



Dr. David Hanscom

Personal Transformation and Healing

An interview with Emerald Greenforest
on Back in Control Radio with Dr. David Hanscom

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Emerald Greenforest - Personal Transformation and Healing

- Tom Masters: Hello, and welcome to another episode of **Back In Control Radio** with Dr. David Hanscom. I'm your host, Tom Masters. And our guest today is Emerald Greenforest, author, entrepreneur, internationally known speaker, transformation artist, and the host of the popular **Men On Purpose** podcast. Welcome.
- David Hanscom: Hi, Emerald. I'm very excited about having Emerald on the show. I met her a few months ago back in New York at the Harrison summit, which is a place where we meet other people to help get our message out to the world. And we instantly connected. I was on her podcast about men with a purpose; she also has one about women. And I'm not sure how to introduce her, but I'll work backwards a little bit. The reason why I have her on this show is that she is a doer, and I've mentioned multiple times on the DOC project that creating a vision and fulfilling it is a critical part of actually moving out of chronic pain.
- If you try to fix chronic pain, your attention is on the problem, not the solution. When I look at Emerald's CV, it makes me feel like I'm standing still a bit. She'd been very active. She started out in real estate development. She's an internationally known speaker. She started the **Men on Purpose** podcast. She is just a busy woman, but she's also a doer and creating a vision and executing. So Emerald, welcome to the show, I'm very excited about having you on the show. And I'd like to just give you just maybe a couple minute background about why you do what you do.
- E. Greenforest Thank you so much for having me, Doctor David. So, I think chronic pain, which is something that you navigate people through in the physical body, can also be in the mental and emotional body and the spiritual body. And so to answer directly your question of why I do what I do, I do what I do because I spent many years in chronic pain in my mental, spiritual, and emotional bodies. And specifically why I'm doing the **Men on Purpose** podcast now is because I actually had a lifetime of being in relationship with men where they were either addicted, abusive, or I felt alienated from them. And that culminated in a major life rupture with my own son in 2016, when he was high on fentanyl after almost of seven years of drug abuse. And he locked me in the basement and threatened to kill me.
- David Hanscom: Wow.
- E. Greenforest So I woke up and realized that I was the single unifying thread in all of those abusive, addicted, or alienating relationships. And it became clear to me that my work was to actually uproot myself from what I now call the toxic soil of abuse. And so even though I didn't have chronic pain in my body, I definitely had chronic pain in my spirit.
- David Hanscom: Right. Well, I didn't realize that part of your background. I let you touch on that just a little bit before we move on to some of the other things, is that the last few years in my practice we've pointed out that the family dynamics are

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absolutely critical. We have these behavioral patterns and we tend to get attracted to our own familiar patterns, which unfortunately are relatively dark.

I agree with you. I went through the same process myself, realizing that I was a common thread in a lot of disruptive things in my life. I have to say, I was sort of forced to acknowledge it, and sounds like you were too. But yes, we are responsible for creating our own reality. Absolutely. ***We want to blame the rest of the world for our problems, and it's just not that way.*** That is the essence of the DOC project—feeling safe, which means that *personally* what you have to do is take 100% responsibility for your own healing.

I'm curious when you first started that journey, you had that realization, and then ***what was your first step in that healing journey moving forward?***

E. Greenforest I actually have been serving people for years around creating conscious change. And so the first step I had to do was go through my own process of creating conscious change. And the first step is clarity and knowing what it is that you want.

A little bit of a backstory. I was 38 years old before somebody said to me, "What is it that you want?" And I didn't even know that question was applicable to me because *I had been conditioned and socialized to believe that I needed to take care of and fix for everyone else.* My wants? I didn't even know I was allowed to have them, right. So at 38, when my son was probably five or six years old, that was when that question first was delivered to me from an outside party.

E. Greenforest Sometimes we need outside intervention, and outside intervention can come in the form of a question from a friend, it can come in the form of listening to a podcast like this and suddenly having an epiphany. I believe that divine intervention is happening all the time for people to help them. The work is really acknowledging that is happening and then choosing, right? Which is another one of my seven C's for creating conscious change. Choosing what it is that you actually want. And allowing yourself permission to have what you want and to have, first, the wants—the desires. So for me, it was really about one of the practices that I do in my work. ***I've been initiated in the Inca tradition of the Peruvian Shaman lineage, and one of the things that we talk about is stopping the world.***

David Hanscom: Is what?

E. Greenforest Stopping the world. Stopping the world.

When you're in these dynamics of either chronic pain physically, or mentally, emotionally, or spiritually, you've created a world, right? And this world has momentum, and this momentum keeps perpetuating itself unless you *stop the world and drain the momentum from it.* So part of the work for me was to get the clarity of knowing what I wanted, ***but how do we get to the clarity?*** Well,

we get to the clarity by stopping the world and instead of spending time being in action, we spend time being in reflection, so that when we do take action, we're taking action in the right direction, in the more aligned direction, and in the more healed direction.

