

Shrink Rap Radio #69, January 5, 2007. From 60 Minutes Producer to Positive Psychologist

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Dr. John Drimmer
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Jo Kelly)

Excerpt: *“One of the foundational formulations of positive psychology is that there are three pillars to what I call the well lived life.*

The first pillar is pleasure: a warm blanket, a great meal, a rich conversation.

The second pillar is what’s called engagement: which means connection to the world in terms of our strengths, what we’re good at; finding a way to apply and contribute to the world in terms of our strengths, because that’s really where the satisfaction comes.

And then the third pillar is this larger question of meaning: how do I make my life about something larger than just pleasure; larger than just connection.”

Introduction: That was the voice of **John Drimmer, Ph.D.** who has distinguished himself as one of the new leaders of the field of Positive Psychology. He’s been teaching at UCLA’s medical school and has founded the Positive Psychology Center of California. He comes to this work with a really unusual background. Dr. John Drimmer spent three decades making film and television programs in Hollywood. All that time he’s been a close student of the human drama and human psychology. His shows are seen far and wide. He was a producer for 60 Minutes, he helped found The History Channel and executive produced hundreds of programs for The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, The Learning Channel, and A&E. the Arts and Entertainment Channel. He’s also written Hollywood movies including *Iceman* which was produced by Universal. He is a winner of the DuPont-Columbia Award, the Genesis Award, the Aurora Award, and the national Telly Award. In addition to all this, he is writing a book about how adults find meaning in their lives.

Dr. Dave: Dr. John Drimmer, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Drimmer: Hi Dave.

Dr. Dave: You and I haven't met in person, but I want to bring the audience in on the fact that we have had some interesting telephone conversations, and we've exchanged emails; and actually I first heard from you as a listener to a Shrink Rap Radio episode, I think on NLP, and you wrote in to comment on that. Then I discovered that you are a psychologist, then I did a Google search on you and further discovered that you are an award winning TV producer, among other talents. So welcome again.

Drimmer: Thanks Dave, good to be here.

Dr. Dave: Yes. I like it when listeners become guests on the show; it's not the first time that it's happened, and hopefully it won't be the last.

So let's jump into your very interesting psychological and media career.

Unlike most psychologists who sit in an office and often hear about life second hand, you've seen a lot of it for real; and I understand that some of it was pretty extreme stuff. What have you seen, and what did it teach you about the psychology of more normal lives?

Drimmer: Good question. A lot; I've been with narco terrorists in South American jungles. I've been with exorcists who were ostracising demons in ways psychologists dream of. I've been with war heroes wondering where they went wrong. I've been with professional athletes who thought they were fighting to save their pride, and their dreams, and their futures.

Dr. Dave: In what capacity was that; that you were in all of these situations?

Drimmer: Either as a film maker, a documentary film maker, or an executive producer, I was a producer at 60 Minutes when I was in my 20s. Then went on to become an executive producer of many, many programs for National Geographic, The Discovery Channel, The History Channel, The Learning Channel.

Dr. Dave: I invite our listeners to Google you: John Drimmer; go to Google and you'll see quite an impressive list of productions you have been involved with.

Drimmer: I was just cataloguing some of the stuff; but you asked me really what I had seen, and I think how it informs my work as a psychologist, or what it has taught me about more normal lives, tamer lives.

Although no life is really tame; the stakes are very high for everyone; it's just the arena in which we act out the stakes.

Dr. Dave: Yes isn't that the truth.

Drimmer: What I've been really interested in is the question of how people change. Looking at character in conflict; and asking myself how do people tap into their resources of courage, or resiliency, or wisdom, or of interconnectedness. Or how do they not – and what keeps them from doing it, and what can we learn from it?

Dr. Dave: Yes; because you've seen people in some pretty extreme situations, it sounds like.

Drimmer: Yes but life is extreme. What's remarkable about these situations is these are crucible situations, I guess.

Dr. Dave: Exactly.

Drimmer: You can see I'm torn between thinking these are remarkable situations, and not. I guess what one does when one chooses a subject for a documentary, is looking for somebody who is heading into some enormously charged conflict, and you are looking for a conflict in which somebody has a great deal at stake, and you want to explore it with them.

