

## **Shrink Rap Radio #96: Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy**

**David Van Nuys Ph.D. Interviews Michael Mayer, Ph.D.**

(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Jeremy Devens)

***Excerpt: Michael Mayer:*** *So In tai chi, every tai chi movement is like a rosetta stone. It's a right brain alphabet that helps us enter into altered states of consciousness, and essentially shape shift into those, meaning... To have boundaries... Or... Every single movement is like that. To be transcendent like a white crane spreading it's wings. So at various times, when we want to, essentially, alter our state of consciousness and shape shift into another aspect of ourselves, tai chi and qigong continue that alphabet. Just like music introduces us into an altered state and brings us to a distant place, in the same way, movements in the body can do the same thing, and are therefore very beneficial to mindbody healing.*

**Dr. Dave:** That was the voice of my guest Dr. Michael Mayer. Long time listeners will recall that Michael Mayer, Ph.D. was my guest on Show #41, speaking with us about Bodymind Healing with Qigong. Michael Mayer, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist, hypnotherapist and a Qigong/Tai Chi teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area. Michael specializes in giving his patients self-healing methods for physical and mental health problems. He says he may have been the first person in the U.S. to train doctoral level psychology students in the integration of Qigong and Psychotherapy. He has authored 11 publications on bodymind healing, including books, audio tapes and journal articles. He also founded one of the first complimentary-medicine clinics in this country. I've known Michael since his student days and not long ago I had a chance to attend an impressive day-long seminar that Michael taught on his integrative bodymind approach. I'm also in the process of reading his most recent book, which is both scholarly and extremely practical. The title is Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy: Ancient Pathways to Modern Health.

Dr. Michael Mayer, welcome back to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Michael Mayer:** It's so nice to be back.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, well you know, it is a return trip from way back in Episode #41. I interviewed about your earlier book, and now you've got this new book, which is titled [Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy](#). What's the difference between this new book and the earlier one that I interviewed you about back in episode #41?

**Mayer:** Well these are two volumes of a set. The set is called [The Tao of Bodymind Healing](#). The first one was very specifically about qigong and how psychotherapy could help a qigong practice and learn from that whole tradition. This second volume is mostly about psychotherapy, essentially how qigong and ancient sacred wisdom traditions in general can help to deepen and broaden the foundation of psychotherapy.

**Dr. Dave:** Did you know that it was going to be a two volume set when you wrote the first book?

**Mayer:** Actually it was one giant piece of work, and I was advised that it was too much, so I decided to divide it up that way. Kind of like a yin yang symbol. It's a perfect yin yang symbol in terms of my life work.

**Dr. Dave:** Well that was good advice, because both works are fairly encyclopedic. I think especially the second one will be an invaluable reference work for anyone that's doing psychotherapy or also interested in qigong, martial arts, energy psychology and trying to integrate those. I think this will be a seminal reference work for those people

**Mayer:** Thank you, you're very kind.

**Dr. Dave:** Now I know from some emails that you and I exchanged that you're excited about the cover of the new book, unfortunately, I haven't been able to see it, what you sent me was a prepublication copy that doesn't have that cover. Perhaps you could describe it for us and tell us how it got created.

**Mayer:** The cover has two streams becoming one, and it has somebody sitting at that stream, and that's how my whole journey began when I

was in my early teens, I use to sit by a river like that. This was long before meditation was known to me, or maybe to most people in New Jersey. I would just listen to those streams coming together and I was meditating but didn't know it. Native Americans say that the places that call us in our childhood hold keys to our destiny, places in nature. That proves true to me because east and west, mind and body, ancient and modern became what my life path was about. When I do workshops I invite people to focus in on what it is that called them in nature and what that has to do with their destiny.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. That sounds wonderful. I was talking about how I think this will be a seminal work and, in fact, is it true that these two books that you've written on the Tao of bodymind healing, this series, that they are the first to integrate qigong and psychotherapy.

