



Dr. David Hanscom

Healing through Love and Science

An interview with Regan Caruthers
on Back in Control Radio with Dr. David Hanscom

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Tom Masters: Hello everybody, and welcome to another episode of Back in Control Radio with Dr. David Hanscomb. I'm your host Tom Masters, and our guest today is Reagan Caruthers. She's a writer and spiritual teacher whose life has been shaped by an early education rooted in contemplative practice, including daily meditation, Tai Chi, devotional singing and direct exploration of the human energy field.

From a young age, she learned to attune to divine guidance and embodied intelligence that has repeatedly. Proven lifesaving. She's the author of Tragic Magic and the founder of the A SET Yoga Center, where she integrates the original heart-centered teachings of Jesus, the yoga tradition, and heart-based science. Her professional background includes. Corporate leadership in Silicon Valley Management of academic innovation initiatives in the California State University system, and work on the staff of HeartMath Institute where she taught HeartMath programs to business audiences. Welcome.

David Hanscom: Thank you Tom. I'd like to welcome Reagans back to the podcast.

We spent a half an hour talking to her about her background in life and it's quite intriguing. But she is a health inner health coach. She's a writer and spiritual teacher whose life has been shaped by early education. Rooted in contemplated practice, including daily meditation, Tai Chi, devotional singing and direct exploration of the human energy field.

From a young age, she learned to attune to divine guidance and embody intelligence that has repeatedly proven lifesaving. She's the author of Tragic Mag Magic and the founder of a SET Yoga Center in St. Louis area where she integrates the original heart center teachings of. Religion, the yoga tradition, and heart-based science.

Her professional background includes corporate leadership in Silicon Valley management of academic innovation initiatives for California State University system, and she worked as she works on the staff at HeartMath Institute where she taught HeartMath programs to business audiences. So she crosses a lot of interest in mine, particularly with HeartMath, but also spirituality perspective, where I have long thought that this is the definitive answer for chronic pain.

'cause we get pulled into our chronic pain circuits is like a big cesspool down here. And really getting your spiritual perspective back is a huge factor in moving forward and healing. So Reagan, welcome back. Your story is very intriguing. I really like what your approach is. So let's jump to the fact that you had this event with cardiac surgery that also really awakened you to the practices you do now.

Regan Caruthers: Yeah. I wouldn't say they awakened me to, to the practices I do now. I was doing the practices prior to it. I will say though the depth of my devotion. Has changed. I'm deeper in my devotion. Yeah, it was December of 21. I was on a writing retreat in Joshua Tree. I was in the middle of the high desert, and I would always pray and meditate before I would sit down to write my book.

And on this fateful evening in the quiet, a trusted voice, one I've listened to since I was a little girl, said, you must urgently move home. That was St. Louis. I had built a life in Santa Cruz, California, so I, for 25 years, that was the life that I had created. I lived right across the street from Monterey Bay.

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I could, just. Three minutes and I'm walking on the beach. I lived in a beautiful resort neighborhood where I could walk to an organic grocer. Anyway, it was a beautiful life. But I knew the truth of it, so I literally came outta meditation and looked to see if I had enough bars on my phone to make a phone call, and I did.

The first call I made was to a friend who was a realtor in St. Louis. And I said, Andrea, I have been directed by the Divine to urgently move home. I do what I'm told. Will you work with me? She said, of course. So I flew out of Palm Springs the following morning to see where I was to go. And it wasn't St.

Louis that didn't feel resonant. And so again, in the quiet, I'm directed. Franklin County. I didn't even know what that meant. That's a rural community an hour west of where I grew up. Within three months, I, sold my beach house and moved to rural Missouri and everybody thought I was, had a screw loose.

But I knew I didn't quite know why. I was directed to create, a yoga center on my property. I knew that was part of the reason. So about three months after I got here, again, in the quiet of meditation, I was told to urgently go to a doctor. So urgent in both transmissions, there's no urgency in the felt sense of it.

If you know what divine guidance. Sounds and feels like there's no stress or urgency in the message. Anyway, so I did. I looked on Google. I found a country doctor. He could see me the next day. 'cause that's what you can do in a small town. And what do doctors do, right? They listened to your heart and he listened to mine.

