

Karen Wyatt: Hello, and welcome to this special keynote presentation for Death Expo. I'm your host, Dr. Karen Wyatt, the author of *What Really Matters*, and I'm so pleased that you're here today joining us in this conversation to listen to this very special guest that we're bringing you today, Dr. Eben Alexander.

And our topic today is going to be on the afterlife, which has really become a topic that I'm hearing about everywhere I go now. I think the time is right for us to begin to open up this discussion, and Dr. Alexander and his work have been key in bringing this subject to the forefront.

So, let me tell you a little bit more about Dr. Alexander before we go into our conversation. He is the best-selling author of *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey in the Afterlife*. Dr. Alexander has been an academic neurosurgeon for over 25 years, including 15 years at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, the Children's Hospital, and Harvard Medical School.

In 2008, his own remarkable near-death experience radically transformed his understanding of consciousness and the brain. Dr. Alexander co-founded the non-profit, Eternea, to share this information, to further the research on science and spirituality, and the nature of consciousness, and to encourage people to bring unconditional love into daily life.

He is currently touring with his recently released second book, *The Map of Heaven: How Science, Religion, and Ordinary People Are Proving the Afterlife*. And when he's not speaking or conducting research, Dr. Alexander enjoys hiking, climbing, scuba diving, snow skiing, tennis, and meditation. And for more information, you can go to his website at: EbenAlexander.com.

So, Dr. Alexander, I want to start by thanking you for taking the time out to be here today. I know that you're extremely busy, for one thing, because you're touring with your new book right now, but I know you're in a lot of demand everywhere as a speaker. And so, I'm grateful that you're giving us your time.

And I want to say even more so, I'm very grateful that you survived your coma and your critical, life-threatening situation, back in 2008, and that you are using that experience in such a beautiful way to help other people, so thank you.

Eben Alexander: Well, thanks so much for having me. Obviously, this is an audience that is right in line with kind of the core part of my message about this, so it's a real joy to be here with you today.

Karen Wyatt: Yes. I've been very excited to delve into more of the discussion of the afterlife, and a lot of my interviews have focused just on the dying process itself. And I feel like we really need, in the hospice world and the end of life world, to think about the afterlife, so that we're seeing the big picture.

And as you and I discussed before we started this call, the very success of your book, *Proof of Heaven*, is actually proof that the world is really ready for this discussion. You were saying *Proof of Heaven* has been on the bestseller list for two years now?

Eben Alexander: Yes. It surprised me because it hit number one on the New York Times bestseller list the first week it came out, and I knew that someday it would do well, but I was shocked at how quickly it rocketed to the top. And, again to me, that's very much a testimonial to this world and how advanced and enlightened this world is.

More so than to the book itself, I think if I had written *Proof of Heaven* 15 years ago, it probably would have hit an absolute wall. So I'm very grateful to the courageous souls who have been out there talking about the science of consciousness, and how we are coming to a much deeper understanding of the fundamental basis of spirituality, as it greatly contributes to the maturing of science.

That and the science that I had worshipped before my coma of pure scientific materialism, that pretends that there is no such thing as consciousness, soul, or spirit. That science is going extinct, that pure materialistic view. And science is now getting to a point where it's greatly expanding its boundaries to fully embrace the truth and the concrete reality of consciousness, soul, spirit and, in fact, they're divine within us all.

Karen Wyatt: Well it strikes me that you were, in so many ways, the perfect person to have this encounter of this near-death experience that you had, just because you were skeptical, and agnostic and, as you said, worshipping scientific materialism before this event happened.

And so, of all the people who have a credible voice now, you have come from the opposite camp in a way, and had your mind completely opened and awakened to new possibilities. And so, for

me, that makes you an even more credible champion for this message.

Eben Alexander: Well, I think it's important to point out, my near-death experience, very profound and powerful, is like thousands of other near-death experiences out there. And, in fact, what I bring up in the second book, *The Map of Heaven*, is what a gift it has been to me to go around sharing my story mainly because others share their stories with me.

And if I give a talk to 200 or 300 people, I'll often have five or 10 of them come up afterwards and say, "I never told anybody this, but. . ." and then they tell me a story that when you come to realize the truth behind it and the similarities behind all of these stories is shocking.

The truth behind it is so profound, it could change the world. So these stories are out there by the millions, and I know full well that, having an MD and spending 15 years at Harvard Medical School – all of that means something in this world. But I promise you, where I went on my journey, those things don't mean squat.

An MD at Harvard Medical School – who cares? In that realm, it's much more profoundly about the journey of a soul, and I know that there are thousands of stories that I've been told by other souls that, to me, are as profound as mine. And that's what *Proof of Heaven* really has the power to do is, take the lid off, and let millions of others share their stories of very real encounters with the spiritual realm.