My approach to making documentaries, and at doing psychotherapy, is very collaborative and I want to explore it with the people. Hopefully like good therapy, you come out of any documentary experience with a person understanding more than when they went into it. Ideally – and this is what's most precious about being a documentarian, and about being a therapist – you're changed by the experience as well.

Dr. Dave: That might be something we want to come back to and sort of tap into, maybe how you've been changed by this process. But I also want to keep moving here, and it's always fascinating to explore how psychologists choose their approach: and I've interviewed a few people recently who've been involved with positive psychology, and I know your experience somehow lead you to identifying as a positive psychologist. How did that come about?

Drimmer: Yes it's been a fascinating journey for me. My career as a psychologist started long ago, in a sense. As a young man I was drawn to both of these callings, and was being trained as a Gestalt therapist at the

same time I was working at 60 Minutes. Now of course something like working at 60 Minutes is consuming.

Dr. Dave: Yes that sounds very unusual.

Drimmer: So I made a choice to do the documentary work; and worked as a therapist very part time, often on the weekends, or at a community mental health centre in the evenings.

Dr. Dave: I'm curious how you managed to break in to something like being a producer for 60 Minutes which is a major show, and from what you've said I gather you were in your 20s at the time – how the heck did you pull that off?

Drimmer: Let's see – how did that actually happen. I made a film for public TV about life inside of a high rise, what were then called high rise ghettos, in Newark. And it won an award that's given out by the folks who give out the Pulitzer at Columbia: an award called the DuPont-Columbia Award. And I went to receive my award, and I was sitting next to Mike Wallace; and I was hired by CBS News and I went to work for them.

Dr. Dave: That's great; and coming back to how that led to you becoming a positive psychologist – you started out in Gestalt.

Drimmer: Right. The more I've looked at people's lives and at my own life, the more crucial the question of how people create meaning has come to seem to me. By that, I mean it seems foundational, critical, profoundly important, that each of us decide our lives are about something. The people who I saw as I made documentaries who were able to tap into this deep, deep underwater current of resources and strength, were people who understood what their lives were about and what they were living for, and usually had connected to something much larger.

So at about the time that insight was dawning on me, and truth be told it took years for that to become clear, I was growing increasingly frustrated with conventional psychology as practiced, in that I found it was limited, focussed toward pathology, and wasn't much good at getting people beyond their problems. In other words I could be very helpful in helping people deal with their problems, but to get beyond that in the more optimal states of fulfilment I just didn't have the tools. And I began to believe that it was in large part because psychology has never been very much concerned with this question of meaning: what's my life about? It was an area that had been relinquished to the philosophers or theologians.

Dr. Dave: I have to ask you if you have been exposed to Carl Jung, because Jungians are very much concerned with that.

Drimmer: Yes; of course I was. I think their concern about it – and I am talking as somebody who was in Jungian therapy but was never trained as a Jungian analyst – but I think they are concerned about it in ways that are mythic, abstract, archetypal; and the question is how do we make this practical.

Dr. Dave: Too abstract; OK.

Drimmer: And that's what I'm very interested in. I thought you were going to mention Viktor Frankl whose work I know well.

Dr. Dave: Yes sure, we could mention him as well.

Drimmer: So I got very interested in this question of meaning; and that then led me to positive psychology, which is this phenomenon that has taken place in the last ten years in the contemporary world of psychology, in which a group of people are looking at how people create well lived lives. Of course meaning is a crucial part of it – not all of it, but a crucial part of it.

Dr. Dave: Not only have you been a creator of network TV shows, but somehow you have migrated to now being a practicing clinician, I gather. So how did that happen? And how did you have time to have these dual careers?

Drimmer: Well you just make the time. Partly out of desperation I suppose, because over the past ten years TV – I've gotten to do wonderful stuff – it's growing increasingly silly.

Dr. Dave: TV's growing increasingly silly?

Drimmer: Yes, it's been getting sillier, for a whole variety of reasons that I probably don't need to go into here, but they all have economic motives. And I felt I just needed to do more work as a clinician; and I worked at a community mental health center here in Los Angeles seeing people for free, and got a great deal out of it. And it began to influence the choice of subjects I was taking on in the documentary realm as well.

Dr. Dave: So your work as a psychotherapist was influencing your media work.

Drimmer: Enormously.

Dr. Dave: How so?

