W E R N E R E R H A R D

Questions and Answers

Boston Radio Program: Transformations

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Questions and answers. An interview with Werner Erhard about the est training is condensed from a Boston radio program called Transformations. Program director Jack Casey conducted the interview along with psychologist Dr. Judith Haynes. This interview was first broadcast in August of 1983.

JACK CASEY

It seems that almost every person who's heard of the est training has some sort of opinion about it.

Werner, as the person who created it, what is the est training?

WERNER ERHARD

Well, there's a number of ways to answer that.

First off, it's a more or less 60 hours long experience that more than 400,000 people from countries all over the world have participated in that has somehow contributed to the quality of their lives, according to their own report, uh, giving them a, uh, greater, uh, capacity to think for themselves and to, uh, bring forth, uh, satisfaction and well-being and fulfillment in their lives and make a greater contribution to, uh, life around them and the, and the other people in the world.

That's one of the ways to talk about what the, uh, training is.

JACK CASEY

Okay. Would you tell us, uh, what happens in the training?

WERNER ERHARD

Well, the, uh, sessions go, uh, from somewhere around nine o'clock in the morning for, uh, about 15 hours with a break about every three or four hours and a meal break in the middle of the day.

People are sitting theater style or classroom style, uh, in rows, uh, with aisles, uh, somewhere between, let's say, 150 and 300 people in the, uh, training itself, along with a trainer who, uh, stands usually at the front of the room, sometimes walking around the room interacting with people.

Uh, quite a number of people supporting the training in terms of logistics in the back of the room and on the sides of the room to, uh, see that things are taken care of and that people aren't distracted with logistical things.

If you were looking in through the top of the roof, you'd see the trainer speaking some of the time.

Uh, you'd see, uh, the people in the training speaking, uh, some of the time. And, uh, for the most part, you would see people, uh, taking a look from some new vantage points at themselves, at their families, at their work, at society, at the world, at what life is about.

And people would be, uh, coming to grips with, uh, what I like to call the ruthless rules of reality.

The reason I like the word ruthless is because, uh, the rules of reality actually don't care. It's like gravity.

You know, gravity, uh, gee, it just doesn't feel badly if you hurt yourself when you fall. It doesn't care.

And so it behooves us to really know what the rules are since the rules don't care.

And there are the ruthless rules of reality.

So people in training are, uh, taking a look at, coming to grips with, learning, uh, taking a little deeper look at what are the ruthless rules of reality.

Uh, what, then the second area, Jack, that people look at is, uh, what impact does different ways of knowing have on what we know?

In other words, you and I both know certain things about life and about how to get along and about ourselves and about other people and about the world.

But what is the difference of knowing those things in one way as contrasted with another way?

For instance, what's the difference between the concept of loving somebody and the experience of loving somebody?

Let's say it's the same thing, the same love, the same content.

But what impact does the shift in the way you know something have on living?

Rather than, you know, for the most part, we're concerned with what we know.

Uh, people have the sense that there's something they don't know, that if they could find it out, it would make a difference in their life.

What we've discovered is that most people know what they need to know to make their lives work and to make a contribution in the world, but the way they know what they know keeps it from making any difference in their lives.

So, a lot of what goes on in the training is opening up new places in which to know things, so that it shifts from maybe a concept or an idea or something you were told to something, I guess maybe the best way of saying it, Jack, is something which you are.

And then finally, the training is about that, about being.

You know, most of us know who we are like a personality.

We know who we are like a name.

We know who we are like a story.

We know who we are like a set of beliefs or goals or even a vision.

But the training gives people an opportunity to know themselves and really to be themselves in the realm of pure being, in which it's possible to create one's life, to bring one's life forth like an artistic expression, rather than to merely succeed given a certain set of facts.

Now, it's nice to succeed, and if you've got a choice between succeeding and failing, I think that it's wise to pick success.

But the training gives people an opportunity to create their lives, to bring it forth, so that it's literally a creative expression.

And that's a function of knowing oneself at the level of being.

So, you know, that's a 60-hour conversation.

Sorry to try to do it in a couple of minutes.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES

Well, I wonder if you could explain what you mean by making a difference, making a contribution.

What does that mean to you?

WERNER ERHARD

Well, first off, Dr. Haynes, there are certain distinctions which most people don't make. I mean, it's kind of like most of us, when we get up in the morning, you know, the day is kind of one thing after the other thing, after the other thing, after the other thing. And very rarely do we stop to think about any distinctions in our life.