And that's how we will take our culture back into a full knowing of the reality of god and the divine and of that whole spiritual realm and the eternity of souls. It's something that's right at the cutting edge of science. Even as we speak, as we get deeper and deeper into understanding consciousness and the relationship between mind and brain, it becomes very clear to those who go deeply enough in that scientific journey of understanding consciousness, that they come to realize, the brain does not produce consciousness at all.

It does not create it. It's simply a reducing valve or filter that allows it in. Consciousness pre-exists the entire universe, and that realization is now coming up very strongly in scientific circles. And that's how this world will change is through the shift in science and the awakening to the truth behind these journeys by the millions that are out there in the populous.

And, of course, these stories have been there in similar fashion for thousands of years. But it's really due to our scientific materialism of the 20th century that we started losing sight of the fact that that very real realm, much more real than this one, truly exists.

And this is what near-death experiences have been trying to say for thousands of years. So that reality is now coming back into the depths of our scientific investigation of mind, brain, and consciousness.

Karen Wyatt:

And I'm reading your second book, *Map of Heaven*, right now, and so I've been impressed with just the volume - and I'm sure you've shared only a small percentage - of all the letters that you've received from people since *Proof of Heaven* came out.

But it's so clear to me that all of these people who have had near-death experiences in the past are now being validated by your book, and reading your book and saying, "Yes. This happened to me," and they finally have the courage to be able to talk about it, and to tell other people, and to even allow this profound experience they've had to change them, and to recognize how important and special it's been in their lives.

Eben Alexander:

Yes. Well, I think that is certainly one aspect of *Proof of Heaven*, that it helps to take the lid off, and let so many others share their stories. It's such a different world, much more real than this one, and yet when you come back from there, it's so kind of shocking, that people are not necessarily willing to talk about it, especially the way our culture has been in recent decades.

They worry that they would be thought kind of crazy. I mean, 20 or 30 years ago, doctors were trying to tell you that this was a sign of mental illness that was associated with whatever drove them into coma, or gave them the near-death experience in the first place.

And so, I'm very gratified that I'm often asked to speak at medical schools, and nursing schools, and in front of surgical groups, etc., because by helping to change the healthcare profession, and that certainly includes the hospice community, and to recognize the reality of these journeys.

Then the healthcare professionals that are involved can help to invite these stories, not just from near-death experiences, but from those who are present at the passage of a loved one. Some of those

people actually enjoy what's called, a shared death experience, where even though they're physiologically normal and healthy, their soul can get taken along on the journey with the departing soul of the loved one, who is leaving the physical body once and for all.

And those shared death experiences are really powerful. And I hear one of those every few weeks when I talk. And that is something that has brought to the world the whole concept of a shared death experience by Dr. Raymond Moody and his beautiful book in 2011, *Glimpses of Eternity*, which is all about normal people who were at the bedside of departing souls, whose souls get taken along with the journey, even to the point of witnessing a full-blown life review, and then, the bystander's soul coming back to this world to tell the story.

And those shared death experiences completely demolish the simplistic the kindergarten level thinking of modern, or I should say, conventional scientific viewpoints that say, they add a little bit of a dark slide, you know, the dark tunnel is because of this because of this.

The bright light is because of that in the brain. And those pseudo explanations from the medical and scientific community don't even remotely hold a candle to being able to describe the full richness of deep, transcendental, near-death experiences. So it's all about this world waking up to the reality of that realm.

Karen Wyatt:

Mm-hmm. Well, I'm interested. It's so clear that your work is really being embraced by the general public. I've been curious how you have been received in medical circles. And I ask about it you know on my own. You and I come from the same era.

We were both in medical school at about the same time, and my first day of medical school, I have a vivid memory of being asked to talk about why I was there, and I said in front of all of my classmates and professors, "Well I believe that love is the most powerful healing force there is."

And I can remember the looks on the faces of everyone around me, and I suddenly realized that I cannot share this. I cannot share what I think and how I see things with these people. They do not appreciate this at all, and I kind of went under the radar at that point.

So I'm really curious about what kind of reception you're getting from medical professionals as you go out talking about your books?

Eben Alexander: Well, I would say that you were way ahead of your time. Because, at least you know my journey, as I describe in *Proof of Heaven* and in *Map of Heaven*, is a healer, as a surgeon, is I came back from this realizing that that unconditional love that I witnessed on my journey that so many other, millions and millions, who have had similar spiritually transformative experiences have seen, come to know, and feel the power of that unconditional love of the creator for the creation.

And I came back realizing full well that we all have the capacity to share a feeling, in very profound ways, by serving as conduits for that unconditional love, and bringing it into this world, loving ourselves. Which I also came to realize is a major problem in this world is that we don't really love ourselves enough.

We only think we do. But not loving ourselves as those eternal spiritual beings that are far more powerful than just the little birth to death in a physical body that we might think of. But we have far greater power than that by acknowledging our true eternal spiritual self, and the connectedness that our souls share with other souls around us.