Drimmer: Both in terms of the kinds of material I chose, and how I went about it. So I'll give you an example of the how I went about it, and then I will give you an example of the kind of material I chose.

The how I went about it is, let's talk about the process of drawing somebody out in front of the camera. That can be a formal, and almost ritualised process, as conducted in one of the big network news magazines. For many people watching it is a sort of mono-a-mono, it's a dance. That's not ideal; it doesn't encourage candour or self discovery. I remember the conversation that was really illuminating: I was talking to Mike Wallace's camera person. I said how does Mike do it, particularly when he was doing those adversarial interviews, how does he get people to give it up. And this guy, his name was Larry, said "Oh, it's when they are changing the film roll."

Dr. Dave: (laughing)

Drimmer: And I said what? What goes on? And he said "he's bonding with them; he's becoming best friends with them."

So one of the things I realised from being a therapist, about the interview process: it's not important to be brilliant, it's not important to have a lance-like or cutting a key kind of intelligence; what's really important is to make people feel unconditional positive regard, to quote Carl Rogers.

Dr. Dave: Interesting how it always keeps coming back to that.

Drimmer: So they feel safe and welcomed. And my interview skills grew greatly once I stopped trying to be so smart (laughing).

Now to shift to the larger question, to the kind of material I chose. The last two big projects I worked on in the media world, one was a series for A&E Arts and Entertainment Network, called *Intervention*. This series goes into the lives of somebody who is acting out addictively, and is desperately trying to stop but is unable to. It explores what is happening with them and their family. It chronicles the entry into their life of an interventionist, and

explores calling the addict into this moment of confronting what they are doing with their lives.

Dr. Dave: Is this where the whole family and all the friends come together and do the big confrontation?

Drimmer: Yes, and talk about character in crisis; and talk about ethical dilemmas.

Dr. Dave: Did you have a release from the person for example; the confrontee who finds himself not only being confronted, but there are cameras in the room?

Drimmer: Well of course, but it was a far more complex process than that. This series is in its fourth season now: I did the pilot, so I had to figure it out.

The very first episode of it we did was about a young man named Gabe, who was the second youngest person ever to go to UCLA; got in at age 16. A gifted, gifted young guy, who had become a gambling addict and was so out of control that his parents had lost their house to pay off his debts, and he tried to suicide four times. He expressed interest in being the subject of this series.

The way it worked, was we told Gabe that we were making a documentary about him and his attempt to kick his addiction, and we asked his permission to talk to his family and to record them on videotape. What we did not tell him was that as part of our discussions with his family, they were interested in an intervention. The TV series was providing the family with addiction treatment for Gabe after the intervention, should he choose to go into it; and we didn't know whether he would or not.

Of course we needed a release in the very beginning, but more than that: once I realised what we were dealing with, I had to make sure this whole process wasn't going to destabilise this young man. Actually a day or two after we started, I shut the whole thing down because I heard he had attempted suicide; and did a very serious assessment.

Dr. Dave: That was after the video session?

Drimmer: The video taping went on for months; this was after just the very, very first interviews with him, long before the intervention. It was a show full of a lot of ethical concern, and I tried to bring a great deal of care

and integrity to that process, because TV exploits people and that's not right.

That story has a happy ending. He's been clean so to speak; hasn't gambled in the last two years.

Dr. Dave: Oh that's great.

Drimmer: I got to know his family very well; cared about them a lot.

The most recent program I did was a series for The Learning Channel. I'd gotten very interested in how illness presents people with a great opportunity – if they are able to find meaning in it – it can change and deepen and enrich their lives. If they don't, it becomes just the most difficult encounter with the chaos of existence. I am also interested in doctors, and their experience of helping people understand their lives in that way.

So this was a series was called *Guardian Angels M.D.* in which what we did was, we found a patient going through some very serious health challenge – outcome unknown. And we found a medical doctor who is a wonderful, wonderful healer, and we paired the two of them. And we said: doctor you are going to spend the next six months helping guide this patient through this disease process; this surgery; this recovery. You are not going to be their primary care doctor, but you are going to be their guide partner, and let's see what the two of you learn from this process. So we recorded their two lives over that six month process.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Drimmer: The first story we did was about a Broadway dancer; he had been in *Cats*, he had been in *A Chorus Line*, he was one of the top Broadway dancers. His hips were rotted out; he could hardly walk past the theatres he used to dance in. He was told that the operation to replace his hips might leave him unable to dance ever again, and he was in a serious crucible, and wondering what it all meant. I paired him with an extraordinary young doctor I found who had been a history teacher before he became a doctor, and had driven an ambulance before he became a history teacher.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Drimmer: And the two of them learned a great deal from each other, and changed each other's lives in ways that are still forming and being shaped; and my life too – they are both close friends of mine now.

