

# Is this IT?

## An interview with Peter and Penny Fenner

**Sue:** Do you find with the number of courses that you have run, that there is a difference in how you're presenting your perspective?

**Peter:** Generally we are more honest when offering the program in that we are not presenting it in such a conventional way.

**Penny:** One of the things that happens when we are running an introductory evening or giving a public talk is that we begin to demonstrate what the course is about, rather than merely describe it. For example we might start to dismantle someone's interpretation of their problem right there and then. They can then have a sense of, even an experience of, the spaciousness of our perspective, in contrast, say, to getting involved in a conversation about whether or not the course is going to help them be stress free.

**Sue:** Spaciousness is a good description.

**Peter:** For example, if someone at an introduction event asks whether or not the course can fix them up, I often reply that I am not concerned about whether the course will fix them because the course isn't operating within the assumptions that they need fixing up or that something is wrong with them.

Also we don't suggest that people are absolutely fine as they are either. We neither assume that something is missing nor do we assume that people are complete. At this point people can either connect with what we are saying or find us confusing or irrelevant. If they can't relate to what we are saying then they tend not to express further interest, which is completely appropriate. After all, if they are weighed down in a strong belief about needing to be fixed up and we don't dance to that tune, if we don't collude with them, that person will undoubtedly be dissatisfied and may not complete the course. At the very least it won't be a clean decision whether or not to stay in the course, whether or not to complete it.

You see, for as long as we view the participant as someone who needs our help, we contribute to their being stuck in the role of needing outside assistance. We would be joining hands with them in supporting a limiting identity. So the contribution we make comes through relating to their capacity to be confident, autonomous and self-reliant. You could say we help them by not relating to them as people who need our help.

**Sue:** It seems to me, particularly when I reflect on your many, many years of involvement in Buddhism and the rigor of your present work, that it requires something of a quantum leap in terms of how we approach our spiritual and psychological development?

**Peter:** Yes. We are not offering the course as an entry level program in personal development or meditation. In fact, I don't think there is anything quite as rigorous as this work in terms of removing conflicting or dualistic beliefs. It is clearly not for everyone. However, for people who are ready for it, who can appreciate the movements of this type of work, it does a really neat job of moving them through and beyond their conflicting beliefs.

**Penny:** For many people, though, the course doesn't show up as an opportunity because we don't provide the comfort and security of a belief system that promises unending happiness. We don't seduce people with the promise that they will become totally integrated and never experience suffering again. We don't relate to people in terms of needing assistance, salvation or redemption, and this can be terrifying. People can, quite naturally, be frightened and reluctant to move beyond the need to continually confirm their existence through struggle and suffering. For this reason we never push people to do our work. Nor do we go around broadcasting the tremendous benefits of doing our course. We simply make it available for people. This way people who will benefit from the course end up doing it.

**Sue:** Do people misinterpret your perspective?

**Peter:** People can misinterpret the perspective of Radiant Mind because it is so different from the usual way of thinking. We are ongoingly correcting misinterpretations. It is one of our major roles. If we talk about the final perspective of our work prematurely, people hear it as nothing which it isn't. It's not nothing. It's only interpreted as nothing because people are still trying to understand it. They figure that it is totally different from anything else they have known which has a purpose, a highly defined methodology and a definite goal. So when we distinguish ourselves from that, people are prone to think that it is the opposite.

**Penny:** It is easy for people to slide into a misinterpretation of what we are saying as being the opposite of how they are presently operating and functioning. Yet we are not suggesting that people should be doing anything different from what they are doing. Nor are we suggesting that what they are doing is right or correct.

**Sue:** It seems to me that language is very inadequate in describing intrinsic freedom. It's like skating. We sort of slide from here to there and back again. Do you find language limiting?

**Peter:** If we are overly concerned about not contradicting ourselves then language can be a problem. At times we seem to be challenging people's interpretation of reality or spirituality by adopting an opposite point of view. Hence my explanation to clarify the context within which we say that nothing is missing. People will impute that we have a philosophy along the lines of: "You can't be doing anything different from what you are doing. Things are just as they are." Something along those lines. Yet that's not our position. It only seems or sounds as though we are saying that.

**Sue:** Yes, it is the language because as you start to get into description, you start to go down these little tubeless tunnels. (laughter).

**Peter:** Well, the tricky thing is that from time to time, we do say there is nothing to get. However, the only reason we say this is as a correction to the position that most people come from, which

is that there is something they have to acquire in order to be fulfilled. We provisionally offer a contrasting viewpoint in order to make a correction or adjustment to the belief that there is something to get.

What can also happen is that people listen to the perspective that nothing is missing and then use that interpretation to avoid or escape the real challenge that this work involves. From a certain perspective, it does involve work. It requires rigor, honesty and discipline to observe and be attentive to what we are doing. If people are fearful of discovering their beliefs systems, and seeing the impact they have on their lives, they can latch onto the phrase that "nothing is missing" and use this as a reason to escape the challenge of becoming aware and awake. They reason, that if nothing is missing, then there is no point in doing our work. However, in so doing they fall victim to their own fears.

**Sue:** They reject the challenge in favor of feeling comfortable and secure.

**Peter:** Yes, people sense that there is something of value in our work but their fear overcomes them. Then they negate the first experience by using the idea that nothing is missing as an escape route.

**Sue:** Does this occur in the course itself?

**Peter:** Yes, it can. Also, in the course people can begin to talk the talk. They will try and talk themselves into being present by thinking "This is it. There is nothing else to do other than what I am doing." They begin to believe that they are being present simply by telling themselves: "Oh well, there is nothing to get. I am just experiencing what I am experiencing." However, this is not being present to the immediacy of what is occurring for them. This is merely believing that they are being present.

**Penny:** In fact, talking the talk produces a numbness, a tranquilization of the current reality. If you are simply being present there is absolutely no reason to talk the talk. It just doesn't occur.

*If you are interested in the **Radiant Mind Course**, a **Free Audio CD** interview is available of Peter being asked about the Course, what the unconditioned mind is and how people can tell if they are experiencing nondual awareness.*