And the fact that we're here to manifest that unconditional love for all fellow beings, the more we can do that, the more direct our pathway to ascendance towards that one that's with the divine. But it really is all about healing. And we heal others, and in doing that, heal ourselves.

So by healing others and passing that love onto others, that's how we come to know and feel that love more powerfully in our own lives, and in our existence. So, in essence, you were right on the beam there with your knowing that first day in medical school about love and the power it has to heal.

Now I will say that I'm very gratified, as I mentioned a minute ago, that I'm asked to talk in medical schools, and nursing schools, in front of surgical groups, and other physician groups, including some annual lectureships and things like that. It's because they understand where this is going and the truth behind this.

They understand that the science if they're deeply into the mind body discussion and the cutting edge of scientific discovery, is

trying to come to a better resolution of the enigma problem of panic, what's called, the measurement problem. That very deeply calls the profound role of consciousness in all revolving realities, and yet the physics community has been very slow to come around with any kind of interpretation from the annex to make sense of that.

And yet, I think a lot of those in medicine, nursing science, etc., come to realize how this is a much deeper understanding of our world, and of the essence of soul. And the reality of the afterlife is something that the scientific community is coming to accept, again, mainly focused around consciousness.

And that whole mind-body discussion, that's been going on for 2600 years. We're finally making some true headway in all of that. And modern science does bring something to the table that's very important. But, ironically, it's basically the materialists in their efforts to come up with a theory of everything, whether that be approaches through the string theory or quantum gravity, trying to blend relativity and quantum physics together.

But the essence is that the materialists are the first to tell you that there's no material to the material world. It's vibrating strings of energy in a higher dimensional space-time or something. Or as I've heard some say, the universe begins to look much more like a great thought, and a great machine.

And mind and consciousness are to be regarded as the creator and governor of this realm. And that is really where we're headed is to a much more profound scientific understanding of what is truly going on with mind-brain consciousness, and realizing that since the physical brain does not create consciousness at all, that in fact, that leaves open to far grander possibilities, the eternity of soul, and our connectedness as conscious beings with each other, with all of life, life beyond the bounds of earth, and with the divine.

And, luckily, a lot of those in scientific and medical circles get there, at a deeper level, where this is headed. And so I'm gratified by invitations to speak at medical and scientific groups about every bit of this.

Karen Wyatt:

Well, I'm glad to hear that. I'm glad to hear that there is some openness there because I feel that that's the direction we need to move our thinking in medicine toward. Because I feel that a lot of the problems we have in our current healthcare system are related to this reductionistic materialism with which we view the body.

We view health as a physical body that we can manipulate, and adapt, and give drugs to, instead of viewing the entire being, the reality of consciousness, and the soul as manifested through this physical body.

Eben Alexander: Right. Well, my role as a healer shifted totally with the realizations I gained from my journey, and especially in the months after my journey, trying to make sense of it. And I've come to see that each and every one of us is truly an eternal spiritual being.

And, in fact, I feel I can function best as a healer when I can step back far enough to see individual souls, and their soul groups, and interwoven in this beautiful tapestry. And that includes realizing full well that reincarnation is a huge part of this. Of course, being a material scientist, I had never paid attention to the scientific literature on reincarnation before my coma.

But you can bet, after my coma, I paid tremendous attention to every bit of that, because it helps us to understand the deeper message about who we are, and what consciousness is, and what the soul and spirit are. And the past life memories in children is really a very profound database.

I know that the researchers at the University of Virginia, beginning with Ian Stephenson, now with Jim Tucker, have researched more than 2,500 cases of very profound past life memories in children that really have no other explanation. And this is kind of a deeper aspect of understanding consciousness, soul, spirit, and who we are, and coming to recognize some of that scientific literature that's out there is supporting all of this.

And no question, the past life memories in children completely demolishes that simplistic little view that I had before my coma that the brain creates conscious, that it's birth to death and nothing more, and that as conventional neuroscience proudly says, none of us have free will.

You know, that neuroscience says that, even that consciousness is an illusion created by the physical meandering of subatomic particles, atom molecules, and cells of the brain. In fact, conventional neuroscience tries to dismiss consciousness as not even really existing, and also similarly to dismiss free will, because it's all just those natural laws of the physical substance of our brains giving an illusion of free will.

I came to realize that view is completely wrong. That, in fact, I believe the whole reason for existence for the universe is to allow sentient beings to come into these physical incarnations, temporarily dumbed down on this side of the veil, not having the knowledge that our higher souls knew between lives.

And this is part of that much deeper understanding. It certainly helps the scientific community that's wrestling with the mind-body discussion and the nature of consciousness. It's come to deeper terms to realize that the consciousness of soul and spirit is actually liberated from the shackles of the physical brain, at the time of bodily death.

That's what near-death experiences have been trying to tell us for thousands of years, and especially in the last five or six decades since doctors discovered means of bringing back cardiac arrest patients and basically populating this world with millions who have been to the other side and now have come back to tell the tale.