**Mayer:** Yes, it is the first.

**Dr. Dave:** That's really amazing, and that pretty much guarantees, I think, that they will be seminal books that people will want to refer to.

**Mayer:** I hope so, because it's not just these books now, I've been doing this for about the last 20 years. I was the first person to train doctoral level psychologists in these methods as far back as the 1980's at John F. Kennedy University. Now there are other people beginning to do this, but it's still in it's seminal phases.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, yes. I don't know if you remember, I studied the long form of yang style Tai Chi for several years, remind us of the difference between tai chi and qigong.

**Mayer:** Qigong is the overarching system of which tai chi is a system. There are many different systems of qigong for many different purposes; medical, internal alchemy, for longevity, there are animal forms, so when I'm teaching tai chi, I show how tai chi has four levels of healing purpose in it that have very often been forgotten, and in that is self healing, self defense, many other things, and I outline that in my first

book. Qigong is the overarching system in mindbody healing, of which tai chi is one.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I see. I remember from our previous discussion that you did a very good job of documenting even how qigong has its roots way back in time in shamanic practices.

**Mayer:** That's right.

**Dr. Dave:** Now the title of this book is Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy, that's the main title, so tell us what is bodymind healing psychotherapy? It's quite a mouthful, what is it?

**Mayer:** Well, many people talk about mind/body healing, and since we're such a mental culture I like to put the word body first and to make them one word, rather than putting a dash in between, in order to emphasize the unity of mind and body, particularly in terms of being a psychotherapists, those can't really be separated, because things are happening in your body any time you're talking about your anxiety or whatever, and there's been a mistake in the training of therapists in saying that the psyche rules the mind, it actually meant the soul in its original usage. So the idea of the soul which had to do in ancient times with fire, earth, air and water, it has to do with the combining of all those elements. So in the training of therapists and in psychotherapy practice, research is now starting to show that the body is very important and brain scan studies are showing that therapies that use the body, the somatic dimensions of psychotherapy, are more successful than ones that are just mentally oriented. So bodymind healing psychotherapy not only combines mind and body, but goes back to ancient sacred wisdom traditions and qigong, and it combines psychomythology, qigong and other energetic approaches to healing, as well as traditional forms. There's ten levels, I won't go through all that, but (forms such as) psychodynamics, accupressure, and clinical hypnosis to increase relaxation and the energy of the person.

**Dr. Dave:** You mentioned the Greek idea of the elements, and the elements in Chinese medicine are a little different, right?

**Mayer:** That's right, there are four elements in the Greek system; fire, earth, air and water, five elements in the Chinese system; fire, earth, air, water and wood.

**Dr. Dave:** To the western ear, things like fire, earth, air, water, wood, they don't seem to have much relationship to either psychology or what we understand as medicine, so how do you make sense of that and bring that into your work, because I know that you do bring that into your work, at least at a metaphorical level.

**Mayer:** The idea of the elements in healing is very accordant, the idea of activating the fire in the person when someone is depressed. What I do is have the elements natural arise in the person and watch when they're stressed in various ways in the body. So the moment that somebody is going through a self shift, which is an experiment that comes from Jean John's focusing, I was his training coordinator for ten years. At those moments of self shift, somebody is doing something with their body that expresses some access to those elements that need for healing. What I've discovered is that very often those are the same postures that could be used in internal martial arts to help defend yourself. For example, one patient who was dealing with going back to see her father who she had not seen in many years put one hand straight forward, as if to form a boundary like earth, and the other hand welcoming underneath that. That is a tai chi movement, and she was naturally doing that to activate those elements. Human beings, when they're out of touch with their own elements, they're not grounded, for example, then I would teach them [microcosmic orbit breath](#) in order to sink their chi to the ground, following their out breath down. She was able to do that and to really get her ground and form boundaries with her father who in the past had been very abusive. So each of those elements is really who we are as human beings and if we're out of touch with those, that's when psychological disfunction happens. There's actually a