But I think if you stop, it becomes very readily apparent that a lot of what goes on in life is kind of going through the motions, kind of trivial. And I don't even say that that's bad. But if you stop to make some distinctions about the quality of your life, I think most of us have to recognize that a lot of our day is spent kind of going through the motions.

You know, you kind of get up because the alarm clock goes off, and you get dressed because it's time to go to work, and you go to work because you have a job, and kind of like that. And I think that there are things that happen during the day that are important, and people recognize them as important, something that's important to them. It might be an interaction with someone with whom they have a relationship that they consider to be important.

It might be a piece of work at their job that they think actually makes some difference in their work. So we have this distinction, I think, most of us do when we stop to make them between what's trivial and what's important. But I'd like to recommend that there's a third distinction, and the third distinction is the distinction of whether something actually makes a difference or not.

Now, what's important is what changes things.

So, like, a very important communication is you're fired. That’s real important that communication.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
That makes a difference…

WERNER ERHARD
Well, I wonder if it makes a difference, you see, and that's my question. I wonder if you and I really took an honest look, does your promoted really make any difference in our lives?

Now, I know it's important, and I'm accepting totally that it's a very important thing to be hired or fired, to get a raise or get a demotion, or that a lot of the stuff that we're concerned about is important.

But I wonder if it really makes any difference in the quality of our lives. I wonder if the things, you know, I look back to my own childhood, and I can remember in my teens when there were certain things that were just really important to me. And not very many years after that, none of that stuff was very important.

I take a look through my life, and I see that I've achieved certain things and made certain contributions.

But when I look at them, I wonder if they really made any difference in my life or in the lives of others.

And then there are certain other things that have a different quality to them that actually may make a difference.

Like, let me give you an example.

If I open up a new possibility in my life, that may make more of a difference than accomplishing something, even though accomplishing something is important.

In other words, if I can open myself up to the possibility that there is something, something in my relationships with other human beings which I'm not now aware of, which I'm not now...

which somehow escapes me at the moment.

Just open up the possibility that there's something in my relationship with other human beings that I'm blind to, that I'm unaware of.

That may be more important than learning how to win friends and influence people.

Sorry, I don't think it's more important.

It may make a difference in my life, whereas maybe learning to get along with people more effectively is more important.

So I make this distinction, this third distinction.

The distinctions that are already there, like the distinction between the trivial and the important, I accept that.

And then I suggest that there's a third distinction.

This third distinction is, what really makes any difference?

You know, there's that wonderful old French proverb which says, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

So lots of stuff is important, and that creates changes.

But what really has an impact on the quality of one's life is what I call the distinction making a difference.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
Great.

JACK CASEY
What is the difference between enlightenment, as the term is applied to mysticism, and what you call transformation that's available in the training?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, first off, I think that's a distinction of culture, that if you're speaking about India or Asia in general, the pathways of the culture there are different, as we all know, than the pathways of the culture here.

For instance, in India, it's perfectly okay to be a holy man. I mean, it's perfectly all right to be holy.

People think it's wonderful, and they actually think that there are holy people. Whereas here in the West, if anyone, it's just not all right to be holy.

I mean, and certainly no one can be seen as a holy person.

I mean, it's okay if you're committed to your religion, and it's okay if you practice your religion, and it's okay if you have a calling like to be a priest or a rabbi in your religion, but you have to make sure that you... I mean, in this culture, you're not allowed to be holy, at any rate.

So in the Eastern traditions, a person who had gotten, let's say, deeper than a mastery of the surface of being alive, someone who had penetrated beneath the surface the apparency of life living in the world, would be said to be enlightened like something …of a spiritual breakthrough.

We live in a different kind of culture.

We live in a very highly technical, scientific culture.

Not that there isn't the opportunity for spiritual concerns and spiritual phenomena in our culture, but we're a more technically, scientifically, rationally organized society and culture.

So I think that we need our own distinction, and our own name for that distinction.

And those people who've gotten a chance to see down underneath the apparent reality, down underneath the rules to the principles, and perhaps even underneath the principles to the contexts from which life and living and reality are derived, could be said to be transformed.

I think another way of defining what transformation is, Jack, that's useful to people, is that most of us are in the process of becoming.

We're essentially trying to make it, and that's held in high regard in this society, trying to make it.

You know, one goes to school in order to learn what one needs to know to make it. One learns to interact with other human beings in order to make it.