David Hanscom: And what did that look like for you? Was that stopping work or was it just simply stopping trying to do things? I mean, *what did that actually look like for you to actually stop the world?*

E. Greenforest For me, stopping the world was not doing anything. It was the exercise of not doing. It was draining the momentum from all the habits and patterns of behavior and engagement, and it included stopping work for a while. It included stopping the habits that I had set up. We have a tendency to be habitual creatures. So if every single day you're doing the same thing and you're expecting to get a different result, that's craziness. And I can't remember who said that originally, so I don't want to misquote, but that's not my original content right there.

I stopped the world by choosing—choosing to say, "This isn't working, and I need to stop doing these things," and that included who I was relating to and how I was relating to them. It included my business. It included my perpetual habit of being a people pleaser. My perpetual habit of what I call pretzeling—it's like you put yourself into a pretzel to make somebody else happy. And so I had to stop all of those things.

David Hanscom: Okay. Well, I'm impressed. I'm going to go back to one step further. ***Awareness*** is the first step of the Direct your Own Care (DOC) project. ***The first step of becoming aware is to understand when you are unaware.*** So awareness is the essence of the entire process. And that's why if you're angry and frustrated and reactive, you cannot become aware, by definition. It just can't happen. I've written this several times, but take the word reactive—if you *react* to the situation, you really aren't thinking, you're simply trying to survive doing the next step. But, if you take the letter C out of the middle of the word ***reactive*** and put it at the beginning, you get the word ***creative***. You have to make a little bit of a space to see first, before you can become creative.

I also have another little mantra for myself: ***No Action in a Reaction.*** In other words you can't suppress anger. You can't stop it, but you don't have to take action when you're in that reaction. So, for me personally, I was in a reaction my entire life. And I think you're a little bit more aware than I was because I just crashed and burned completely. It sounds like you had a moment of waking up and becoming aware, and I'm impressed. That's a really great step. That is the essence of starting the process, by the way, is this awareness. We have a process called expressive writing, which starts the entire DOC project. Did you do any writing exercises? I'm just curious.

E. Greenforest Yes, I write all the time. In fact, after my experience, it was a rite of passage with my son. After that experience in the basement, it was definitely a rite of

passage. It was a rite of passage for me to exit the role of mother and enter into the role of elder. And it was the rite of passage for him to exit out of being child and going into man. ***Now he's fine and everything is great, so let me just make everybody clear about that.***

But in the moment of the trauma, and I have a lot of tools in my toolbox, so I've been studying personal development and facilitating personal development and professional development for people for 20 years now. So I had a ton of tools and I had a lot of awareness already cultivated, but when I went through this trauma in 2016, writing was really what actually neutralized the entire thing for me.

I actually began writing on Facebook about three days after this happened. And not only writing, but for the first time in my life, surrendering to the notion that I needed help. I really needed help. And it was time for me to vociferously ask for help. So I started writing on Facebook and asking for help, but I was very specific about the kind of help that I wanted. I didn't want people to feel sorry for me. I didn't want people to say, "Oh my God, this is terrible," and fuel the trauma. I asked for people to pray for my sons' and my evolution out of this into a better place. And every day for 30 days, I wrote.

After the 30 days, maybe two or three weeks afterwards, I realized, wow, I've neutralized this whole experience. I don't feel charged anymore from it. I came to the understanding that I had actually been doing **EMDR**, which is a technique and stands for **Eye Movement, Desensitization, and Reprogramming**. I was doing **EMDR** on myself through the writing, because when you're typing, you're using both hands, so *every time I was expressing myself and using both hands, I was literally processing this experience through my corpus callosum.*

David Hanscom: There's something about the writing that's very powerful. It's almost sort of the secret weapon of the DOC project. I broke out of my 15 years of chronic pain with writing by accident. I didn't know what was going on. What do I *now* find out? There's a book out called ***Opening Up by Writing It Down*** by Dr. Pennebaker and Dr. Smyth. There are over a thousand research papers that document how expressive writing makes a difference. It's huge. And we don't really see movement until people start the writing.

David Hanscom: So on your seven C's for Creating Conscious Change, number one was ***clarity***, where in the DOC program, I use the word ***awareness***. We just talked about that. And obviously it took a big event in your life to bring that on. The second "C" is courage. I go through this all the time, myself. I teach a lot of things, but I'm also going back into counseling myself to keep looking at what I don't see. *It was very humbling to realize that, okay, teach the stuff, but it's a lot harder to practice it than to actually do it, right?* So I'm curious on number two, you have the word courage, which to me humility is actually part of that process, part of that word.

