about, what I began to really get was that you need to find unexpected teachers. And what I began to do was every day, to wake up and have the goal to find deep spiritual teachings in everyday people, and everyday circumstances; and then to write some about those. It's been a very interesting and very different path.

Dr. Dave: It sounds exciting, because it sounds like it's a path of unending discovery.

Jampolsky: It is. It's amazing really. Not always comfortable; because I come up against my own limitations some, my own patterned ways of thinking, and disguised judgements, and my own pieces of guilt that I am yet to let go of.

Dr. Dave: Yes. It feels to me as if we are probably getting near the end of our conversation here, and I wonder if there is anything you would like to say that hasn't been invoked yet?

Jampolsky: I think because this is on addiction, and because it is such a full subject, and because we have devoted 30 minutes and kind of bounced around a little bit, that it might be good to think about what is truly at the heart of the matter.

Dr. Dave: OK, let's do that.

Jampolsky: For me, Aldous Huxley at the end of his life, was asked – this was imparted to me, I never read it, but I believe it probably to be true – “After being a great philosopher of our time, you are departing this world, what would you leave us with?” And I think probably the person who asked probably had a tape recorder in hand, was expecting a lot; and my understanding is what he said was, “About the best I could say would be, to be a little kinder than you need to be.”

And if I were to say what gets in the way, and what continues people in the path of addiction: it is their own self judgement, their lack of forgiveness, their own criticism to themselves, their own belief that they have done unforgivable things, their own shame, and their own guilt for all of the things that they have done. But they don't want to look at that because they believe that it's real. So they continue in the same patterns because it somehow pushes it away for a moment, a week or however long it might be.

I'd like your listeners to know that I was king of that, and I know it far too well, and that I spent many, many years doing just that, and I now can speak

from my own personal experience that it is possible through really committing to being a little kinder than we need to be to ourself every day, to really believing that it's possible to forget, to believing that there is a power greater than ourself that looks completely beyond all of that behavior and sees something worthwhile in us. That if we spend a little time each day doing that, that that is recovery.

I remember when I was working at the recovery center – and it was a hospital based program, and they were very formal – and I had to wear a tie and a pastel shirt, and all the stuff that goes along with it, and a name tag. And the name tag said I think, “Dr Lee Jampolsky, Recovery Center” or something like that; and it never quite fit. So I went to the guy who makes the name tags and asked if he would make me a different one; and my name tag that I wore said, “Lee, (and beneath that it said) Remembering Human Being”. And to me, being a *Remembering Human Being* is remembering to be kind; be kind to myself, be kind to a few people during the day that I might be tempted not to be. That's recovery, and that's how we can move through addictions.

And the thing I would leave your listeners with is – if a guy like me could do it and kind of move ahead a little bit with time; that it's possible.

Dr. Dave: Well Lee I want to thank you so much. I feel very moved just hearing the words that you've shared with us, and maybe we can talk again some time and capture it for folks.

Jampolsky: I'd like it – get you down here once every 14 years (laughing).

Dr. Dave: Well maybe I'll come down here a little bit sooner than that (laughing). Thanks a lot.

Jampolsky: You are welcome.