Dr. Dave: These sound like marvellous TV series programs, and I'm sorry to say I didn't catch them. I wish I had, maybe they will be replayed or be in video stores or something. A lot of good TV programming I think probably just disappears, unfortunately.

Drimmer: Off into the ionosphere Dave. This is one of the problems with TV. It is entirely perishable, it is rarely used, and it is not ever put to any good use. If I'm going to continue working with media, I want to find ways to use it as part of social networks, or as part of training tools, or as part of ways to help people expand and grow.

I've also been teaching at the medical school at UCLA and taking some of my experience in this recent documentary series, and some of what I learned from watching these experiences up close, and trying to bring some of it to the medical students.

Dr. Dave: Wow that sounds wonderful. Is there a certain course that you are teaching?

Drimmer: Yes it's a course called *Cultivating the Healer Within*, at UCLA, and it's really the first time positive psychology has been used in the medical school. One of the things I have been most interested in doing is working with these young medical students to explore what the meaning of medicine actually really is to them. It's one thing to write an application to medical school, and it's another thing to decide honestly what the meaning of this calling is for you.

Dr. Dave: I notice you keep coming back to meaning; and you said it was your own interest in the quest for meaning that brought you to positive psychology. And yet I'm not sure what the linkage is there between meaning and positive psychology. The exposure that I've had to positive psychology, I don't recall that it particularly emphasised meaning.

Drimmer: It does; it does. One of the foundational formulations of positive psychology is that there are three pillars to what I call the well lived life; not happiness, because happiness comes and goes. The well lived life has happiness; but it's not the happy life. At any rate, three pillars. Three essential ingredients we need all in different proportions at different times, but we need them all.

The first pillar is pleasure: a warm blanket, a great meal, a rich conversation.

The second pillar is what's called engagement: which means connection to the world in terms of our strengths, what we're good at; finding a way to apply and contribute to the world in terms of our strengths, because that's really where the satisfaction comes.

And then the third pillar is this larger question of meaning: how do I make my life about something larger than just pleasure; larger than just connection.

Dr. Dave: Well that's really the best presentation, formulation, of positive psychology that I've heard so far.

Drimmer: Gosh, well thank you.

Dr. Dave: Yes I like that. And you've even started something called the Positive Psychology Center of California. Tell us a little bit about that, and what's led up to that?

Drimmer: Well what led up to that is realizing that what we have here in positive psychology is this enormously important shift in how to think about the work we are doing. And yet it's almost entirely still contained within academic environments. And the only really practical world it's getting applied a lot within is in the business world, and most of that is back east. Out here in Southern California most clinicians know nothing about it; it's extraordinary to me.

So we formed the Positive Psychology Center of California, to combine the practice of positive psychology: training professionals in different allied fields in positive psychology, and to do some research in it. Our website is www.thepositivepsychologycenter.com

Dr. Dave: You just read my mind. That's what I was going to ask you next. We will all take a look at that.

Now for example, how important is positive psychology in dealing with people who are depressed or anxious?

Drimmer: Enormously important. There has been relatively little work done on this, in this whole world of how to make it practical. There is a

preface to a book written by the late Rick Schneider, in which he talked about finding a birds' nest with his son. There were little chicks inside the birds' nest and they were flapping around, and his kid looked at his dad and said "Gee, there's a whole lot of flapping, but not much flying dad."

Dr. Dave: (laughing)

Drimmer: And Rick said, sort of like positive psychology: there's a lot of flapping but not much flying. Flying in terms of – how do we make it practical.

OK so you asked me: how do you help somebody who's depressed or anxious. I'll give you an example; details changed. One of my clients is a 22 year old female graduate, studying physics. She came to grad school with her boyfriend; they both enrolled in the same grad school and broke up 2 months before arriving. She sank into a deep depression, and began isolating herself.

