

Find Your Voice, Change Your Life

PODCAST



*With Special Guest
Dr. Gary Wohlman*

**Hosted by
Dr. Doreen
Downing**



Transcript of Interview:

Find Your Voice, Change Your Life Podcast

Podcast Host: Dr. Doreen Downing

Episode #79 Dr. Gary Wohlman

“Moments of Breakthrough”

(00:35) Dr. Doreen Downing

Hi, this is Dr. Doreen Downing. I'm the host of the Find Your Voice, Change Your Life podcast. I'm a psychologist. I always like to invite people who have stories or who have lives that have been sometimes complicated, and challenged, and part of what they get to do here is not only tell the challenges and talk about it, but they get to tell us how they broke through, how they found their voice, how they get to be more of who they get to be out in the world. Today, I am so happy to— I'm already feeling a little teary here. Introducing you to one of my first coaches ever when it comes to overcoming my fear of public speaking, this is Dr. Gary Wohlman. I'll tell you a little bit more. But I first want to say, Hi, Gary.

(01:31) Dr. Gary Wohlman

Hey, Doreen. Across the waters, time, and space. 20 years since we first met. My goodness, so much has happened.

(01:44) Dr. Doreen Downing

Transformation was begun with my first class with you. I have so much— I almost want to have my whole show talking about you. I want to share a lot. You sent me a bio. I want to say a few things.

“Dr. Gary Wohlman has devoted his lifetime as an archaeologist of the soul, liberating stored layers of energy, communication, and expression, buried within the physical, emotional, and creative layers in the landscapes of our bodies.” Already, you can tell the kind of poet he is. I just read the first paragraph of what he wrote.

Like I said, I want to tell you more about what my experience was. To introduce you, Dr. Gary, I had speaking, terrible speaking anxiety, even though I was working on my PhD in Psychology. I’m not going to go into the story about how I realized I needed help. But what I loved about the first class I went to with Dr. Gary is that he talked about Michelangelo, and that Michelangelo knew how to sculpt the angel in the marble because he saw it in the marble. That’s what I felt.

I felt like I was getting my PhD. I came to Dr. Gary, and he saw my angel. Now isn’t that something that is transformative, or could be transformative, for so many people who feel like they have layers of image, layers of how they should be and acting like they’re going to get the awards, which I did get a lot of awards, but my little beautiful, brilliant self was inside, and you saw it.

You have processes. I’m going to say little things, or a couple of things about it. Because the pandemic has been so challenging, somehow you’ve found ways to work with people physically, emotionally, spiritually online, and I want to tell people to go to your website, Garywohlman.com. Is that the place you want to send people?

(04:19) Dr. Gary Wohlman

Garywohlman.com will bring you to all of my services, the online experiences, where you can see that I do a lot of hands-on even when I’m not physically touching. It’s still a *visceral* experience, not just a visual, but a visceral experience so people can feel what we’re saying. The shifts happen almost instantaneously. Absolutely right what you’re saying. I want to get to the moment, too, because I can’t forget it and I know you’re thinking about it, where what I’m doing with my hands where you were in a box and you broke out of it. Please share that with us and I’ll go deeper as well. You know what I’m thinking? That moment at the retreat [which Doreen attended]

(04:59) Dr. Doreen Downing

Absolutely, one of the techniques that I think really broke through and helped me break through a fear was me. What Dr. Gary does is he really works in a spontaneous way. It's so creative. It's not like do this and that and this. He's so improvisational. He takes what's in the moment and helps people break through. He asked us, each one of us in the class, to play out, act out our fear. I took myself into a deep, dark place. Very tight, tight, tight, tight, tight, tight. I was asked to get even tighter in this box. Oh my gosh. You get to a point in your fear that you extreme it so much so that you can't do anything else but get to the point where I can't take this anymore. I don't know how you do this. I'd like to have you explain it because there was an instant break out of that box. As soon as I did, like you've just said, instantaneous, my whole body, I'm alive, I'm here, I don't have to hide anymore. How did you do that?

(06:27) Dr. Gary Wohlman

Exactly. It's a very simple process. Part of it is a tool that I've developed using improvisational techniques that over the years have become refined. The specific one I'm thinking of is called the **double extreme** technique.

This one is to give people permission to do whatever they're doing to hide, to look away, to be afraid of facing or being seen or heard by others, to exaggerate what they're already doing to the given permission, as you did, to be in this, as you described, the box and how you broke through is a very simple thing.