And we have different definitions of making it. For some people, making it means lots of money.

For other people, making it means lots of contribution to other people's lives.

But never mind how you define making it.

Most people's lives are about making it, or to put that in a little bit more technical jargon, most people's lives are about becoming something, or becoming someplace, or becoming.

Transformation is a shift from life as an expression of the attempt to get somewhere, to life as an expression of a fulfillment of a being rather than becoming.

Now, a lot of people misunderstand that because they say, well, if you have the sense of being satisfied and fulfilled, if you already are, well, then you're kind of going to slump down in front of the television set and vegetate.

But it's not true.

I mean, it's a good theory, and it's very logical and sensible, but it just isn't what happens.

Really what happens is that people who have shifted the basis or ground of being of their lives from one of becoming to one of expressing being, these are people who have a greater sense of empowerment, a greater sense of possibility in life, and are therefore able to participate even more fully in life.

And perhaps, at least in my experience, in the observation of the people that I've worked with over the years, who've been able to shift their ground of being, there's an expansion of their context of responsibility rather than a kind of narrowing of their context of responsibility.

JACK CASEY

In a recent issue of the East-West Journal, the late Alan Watts suggests that there is no getting better.

Is the est training about getting better?

WERNER ERHARD

Well, first of all, about Alan, he was one of my teachers and very important in my life. I mean, really very, very important.

I spent lots of time with him on the ferry boat in Sausalito, and he was really a remarkable guy in that he was both very intelligent and not trapped by his own intelligence.

He had a deep insight, and he could express that insight with the power of his intelligence. So, it was a great combination of qualities, in addition to which he was really wonderful to be around and had really deep compassion for human beings and what it meant and what it is to be alive.

And I agree with Alan.

I mean, I think fundamentally I agree with Alan.

I think there's lots of getting better, that people are always trying to get better. But getting better is like only important.

It doesn't make any difference. And, you know, one of the things is that you and I, we live in a pretty successful society.

When you get a chance to travel around the world, you see, my goodness, this society has really got it made.

And a lot of us say bad things about our own society. I mean, we put it down for its materialism and its overly technological, too great a commitment to technology, perhaps.

But there's something to be said for this society, because for me, it gets to be very clear when you're really successful that something is missing.

See, in Upper Volta, because life is at a very basic level of survival, you might be able to fool yourself that if there were more food, if there were better housing, if there were better health, then everything would be OK.

But we've already got more food, better housing, incredible health support system.

And I think if we could get really honest with ourselves, Jack, we could see that still something is missing.

And I think that's what Alan was talking about.

I think that what he was talking about is that getting better isn't really going to make any difference. Now, let me give an example from my own life.

I spent most of my life learning. I mean, that was my commitment, was to keep on learning.

Whenever I had an opportunity to either earn more money or learn something more, I always took the option of learning more.

And I tried to find people who had something to teach me so that I could learn more.

And I realized about 11 years ago that I actually, although I'd spent my whole life learning, I knew nothing, really knew nothing.

Now, how could a guy who'd spent his whole life learning and who'd piled up things he knew in a great, big, fancy, impressive pile say that he knew absolutely nothing?

Well, I'll tell you how he could say that.

He could say that by virtue of the fact that I knew nothing which I knew simply by virtue of knowing it.

I knew every bit of it towards some end.

I mean, it was all there to try to get better or to try to do more or try to accomplish more or try to look better or try to feel better about myself.

It was all there for something.

It was all there about some end.

And it was, I'll tell you, a real shock to realize that I truly didn't know anything like just knowing it. It was always towards some end. It was always a part of getting better or making it or getting along or getting ahead or, I don't know, something.

It always had an end to it. And I think that's what Alan was talking about, that, again, like I said before, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Getting better doesn't seem to make any difference.

And as you know, it's a very interesting thing, Jack.

What I discovered is people who are trying to get better are essentially saying something to themselves at a deeper level.

What they're saying to themselves at a deeper level is, I'm not all right the way I am.

It's not like we articulate that.

But if you look at it, the logical impact of the attempt to get better is there's something wrong with you to start with.

So if there's something wrong with you to start with, trying to get better is very difficult.

It's like if you lack something, you lack the power to get what you lack.

What I've discovered is that when people find out that they're all right like they are, they get better naturally.

They don't have to be struggling to get better.

Because if you're already in possession of it, then the expression of IT becomes very easy and very natural.

So that's what I think Alan was talking about.