E. Greenforest

Courage means with heart, right? And so when we know what we want, we must then put ourselves wholeheartedly into the direction of creating that, right? So we can't be having back doors. We can't be having crutches. We can't be leaving escape hatches for ourselves that says, "I really want this. But if that doesn't work out I'll go do this."

We have to be courageous in that we must put wholeheartedly into the direction of what it is that we want to create. For example, if your patients are in chronic pain, and you are here to give them *the awakening, and the epiphany, and the clarity that it doesn't have to be this way, you are the divine intervention. This podcast is the divine intervention.* Now they must muster up the courage to wholeheartedly choose to go all in on the process of ameliorating the pain for themselves,

David Hanscom:

Right, which means you have to take full responsibility for your life, what you want. But I do think that maybe it's the way we're programmed. I would say I was very competent, I was a top level spine surgeon, lots of accomplishments, but it wasn't really seen. *I just was reacting literally my entire life.* And so in a way I was in a very structured environment where you just go to the next step. That's a little bit different than courage. And I also tell people that look, "My book's just a book. The website is just a website. You have to actually learn the tools and implement them to actually move forward."

But also that implies creating a vision of what you want your life to look like. You can't solve chronic pain by trying to fix it. ***You actually have to move into your new life. And it's a huge, huge aspect of solving chronic pain***—creating a part of your brain that actually lives life going forward, not looking backwards. One of our basic premises is that people cannot discuss their pain because where's your attention? And the key is it's in terms of neuroplasticity, not psychology, which is a fiction type of mentality. The key is to move forward with your pain, but it actually changes your brain. ***Your brain develops where you put your attention.*** So the courage thing *is* a big deal.

The third "C" you have down there is for ***coaching***, which I heartily agree with. ***I will just quickly say that the intention of the DOC project is to unload a hundred percent of the responsibility of solving pain onto the person experiencing the pain.*** And then what it does, I said this for many years as a physician, instead of, "Let me try to fix you," I become a cheerleader and a coach and a guide, but I'm not doing it for you. Do you want to make a comment on the word *coaching* in your seven steps?

E. Greenforest

Before I make the comment on that, I want to underline and underscore this idea of ***not fixing and*** also this idea that you're advancing of ***not talking about the pain.*** When we use the word, "my," we are telling ourselves that we own it, so now there's ownership of this pain and ***that sets us up in the dynamic of 'I have to fix it'.*** So for me, that looked like wanting to fix all the people in my life so that I could get out of pain.

The **coaching aspect** of this is really **looking for somebody that you resonate with**, who has evolved beyond where you are, and who can **guide and coach and mentor you in the direction that you are choosing to go**, so that you have a structure—a framework—and help. My biggest challenge was not asking for help, right? So if you are experiencing pain and your attempts to fix it aren't working, there's nothing else you can do except ask for help. Whether it's asking for help from the divine, or asking for help from a coach or a mentor, sometimes you have to recognize that where you thought you were going to get help is actually **not** the place.

I'll tell a little story about when I got out of the basement that night. I ran to the forest. I called my son's father and he started yelling at me and I looked at the phone for the first time in my life, I was like, "This isn't helping." And I pushed the button and I hung up. I was like, "This isn't helping!"

So the next step was to call the police, and who came to get me out of the forest? Officer Friend. Seriously, so mythic—you can't even make this stuff up, right? But it was my acknowledgement that **first** I needed to ask for help. Second, I asked for help where I thought I could get it, which was another old habit of behavior of 20 years. I had been trying to get help from his father who was not capable of helping. And not only was he not capable of helping, he was actually amplifying and aggravating the condition.

The work in coaching is not only to ask for help, but **be willing to acknowledge when it's not helping and stop that, and then move forward to see if there's somebody else that you can ask for help. There's no shortage of help in the world.** I want to make sure everybody understands that coaching and mentorship are available; there are plenty of people out there in the world. If you resonate with me and I'm your coach or mentor, then let's have the conversation. If you resonate with Dr. Hanscom as your mentor, then have the conversation with him and make the magic happen. **And if you get into a dynamic with a coach or a mentor where it's aggravating, and perpetuating a pain pattern, you've got to say, "Oh, that's not working. We're going to move on," rather than get stuck in just perpetuating the same patterns again.**

David Hanscom:

There's also a really big factor I noticed with myself and with my patients in pain which is that *if you aren't willing to be coached, you got to stop*. In other words, if you're not willing to ask for help, and you think you have it figured out, you are ignoring that every human being has blind spots—and they can be big ones. I teach this stuff. Actually the therapist I work with keeps saying, "Well, I don't know why you're here. You already know this stuff," but guess what? Over the last three months I've found all sorts of blind spots that I didn't know were there. She may not see them, but I can see some very clear blind spots.