Karen Wyatt:

Well. Yeah. I think that's just fascinating, and it's obvious that we've really just glimpsed the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, and that in the coming years, there will probably be so many more stories that we will be hearing about, but also so much more knowledge and understanding that we're going to have about past lives, and about the nature of the consciousness, and the divine realm around us.

I was wondering if you, during just the feedback you're getting, and the responses you're getting from all of your research for your books, have people talked to you about the impact your writing has had on their experience of grief when they're dealing with losing someone?

Eben Alexander:

Yes. In fact, I first started giving talks about my experience about two and a half years before *Proof of Heaven* came out. And the very first talk I gave, which was in April of 2010, was to a fundraising dinner to a group called, Kids Haven. That is a group based in Lynchburg, West Virginia.

And what had happened is, there were several families that were good friends of ours in Lynchburg who had lost a child. And I was talking with some of the families informally, you know, just as a friend about my experience. And word got out that they were getting tremendous benefit from conversations with me.

And so that's what really led to that first talk that I gave, was to help raise funds for that group to support their efforts. And Kids Haven was there to help children who had either lost a sibling or lost a parent, to help them in their grieving process.

So that was really, you know – it was in that tough environment of families that had lost children, that I got my start in giving these presentations. And I have now given more than 230 such presentations to many different groups all around the world.

And right at the core of it I think is trying to help souls who are bereaved, who are dealing with the loss of a loved one who has left the physical plane, and trying to help them come to recognize that our souls return. And that, in fact, they can still communicate with the souls of departed loved ones and, in fact, do so in ways where they will be often given proof that this is a real time, active, communication from a soul on the other side.

And this, of course, is important because this is how we often get important information concerning our own health, or concerning our own soul journey, in ways that often comes with an improvement that shows that this is an active intervention in our life, from the soul of a departed loved one on the other side, giving us information we need to live our lives now.

And by opening people to this possibility, I think that it does a great service for them. One of the best books out there that I often recommend to people along these lines is a book by a very close friend of mine, Bill Guggenheim. And he co-wrote this with his former wife, Judy Guggenheim. It's called, *Hello from Heaven*.

It came out back in the mid 1990s. It's a wonderful book about after death communication. And I think it is also very helpful to those who are bereaved, to help them to come to see that when you are open to it, often you can get that message from the soul of the departed loved one, about the other side.

And they will share. As people often tell me, the greatest gift they get from their mother, or father, or maybe a sibling or a child who passed over before them, is evidence, some very strong evidence, of the reality of that realm. And that that soul passing over is in perfectly good health and shape on that other side.

And I think that's very comforting to people who get that. But it's important to open oneself, and to be available to receive that message. And it often comes when the loved one is making the

transition. And, of course, you're working in a hospice, and I imagine you've probably seen that many times yourself. I know many in the nursing community – I often credit the nurses with having gotten this long before I did.

I can't speak for other doctors, but I needed an extra thumping, you know, in the form of my meningitis to actually see the reality of our eternal soul. But many in the nursing community, and certainly in hospice, have seen evidence of this themselves, when a patient leaves the physical plane.

When the physical body dies, they see something there that shows them the soul lives on. And so many others out there, just lay people who have been at the bed side when a loved one leaves their physical body once and for all – they see the evidence of the same thing.

And, of course, there are stories like that in *Map of Heaven*. I hear stories of that all of the time, and it's a beautiful thing to share. This is what our culture needs to reawaken to.

Karen Wyatt:

Yes. Absolutely. And I wanted just to tell you, well, in my own life experience, my father committed suicide 25 years ago. And, in spite of my spiritual beliefs and my own beliefs in consciousness at the time, I had a really difficult time with my own grief over his death.

And I realized that some part of it was that there's a societal stigma about suicide, but then even a religious stigma, and that I was receiving messages from the religious community that, well now my father would be condemned because he took his own life.

And even though I don't ascribe to those religions – I would say that took a toll on me. And I loved reading in your book when you described that the afterlife is all loving. It's all loving, and there is no condemnation. That even though I believe it for myself, it's nice to have that validation.

And I was thinking that I'm sure that there are other people grappling with suicide out there, who really need that reassurance and that message.

Eben Alexander:

Well there are. And I think it's important to point out, you know, that old saying, your life flashes before your eyes. Well, guess what? That's absolutely what happened. And of course, near-death experiences have been telling us for ages that you go through

a life review. The life review is a very important thing to understand. In essence, it helped me to realize as I came back from my journey, I knew that there was no eternal hell and damnation. I mean, basically what was shown to me is, we don't have an eternal hell because God in this universe he has created is for us to learn, if we can learn these beautiful lessons of love.

