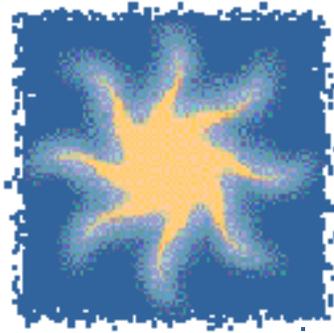


Spirit Counseling®

Dr. Kym Maehl, PhD, CRC, CCHT
Speaks With Nancy Epstein, CHT



“This eBook provides information and insight into the process of Integrative Life Coaching, Hypno-Coaching™ and Spirit Counseling as practiced by Dr. Kym Maehl. It is insightful, humorous and inspiring...a quick and delicious must read for anyone on the healing journey.”

Nancy Epstein, CHT

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Isn't technology awesome? In this moment, thanks to the vehicle of this eBook, we get to spend some time together, joining in consciousness, and hopefully mutual excitement for the healing potential that rests within each of us.

As I begin today, I want to thank my friend and colleague, Nancy Epstein, for urging me to do this project and for being both the muse and technician that helped give it form.

So taking a deep breath, let's join hearts and minds as we begin the conversation...

Nancy: Where shall we start?

Kym: First of all, I want to thank you for sharing this time with me in this way. It helps me to tune in, to join energies with another. That's exciting to me, versus just sitting down and trying to write something myself.

In saying that, today I want to talk about the work that I call Spirit Counseling and the great passion I have for this transformational process. Counseling is effective, but by including Spirit in the process it becomes energized, vibrant, alive and so much fun!

I have been a counselor and educator for over 20 years and early in my career, I got so caught up in the thinking that if you're doing counseling or healing or coaching or spiritual work, all of which I do, that it is serious business. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

What I know now is that God, Goddess, Creator, or whatever name you give to Higher Being, put us here to have fun. When we're having fun our energy is elevated, and when our energy is elevated we are open, and when we are open, the magic of inspiration happens. That's the point of my work. I want to help people to get in touch with those things that are keeping them from living their life fully, joyously, magically.

To do this, I work from a mind-body-spirit philosophy using integrative practices and techniques that help my clients find balance and harmony in their lives. It is very fun and creative for me. And as those who have worked with me know, I throw everything into the mix. In doing so, it surprises the defense system and makes the mind go to new places and possibilities. And in that moment, there's the opening, the crack that is, as Leonard Cohen says, "how the light gets in." That light is the space for healing and change.

So when I first speak with a potential client, after I ask what brings them to me, the primary question that I ask them is "Are you ready to heal?" In order to work with someone, I need a commitment from them that says "Yes, I am ready and willing to heal. I'm ready to do what it takes."

As a Clinical Hypnotherapist, I frequently hear, "I have tried everything else before I got to you." That tells me that there is some degree of desperation and that they are seeking, both of which are good fodder for healing. But it also tells me that there may be some big resistance to

doing what is necessary for change to take place. This is where the fun starts for me and where I start looking for the first little crack.

When my clients tell me that they've tried "everything else" I declare with certainty that everything they've done so far has brought them to me. I also state that I know that divine order is happening and that they are meeting with me right now, at the right and perfect time. And finally, I assure them that if they are ready to heal, I am ready to show them how they can do it, thus beginning the coaching relationship.

Nancy: Do you think that people come just to be programmed?

Kym: Yes, I think that there are those who come thinking that hypnosis lets them off the hook. They come hoping that it's going to be just like taking a pill...the magic pill, the quick fix that requires little or no work on their part. You can almost hear their thoughts saying, "You're going to do hypnosis for me, my subconscious will do whatever and I'm going to be fixed."

However, what I tell them in our first conversation is that that's not the way that I work, nor is it the way of authentic healing. I then explain that I work from a mind-body-spirit perspective in which attention must be given to each of these aspects of the Self. I also explain that we will be working with hypnosis and the subconscious mind on changing underlying beliefs and in such, will be tapping into the part that I refer to as spirit.

Nancy: Or the super conscious.

Kym: Or transpersonal, yes. But for most people, you can't just work with that dimension any more than you can just work with the physical or the mental and expect lasting change. You have to work with all aspects of the Self for lasting change to occur.

In the Integrative Life Coaching or Hypno-Coaching™ process that I've created, we don't begin with hypnosis. Rather, we begin with the mind, which begins with our thoughts, using affirmations. Then we move to the body through engaging in action in the form of homework or a behavioral plan.

And then, once we've tilled the soil and the intentions are reflective of the desire to change, we enter the subconscious with hypnosis and repetition. In that way, the mind, the body and spirit are all working in concert, not isolation.