And you look at people that are high level athletes, they all have personal coaches. High level performers, dancers, ballet, all have coaches all the time. In fact, the more proficient you become at what you do, the bigger the need for a coach. But the biggest obstacle that we have in people solving their pain is

accepting that the mental pain is the bigger problem than the physical pain. But if you're not willing to be coached, you say "Oh I know it. Just get me fixed. I don't want to do this." That's a huge red flag that you are in trouble. ***The problem is when you're not aware, you're not aware. So becoming aware of your unawareness is a huge step in going forward.***

E. Greenforest It is the first step.

David Hanscom: It's huge, and then if you don't want to be coached, that's just another clue that you aren't aware. I noticed that in medicine the physicians who were the best physicians by far, including my mentors in Minneapolis who are unbelievable surgeons, ***never*** thought they had it figured out. They were going to conferences, writing papers. My situation in Seattle, I had all these fellows coming in. So I'm the mentor, but I learned a ton. Every fellow that came in taught me things that were dramatically different. ***Being open to change in any direction at any time is really critical.***

So in this first of our two podcasts together, I'd like to just finish off with the fourth "C" for Create in your series of Seven C's, and we'll go over the other three on the second podcast. But you have the word ***"Create- Take the leap and engage in inspired action."*** And again, I say, "Look, the DOC Project's tools—a book, website, and podcasts—*but nothing happens until you actually take action and learn the tools.*" So far we've talked about clarity as number one, followed by courage, coaching, and then creating. So obviously you are more than a little bit creative, but I'm curious about your take is on the word "create."

E. Greenforest ***Creating means to marshal the resources that you do have available to you.*** In the process of this disintegration of everything that's not working anymore, *you are redirecting that energy in the direction of what it is that you want to bring into your life, the experience that you want to create, the relationships that you desire. The process of creation is magic, it is mystical, and it is collaboration with the divine.* It's collaboration with the elements that are available to you, but every person's creation process is different. And so the real work is ***being the willing vessel*** through which creation is able to express itself, whether that's through writing, or making art, or creating relationships, or being a podcaster, or ***whatever it is that you're inspired to do.***

I made it very clear in my step, that this is about taking a leap out of where you've been and into unknown territory, *but only if it's inspired action.* There's a very ***bad message*** out there that says, "Take action. Take action. Take action. Take action." Well, if you're taking action in the same old environment, in the same old mindset, in the same old patterns that you have established over the course of a lifetime, you're just perpetuating what doesn't work for you, so ***inspired action is something that is a felt experience. It comes in from the divine, from the infinite source, from the great mystery, from the muses.*** Whatever you want to call it, but it's not just taking action for taking action's sake. ***And often we have to stop, and wait, and be patient for the inspiration to come.*** While we're waiting for the inspiration to come, that's the time to

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actually conserve and build our energy, because the more we conserve and build our energy, when the inspiration comes, we have that energy to fuel the creation.

David Hanscom: Wow. That's fantastic. Well, Emerald, thank you for this first podcast. We're going to go over the last three of your Seven C's on the second podcast. So just to review, the first one is clarity, courage, coaching, and creation. On the second part, number five is checking in. Number six is choosing, and number seven is celebrating. And those are things we'll about in detail. Can you tell the audience how to get ahold of your resources? You've written several books, right?

E. Greenforest Yes. I've been a contributing author to at least 17 different books, but the place where I'd really like to have people go is to my website, www.emeraldgreenforest.com/gift because I have created a gift there for people. It's my instant clarity exercise because we've got to start with clarity. It's an eight minute meditation to help people make a decision or maybe several decisions when they are caught in what I call the clouds of confusion.

David Hanscom: Did you write a book also? Have you written specific books?

E. Greenforest Yes, I've actually written several books. I have a book of poetry. I have a book of channeled messages from the angels. I have a book of success quotes, and I have another book in progress right now. I actually have several books in progress. So yeah, I'm constantly in *creation mode*.

David Hanscom: Well, I'm energized just talking to you. It's a great conversation. I appreciate you being on the show. Thank you very much.

E. Greenforest Thank you so much for having me.

Tom Masters: I'd like to thank our guest, Emerald Greenforest, for being on the show today and sharing her journey of emotional and spiritual healing, and also the process of transformation that we can all use to change our lives. I'm your host, Tom Masters, and I want to remind you to come back next week for another episode of **Back In Control Radio** with Dr. David Hanscom. In the meantime, be sure to visit the website at www.backincontrol.com.

: Thanks for listening today and join us next week for Back in Control Radio.

Notes: The original transcript of this episode of Back in Control Radio with Dr. David Hanscom has been edited for readability.