And so there would never be eternal damnation for certain souls. It's much more a soul tool that we're here to learn from all of these adventures of life. Now, in the case of suicide, what that really means is that the first thing that a suicide comes to realize is the tremendous power and depth of love that is there for them, not only from that all powerful deity, but also from the loving souls that were in this life that they left behind by committing suicide.

So, in essence, suicide provides a very rich and profound life review in which the first thing to become very clear is that that departing soul of the loved one who has committed suicide was indeed deeply loved, far more than they would have been aware of, to enable them to even commit suicide.

Now the strange thing with what I'm saying here, I would like to share what Dr. Raymond Moody – he's become a very close friend. He and I often present together. In fact, I was with him just a few days ago, actually in North Carolina, at Hendersonville, at Kanuga, presenting.

And I remember presenting with Dr. Moody several months ago in the Bahamas, and he shared with me a very interesting observation about suicide. And he said, this is one of the few things that he can say with basically 100 percent assurance when he looked back over his 50-year career, looking at near-death experiences, and those who had been to the other side and come back.

And here's the way he put it: That in all of those decades of research, in every case of which he is aware, if someone who attempted suicide actually had a near-death experience, that is, they had some of those memories of love, maybe going through a dark tunnel, seeing souls of departed loved ones, and of getting that beautiful message of the divine, the power that instantly defined god, and of that unconditional love, any aspect of those facets of a near-death experience that were presented to them, and came back to this world, that if an attempted suicide case had such an experience, even though it may have been just minimal elements of an NDE, that they never attempted suicide again.

And I think that's the important take home from this and what brought Dr. Moody, and if my interpretation of what he told me is correct, is that those who had the near-death experience as part of their suicide attempt, they never tried to attempt suicide again.

And the reason that's important is because it tells us what the message is, not just for those who attempted suicide but then came back to this world, but for those who attempted suicide and were successful is that they saw that infinite love. They saw the love of the others around them, of their soul being a love that they may not have perceived before their suicide attempt.

But by witnessing even just a glimpse of that love, they never tried to attempt suicide again. And as I am sure you're aware, for the general population of those who attempt suicide out there that don't have an NDE, if they just attempt suicide and then come back, it's not uncommon to attempt suicide again. And unfortunately, many times they may be successful in effect in a third attempt.

And so crucial to get is what they are seeing in that life review is the full-blown power of that love, of others for them, and of the divine for them. And, in essence, this is telling us that what they are going through is a very deep aspect of a dark side of the soul, of depression and what have you, that is trying to teach us and our soul mate or their particular soul group, the infinite love of that creator, and that the love that we have access to here on earth for each other, can easily overcome the kind of depths of darkness and depression that often leads to suicide, if we're only open to coming to know it in this incarnation.

And given that I came to realize that all the hardships and difficulties in our lives, and that certainly includes illness and injury that I see as the healer. But these are all gifts. They are opportunities for growth if our souls can come to realize that in embracing the lessons around the darkness of that walk deep in the valley of that shadow of death and of other darkness and depression that accost us in these incarnations.

If we're willing to learn those lessons that will allow us to walk up on that ridge in beautiful light and love, from having learned those lessons that we're here to learn, then there really is no darkness that is so overwhelming, and no apparent evil that is so dark that it would drag it down.

If we are able to remember the infinite healing power of that unconditional love, and that we are all truly deserving of that love,

by being eternal spiritual beings, and our deepest consciousness are connected to each other and to the divine. And that is such a huge part of the lesson in both *Proof of Heaven* and *The Map of Heaven*, for each and every one of us to take with us on this journey.

And I hope that helps you understand about how I view suicide and how I view the deep love that it is here to teach us, and the deep connectedness it is here to teach us, and help remind those souls that are in that darkness to remember their connection to the divine and to the infinite healing power of that divine, all-loving source.

Karen Wyatt:

And I think it's definitely helpful for the survivors who have lost someone to a suicide, because you do get plunged into your own dark night of the soul when you're grieving that kind of loss. And yet, it's also part of the process of growth. And in my case, it was my grief over my dad's death that led me to hospice work.

I was a family practice physician and finally decided maybe I should try working in hospice and immersing myself in death and dying, as a way of healing my own grief. And, in fact, I got to hospice and found out this was where I belonged all along.

This was where I was meant to be. So it was clear that that event, that was so traumatic and really shattering for my entire family, actually had in it the seeds of the transformation that each one of us needed to make. It took awhile to make the transformation, but it was ultimately what led us there.

Eben Alexander:

It definitely does. It does. Well, I think you're exactly right and that is part of your soul's journey to have been thrust into that darkness, into the unfathomable depths of having a loved one so close to you take their own life. And so I congratulate you on being able to wrestle with that darkness and the depths of what that must have involved, to rise above it and get the lessons from that beautiful light, and of that love.

And in hospice, we are truly honored to be at the side of those who are leaving this physical incarnation. And that's why it's so important as part of this journey of all souls together, to share the gifts that come from that. And that's why my hat is off to hospice workers and to nurses and doctors everywhere, who are willing to help bring these stories out, to help to let people share.