He said, Reagan, you have a really loud murmur. Something's terribly wrong. So I was scheduled per an echocardiogram the following day, and then the day after that, I learned I was dying. And that I had a congenital heart defect, so I had a bicuspid aortic valve that had become so calcified that the only solution was open heart surgery to replace.

The valve. The reason I was guided home is Barnes Hospital in St. Louis where I was born, where my oldest son was born, just happens to be one of the best places in the world for aortic valve replacement. It's not a surgery you wanna have in Santa Cruz.

Right. Anyway yeah, I had a surgery to replace my valve on a Friday morning.

I was cleared from the ICU the following morning, which is a rare occurrence, and I was home by Tuesday.

David Hanscom: Wow.

Regan Caruthers: And come Tuesday, the head of cardiothoracic surgery, Ralph Damiano. I. Shared that there was no medical explanation of how I was alive prior to the surgery. I had less than 0.2 centimeters for blood to flow through my valve.

He said, I don't know. There's no clinical explanation of how you were alive, much less how you walked. And I was teaching yoga.

David Hanscom: And you weren't having symptoms. Really?

Regan Caruthers: I thought I had heartburn.

David Hanscom: Oh. Okay.

Regan Caruthers: That's one of the top five symptoms of menopause,

David Hanscom: Right.

Regan Caruthers: It was chest pain.

David Hanscom: Chest pain. Yeah. That is something I used to do, internal medicine.

So people have exactly the type of pain, which is not the normal heart pain, but depends what part of the heart's being affected. It can do almost anything. Wow, that's a great story.

Regan Caruthers: And it taught my surgeon something, right?

David Hanscom: Which is. Not to listen. Surgeons don't listen.

Regan Caruthers: He did.

David Hanscom: I know. I'm kidding.

Regan Caruthers: And I had given him,

David Hanscom: I have learned to listen, but it's not an inherent skill we have.

Regan Caruthers: You can still work on that, right?

David Hanscom: So, I have definitely learned to listen, but no, it doesn't, we're taught to do things and we don't listen like we could or should. And no, that's a great story. So let's look jump forward to now.

You now live you yoga center's on your property, and I like to discuss how the HeartMath process fits into all this process.

Regan Caruthers: Yeah. HeartMath is basically ancient spiritual wisdom packaged in a biomedical model for the Western mind, right? The people that started HeartMath, these were deeply devoted spiritual people, but they knew that if they were going to try to heal the world.

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It clearly couldn't be the same messages of all the great spiritual teachers that have known this world. Couldn't be that because we're not listening to that as much as we need to be. So they packaged it differently. I would credit them with just mainstream understanding of what HRV is.

Back in the early nineties nobody talked about that. They put that on the map. They had a study done that was published in the American Journal of Cardiology in the mid nineties, right about the time I started working with them, showing, the difference in HRV when you feel gratitude and love contrasted with frustration.

David Hanscom: Can you explain to the audience what HRV is?

Regan Caruthers: Heart rate variability. Yeah.

David Hanscom: Right, but what does it indicate though? In other words,

Regan Caruthers: happy to tell you. So, with every beat of the heart. It beats at a different rate. When you look at that over time, you're looking at the rhythm.

David Hanscom: Okay?

Regan Caruthers: So, the sympathetic part of the nervous system, the accelerator, then you're gonna see that part of the HRV, the climb, right?

And then the parasympathetic is the rest. In a time when you are feeling love and gratitude, your heart rhythm looks more like a sine wave. When you are frustrated or angry or any of the, basic emotional responses that the typical American has, right? Your HRV looks more like a, an earthquake and why that matters.

Back in the day, people in your field thought that, a less variability was better. We now know that's the greatest indication of sudden cardiac death. You need that variability, right? You need to be able to run up a hill, sit down immediately, and for the heart to have the capacity to adjust.

Looking at it, physiologically but biochemically or cognitively when you're in those negative emotional states. You can't access the higher reasoning centers of the brain and what you are emitting biochemically is quite toxic. So what HeartMath teaches is basically the Buddhist practice of meta, right?

