

## **Jeffrey Mishlove Interviewing Christina Grof**

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**JEFFREY MISHLOVE, Ph.D.:** Hello and welcome. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Our topic today is "Spiritual Crisis." With me is Christina Grof, who is author of *The Thirst for Wholeness*. Christina is also the co-creator of Holotropic Breathwork and the founder of the Spiritual Emergence Network. With her husband, Dr. Stanislav Grof, she has authored several books including *Spiritual Emergency*, *The Stormy Search for Self*, and *Beyond Death*. Welcome, Christina....

**GROF:** Yes. Well, I like to talk about both spiritual emergence and spiritual emergency. Spiritual emergence is a natural capability of every human being -- to emerge into their spiritual self, to emerge out of the sense of limitation as an individual into a more expanded sense of self, and that this kind of spiritual identity gives sacred underpinnings to a person's life. And so spiritual emergence can happen easily; for some people they might not even notice that it's happening, and after a period of five or ten years they look back and say, "I really have changed." Spiritual emergency is something else. This is spiritual crisis. This is a time when the experiences, when the physical states that you mentioned, when the insights come very rapidly, and a person sometimes in that situation has trouble coping with their everyday life, and for a while may even need to step away from some of their daily responsibilities to give attention to this inner process that's become very overwhelming....

**GROF:** ... The kundalini awakening is the context that I've been able to put many of my experiences into in order to understand it. It was a metaphor that works for me. When it started, it started for me with the birth of my first child. So there I was, in a hospital, lying on my back giving birth, and suddenly this enormous spiritual force got going in me. I didn't know it was a spiritual force at the time. It

felt like being out of control. It felt like there were a lot of tremors, a lot of strange breathing that started to happen, kind of in spite of my best intentions. And I was both excited and very frightened by what was going on. This certainly was not what they had taught us about in Lamaze childbirth preparation. And that's how it began. I've spoken with other women where this is true. This is not the only place that the kundalini awakening happens.

GROF: ... it also can be a kind of physical-emotional emergency in a way. I mean, it's a tremendous point of stress, and we've found out in our research into spiritual emergency that very frequently when this process gets going in people, whether it's a kundalini experience or some other form of spiritual awakening, it's at a time of stress or a time of loss, emotional or physical stress. It may be when a person has a disease, or just has had an accident, or is grieving the loss of a job or a mate or a parent. Then this awakening can start. And as you say, it has very physical form sometimes....

GROF: ... let me say something about the kundalini. You mentioned it -- that the yogis see the kundalini, the spiritual energy, as feminine, that it is available to all people, that it lies dormant in all people, and that through spiritual practice or through contact with a teacher or just spontaneously, that suddenly this sleeping spiritual energy can be released through the system, and it travels through the system, kind of cleansing, opening the person to their spiritual self. It sounds very simple, but it can be very demanding when that happens. For me, I think that when this kundalini process got going I was very blocked, I was very resistant, there was a lot of cleaning out to do, and I was scared. So I kind of dug my heels and resisted the experiences much more than I wish I had, and I think that's part of what made it so difficult. I had wonderful support through it, but it was just my own resistance that made it difficult. There were a lot of physical pains in different parts of my body. It was almost as though, as the spiritual force, the kundalini, was hitting against different areas, trying to open it up, that it would result in pains of

**different kinds -- temporary blindness for a while, strange eye problems and headaches.**