And I'm not just talking about near-death experiences or shared death experiences, but after death communication – deathbed

visitations. Those who are at the bedside when loved ones pass over often get these beautiful gifts, and that's what we're all here to share, to help to wake this world up and bring us all back into that much deeper sense of connectedness, and that this is about so much more than just what happens when we die.

It's all about how we are to live our lives. How can we fully live a life here unless we have a deeper understanding of who we are and the full extent of this. To me, if I were still harboring that birth to death and nothing more, I could hardly have the kind of visions and understanding about how best to live my life here that I do.

And that's why I think it's so important to share. And this is really about all of our existence, not just about what to expect when you leave your physical body once and for all. It's a far deeper kind of challenge and opportunity to us to come to a much deeper understanding of the nature of our existence.

And that's one reason why I'm such a big fan of meditation. And with the book, *Map of Heaven*, in many ways, it's kind of a clarion call to all to go within. As I say in the appendix of *Map of Heaven*, "the answers lie within us all, and deep meditation centering prayer."

You know sometimes it comes unbidden as a gift of desperation, but we're all, as conscious beings, we have access to coming to a much deeper understanding of the nature of consciousness and of all existence, and of who we are by going within. And that's why I do the work I do with sacred acoustics.

You know as I mentioned in *Map of Heaven* in that appendix, those who want to go more deeply into meditation can check out *Sacred Acoustics.com*, and learn more about how sound can engender very deep, transcendental conscious states, to help us all come closer to this knowing.

Karen Wyatt:

I think that's wonderful to recommend practices that people can use because I think, first of all, it's important that we wake up and become aware of our own consciousness. But beyond that, we all need to practice in our daily lives in order to deepen our experience of it because we have minds that are not used to this and not used to the process with connecting with the divine and with higher realms.

So I think that it's just practical to recommend that we do need to work at it. We do need to take time every day to practice.

Eben Alexander: Yes, absolutely. And it took me about two years after my coma to really start getting deeply into the power of exploring consciousness to become to understand it more fully. I now try and meditate an hour to a day. If I have extra time, I'll try and put in three or four hours because long, deep meditation, for me, is a perfect way to get right back into those very realms that I visited and describe in the book, *Proof of Heaven*, about my coma journey back in 2008.

And the reality is you don't have to die or almost die to get there. By being a conscious being, a deeper knowing of it is available to all of us. And, again, that's why I am such a major proponent of meditation. And if you already have a form of deep meditation or centering prayer, fine, go with it.

For those out there who say, "well you know I can't meditate. I have too much of a monkey mind, that little voice in my mind chattering away," well that's where the sacred acoustic sound can be very powerful and can help to turn that little monkey mind off.

I often remind people in my presentations, the little voice in my head is not my consciousness. I know that fully well. And as a neurosurgeon, I'll tell you the little voice in your head is little more than a very tiny part of your brain that puts together words, and thoughts, and spoken words.

And there's a similar size here, very small. Both of these are in our dominant hemisphere, and those right-handed people, on the left side. And this other little region is where we put together definitions and kind of the false boundaries of our linguistic brain.

Remember that linguistic brain, the voice in our head, is very tightly tied with ego and with notions of self. And, of course, the ego has two tools to kind of guide us and cajole us. The ego uses anxiety about the past and fear about the future to kind of drive our behavior.

And I often point out that the true magic of consciousness, the real deep mystery of consciousness, is really the awareness of the observer. And with meditation, we can cultivate that awareness within self and also allow it to – you know, that little voice in our head can state an intention, make a request, and offer up some gratitude. Because gratitude, as I point out in *Proof of Heaven*, is

really the only appropriate response to any of this miracle of our existence. But then that little voice goes into time out. And there is far greater wisdom for us to have access to our awareness, the observer.

It's the true mystery of consciousness within us. And that's where meditation comes in handy. It allows that observer self of our true consciousness to come to a much deeper knowing of who we are, and to come into a much better guidance, and to come in touch with that divinity.

And in all meditation, for me, a form of centering prayer, I focus deeply on that infinitely healing and loving god, and that unconditional loving god of core consciousness, and of the connectedness of all souls as one conscious being.

To me in meditation, I come very much in touch with that, and that's what others can do too to come to know the truth of this, long before they face leaving their physical body once and for all.

Karen Wyatt:

Well, I wonder, Dr. Alexander, from this part of our conversation, I would imagine that you would probably recommend meditation for our colleagues in medicine, for physicians too. Because I have some concerns about our medical system and where it's headed in some ways, because I find more and more emphasis on technology.

And I'm very concerned about the lack of awareness within medicine of the soul. And I feel like some of our overspending at the end of life and over-treating patients comes from the fact that if you don't believe there's anything more than this physical existence, then you will put all of your energy into just this physical body.

