

# Interview with Brian Murphy

# Breakthrough into Enlightenment

Addiction is regularly implicated in life-threatening problems faced by families, workplaces and communities. Faced with shameful, difficult feelings or a seemingly meaningless existence within a pressure-filled world, people become addicted to drugs, alcohol, relationships, gambling, running, television, shopping - the list is endless – in a fruitless search for relief. When enough has become enough and help is needed, the search for solutions can be difficult.

In today's treatment-oriented culture, people looking for help are faced with limited choices. There are plenty of programs - CBT, 12-Step, Rational Recovery, Harm Reduction and others – but they fall within a single 'rehab/counseling' model. The right choice can seem elusive.

Brian Murphy has been watching and working with addicts for a long time and now, after twenty-five years of searching (an impressive practicum) believes he's found a solution that works.

Beyond Rehab is geared to individuals struggling with addictions that need or want more than the current treatment community is able to offer.

"I think that what AA says is true," Murphy says, "that people need a spiritual awakening and everything else follows from that." The ultimate form of spiritual awakening, he says, is enlightenment: direct contact with self, others, nature and God unmediated by beliefs or culture. It is a state of freedom from Ego!

The best environment to experience enlightenment is a monastery, he suggests, and he has created a retreat that will reshape the monastic experience to fit the needs of addicts.

His program is rooted in minimalism and silence. Drawing from his extensive monastic experience, he has created an environment within which clients undergo a 'stripping away' process that takes away addictive attachment to environmental dependencies are taken away. They are "plunged into a kind of spiritual emergency" he says, "and forced to go within themselves."

This can be a frightening prospect. In fact, Murphy describes his program as being similar to a near death experience - serious stuff, harkening to the most life changing of all human conditions.

Those with the courage to sign up can expect to participate in some interesting and challenging activities. Letting go of intellect and beliefs and facing one's own death can be terrifying. So there has to be a payoff.

Murphy promises nothing short of effortless happiness; he offers the freedom that comes with the ability to manage the stresses of daily living.

Freedom is the payoff, he says, "freedom to simply be in the present moment, freedom to deal with crises within lives and families." These are serious triggers for relapse and people who have done his program have emerged with profound insight into their addiction. They are able to cope with codependency, shame and trauma. They have a new capacity for

love and compassion and their level of tolerance to frustration is magnified significantly. They seem to be possessed of a calmness that makes them less likely to react to situations and crises.

**And Brian Murphy has the credential to back his promise.**

Born in Scotland, he had a crisis of conscience and a 'profound spiritual awakening' in his twenties. He was called to become a Catholic Monk where he engaged in meditation and other spiritual practices before being trained as a psychotherapist and art therapist. Art allowed him to see some of the deficits within the church, he says, and he felt a need to reconcile what was good and healthy in that environment with his knowledge of Art Therapy and Psychotherapy

He spent many years in the UK working with addicts - first with homeless addicts in shelters and later as chaplain in a maximum security prison where he was exposed to drug addicted murderers awaiting trial. He worked with these men post trial and through their suicidal grieving periods.

After working with these extreme cases, he was approached by a Twelve Step Rehab to become their chaplain. Finding he had no way of bringing his theology to these clients, he started using art to help them communicate their image of God. He found art offered a common language to communicate spiritual ideas and feelings. "I was trained in working with Catholics," he says, "and a lot of these men were not Catholic. Art was an immediate hit and allowed me to bring spirituality to people of all faiths."

**Beyond Rehab is the culmination of those experiences.**

The retreat is expensive to operate, he says, and comes at a cost that not everyone can afford. Three, five, seven, ten and twenty-one day retreats are offered for people with varying periods of abstinence. Each member of the group pursues his or her own personal journey within the group while benefiting from the tremendous power of the collective.

"What we're doing in the workshops is what is normally done on one's deathbed. In the last 36 hours of life, when we are facing our death – vulnerable and dying and completely alone – we should be doing this process. I'm saying we can do it in advance."

"It's about knowing by unknowing," Murphy quips. "That is the road to spiritual awakening. Stripping away that which we think we know about ourselves leads to a true realization of who we are.

People need to realize this is a life-long journey and follow up retreats and 'tune-ups' will be necessary. Further psychological and spiritual work needs to be done. People come away with a strong spiritual enlightenment and become extremely compassionate and connected to their families and friends. Through their example, they will often spur loved ones to make changes in themselves.

There is no question of Murphy's commitment to his process. He's tried and proven his methods and states he willing to do it for the rest of his life. At 44, he attributes his insight to grace and spiritual awakening. He has developed the spiritual maturity to hold the space for his clients, holding their disillusionment, despair, anguish and frustration. With his advanced Psychotherapy training, he is able to withstand the holding of all that, using the spiritual tools he has learned and tapping into the collective unconscious.

This is 'Zen for Dummies,' he smiles. The art process ensures that people will journey through the consciousness. A short cut to years of formal meditation training can be achieved in a few days!