word of that in the ancient times called the [elementals](#), they were called devas. In Jungian psychology all of those names were how we honored that the elements were important to creating balance in the psyche, because we're all out of balance in one way or another. So this is an entry way, it's an ancient way to create balance in the psyche, not just in belief, which is very important in terms of cognitive therapy, and that would be the air element, but also in terms of grounding that in the body, which is the breath, and to activate the energy in the body, for example, when you are depressed, how to do that naturally, rather than just force something through exercise, or, in terms of people that are suffering through trauma, the idea of using a very yang method of reactivating power. One of the important elements in tai chi and qigong is learning how to activate the yin element of yourself and showing there's just as much power in holding your stance that way. So I teach people how to do that both verbally, as well as energetically.

**Dr. Dave:** So yang would be the more forceful, outgoing energy, and yin would be the more relaxed, receptive energy, is that right?

**Mayer:** Yea, and that has very important implications, not just theoretically, but the kinds of methods that are getting very well known now, for example, one of the growing edges right now in psychology is energy psychology, such as tapping points on the body. Part of my work in presenting at the energy psychology conferences is to try to broaden and deepen this foundation of energy psychology. So tapping is just one of the dimensions used in qigong, but there's also slower methods of holding; where you're basically putting the hands, for example at the heart, I use that a lot. Or the circle, stop and feel method, which is a way to both activate energy, as well as have relaxation, balancing yin and yang. So when in our training we keep out these ancient methods and look at them as being too 'oriental' or too 'primitive' or whatever, we as psychotherapists are missing a major element that can be helpful to our patients. Even by taking little bits of these traditions and bringing them

forth, rather than really understanding the depth of what's behind them, you're getting little gems of wisdom, but not the whole depth.

**Dr. Dave:** Speaking of energy psychology, I heard from someone, I don't know if it was you, that the American Psychological Association is fairly hostile to the idea of energy psychology and doesn't recognize it. What can you tell us about that, why do you think that is, and what are the chances of that changing, do you think?

**Mayer:** It's actually very strange, and I go into the politics of it in my book, where there was a person who said that he founded energy psychology, [Roger Callahan](#) was making these claims, saying that it was 100% effective and he was charging \$100,000 for his training, and he basically set a bad note with the APA. I try to bring out in my book many people that say that they're founding something - even psychology was said to be founded by Wilhelm Wolf in Germany in 1879 - psychology has roots way, way back before that, and that's what I go into in my book. In the same way Roger Callahan isn't the founder of energy psychology, energy psychology is part of the history of indigenous cultures throughout the world, and I go into that throughout my book. Energy psychology was there in Freud, and he talked about how energy effects us, and we had [Wilhelm Reich](#) and what I point out in my book is that the body and the energetic dimension is really part of cognitive therapy and all traditional forms of therapy. I think that it will just be a matter of time until western psychology takes that in and sees it's value. In the past they have given some continuing education credits for energy psychology workshops by myself and other people, but it's in flux right now and I do go into that in my book.

**Dr. Dave:** Good, good. One of the things that I really like about your book is that it integrates so many different perspectives. It touches on, as you mentioned, mythology, psychosynthesis, psychoanalysis, hypnosis, cognitive behavioral therapy, so it's really not just about eastern thought and Chinese medicine and so on, but it's really an integration that really holds it all together, I think, In a very beautiful way. I was particularly

interested in your discussion of hypnosis and integrating hypnosis, because much of my own work in the past involved hypnosis. So maybe you could comment a little bit about qigong and hypnosis and what the similarities are and so on.

**Mayer:** Let's see, first, you said something a moment ago that I just wanted to go back to, which was that in terms of working with myths and symbols, Carl Jung said that archetypal symbols were energy potentials, so really when you're working, let's say, in a Jungian oriented way, there is energy in those symbols. By symbolic process therapists not being aware of the energetic dimensions of that, they are somewhat limited. In my workshops, I do a mystic journey process and people find that themselves shift and find a new life stance, and I ask them to embody that with an animal movement of qigong or a tai chi movement to bring in and essentially create a new life stance.