But if you can see a much bigger picture, it's much easier to let go. I'm wondering if you have any other thoughts about what changes do we need to make within our healthcare system within the way doctors think and doctors operate, to improve the care we're giving to people?

Eben Alexander:

Yeah. Well, I think that's a very, very good point. I would like to share a little story about when I was first going into neurosurgery and medical school as a resident, I was very impressed with the technical fortitude of various neurosurgeons in the operating room, and their incredible expertise technically as skilled surgeons. But I remember asking my father. My father had a deep spiritual side. He always knew that God was at the core of any healing of

patients that he had. His role as a neurosurgeon was very small in any recovery. It was God's healing hand. He knew that completely. He never doubted it. And I've known other surgeons and physicians through my career who had a very strong faith in God, who knew the power of prayer.

And so I think that there are many out there. In fact, I feel that those in medicine and in nursing, that more and more of them are coming to realize that we're eternal spiritual beings. They're coming to realize the afterlife is real and the power of prayer.

But there are those, as you point out, who are still mired down and stuck, worshipping that pure scientific materialism that I worshipped before my coma. I do not use that term lightly because, in fact, that pure scientific materialism that denies that there's any such thing as consciousness, soul, or spirit, that says that all of that is an epiphenomenon of the physical workings of subatomic particles, atoms, and molecules in the brain, that that is false.

And there are those out there who still believe that. And so what I urge those in the medical community, is to entertain the realities presented in *Proof of Heaven* and especially in *The Map of Heaven*. Both of those books are a call to the skeptic, to the true open-minded skeptic.

In fact, that's who I wrote those books for, were the open-minded skeptics who were very well-read, modern scientific thinkers, to help them to come to realize that one of the biggest smoke and mirrors tricks out there in our world is scientific materialism's attempt to convey that they have any understanding at all about consciousness, brain, and mind.

Because, in fact, there's something that are called the hard problem of consciousness. And I would say that is the deepest conundrum into all of human thought, even though, the truth be told even with more than 15 years of experience at Harvard Medical School, I had never even heard of the hard problem of consciousness.

And it is really that deep mystery surrounding efforts by modern science to explain how the physical brain might rise to consciousness. In fact, the truth is, no one on earth who studies the brain and mind, the philosophy of the mind, or the neuroscience of the brain – no one on earth can give even the first sentence to try and explain how the physical brain might give rise to consciousness. That is very crucial. The more people who study

brain, mind, and consciousness get deeply into it, as they learn to really appreciate the depths of the challenge, they end up crossing over and they leave that pure materialism behind because it is hopelessly lost.

That pure scientific materialism is a very primitive, simplistic, kindergarten level thinking that sooner or later hits the wall where it realizes, well, the physical brain does not create consciousness at all. And this is where all of modern neuroscience and the philosophy of the mind is headed.

It's about time. This is really all about the 2600 year old mind-body debate, as it's called. And it's about so much more than just mind and body consciousness. When you come to realize that the only thing any one of us truly knows to exist is our own consciousness.

Our conventional neuroscience will remind you that all that you've ever thought, or known, or experienced – that falling in love, beautiful symphony, lovely sunset – every bit of it, going back to before you were born, was only the electrochemical flickering of 100 million neurons in a three-pound gelatinous mass, floating in a warm dark bath – a model of reality, a model of that external world, not external reality itself.

And as you start to wrestle through all of this, you start to realize that consciousness is actually the most fundamental and profound thing to understand in this universe. And for anyone out there who is proposing some kind of theory of everything, they have to start with a far more robust understanding of what consciousness is before they can even begin to discuss the nature of reality.

This is what I point out in *Map of Heaven*. Some physicists, like Roger Penrose, Henry Staff, and Mitt Islami, and Bryant Josephson, have risen to the plate to try and take physics much more deeply down into this understanding of consciousness.

But most of the physics community is clueless as to the rigors demanded, and it drove the founding fathers of quantum mechanics into mysticism to even to begin to understand that enigma of quantum mechanics and where it's going. But this is all about a deeper understanding, broadening the boundaries of science, to a far richer knowing of the nature of all existence.

And it all begins with a deeper understanding of consciousness. This is what I point out in the book, *Map of Heaven*, as an extension beyond the challenge, presented in *Proof of Heaven*. And as the whole modern medical community and scientific community awakens to all of this, we will begin to see the true nature of the eternal spiritual being that each and every one of us is, our inner connectedness as parts of that greater spiritual existence, and how all of consciousness truly is one.

And I think as those in medicine begin to fully address the deep mysteries presented here and come closer to that deeper truth presented around the nature of our soul and spirit consciousness, we will begin to have a far richer role in true healing.