Sometimes people exaggerate being in a box, and then coming out and being in tighter box, and even coming out more, and being in the tightest box and then bursting through.

But the thing that I did with you, I remember, I believe I asked permission if I could help holding you in the box. No one likes being held down. Once you were feeling this pressure of "I don't like the feeling at all", it was taking over the defence system that you were already administrating on your own. In your psyche, just like what you just said Doreen, "I can't stand this anymore." One of the tools that I use when I'm teaching in the presentation coaching and speaking is to have people use this affirmation, say this after me, "People are more interested to hear my message..."

(07:59) Dr. Doreen Downing

People are more interested to hear my message...

(08:03) Dr. Gary Wohlman

"...Than I'm scared to share it."

(08:05) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

“...Than I’m scared to share it.” Wow!

(08:07) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

That’s the truth. Always. It’s the truth. What happened in that moment, when I held you in with your permission to hold yourself in that small box, the psyche was saying, “I don’t like being held down,” and you burst out of it. That moment of breakthrough was when you went “I can’t take this anymore”, the pain of the seed in the ground was too strong, so then it began to sprout and grow roots, and shoots. That’s the process that I use in that particular tool with you. The **double extreme**. Very powerful and effective.

I remember one time, it’s a similar example: I was in New Zealand. I was traveling teaching a large group. In New Zealand, there were a lot of people who are very refined and articulate. You may know from having visited there yourself. At the same time, there’s a certain kind of polite, reserved, held upper lip.

When it came to one person’s turn, I said, “Okay, who’d like to have a turn next to face your fear of public speaking?” Someone raised her hand kind of shyly. I said, “Well, what is it with you?” And she said, “Well, I just don’t like to be seen. I’d rather hide behind that curtain.” I said, “Oh, please do. Please hide behind that curtain.” So, I went with the moment [following her lead]

Now she is hiding behind this curtain. The next thing I did, again, very carefully-conceived, staged, and planned, actually, even though it was [spontaneous] in the moment. I said, “Okay, well, let’s move on to our next person.” She didn’t like that at all. Because now she felt like she lost her turn. She pulled herself out of the curtains then said, “Wait a minute. How about me? I want to be seen.” There you go.

(09:29) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

About 20 years later, I was here in Australia at a five rhythms movement meditation workshop, and I was talking with different people on the break. There was a woman who turned to me, I don’t know how it came up. She said, “I used to live in New Zealand. I had a really powerful experience. At one time, a guy named Gary,” my name, “I came to work with a group, and I was hiding behind a curtain, and I couldn’t stand it, and I broke free.

Now I teach women all over the world public speaking.” Are you serious? This is 20 something years later, and how things turn around. These tools

are very tangible, physical, measurable, and you see what I do. I've been a transformational body therapist all my life, and diver, gymnast, acrobat and court jester. I'm very much into the physicality of experiencing. Because of that, these shifts are multi-sensory. They're seeing they heard their self. The audience reflected. There are also tears and what I'm going to remember the most from now on. We stage a new *modus operandi*, a new self-talk, that then moves as a moving from your left to your right, through space and time, through to the future, in a way that people remember the new self-talk as the default program they've returned to rather than the old litany. Because of the **multisensory encodement** of this new self-talk into the muscle memory, they don't return to the old programs. That's how this method works. That's the essence of it. Right there.

(11:49) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

Well, having experienced it, I do know the power of it. Here I am also, whatever 20 years later working with people on finding their voice, and here I've got this podcast, "Find Your Voice, Change Your Life." Before we go back and talk about some more of the, well, some of the magic. I would say **you are a magician who is a transformational coach.**

But I want to know just a little bit because that's what a lot of people do. You didn't start out, you didn't come out into the world and say, "Hello, world. Here I am to do all this transformational work." Because what happened to you early on is what formed you. What seems to be our greatest challenge, becomes our greatest gift, I guess you might say. Tell us a little bit of early history. We don't have to spend a lot of time.

(12:45) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Yes. For those of you who want like a deeper dive and understanding about this, either visually or audibly, I do also have this in my book, which you can see.

(12:58) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

[Reading the title on the book cover] "Get up, stand up for your life." Is that what it says?

(13:01) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

"Get up, stand up for your life." This is my book—

(13:04) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

Oh, isn't that a song?