**Dr. Dave:** Could you give us an example of a situation where you worked with somebody and you used the idea of the animal posture as a way to consolidate the work energetically?

**Mayer:** One of my students had issues about withdrawing a lot. She had been raped in her adolescence, and had a lot of fear and in a relationship she had a victim stance. In her mythic journey process, she became an ostrich, meaning that the way that she was going to protect herself in the world was to put her head in the sand. That was creating a lot of problems in her relationship, because when her husband was doing something that was inappropriate, she had this passive aggressive withdrawal stance. So in the mythic journey process that she did, out of that came understanding that, and then seeing that she needed to embody more of a tiger energy to feel her power. So, normally, when you're doing mythic journey process or psychomythological work, that would be enough, you feel the energy of that symbol, but it was very helpful for her to actually do the tiger form of qigong, which I taught her, and that, she said, helped her to really embody much that new stance of the tiger rather than the ostrich. In my book I talk about how the earlier

forms of healing in the western world, and this is the origin of psychodrama, was to go into the Dionysian temple and to enact something that would be helpful to you, to enact an animal form or put on a mask, to be something different than you normally were. That is the very root of our word person or 'persona' and that was the very root of healing in the western world.

**Dr. Dave:** Thanks for that example. Now let's go on the qigong and hypnosis question, how do you see those two either being similar or different?

**Mayer:** They are overlapping circles, and there's something in clinical hypnosis that's called the [activity-passivity paradox](#), and what's being discovered now with the growing edges of hypnosis research is the idea that intention changes whether hypnosis relaxes you or energizes you. That has been known in qigong for thousands of years, there's a word for it called '[sung](#)', which means relaxed awakeness. When you're in a posture in qigong, depending on your intention, you can either relax or energize yourself and really feel that in your body. That's one element, but another one is that in hypnosis, a lot of the actual technique hypnosis, like the arm levitation method, is really there in tai chi, the very first movement of tai chi, where you learn not only to have your arm raised, but exactly how to raise it so that your elbow is very relaxed in order to create a trance. The deeper answer to the question is that the part of hypnosis that I focus on is altered states of consciousness and shape shifting. In tai chi, every tai chi movement is like a rosetta stone. It's a right brain alphabet that helps us enter into altered states of consciousness, and essentially shape shift into those, meaning... To have boundaries... Or... Every single movement is like that. To be transcendent like a white crane spreading it's wings. So at various times, when we want to, essentially, alter our state of consciousness and shape shift into another aspect of ourselves, tai chi and qigong continue that alphabet. Just like music introduces us into an altered state and brings us to a distant place, in the same way, movements in the body can do the same thing, and are therefore very beneficial to mindbody healing.

**Dr. Dave:** I love that expression that you used that tai chi postures are like a rosetta stone, giving you an alphabet for different states of consciousness.

**Mayer:** For accessing those different states, it's like if you only knew a couple letters of the alphabet, you'd be very limited. If you knew a, b and c, you can't really speak English. In the same way, many of the letters of the alphabet are expanded when we do these tai chi movements to activate and access the human potential. We all are monkeys, and there are in qigong monkey forms, there are tiger forms, there are crane forms, each of those can be found in qigong and tai chi movements. By accessing those, you give yourself, you give your patient ways to expand their healing repertoire.

**Dr. Dave:** That's really fascinating, just thinking about that really expands my sense of tai chi as I experienced it. There are so many different levels to all of this that are possible, aren't there?

**Mayer:** Yeah, and what I'm trying to do in the book is not to make people learn tai chi and qigong, basically the book is about how to introduce tai chi and qigong into your sessions as psychotherapists without ever doing a tai chi movement with your patient, without ever mentioning a word about tai chi and qigong. So, for example, you teach somebody how to breathe in ways that effect their chi, but you don't need to mention chi, you can just describe it as grounding. When you do the microcosmic orbit breath, you're doing that. Or when someone is making movements in their body in a moment of self shift and you see those and you freeze the camera there to help the person be aware that their own primordial self, the moment the self shifts is actually doing these movements.