Loving kindness, how to breathe through the heart. There's just two parts to it. Heart-centered breathing and feeling an elevated emotion. Not thinking about something you love or something you're grateful for, that's not gonna do it. It's the right, it's the felt sense of it and learning how to do that first, just sitting in the quiet, ideally holding that elevated emotional state, the felt sense of it for at least 20 minutes.

Because then you're building a new baseline. You're basically recreating your neurophysiology so that in a moment of stress when you are triggered, right? Nobody knows what to do in those moments, right?

HeartMath teaches you what to do, which again is the same thing. Anchor your breath in the heart and focus on a positive feeling.

And then there, there's over 400 clinical studies all about this. 'cause that's, we live in a culture, we have to prove these things.

David Hanscom: So let me give my perspective on this, which is critical because. In my world, especially being a referral spine surgeon, that people, by the time they get to me, but also I deal with all sorts of people, with all sorts of chronic pain.

Usually 1, 5, 10, 20, 30, 1 woman, 55 years of chronic pain. They're so angry and they're so fired up and they, and so what I, the biggest factor that predicts healing is engagement. And I've tried for 15 years to. Break that wall down, try to get people engaged and it doesn't work. And so that's where I'm trained and I have not paid enough attention to this with the HeartMath concept, which is regulation of the autonomic nervous system and getting people calmed down, is that it appears this probably is one of the more likely possibilities.

Allowing people to be open enough to actually engage and heal, because if they engage with repetition and time, they always heal. But the biggest factor we have by far in medicine is getting people to engage. So we want people to get their brain and body aligned enough to actually engage the process you talk about.

So I'm curious now how. I'm not sure which audience you're working with. 'cause people, by the time you get to, you are open to these ideas, but 80% of my people I'm working with are not open to anything. They're just totally shut down. So I'm curious about your perspective of the spiritual journey being healing, which I a hundred percent agree with, and the fact that you have a HeartMath process.

I'm assuming the practices you talk about actually change the HeartMath wave.

Regan Caruthers: Yeah, they change your HRV. So what I would suggest for you is to buy the technology that HeartMath has now, right. So that you can see in real time your h rv and they have a free app that has all of their techniques, all of their research.

That's why they did it this way, right? Is for the nonbeliever or the person that needs the proof, right? The proof is their own heart rhythm. So, you can connect them, they can get connected through the sensor and see in real time through the technology what they have going on.

And then they will also see in real time the difference when they reflect for a moment, on a moment where they felt love or gratitude and feel it again. So, if they do that with you and they're connected to the HeartMath technology, they'll see the difference.

David Hanscom: So, do you use HeartMath now in your work now or are they past that by the time they get to you?

Regan Caruthers: Oh, I do HeartMath trainings. I've done HeartMath group work at my center.

David Hanscom: Okay.

Regan Caruthers: I try to get people to understand basically the efficacy of love, so you can look at all of the wisdom traditions. They all teach the same thing. And in the yoga tradition which certainly predates Christianity, right?

Yeah. There, there's just, it's all about conscious union with the divine. That is what yoga means in Sanskrit. Yeah I just try to get people to feel love and to get committed to feeling it more often.

David Hanscom: Yeah. In my world, people are so angry. Just that word love is extremely triggering. The pains in my head.

You don't believe me. It's pretty brutal the way people react when they're really trapped in pain. So I'm curious with the HeartMath process, Mike. Growing awareness is about if you use HeartMath to train your body to connect to what you feel, how long does that take to do that? And what's the success rate?

In other words, how much training do you have to do to be able to access the better part of your brain?

Regan Caruthers: It's not about the training. It's actually a very simple thing to learn. It's about the dedication of the practice, right? So, if you're, if you don't do it, it won't help you.

David Hanscom: But like one session all of a sudden changes things or it's 10 or 20, or do you do it indefinitely?

Regan Caruthers: Again, that's such a heady question. I could never quantify that. I don't know. It depends on the person, depends on how much, how much habit they have around feeling. Emotions that don't serve them. Even if you're righteous in your anger. There's still a biomedical consequence to your immune system for a five minute expression of anger for over six hours.

We proved that at HeartMath yeah. I don't know. I don't know how long it'll take.