So in terms of those three pillars: she had almost no pleasure in her life, and wasn't concerned about it; and it became very important to begin to help her redevelop her ability to build pleasure into her life.

But larger than that was the question of meaning. And she and I began to explore what her life was about, and what it was going to mean. And we began to find something that she cared deeply about, that wasn't about physics at all. It was enormously exciting to be in the room when somebody connects with that, and begins to not only get in touch with it but begin to think about how to actualize it.

One of the things we know about meaning is that it is not enough simply to think about meaning. You need big meaning, that's like the city on the hill in the distance on the horizon. But you also need ways to get there: practical, proximal goals. Short term goals, long term goals together make a happy person and get you someplace that matters. And so we began to build those.

They function like – when there's a sunken ship, the way they pull it up: they don't drop lines down and grind on the lines and haul the ship up – what they do now, is, they drop these gigantic balloons and put them under the ship, and they inflate it. And to give somebody their personal discovery in relationship to what their life matters, is like inflating those balloons underneath.

Dr. Dave: Nice metaphor.

Drimmer: The ship?

Dr. Dave: Yes, I love it. That's a beautiful metaphor.

Let me press you just a little bit; and I know you're going to have a good answer for this.

Drimmer: Uh oh.

Dr. Dave: (laughing) In my own darker moments, I sometimes think that positive psychology may be philosophically naive. It seems to me, that the wisdom of Jungian psychology and eastern thought both tell us that we will always be dealing with yin and yang, the dark and the light, and that our sorrows are as important as our joys. What are your thoughts about this?

Drimmer: My thoughts about this are: of course, absolutely. It fits in with positive psychology. Positive psychology is not happy-ology; or smiley face psychology. This is why I called it the science of the well lived life. It's about engaging life realistically and making absolutely the most of it that we can while we are here. I have been a life long Buddhist practitioner, and there is no contradiction at all. Buddha was in some ways a positive psychologist.

Dr. Dave: (laughing) How so?

Drimmer: Now you've stopped me – OK.

Dr. Dave: Well it's a great thought and it could be the title for a book.

Drimmer: No, let me answer this, because it's really a good question. It's going to be hard for me to - Alan Wallace wrote a big piece in the APA Journal about this. He's a Buddhist philosopher.

OK so let's leave that. Do you feel I've answered your question – I'm happy to engage this question a little more, about it being naive? So let's resume this: so tell me more Dave, about what you think's naive about it?

Dr. Dave: Well I think you answered it really when you said that positive psychology is not about happy-ology; or smiley face-iology. Maybe I was coming from that simplistic view of it. Really you have presented a more rounded picture of it than I've heard elsewhere. I wonder if you are

thinking of writing a book, because I think you might bring a unique perspective; I know you would.

Drimmer: I am interested in what you hear me saying, that you haven't heard said from other people.

Dr. Dave: Well the three pillars for example; not that I've read everything out there on positive psychology; I've actually only read a little bit. I've read Seligman's book, I've read Mihalyi Czikszentmihalyi, and I've interviewed a few people.

Drimmer: Well I would only write a book if I was convinced that I was going to contribute something unique to it, and so far I'm not sure.

Dr. Dave: Has somebody else articulated the three pillars?

Drimmer: Oh sure; absolutely.

Dr. Dave: Who has done that?

Drimmer: Everybody. That's pretty fundamental stuff.

(laughter)

Dr. Dave: You know the other place where I've felt a little shaky about positive psychology – I mean part of me embraces it, and I always have this questioning side of myself as well that I can't seem to get away from; I have initial enthusiasm and then I have second thoughts, and that tends to be my pattern. So sometimes I wonder how robust positive psychology is, when much of it seems to have been based on research – you mentioned how academic it's been – much of it is based on research in which people fill out paper and pencil surveys about how they are feeling at various times during the day; at least initially.

Drimmer: Yes, that's absolutely right. It's not a panacea; it's a different interpretive lens; and by providing that different lens, you are offering a different world view. And that different world view leads you to novel answers to questions that have been around for a long time, but it's not a system that psychologists use consistently.

Dr. Dave: I've just thought of a way in which Buddha is a positive psychologist.

Drimmer: How so?

Dr. Dave: Well Buddha and meditators examine their thoughts; they follow their thoughts during meditation, and they watch their thoughts come, and watch their thoughts go, and hopefully without attachment to them.