JACK CASEY
One of the questions I had was, how are the trainers chosen and how are they trained to be trainers?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, the trainers are chosen from people who have some sort of professional background and a record of success in their own profession.

So, for instance, we have physicians who are trainers.

We have psychotherapists who are trainers.

One of our trainers has a background in design. As a matter of fact, he's reputed to be. I mean, he's in the book with the 100 Greatest Designers since the 1950s.

So there are people with professional backgrounds who have demonstrated their ability to succeed and make their way in the world, and oftentimes in the arena of people, in fact, most usually in the arena of people. They are then given a series of hurdles to handle. For instance, they have to demonstrate that they can be effective in contributing to the quality of people's lives in our seminar programs.

That is a program for people who have completed the training.

All of our trainer candidates, people selected to be trainers, have been successful seminar leaders, and they've been successful seminar leaders over a number of years.

And they do that in addition to their professions.

And there are various other kind of hurdles like that that we ask them to go over. And then once they've gotten over those hurdles and passed a review by a trainer candidate selection committee, they become a trainer candidate.

And they have the qualities of being able to have the qualities of a insight into human beings and the ability to relate to people in a way that makes a difference out of the relationship.

They have the ability to handle themselves from a platform and to speak intelligently and effectively and to express themselves.

They've demonstrated a real commitment to humanity and a real sense of compassion, not mere sympathy, but real compassion.

You know, the kind of compassion that you might see in someone working with a handicapped child where they were making a demand for the child to go beyond what was comfortable for the child, that kind of compassion, not the kind of compassion that merely is sympathetic, but the kind of compassion that can tolerate a deeper relationship in which the commitment is even greater.

So they have these kinds of qualities, Jack.

And then their training period beyond whatever they brought from their profession is, I guess, never less than two years and sometimes three, four or five years before they actually become trainers. And during that time, they're trained in the thinking which underlies the training.

See, one of the things that confuses people about our work is they think our work is the training.

And the training is really an expression of our work. The work is really what at least we think may be a breakthrough in thinking about what it means to be human, what reality is about, what knowing is.

So the training is an expression of the work. And the trainers are trained in the work and then in expressing the work. And then they do the training.

JACK CASEY
Some people seem to have a hard time with the enthusiasm with which their friends share the S training.

My question, Werner, is, is there a need in the world for people to do the training?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, first off, let me deal with this issue about enthusiasm.

It's kind of like if you went to, I don't know, some place in the world where Bali, let's say you went to Bali for a vacation.

When you came back from Bali, my guess is that you'd be really enthusiastic about how wonderful Bali was, how beautiful it was, how wonderful the people are.

You'd be talking about this wonderful hotel that was alongside of a stream in which there was no plumbing in the hotel, but you got washed in the stream.

And that, you know, you ate under candlelight on a veranda and people were very enthusiastic about it and probably talk about it beyond the point that some other people might be interested and perhaps be still talking about it after, you know, the same people after you'd already told them about it once. But that's understandable.

People get enthusiastic about those things in life which seem to be significant to them. And we know that people have been through the training, find the experience very significant. But it's kind of like having been to Bali.

You know, yeah, I'm interested to hear about your trip to Bali for maybe three, four minutes. But after it gets to be 10 minutes and 15 minutes, it's no longer very exciting. Now, if I got to go to Bali, that might be exciting.

But listening to you tell me about Bali for longer than three or four minutes, that gets to be, that's no fun.

So I appreciate the difficulty that people have when their friends have gone through the training with the enthusiasm that they bring back to the training. Now, there's something really more, there's something a little deeper there, however, and maybe more important, that what gets shared for the most part in the verbalizations right after the training is probably the most trivial parts of what people actually get out of the training.

New ways of thinking about things.

That, a new way of thinking about something is for me less powerful than a shift in one's way of being. Now, the shift in one's way of being one doesn't talk about because one simply is it.

One does talk about a shift in one's thinking.

So if you've got something really nice that you're now thinking, that you can see is a lot nicer than what you used to think, you know, you try to share it with other people. You try to tell other people about it.

But it's interesting because what's really powerful is not this new way of speaking or new way of thinking, but the shift in your ground of being. And that, as I say, one doesn't talk about. So I think that the more powerful sharing of the impact of the training in people's lives is not the enthusiasm, not what gets said, but who one is for the other person.

And if I were looking to see what the training was about, that's what I'd be looking for. I'd be looking to be in touch with the other person like a being, like who the other person is. I have a lot of technical ways of talking about that, probably not useful at the moment.