Nancy: Explain how hypnosis works with religion, how it interfaces with someone who is tenaciously religious and thinks hypnosis is airy-fairy woo-woo stuff.

Kym: In asking that, it sounds like you're asking how to deal with the preconception that hypnosis is airy-fairy. Is that right?

Nancy: Yes, that's what I was asking.

Kym: Well simply, hypnosis is not airy-fairy. It's not brain washing. It's not a quick fix or a pill. And it's not

the devil, which is in effect brain washing. It is a healing modality that works with changing the beliefs that are housed in the subconscious mind and that are causing distress or disharmony in our lives. It's that simple and that complicated.

What I really want to reinforce is that as we are speaking about it here, clinical hypnosis is a healing modality and that while in a hypnotic state, you cannot be made to do something that you don't already want to do. That's a misconception. Rather, in working with hypnosis, what we're doing is simply helping our clients enter into a relaxed state so that we can talk to their subconscious minds.

As that part of our brain that is operating all the time, the subconscious mind functions beneath our awareness. It is where we store, and can therefore access, all of the beliefs both known and unknown that affect our lives. When we can access those beliefs and take the information that's stored within them and change what no longer works, what's no longer necessary, or what is dysfunctional, we can then replace them with something that does work, that is desirable, and is functional. That's the value of working with the subconscious mind. So basically all we're doing is saying "relax," so that we can shine a little light in there. This gets interesting when the conscious mind is still aware and thinks that it is in charge. If you try to mentalize this phenomenon, it can be misleading because people think that if they're aware, the hypnosis must not be working. In reality, that's just the ego-mind trying to protect itself. It's doing

its ego thing, which is what the ego is supposed to do. It is supposed to say, "Hey, I am invaluable here and anything happening underneath this is not valuable." When in reality, what's really happening is that as you enter into a deeply relaxed state, the subconscious mind is receptive, regardless of the conscious mind. So the conscious mind can argue all it wants, but the light is still getting in.

Nancy: Who is your ideal client?

Kym: My ideal client is someone that's ready to change, someone who's really ready to look at themselves and answer the question, "What's out of balance in my life? And, "Am I willing to do something about it?" These imbalances must be identified in order to restore balance. It is only through awareness, intention, and the integration of healthy skills that lasting change can occur.

In this way, the pursuit of balance is the pursuit of wellbeing. What I generally find is that when a person's life comes back in to balance, when they're really doing the work, whatever the identified problem area was, it drops away.

Nancy: Do they know the area?

Kym: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. What they will know is that something doesn't feel good. So we begin by getting in touch with the emotion that's blocking the feeling. This is paramount because the root of all problems is a feeling that hasn't been felt to completion.

Instead, we stuff the feeling and connect it with a thought, which then creates the dense energy of emotion, followed by a story.

Nancy: Now, I've heard you say that you let your clients tell their story one time. Tell me about that and why.

Kym: Most discontent begins with a story that we tell ourselves over and over. We get stuck to our story. When we are stuck to our story it's like quicksand. It's going to keep pulling us down into the mire again, and again, and again. However, according to the teaching of Byron Katie, Carolyn Myss, and all of the great masters, we are here to free ourselves from our story and our attachment to our story.

This doesn't mean that we let go of our history. It doesn't mean we let go of our "now." It just means that we let go of the attachment to it. When we let go of the attachment and the emotions it produces, we no longer allow ourselves to be defined or limited by our story. As we move beyond that definition, then we find freedom, and that's where there's room to change.

Nancy: So if the subconscious mind is like a computer chip that's been programming and running our life from the perspective of let's say a 7 year old, moving away from our story is when real transformation happens.

Kym: Yes, and getting to tell it once is important so that you really feel heard. In telling our story again and again and again, there is a part of us that is feeling like nobody

is listening. So, I urge my clients to tell their story once and I listen with total undivided attention. But what I'm not listening to necessarily is the blah, blah of the story. Instead, I'm looking for what's deeper, what's going on underneath the story. And I use that information then to help guide the person through the dense energy of emotion that they've wrapped around their story.

Nancy: Do you think people are afraid to let go of their story because then what's their identity? Who are they?

Kym: Most definitely. We define ourselves with our story, which is such a misnomer because once we're beyond our story we're able to really live. When we let our story be known and feel the feelings that it brings up fully, we can continue through it and into freedom.

Nancy: Do you have a favorite success story with a client?

Kym: There are many but this one comes to mind first. To me it's a really good one because it deals with the misconception of someone who thought they'd already done so much spiritual work that they should be at peace but were not. In fact, they were in a state of constant judgment.