And there's a way in which positive psychology – part of what that's inviting people to do – is to look at their thought processes and be aware of them, and not get hooked in by negative, self defeating thoughts.

Drimmer: Absolutely. And your thought triggered a thought of mine: which is one of the most profound and simple meditations the Buddha offered us, is the meditation on loving kindness; and ways to understand our connection to all sentient beings. That's called a metta meditation. Then there are other meditations called tangala meditations, which are meditations on compassion; not only compassion and loving kindness for the other but for oneself. And it's the nectar of the good life. Really without that there is no wonderful life. Without care and concern for others and for oneself, there is no wonderful life.

Dr. Dave: Yes I was speaking with a friend just yesterday, and kind of having an interview like this; and he referred to the “L” word, and the “L” word is love. And that's the word that often is unspoken in psychology, that we are shy about speaking. The kind of compassion that you are talking about both towards others and towards oneself can also be understood as a form of love.

Drimmer: I have a terrific story for you. Marty Seligman, who is really the fellow who founded this approach called positive psychology, was doing an executive training program. And these were executives who were brought in for a week-end, or for two week-ends, and paying a lot of money to be trained in positive psychology. And they showed up in his class room and he said: this is going to be a very brief class today. And he pulled out a wad of hundred dollar bills – and I never have this story exactly right, but I've got the point right – and he said OK guys divide yourselves into two groups. And there were ten of the people on one side of the room, and the other ten on the other side. And he said: OK guys, and girls on the left side of the room: I am going to give each of you one hundred dollars, and I want you to go off for the next 4 hours and each of you use your hundred dollars to increase your happiness in the most significant way you think you can. Now, I suggest you pool it and go off to the finest restaurant we have here in Philadelphia, and get to know each other and talk about what you want to

do with your lives, and then come back in 4 hours. And they said, “Great, that sounds terrific.” And they went off.

And the people left in the room, he said I don’t have any money for you, and you aren’t going to get to eat lunch either. What I’ve done for you, is there is a hospice down the street, and I have made arrangements for you to spend the next 3 hours at the hospice. Each of you is going to sit with somebody who has got a fatal disease, and talk to them about life. Then be back here in 4 hours.

So 4 hours passed, and both groups reconvened. And he said to the group that had been out for a fine meal: on a scale of 1 to 10, where would you put the meaning, or the happiness, or the reward you got from the last 4 hours? And they said “it was great, we talked and we shared, it was really good. 8 ½.”

And he turned to the group on the other side of the room, that had been to the hospice, and asked them where they would put it, and they said “10 plus, plus, plus; the most important experience of our lives.”

Dr. Dave: That’s a great story.

Well we are beginning to get short on our time here; there are a couple more things I wanted to ask you about before we wrap it up. You mentioned mid life career change. What are you doing around that?

Drimmer: One of the things we are doing at the Positive Psychology Center, California, is we are doing a group: a six month group for people who are looking to change their work and their lives. We are doing it over that time period and in that form because this is deep searching work, and people can be very supported by other people who are going through it at the same time. We are using a whole spectrum of tools from positive psychology to help people deal with deciding what they want to do, and how to create goals and making the move towards exploring it, and making it real.

Can I tell you another little story? This is a story from an Indiana Jones movie, and it relates to the process of career change, and it relates to positive psychology. And it’s something I talk to people about who are looking to make a career change.

It’s the scene that occurs at the end of one of the Indiana Jones movies, and I think maybe Temple of Doom, the one where Sean Connery plays Indi’s

dad. And Harrison Ford reaches a giant chasm and there's no way across it, and on the other side of the chasm is the holy grail – for the Jungians out there – the holy grail which represents all of god's gifts to man. And there's no way for Ford to get across; and sure there are people chasing him, and it's the end of the movie, and he's got to get across and he doesn't know what to do. He pulls out an old, parched, yellow map and he sees a figure of a person walking across the chasm, but there is no bridge, and he doesn't know what it means. And he thinks, and he turns to Sean Connery, and he says “this must be a leap of faith!” And he puts his foot out across the chasm, and as he does, a slat appears; and then as he takes another step a slat appears, and a rope bridge begins to form in front of him.