Yeah, I guess that's it. If I wanted to know about the training, I would. Sure, I'd ask you and I'd listen to what you said, but I'd be more interested in my sense of you and perhaps how I felt about myself around you.

And that would be the way I'd want to know about the training.

JACK CASEY
Up to this point, Werner, how many people have completed the training?

WERNER ERHARD
Somewhere in excess of 400,000 people from around 105 countries throughout the world have completed the training. And on average, I guess, over the period of any given year, probably in the neighborhood of eight, nine hundred people a week complete the training ongoingly.

JACK CASEY
And how does that compare with your original projections and expectations?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, I have to answer the question in two stages.

In the very beginning, I really didn't know.

All I knew was that this had made a profound difference in my life and I could see that the difference that it had made in my life, I was somehow able to share just by proximity with the people close to me in my life, like my family and my associates.

And I mean, that was what it was.

That was the end of the story.

And it was only because people said, well, yeah, good for you, but what about me?

I even thought at all of sharing it with people other than sharing it by telling them about it. And it was out of that kind of a demand that I began to do what is now called the training. I mean, it was just getting together with a group of people.

And the beginning was thirty five people. And those thirty five people then talked to other people and 70 people showed up at the next one and then 140 at the next one. And like I said, there's now 400,000.

So in the very beginning, I really didn't know. But let's say a little bit after the beginning, when I could begin to see the impact it was having in people's lives, it really was clear to me, Jack, that something profound was possible.

I don't think that it would be fair to say it was predictable.

At least it was never predictable for me.

There's a big distinction between possible and predictable. I think that it's possible for people on this planet to live in peace and harmony with one another, but I don't think it's predictable.

So that's the distinction I'm making there. So in the early days and really still today, and I'll speak more specifically about now in just a moment, but in the early days, what I saw was that our work held the possibility of actually making a difference in people's life and in life itself, a real transformation of what it meant to be alive. Now, as far as whether it's that.

So where is where is that today? It's kind of the question. And the answer for me is that the window stays open.

We have not gotten through the window, having 400,000 or more people who've participated in the training as a spit in the ocean, another grain of sand on the beach. But the lives and work and the commitment of these 400,000 people and their friends and associates who their lives touch keeps a window of making a difference in life open. And that window stays open by virtue of a lot of different activities in this network of people.

So while most people focus on the training, that's just a part of the network of the expressions of transformation.

You know, we work, for instance, through an organization called the Breakthrough Foundation in international development and bringing these principles and these contexts of transformation into rural villages and urban ghettos where development work is being done.

I think many people know that literally more than two and a half million people have committed themselves to making a difference and ending hunger on the planet before the turn of the century.

This is another expression of these same principles.

The work of the Hunger Project is another expression of the same principles.

We have a program in which we train psychotherapists, not in psychotherapy, but in the principles of this work of transformation, which therapists tell us empower the training they've had in the particular therapy in which they've been trained, that it's really made a difference in their training as psychotherapists.

There are just many more expressions of this fundamental principles of transformation.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
I've been really impressed with the work of the Breakthrough Foundation and particularly the program Youth at Risk.

Would you like to share something about that?

I would love for people to know about it.

WERNER ERHARD
The Youth at Risk program is a program sponsored by the Breakthrough Foundation, which has as its intention the literal transformation of the life of a teenager who's in trouble, the kind of teenagers that we ordinarily call juvenile delinquents.

It's an arena in which not a lot of success has been had, but this 10-day program, which utilizes the thinking, the principles, this basic work that's expressed not only in the training but also in this 10-day program, seems to be able to take a youth at risk, a juvenile delinquent, and literally turn their lives around out of a 10-day interaction, open up life as an alternative possibility rather than merely trying to get them to do better from where they are.

So it's like a real breakthrough, a discontinuous result rather than kind of changing the person a little bit to try to improve them a little bit so that they can do a better job.

It's a literal massive and total shift in their way of being in the world that seems to make a real difference in the lives of these youngsters so that being able to be effective in life and productive in life and supportive of themselves and their own well-being in life becomes a natural expression rather than something they have to fight.

JACK CASEY
Werner, would you describe briefly the organization that produces the training and the seminars and the Breakthrough Foundation and some of the other experiences that people are able to have after they complete the training?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, first off, the context for all of it or the umbrella for all of it is an informal network of people, entities, projects, organizations, all kind of grounded in and perhaps coming from this basic body of thinking, this basic work that started the whole thing.