David Hanscom: Okay. I'm just curious. It's something I'm still, we're still experimenting with trying to figure this out, but trying to get through that initial block is really challenging and I'm not giving up.

I've tried to live for 15 years to work with people, but somehow using tools to get them calmed down and engaged is a huge deal. So if somebody comes to you now, let's say they're at least open to engagement, what sort of programs do you put them through?

Regan Caruthers: So, I don't. Put everybody through the same thing.

A lot of what I do is guided by intuitive intelligence, though I do have some fundamental processes that everybody will learn. That is the HeartMath process, though. I don't call it that all the time because HeartMath didn't invent anything.

David Hanscom: Okay.

Regan Caruthers: They, I agree. They just, they did a great job in proving the efficacy of love.

David Hanscom: Right.

Regan Caruthers: But meta, which is a Buddhist pro practice about embodying loving kindness definitely predates HeartMath. So it's about that, right? It's about learning how to sit in the quiet. And embody gratitude and love that. So that's fundamental to all of the client experiences. And then this process that I created called Loving Witness, it's how I healed myself from my childhood trauma.

So we do that deep unpacking of different developmental stages. What happened and what was imprinted, what did you believe about yourself or the world because of it. Because all of our beliefs, unless we are conscious and attending, are hand-me-downs. They come from somewhere else. Yeah, so we do that unpacking in the loving witness process because what we really need to do physiologically is change the composition of the amygdala.

David Hanscom: Right.

Regan Caruthers: So we work to do that and then we look at a lot of spiritual principles that we need to get aligned to if we want to feel better.

David Hanscom: And again, is that yoga, meditation, Tai chi, all of the above. Singing?

Regan Caruthers: Yeah. Un unfortunately, people think of yoga as the physical practice, right? There are eight limbs to yoga Asana.

Physical practice of yoga is one of the eight.

David Hanscom: Okay.

Regan Caruthers: If I had to choose one playbook for human transformation, it would be the eight limbs of yoga.

David Hanscom: Got it. We could talk for hours. What you're doing is remarkable.

Regan Caruthers: Aw, thank you.

David Hanscom: If we could spend hours talking about this, you see we're almost word for word aligned in many things or most things, and so I'm excited about what you're doing.

This is, again, Tom knows from my surgical perspective that to. It took me probably at least 10 years to go, wait a second, that probably Eastern Medicine has probably much more data right now than Western medicine for what we do, and Western medicine's incredibly ineffective, and I thought for a long time, eastern medicine has to have some merit because it's existed for so many years. Just by trial and error, you're gonna figure out what's going on and so there is a huge amount of resources and knowledge to be gained from the practices that you're offering to people. So I think it's fantastic. Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you for being on the podcast. Can you tell us how to access your services?

Regan Caruthers: Sure, they can head to reagancaruthers.com. So that's one way. I've got a lot of content there and that's how they would set up a call with me if they wanted. I write on Substack, so if they're interested in more of my point of view about things they can read essays that I publish there.

And that's just. They can find it through my name, Reagan Caruthers. I think my Substack is Reagan Caruthers one or something. Okay. I have a lot of videos on Instagram so they can find me there. I'm not active on Instagram right now. I'm taking a nice long break. I think this is, I. My third or fourth month of not doing anything on Instagram or doing very little, but all, everything is still accessible.

Videos that I've created there and then they can buy my book. So if they are interested in learning more about what I understand and how I've come to understand it, my memoir is available on Barnes and Noble and Amazon.

David Hanscom: And that's called Tragic Magic.

Regan Caruthers: Yep.

David Hanscom: Got it. Okay. Again, thank you very much. It was nice meeting you and good luck with all these efforts. It's fantastic.

Regan Caruthers: Yeah, thank you so much. Good luck to you too.

David Hanscom: Alright, thank you.

Regan Caruthers: Bye.

Tom Masters: I'd like to thank our guest, Reagan Caruthers, for being on the show today and discussing her approach to healing, which combines spiritual practice with HeartMath techniques to help people regulate their autonomic nervous system and access a state of love and gratitude. I'm your host, Tom Masters, reminding you to be back next week for another episode of Back in Control Radio with Dr. David Hanscomb and in the meantime, be sure to visit the website at www.backincontrol.com.