And the reason I tell that story is because I think in making big changes in a person's life, these are all leaps of faith; emphasis on faith. And this is very much in keeping with positive psychology; one begins to look for the slats of the rope bridge as they appear. In fact one of the exercises I do with people, is I say: what slat appeared today.

Dr. Dave: John I think you are going to make everybody want to move to Southern California so that they can come to your Center.

Drimmer: That would be good.

Dr. Dave: It's sounding very inviting.

So are you done with media and TV?

Drimmer: I don't think I am entirely done with it, but I think I'm done with working in the conventional frames. I am very interested in how to use media to create social networks or to help people grow, or learn, or inspire them.

There is some fascinating work being done at Berkeley and at the University of Virginia in how to stimulate states of awe and inspiration in people. And they are using scenes from movies; they are showing them to people and they are finding they have great power to stimulate those states and that kind of imaginative space. And if you could use media in that way and then build on it, then you would have a really productive, interesting way to use it.

Then there are other really fascinating phenoms, or phenomenons; like this DVD *The Secret* that people have been distributing by word of mouth over the internet.

Dr. Dave: Wait, what's this?

Drimmer: I don't know if you have seen that or not.

Dr. Dave: No I haven't heard of this.

Drimmer: Well it's a very, very interesting thing – I have some reservations about the content of it – but this is a DVD that I think was produced in Australia, called The Secret. It's a series of interviews that deals with what some people call the Law of Attraction, which essentially means we see what we want to see. Or if you push it even further, the way some of the practitioners do, it means that we are able to create in the world what we will to create.

Now that's a subject for many dissertations, but what's interesting is that these people produced this DVD; and it's a powerful idea, and a well made piece of media, and it's spread all around the world – without ever being on a TV screen or in a movie theatre.

Dr. Dave: Well; I think I know someone I maybe can get it from – you. (laughing) I'm hoping.

Drimmer: Well I think I could arrange that.

Dr. Dave: OK we can check that out. Well to wrap things up here, just a couple more things. The great thing about a podcast as opposed to traditional media: I say we are running out of time, but in fact it's totally up to me how much time we take. And it's my judgment of how much our audience will tolerate; and I think that this has been a wonderful conversation and I am going to assume they are going to tolerate it well.

You mentioned that you had been in Jungian psychotherapy, and maybe other approaches as well; so I wanted to ask you in what way psychology has helped you in your own personal life – either psychology, psychotherapy, these ideas.

Drimmer: Well in enormous ways; and in ways that have left me disappointed.

Dr. Dave: Both – positive and negative. Say a little bit about each of those poles.

Drimmer: I feel the most important thing I ever did was join an ongoing therapy group. Because I think for me, what I needed most was to develop honest, authentic, trusting relationships with people over time. I feel one of the biggest wastes of time (laughing) I ever spent was spending many years thinking about my childhood wounds. I think it's useful, as a way to understand oneself; but I think, and we know this – the more neuropsychology we are doing, the more evidence there is, of the fact what you spend a lot of time thinking about, ie your problems, is going to begin to shape the way your brain operates. And if you begin to feel that the twig is broken, then you begin to think the tree is bent, and gnarled, and deformed. And I think there is enormous danger in it.

Dr. Dave: Danger in spending too much time being preoccupied with deficits.

Drimmer: Yes that's exactly right. And that I think one of the responsibilities of people who do this work, is to bring their whole selves into the room with the client, the patient. And that means – here I separate myself from a lot of people in the field – that means you had better be pretty well developed yourself, otherwise who wants your whole self in the room?

Dr. Dave: (laughing) Good point.

Drimmer: There is this whole conflict in the field that you don't have to be able to lay an egg to know what a good egg is. But I think you do have to put a lot of work in on your own life, and I think I learned a great deal from the therapists I had who were willing to share their lives with me. A lot of learning I think comes from life.

Dr. Dave: Yes well that maybe segways into my final question, which is: what advice do you have for students who are considering a career as therapists or counselors?

Drimmer: What a great question. I think the best way you could ever learn about it would be to spend six sessions with four different therapists from very different schools, talking about your life. Unfortunately what most people do is they find a therapist, and stay with them for years and years and years, and then they spend most of their lives practicing exactly the way that therapist practiced.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Well that is a unique recommendation.

John Drimmer I want to thank you so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Drimmer: You're welcome; it's been really, really fun.