And like I said, there are literally thousands and thousands and thousands of different expressions tied together loosely in this network of having a common ground or a common place from which to come. And the people and enterprises and organizations and partnerships in the network kind of support one another and communicate with one another and keep one another abreast of what they're doing to some degree.

Within that umbrella, there's an organization, a formal organization called Werner Erhard & Associates, which actually makes a lot of the programs of the network available and tries to coordinate and facilitate the various expressions of this work around the world so that the various expressions can stay in communication with one another.

So, the Werner Erhard & Associates presents, the est Training presents and makes available the seminar program. It makes available some programs of other entities in the network, like another entity in the network is Hermanet, which is essentially an organization devoted to the age of the computer and what computers are all about and a real breakthrough in communication for action, like communication in the world of work that actually makes a difference.

And most of us who work know that a lot of the communication that happens in an organization doesn't make any difference. I mean, it's just noise, really, ultimately.

So, Hermanet has developed a workshop called Communication for Action, in which people are trained to actually make a difference with their communications in an organization.

Now, that particular program is made available through Hermanet to business organizations and various kinds of enterprises, and it's also made available to individuals through Werner Earhard & Associates.

So, it's an example of that. Now, there are lots of other entities in the network, some of which have a formal relationship with Werner Erhard & Associates, lots of which don't have a formal relationship with Werner Erhard & Associates.

For instance, the Hunger Project is an independent, non-profit entity with no formal relationship with Werner Erhard & Associates. And Werner Erhard & Associates is an experimental organization itself.

Rather than use the kind of hierarchical, pyramidal, chain of command design of an organization, we're doing lots of work with management and organizational structure, and we've got a new architecture for organization, which we call networking.

And we not only share this with other organizations, but we use it in our own organization. And it essentially empowers people to get the job done out of a context rather than out of being told what to do. So, networking is partially based on providing for people, as a matter of the structure of the organization, what management ordinarily has to supply to people.

Now, it doesn't do away with management, but management begins to shift its role to one of leadership rather than a kind of authority or telling people what to do. It's rather giving people the power to accomplish what is natural for them to do.

So, you know, I could do probably hours on the organization, but that kind of gives you some sense of it, I think.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
In one of his last public appearances, the late author and social philosopher, R. Buckminster Fuller, said that he believed that we have about three years in which to choose whether or not we're going to blow ourselves up, whether or not we're going to end life on this planet as we know it.
Werner, do you have any thoughts on that subject that you'd care to share with us today?

WERNER ERHARD
First off, as you know, I love Bucky very much, and I've enjoyed a really remarkable friendship with Bucky, and he's been very generous in his support. And I've learned a great deal from Bucky and from the privilege of the relationship that I've had with him. So if Bucky says we've got three years, I would pay attention very carefully.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
Okay, so what do you think we can do? Do you have any ideas about that?

WERNER ERHARD
Dr. Haynes.

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
You can call me Judith.

WERNER ERHARD
I always, Judith, I always suspect predictions about the end because I have the sense that while the predictions may be valid, that life does not work or is not a product merely of that which can be predicted, that humankind has the capacity to bring the unpredictable to what is predictable.

And that would be my answer to the resolution.

That's why we do the work we're doing.

This work is not about improving or changing or getting better or even doing a variation or something different of what's already being done.

I mean, we're interested in breakthrough and transformation and opening up new arenas of possibility, not merely extending what we've already got out a little further, but opening up whole new arenas of possibility.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about, Judith.

Up until, let's say, Newton's time, the physical reality was interpreted in a kind of mysterious, magical way.

Newton not only gave us a new mathematical approach to reality, to the physical reality, and not only gave us certain fundamental physical laws, but opened up the whole possibility of a scientific approach, a scientific grasp of the physical reality.

That is to say, he opened up a whole space of learning, of discovery, of invention, of coming to grips with physical reality.

So when I talk about a breakthrough, when I talk about transformation, I'm not talking about extending our knowing one more step beyond where it is, but rather I'm speaking about opening up a whole new possibility of knowing, a whole space of discovery, of insight, of invention, and of responsibility for what is. And that's what I think it will take, that kind of a breakthrough. You know, it's a very interesting thing.

We've been doing some work in the arena of nuclear weapons, and most of the work that I've been doing is the work of learning. And one of the things that really kind of shocked me, and was very useful to me, was the power of the nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

And, you know, when one really starts getting into the facts, one can see that perhaps nuclear weapons have been a deterrent to war.