This client, a 40-something single mom, came to me as a referral because she felt stuck. She couldn't seem to work it out in relationships. She couldn't seem to work it out at work. She couldn't seem to work it out with her family. She was in her story and she was stuck to it. She

was also angry about it because she had "done so much work."

Getting beyond that story was a hoot with this client because she was stubborn, really stubborn. I would suggest something and she would say, "I've done that." And I would ask, "Did you really do it?" And so I would challenge. I would challenge and challenge.

For the first two sessions she was fighting both herself and the process. I could feel the resistance but I just kept challenging and working for the little crack that would let the light in. Then, in the third session, there was a little shift. It came when something happened in her work that was really positive and was a direct reflection of one of her assigned affirmations. In that one brief shift the light got in and changed everything for her. By the fourth session she was blown away by her own transformation. It was a sheer delight to observe her healing layer after layer. She was ready, and I was fortunate enough to be the coach that challenged her into remembering who she really is. And from our work together, she was able to actually transform her whole belief around herself and who she is as a spiritual being, as a physical being, as a mom, as a woman, as a professional person.

Nancy: What do you say to people who seem to pooh-pooh affirmations? Those who say you can't just say something, repeat something, and then get it?

Kym: Well, there are two ways I approach this. The first is for someone that I'm not working with or someone in the beginning phases of coaching with me. I would just explain that we have about 70,000 thoughts that fire off in our head every day. Of those 70,000 thoughts, at least 90% of them are repetitive, and 85% of them are negative. So if that's happening, why wouldn't you want to say, "Hey, slow down a little bit and let me put something in there that's positive and desirable"? In that sense, whether you believe in affirmations or not, it's worth a try because at the very least it's interrupting the pattern that is unconscious, spontaneous, and negative while replacing it with something new, intentional and positive. The second thing that I say, particularly to someone I'm working with, is that this is part of the process and I am asking you to do it because it works and I would like you to have the chance to experience it for yourself. As icing on the cake, I quote Christiane Northrup who says, "Affirmations don't make something happen, they make something welcome."

Nancy: You've mentioned Integrative Life Coaching and Hypno-Coaching™. Can you explain these?

Kym: Of course. As a Counselor and Clinical Hypnotherapist, I strive to help my clients gain the awareness and tools to help them restore balance and control to their lives. I consider myself an empowerment specialist and do whatever it takes to help them believe in their innate perfection and to feel good about themselves. When we feel good about ourselves, our thinking is

clearer and our energy is elevated, thus enabling us to reach for our potential.

As for the format of my work, I work with groups and individuals and try to be flexible according to the needs and desires of the client or group. For most sessions, groups or coaching series, I integrate one or more hypnosis sessions, along with the other mind and body aspects mentioned earlier.

The bulk of my work right now focuses on my Six-Week Transformational Life Coaching Series in which there are two 2-hour sessions followed by four 1.5-hour sessions. In the initial session we set the foundation for the series with affirmations and a behavioral plan or homework. In the second session we do the personalized hypnosis which is recorded and will be listened to by the client for the remainder of the series. The subsequent four sessions are for follow-up, adjustment, reevaluation and reinforcement. The process is a very involved and organic one.

Nancy: How long is the hypnosis recording that the client listens to?

Kym: The personalized recorded hypnosis is generally 20-25 minutes, depending on the individual affirmations or suggestions that are used.

Nancy: It easily fits any schedule.

Kym: Yes, it's very easy. In fact, with the very nature of hypnosis, it's possible to fall asleep while listening and still have it be effective. You don't have to be awake for the suggestions to go into your subconscious mind.

Nancy: What about the homework that you mentioned above?

Kym: The homework is part of the process that engages the physical aspect of the Self by requiring action of some sort. It will include things that move the client in the direction of the desired outcome, give them something to do, and reinforce their integrity around the desire to change. We work together to create the homework, but I am always guiding the activities to be not only psycho-emotionally challenging, but fun. That increases the likelihood that they will do the work.

Nancy: Will you talk briefly about the difference between hypnosis and traditional therapy work with psychologists or psychiatrists?

Kym: I lump most traditional therapies into one group which I call "talk therapy." What happens in talk therapy is that the client basically talks and talks about the problem.

Nancy: They tell their story.

Kym: Yes, the client tells their story, while the therapist will respond with some degree of active listening such as, "Oh I see," or "And then what?" This telling and retelling

of the story is by default designed to keep the client in his head because you have to stay in your head to tell the story.