**Dr. Dave:** I think that's really great the way that you're bringing it down to an every day level without all the terminology and, perhaps, mystification that, at least for some clients, be very off-putting. We're both here in northern California, so a lot of people in this region might

really be turned on to these ideas, but I gather you have people come into your clinic, ordinary working class people, who might really be adverse to some of these eastern ideas.

**Mayer:** Exactly. That's exactly why I developed it this way, out of it, I extracted the most important method of my process, it's called the River of Life exercise. You follow your out breath down your body, and while you're doing that, you'll hit into things throughout your body. It's a combination of focusing, imagery work and qigong. As you're traveling down the River of Life, you'll hit into your own issues in your body, in your heart, in your belly or whatever. So this combines both transcending and transmuting dimensions of form. Transcending meaning you go into an altered state, and transmuting meaning when you go down into those places that stuck, then another aspect of what's in there will come up. One patient, for example, was a man whose back went out and he was scheduled for surgery, and an orthopedic surgeon wanted to send him over to people in our clinic first. When I had him breathe down into his lower back, issues came up from a way that he was sexually abused in his adolescence, he was hitchhiking and two men picked him up and stabbed him in the back after doing sexual things with him that he didn't want to do. It was the first time he really remembered it, how he was stabbed in the back, and he crawled in through his bedroom window and he didn't let his parents know that this had happened, he never let anyone know that this happened for many years. While he was breathing in this way in my office, what came up for him was a place in his back, and after that, he had a healing. Whenever I tell this story, I'm very careful to point out that he was working with other people in our clinic; a chiropractor and an acupuncturist. What I say is the crux of my work is not so much me alone doing this, but it's really being an advocate for integrative medicine, through being in a clinic and having professionals come together and working on all these different levels for people healing. That was a very important foundation of the book, that integrative

medicine and how these fit into the wider picture of behavioral healthcare.

**Dr. Dave:** An idea that got triggered for me when you were talking about hypnosis and qigong and the idea of relaxation and alertness coexisting... I've just been doing a series of interviews on dreams, and one of the paradoxical thing there is that the body appears to be relaxed, we always thought that during sleep that the brain was very quiescent but, of course, what they've discovered in recent years is just the reverse, while the body is for the most part immobile, the brain is very activated. That seemed to have some resonance to what you were talking about.

**Mayer:** Actually you're alluding to one of the deepest healing aspects of qigong. The difference between qigong and exercise is it combines stillness and movement. They say that big circles are great, and small circles are even better, and no circles are best. That's what the grand master of my tradition said. What that means is that first you start off doing very big movements, and then they get a little smaller, and you imagine you're going up a spiral in the molten core of the earth, and an injury in their body is just a really small step on that giant spiral. As the spiral gets smaller and smaller, pretty soon there's no spiral at all, and you're just in stillness. You still feel the energy of the movement of that spiral down to the level of your cells, down to the double helix of our DNA and while we're in total stillness, the double helix is vibrating at an incredibly fast speed. It's just like you said, in that stillness there is incredible energy just by what we've focused on inside of our bodies. The Tao Te Ching says "find the stillness in movement, and the movement in stillness."

**Dr. Dave:** It's interesting how in this ancient Chinese approach, focusing imagination seems to be very important.

**Mayer:** What I say in my book is symbols are multifaceted, you can say many things about them in many meanings. I like to think about the

double snake of the caduceus, the oldest symbol of healing, as the imaginal on one side and thematic on the other, and those two snakes wind up the central staff of our spine in healing.