Perhaps there have been less conflict because of nuclear weapons, because they really are a deterrent to war. After all, nobody wants to start a war which could end up with the use of nuclear weapons. So that begins to make a lot of sense.

But then there's the balancing fact, and the balancing fact is that a deterrent only has to fail once.

If it fails once, you know, you have the possibility of ending the whole thing. So a deterrent is a useful interim notion, but as the deterrent stays, the longer the deterrent stays in place, the greater the probability of a breakdown.

And if the deterrent fails once, and you've got a nuclear holocaust, it didn't succeed.

So we need a breakthrough in our thinking, for instance, about the whole issue of atomic weaponry.

Because while deterrence may be a useful interim notion, it will ultimately not work, because nobody expects something to be perfect in its application.

And the problem with deterrence is that it only has to fail once for it to be all over.

It's not like, well, sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't work, but it works most of the time, and that's okay.

The deterrent only has to not work once, and you're all over.

So that's the reason that we're interested in that kind of thinking.

JACK CASEY
What sort of breakthrough do you project that would turn that situation around?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, you can't describe a breakthrough until after the breakthrough.
It's like caterpillars standing around discussing flight.

They can't do it.

I mean, the idea of a caterpillar flying is just ridiculous, so they don't even talk about flying.

Now, once you're a butterfly, I mean, you can see that it's obvious that caterpillars are going to fly.

So breakthrough is like that, and that's why it requires almost its own technology, Jack, because it's not like other things.

However, there is something that can be said, and what can be said is that a commitment to breakthrough, a commitment to going beyond the conventional everyday interpretation, a commitment to going beyond the tranquilized obviousness which life becomes for most of us, that's the breakthrough that would make a difference, is a commitment to a breakthrough.

You see, we live in a society which worships answers.

We always want the answer.

You've got to have the prescription for solving this problem.

People want to know what will reduce the risk which life is.

You know, what's the prescription?

What's the answer?

What reduces the risk?

Breakthrough requires a commitment to a question.

There's an enormous power possible in people's lives when they're able to live their lives in an open question, not like they've got the answer, but like they're committed to living in the question.

Now, I say that as a pure assertion.

In other words, I'm not promising anything by that statement.

I'm not even trying to get someone to believe that it's true. I say that when human beings, when a human being can train themselves to live their lives as the expression of a commitment to certain questions, that they will find power showing up in their lives from which power they can make a difference in their lives, in the lives of people around them, and perhaps even in life itself.

And I'm really inviting people to come to grips with what it's like to live in a question.

Like, you see, most of us go around living like we're trying to prove that we're important.

I'd like to invite people to live for a couple of days, just as an experiment, in the question, does my life make any difference?

DR. JUDITH HAYNES
Yeah, I'd like to move to something maybe a little lighter, since we've taken care of the heavy-duty stuff. We've also been wondering, what is it like to be Werner Erhard?

Okay, and specifically like this, is what you're into, what you're doing, you've made a tremendous contribution in my view.

Okay, so is that nurturing for you?

Is it fun for you?

What do you do for peer relationships?

Who do you talk to?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, first off, it is nurturing to be able to authentically take the stand that you've been of some value to people, and the relationships that I have in which we're relating out of the value people have gotten from the relationship, and out of the value that I get from the relationship. It's a very nurturing way to live.

For me, Judith, I live in an environment of nurturing, fulfilling relationships.

It's like the air is that for me, and I think that it contributes to my well-being enormously, and I find myself with an enormous amount of energy and vitality.

I find myself feeling up to participating with people in really big commitments, and a lot of that, I'm quite sure, is a product of the gift of the relationship that people with whom I work and with whom I've participated in these activities, the gift of the relationship that they've provided. In addition to that, I'm privileged, and by the way, that's an important word for me.

I know that's kind of the way people talk, but life is actually a privilege for me.

It's not a right for me.

I'm not saying that people don't have a right to life.

I'm just saying that for me, life is a privilege rather than a right, and I try to live it like it was a privilege, like it was a gift, like it was an opportunity given to me, and it is really a profound privilege to be able to work with people on things that actually make a difference in people's life, to be able to work with people on things that actually make a difference in society, to be able to work with people on things that actually make a difference in living.

I don't know what more one could ask for. I mean, it takes you beyond the personal concerns of getting enough sleep, perhaps, and beyond the personal concerns of vacations and so forth.