My work, on the other hand, is directed toward freeing the client from the story and from the beliefs that have either created it or kept it running. This is fundamental to healing because by retelling the story, the teller becomes trapped in it, and while there may be some epiphanies, they take time. What I want is transformation that can only come through letting go of the story, shifting of beliefs, and feeling feelings. This is what excites me about Integrative Life Coaching and Hypno-Coaching™. They are designed to free the client from the story in a dynamic and organic process that involves inspiration and imagination on behalf of both client and coach. I've done didactic counseling or talk therapy, and I've done transformational therapies like hypnosis, breathwork and tapping, to name a few, and I've found those techniques that transcend or circumvent thought are by far the most efficient and effective for lasting change.

Nancy: When you talk about "feeling feelings," what do you mean?

Kym: When I am talking about feelings, it's important to note that I am not talking about emotions. As I said earlier, emotions are feelings that get connected to a thought and create a story. On the other hand, feelings are sensations in the body that respond to stimuli. What happens to feelings, particularly unpleasant ones, is that

we don't want to feel them so we suppress them or lock them down in the body. When we do this, they block the natural energy flow of the body and become denser and denser with time. This dense energy then becomes like a magnet that attracts more of the same energy to itself until finally resulting in mental unrest, emotional upheaval, physical disease and spiritual dampening.

All this can be transformed once the feelings are felt to completion and the natural energy flow is returned to the body. To do this, we must listen to the body first, because while our minds can lie to us, our bodies cannot.

This is a huge challenge for most people because so many are disconnected from their bodies. Even when they think they aren't, they generally are and truly are unable to say where or how they feel things in their bodies. So I guide them in the process of using the emotion to direct them to the feeling in their body and I help them feel the sensation fully so that energy can be restored. I call this process the "Feeling Exercise" and it is one of the most powerful tools that my clients will have in their tool bags when they are done working with me.

Nancy: You've talked about talk therapy and hypnotherapy. You also mentioned breathwork and tapping. Can you talk about these a little more? You teach these, don't you?

Kym: I would love to talk about these techniques and yes, I teach them both. Let's begin with breathwork. Breathwork is a transformational process that is better

known as "rebirthing." It is a process in which deep connected breathing, done to intentional music, over an extended period of time, guides you into a type of self-hypnosis in which the breath works to clear energy blocks within the mind, body or spirit. What I love most about breathwork is that your Inner Healer is totally in charge and will direct the breath to whatever area needs to be cleared. There is no story, no thought. It is entirely self-directed and self-regulating, and all you have to do is breathe.

Tapping or Emotional Freedom Technique is another transformational process that uses the body's energy meridians and hemispheric integration to help bring about awareness and reprogram beliefs. The way that I teach and practice this profoundly healing modality is by following a gestalt-like "stream of consciousness" in which thought associations are allowed to flow out of one's consciousness while various meridians are stimulated with taps. While this begins as a mental process, it soon becomes a vehicle for the expression of hidden thoughts, beliefs and emotions that are keeping us stuck.

Nancy: Talk about what other specialties you have.

Kym: As I've said several times, I do whatever it takes. I'm an empowerment specialist. I use everything from all of my experiences, all my training, all my education that helps you feel good about yourself because when you can feel good about yourself, miracles happen.

I became a counselor because I went to a counselor. At that time, I thought I was screwed up. I didn't believe in myself. I judged myself unmercifully. I carried guilt around like a person carries a handbag and it was awful. The way that I felt about myself outpictured, or showed itself, in my life. Finally, I couldn't carry that handbag around anymore and I got into counseling. Gradually, it's evolved into this.

Thankfully, the first counselor that I saw was an empowerment technician. He assured me that I wasn't as bad as I thought I was and I gradually started to listen. That was the turning point for my life. Here I thought I was the worst thing alive, yet this person could see a glimmer of light within me, and that changed everything. So for me, that's my whole goal, to help those that I come into contact with find the glimmer of light that is within them and us all.

Nancy: You call your website spiritcounseling.org. Can you finish by talking briefly about that?

Kym: I am a spiritual being as we all are, and in such, am an active part of Spirit. I work from this perspective because it's how I live my life and because my healing journey came as the result of "new thought." However, while new thought is inherently a wonderful place to start, it is not a place to finish. It's a place to help you to begin to realize that there is another dimension to life and that there are ways that you have to make magic happen. But it is not a place to stop. While on this planet, you've got to keep working. You've got to keep breathing and

feeling your feelings until your energy is flowing freely and naturally and nothing sticks. You've got to quit telling your story, let go of attachments and find the joy that inspires. And when you need help remembering how wonderful and talented you are, or you need a little prompting to stick with those things that keep your mind, body and spirit balanced and harmonious, I Am here to help you remember. That is Integrative Life Coaching and Spirit Counseling. That is my work.

If you are interested in finding out more about this dynamic work, please contact:

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