**Dr. Dave:** That's interesting. Of course only in recent years has western medicine begun to open the door, slowly, slightly, a little light is coming in, to begin to recognize the importance of imagination. It's kind of the link between the inner world and outer world. We've been so focused on the outer world, the things we can observe and measure objectively, but the work that the person is able to do from inside that we can't directly observe, that's also extremely important. It seems to be acknowledged in these ancient traditions.

**Mayer:** Exactly, and that's why the behavioral traditions have taken over our culture, because we are an outer oriented culture. The cultures that our western civilization destroyed were very inwardly oriented; pagans, traditions focused on inward processes were not that respected in the West. One of the places in the western world where we can get that is in psychotherapy, that's a very important part of psychotherapy, going on an inward journey. That inward accessing leads to a shift, when you look within, something shifts and an energy changes. There's research that shows that an energetic shift happens at a moment when someone has an 'A-Ha!' experience. The idea is how do you ground those a-ha's and anchor those. The anchoring methods of qigong are ways to really bring in those new life stances to your body, through symbols, but also through new ways of standing. To just bring that down to earth, our posture really shows those new life stances. If you're arrogant, your chest is going to be really out, if you're dejected then your chest is collapsed. The psychotherapist or the person who is aware of those bodily changes as they embody new ways of being will begin to feel the body change through what I call Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, this all makes a lot of sense to me because I personally have studied most of the things that you allude to in the book, but not as

deeply, of course. You've pulled it together, theoretically, you brought about a theoretical synthesis that I think is really quite remarkable and quite profound. I hope a lot of people read your book (laughs), I know you do too.

**Mayer:** Thank you.

**Dr. Dave:** You give a case example, and I don't know if you remember it or not, of working on writers block with a woman you call Marcy in a section on Transpersonal Hypnosis and Healing with the Elements. Do you remember that case well enough to take us through it?

**Mayer:** I remember it very well, this was the women whose parents came to one of my workshops and her daughter was having writers block and felt like she was not going to be able to be a writer. She had been blocked for two or three months in her writing, so she came to me for just a few sessions. When she came in, she was expecting me to be very complimentary of her writing ability, and instead I said to her, "Of course you're a terrible writer, we all are terrible writers." She was taken back a little bit...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, it struck me when I read the account. It was like water in the face.

**Mayer:** That's great. Then I told her the story of when I was working on my doctoral dissertation, I realized that I couldn't write. I was blocked for five months, and I felt a breath of relief, she said maybe her two months wasn't so bad. I told her how one day I went out for a breath of fresh air and all of a sudden an idea came. I discovered that I couldn't write, but that the air was writing through me.

Then a couple weeks later, I tried to do that again and I realized I was such a terrible writer that even a breath of fresh air couldn't help me. So I went in to the shower and while I was in the shower the nice warm water helped me to relax enough to make it come through again, and I was able to breath through the block.

After a couple weeks that didn't work anymore either. Then I went and ate some food and getting grounded helped me get grounded and I was inspired again.

**Dr. Dave:** So first the element air helped you break through, then it was the element water, then it was the element earth.

**Mayer:** And this goes back to your question at the beginning of how the elements are useful for healing us, how it's nothing very esoteric, it's what's right around us in our every day lives. So when I told her that story, we did a little bit more inner work on her critical inner voices and things like that in our sessions, and she went back to her screenwriting program and she called me about a month later and said that one day she was sitting in front of the fire and an idea came that helped spark an idea in her new screenplay.

So the reason I call it transpersonal hypnosis is recognizing that we're all composed of these elements in the wider whole of which we're a part, and when our ego is comparing ourselves to other writers or trying so hard, rather than really letting the creative elements of the universe come through us, we're limited in drawing on the energies and powers of our higher self.

**Dr. Dave:** Thanks for sharing that story. Another thing that leapt out at me as I was going through the book was that you refer to something you call qigong psychosis, which you say is actually in the [DSM](#), that rather shocked me, what's the story on that?