I mean, not that I don't sleep and not that I don't take vacations, but they get to be, I mean, not the highlights and not the high points of life.

So, life's like that. I have the privilege of remarkable associates all over the world, every place I go, people with whom I share this sense of life as an opportunity, sense of life as a big, fulfilling possibility, and this very profound relationship.

And in addition to which, because of the support and love of literally hundreds of thousands of people, I've had the opportunity to have relationships with some very great teachers, people like Bucky Fuller and others.

So, that's what life's like.

JACK CASEY
Do you see yourself in any way as a guru?

WERNER ERHARD
Well, you know, it's interesting.

I'll tell you a story, Jack, because it illustrates the answer to that question, I think, more poignantly than saying, yes, no.

I've made many trips to India and actually been invited to work with the government in India and with various organizations in India, like Indian Airlines and so on and so forth.

And I've also spent some time studying the various teachers and holy men and gurus in India.

And on my trips there, one of the people that I met in a very early trip was a professor of English at the University in New Delhi, a man by the name of Manmohan Rai.

And Manmohan and I had a really nice relationship.

And subsequently, when I would take trips to India, he would take a leave of absence from school and travel with me and kind of try to help things, make things work in India.

And, you know, he was fascinated with the work and would get me to talk to him on the trips about the training, what it was like.

But he would always say, but when are you going to do the training in India? So finally, we decided to do the training in India, really in the beginning as an experiment to see if the training was really culturally bound or not.

And Manmohan was very excited because we were finally going to do the training in India. As a matter of fact, I think personally enrolled 50 people in the first training we did in India and participated in the training himself.

He had a real breakthrough in the training.

And one of the places that his breakthrough or transformation showed up was in his relationship with his father.

As you know, in India, it doesn't make any difference how old you are.

First, you're your father's son.

It doesn't make any difference how old you are, whether you have your own family. First, you're your father's son.

So that relationship is particularly important in India.

And while Manmohan had a decent relationship with his father, it wasn't a profound relationship.

There was something blocking it, and both he and his father knew that.

Anyway, after the training, he went back to visit his father, and they spent many hours together and were able to break through to realize a profundity in their relationship, which had not been there before.

And after they really got to this place of profundity, Manmohan's father asked him what had happened.

Clearly, Manmohan was in a different place, and he wanted to know what had happened, what had enabled him to have this breakthrough in his relationship with his father. And Manmohan began to tell him about the training.

So Manmohan told his father, with the usual enthusiasm that people who have just completed the training tell, about the training.

And Manmohan's father listened with a lot of interest, because clearly it had made a difference in his son's life.

And finally, Manmohan was telling me, on my last trip to India, his father said, Oh, I understand, son.

You have found a guru.

Now, in India, that's a nice thing to say to somebody.

I mean, it means that you found a teacher, you found somebody to support you in life.

So Manmohan's father was not trying to say something negative to him, like it might be construed in this country.

I mean, he was saying something very positive to Manmohan.

And Manmohan said, you know, when I stopped and I thought for a while, because I really wanted to tell my father the truth, he said, I finally said to him, No, father, I haven't found a guru.

I've found a friend.

And I thought that that represented the truth about my relationship with the people who've been through the training, pretty darn well, that we have really a kind of sense of being friends.

But I mean, real friends.

I mean, friends at a very profound and deep level.

Friends at the level of making a difference in life.

And beside the word friend, there are two other words that fit for me.

Another word is partner.

That is to say, the relationship that I have with people in life is one of partnership and a really a sense of partnership, you know, where partners kind of trust the other person to handle their part of the bargain in such a way that they feel empowered to handle their own part of the bargain.

And the third aspect of my relationship with people is really that of one human being with another human being.

The greatest title a person could have for me is the title of human being.

And I think that's something to, that's something to be willing to be, to be willing.

I mean, it would be fine for me to live my life as a human being and I'm willing to be a human being.

And it's not that I think that's better than something else or preferred over something else. It's simply, I'm willing for that.

And that's really sums up the relationship that I have with people, for me.

And I think it would be a fair representation from their point of view, that our relationship is one of one human being with another, that of partners.

And then finally, that of friends.

The est training is delivered regularly in 46 cities across the United States and Canada, as well as in six other countries. For more information about the training or any of the other programs you heard about on this tape, you can write to and associates at 765 California street, San Francisco, California 9 4 1 0 8, or call area code 415-391-9911.

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