Because you cannot see healing when you limit the sense of healing to the physical, the mental, and the emotional. But it really needs to expand to encompass the spiritual nature of each and every one of us, the spiritual journeys that our soul groups are on, and how these hardships and difficulties that may manifest as illness or injury are all opportunities for growth of our soul groups, and learning how to manifest that love, compassion, forgiveness, acceptance, and mercy from the divine creator is what we do in the process of healing, in all senses of the word.

This is all about healing in a far grander sense than I ever recognized before.

Karen Wyatt:

That's just beautiful. And what I'm hearing in what you're saying is that medical providers will wake up because everyone on our planet is waking up. That is going to happen more and more. It is right now, in front of us. And I'm really glad for this conversation.

I'm glad that we can put information out there so that those who are waking up, and who are considering new ideas and opening their minds, and seeing things they've never seen before, know that they're not alone, and know that there are those who have gone before them, and they can find a place where they feel supported and validated in the experiences that they're having.

Eben Alexander:

Well I think that's very true, and the world is waking up to this, and the more we can share this around this world. That's why I was so gratified that *Proof of Heaven* is now out in 43 countries. And its beyond any apparent boundaries of a given religion

I think that's another important core message in *Proof of Heaven* and in *Map of Heaven* and rising above those false boundaries that

tend to separate us. And that includes the boundaries between science and religion because, in fact, this will involve greatly expanding the boundaries of science to fully incorporate the reality of spirituality and of our spiritual essence that we all are, and also to rise about the false boundaries of the various religions.

So, it's not a question of whether you check off, I believe in God or Allah, Ramen, Vishnu, Jehovah, Yahweh, all of the above, or none of the above. No. The reality of that loving, infinite God at the core completely transcends the little petty bickering about dogmatic differences which are between the various religious faiths.

And I think that religions are very valuable insomuch as they teach the original message of the process of love and compassion, forgiveness and mercy. When they separate from that and start proposing separatist dogma that we're different and separate and we're actually at odds with each other, then obviously you have dysfunctional humans who have twisted and distorted the teachings of the prophets, to gain some power over humans in this material world.

And to that extent, any part of a religion that puts out that separatism and that we are at odds with other religious faiths, we're better than the others – then that's all false. That does not work and that is something that religions will have to let go of because it's not part of the original teachings of the prophets.

And this is all about unification and coming together. It's not about an ongoing perpetuation of this false sense of separation.

Karen Wyatt:

Exactly. And I think that even kind of sums up what we're seeing happen in our world right now where it appears that there is a maximum division and separation going on around the world in cultures and societies. But actually because we are waking up, and really, the old structures are falling apart, and we're waking up to this new higher consciousness. We just have to hang on while we go through this process together.

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think it's actually inevitable. I'm very optimistic about where the world is headed now, and it has to do with this awakening and also realizing that that love, that compassion, that light is overwhelming and infinitely powerful. As we all serve to be conduits for that light and love, bringing the unconditional love of the creator through our being for ourselves, and our fellow loved ones, and for all fellow beings in this world.

There is no way that forces of darkness and of evil can overpower that love, the more we all serve to bring that love into this world, the more it will fill this world. And of that I am quite certain, and that's why this awakening is happening now. It's because we really don't have an option to go forward pretending there's a status quo of the 20th century, with all the warfare and the destruction of the ecological systems, and the polarization of economic resources.

I mean, this is about all of us taking care of all of us, being there for the least, the last, the lost. This is about this world waking up and sharing the beauty, and love, and compassion and forgiveness of that creator for all of this creation. And I know that that awakening will be taking this world into a beautiful realm of harmony and of forgiveness, and love, and compassion unprecedented in our history.

And it's because we don't have a choice to keep pretending that the hatred, and animosity, and warfare, especially in the 20th century, is in any way part of moving forward in this world. And this is what we have to bring to all beings in this world.

Karen Wyatt:

Well, I think it's a perfect message for us to end our conversation on that. It's really up to each one of us to be a conduit for that unconditional love in our own world, in our own life, in any way that we possibly can.

And I just want to thank you so much Dr. Alexander for the work you've done, your writing, your speaking, and just for having the courage to speak out and bring this beautiful message to the world. So thank you for everything that you're doing.

Eben Alexander:

Well, thank you very much for having me. And I tell you, to me, the biggest gift is the gift that I receive by sharing this love. I mean, it comes back to us a million times over. So, for each and every one of you out there, just remember, this is how the love comes to us is simply by serving as a conduit, and sharing it out to our fellow beings. And the rewards are beyond imagination.

Karen Wyatt:

That's beautiful, and that's a beautiful way to close our talk for today. So, I've been talking with Dr. Eben Alexander, author of *Proof of Heaven* and *Map of Heaven* and I encourage you if you haven't read those books, to get them and read them now. And also go to his web site, ebenalexander.com.

So, thank you Dr. Alexander, and thank you to everyone listening today. I'm glad you've been able to join us and share in this

important conversation. And remember to be the love wherever you go. Thank you.

Eben Alexander: And thank you so much for having me. God bless you all.

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