**Mayer:** It's in the back of a section on cross-cultural syndromes. Basically what's been discovered in China is when people meditate too much on the third eye then they're not down in their belly and they're not down in their body and they can get overinflated. That's something to watch out for, many people use spiritual practices to increase excess in a place that can be damaging and can cause inflation.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that certainly makes sense to me, I've met people who I thought suffer from that sort of spiritual inflation, I definitely know what you're talking about.

I wonder if there are any other topics that you'd like to touch on before we close things up here. I know you deal with a broad range of both physical and mental problems and you have lots of case history examples in the book. Why don't we just pick one more before we close off. How about insomnia, I know a lot of people at various times in their life suffer from insomnia, how would you approach that?

**Mayer:** Well I use the River of Life exercise for people with insomnia and also people with hypertension. I'd like to talk a bit about that, it's the leading cause of death in our culture, those kinds of heart problems, high blood pressure. What I do is I teach people both a combination of western psychotherapy as well as qigong movements which help them relax their hypertension. The head of our clinic once assessed what I could do and brought in a patient and had me do my River of Life method in front of 200 people. He had insomnia as well as hypertension with a 168 systolic blood pressure. We had one of the top researchers from one of the local hospitals there to measure him with a blood pressure monitor. Within 6 minutes he went down from 168 to 126. People were very amazed by that, but what I point out in my book is that's not something to do to be amazed and impressed about, that's why we need real research. What is important is the ability to create this through our own will, because we know that these relaxation processes are very powerful, but can you do that on your own, and that's what these methods do, they teach you how to empower yourself even if you don't have a health professional to do it for you. Also to go into what the underlying issues are that are creating that hypertension.

I tell a story about another patient in the book who had hypertension, and when he did the River of Life, he found the underlying issues in his body. He was overworking, he had really severe insomnia as well as hypertension, and his marriage was breaking up. He was buying

motorcycles all the time and was very wealthy and was only sleeping about four hours a night. When he did the River of Life exercise he went into his childhood when he got a “D” on his report card and his father and his four brothers all laughed at him and said “You’re a dummy, you’re never gonna make it in life,” and one of his brothers said “But don’t worry, Uncle Jimmy’s garbage truck, you can always come and pick up garbage at our mansion, so you’ll always have a job.” He was so humiliated by that.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Mayer:** That it stuck with him for years and years and he took it literally. He didn’t rest until he could make more money than all of them put together, that’s what he said to himself at the dinner table at that time. “I will never rest until I make more money than all of you put together.” That’s what he did and he had forgot that that was his own myth. He was already extremely successful but he had worked himself so hard that he was ready to endanger his marriage.

So, in our outer oriented culture, when we are focused on our relationship to insomnia we focus on going and finding the best insomnia medication, and those medications produce side effects because we don’t look within ourselves and see what’s creating the insomnia or hypertensions. So we look to the drug companies, and then we suffer the karma and side effects that come from that.

With the River of Life exercise, he saw it was inner work he needed to do to work through the old issues that he’d been stuck on for many years and improving himself. His wife marked that session as the beginning of his change, in terms of being there more for the kids and more for her.

**Dr. Dave:** What if listeners want to learn this River of Life exercise? Will they find that in your book or one of your DVDs?

**Mayer:** [River of Life is available on CD at my website](#). The other nice thing about my website is that every chapter in the book, let’s say you

don't want to buy the whole book but you're just interested in hypertension or chronic pain, you can just look through the chapters and purchase individual chapters, including one on River of Life.

**Dr. Dave:** That's a great idea. One of the great advantages of self publishing. This is a self published book, right?

**Mayer:** Exactly, yes.

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Michael Mayer, I want to thank you so much for being my guest again on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Mayer:** Thank you so much for having me on, it's always a pleasure. This is a great service you provide to the community. Your listeners can check out my website [bodymindhealing.com](http://bodymindhealing.com) or contact me at [drmichael@bodymindhealing.com](mailto:drmichael@bodymindhealing.com). Thanks so much, you're really a great interviewer.

**Dr. Dave:** Thank you!