(13:07) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Yes, well, it's similar. I always heard *these* words. But the real words were actually, "Get up, stand up for your rights." But anyway, it's the same. Taking a stand of command in your land. In this book, there's a chapter that talks about all the different ways to assist people in **transforming our relationship with our bodies, our partnerships, our communication, our creativity, our giving back to humanity.**

Here's what happened with me, and I have this in one of the chapters here: I was born to Russian Jewish parents in New York City. My mom and dad were upwardly striving, beautiful souls. My dad became one of the foremost most successful private chartered public accountants, CPA, ever, in New York City, very successful. He had the gift of gab, theatrical, beautiful caring for people. My mom was an artist. What happened was, they wanted me, as all parents do, to have the best in life, and because I was so creative, and so much into my body, and acrobatics, gymnastics, playfulness, and improvisations you mentioned, I had a very different view of life and I could not fit into any kind of a square if I even tried to. My mom when she painted a painting of me when I was in her womb, she painted four skiers walking up on a hill and a fifth skier way up ahead on a hill, creating new frontiers. I was in her womb when she painted this painting. The one thing I wanted when she passed away was this painting, because I have this feeling of stepping out from the crowd, launching new horizons, creating new pathways, to get to the answer to your question, in the simplest, shortest, strongest, which is one of my two techniques.

(15:05) Dr. Gary Wohlman

Mom did not encourage me to be artistic. She wanted me to be the intellectual professional that she thought I better fit into that mould and run a company or whatever. It was not in my heart to do that. I remember one day, I created [what I felt to be] a beautiful piece of art, I told her, "Mom, look at this beautiful piece of art." I was really young. "Oh, that's great, honey, how's your math going? How are your homework assignments going with what really mattered? [my mom inferred]."

From that moment on, I had so much pain about sharing anything with her. I felt like, why even bother. she was going to make an interpretation of me having to go into certain things, telling me what I should believe. No, my art is a big part of what was repressed.

he held back from me, and so did my father, that my mom's great grandfather played clarinet for the Tsar, and his brother was also creative as an artist, playing the violin in Russia. They didn't tell me till I was in my 30s - well after I had been applying and not getting into medical school, well after I had become the court jester living in Hawaii. It was in my 30s that I found out how creative my past was, not how professional and

intellectual, [even though] I can do all that. I [received] the award in private high school for the one student who had the best combination of both athletics and academics. That's been my whole life.

(16:34) Dr. Gary Wohlman

That broke me through: By finding all these visceral, creative, acrobatic, explorative ways of expressing myself through painting, through dancing, through singing, through poetry - as you mentioned. That became my, as you also mentioned, saving grace, the breakdown of "I can't fit into this mould" became a breakthrough.

Now, just like you and that other woman 20 years ago, I am a model for, as well as a stand for, and a facilitator and catalyst for people breaking free of holding themselves back. That was how it happened. That's how I broke free of my repressed upbringing, where I was directed in a certain channel that I had to break out of my own box, out of that box, into something far more multi-dimensional, multi-sensory.

Now, I stand alone with what I do, because there's no one that does quite the multi-sensory elements with the creativity and improvisation, and all the five or ten different tools and techniques I use for every one that also can be seen on my other website, Doreen, which is **mypresentationdoctor.com** that has videos of these breakthroughs, showing 20, 30, 50 examples of how people similarly have broken free of these patterns of pulling back to move forward in their most fulfilling life direction.

You see what I'm doing with my hands online? To answer your question about that too earlier, since 2020, I have been focusing more online, I've been able to reach people like yourself, people all over the world that I haven't before, and the opportunity to use hands, to use gestures has led to a new specialty for me, which is transforming your message with your body, the visual, the physical, and your voice, so the Vocal, the Visual, and the Verbal, the three V's of communication coming together. Some of this sounds familiar to you.

(18:52) Dr. Doreen Downing

Absolutely. You said you did the three V's; you did the three V's now. That's what I mean about you with words. You're just so unique. There's nobody like you at all, that can help people break through in a more full and quick way. I just want to make a comment, though, because even in the past— your spirit was always there. That's partly what this podcast is about, that is, helping people remember and to claim those original "Hello, world, here I am," and whatever it was in how it was and not given

permission or welcoming into the world or support. Thank you for going back and sharing those details.

(19:47) Dr. Gary Wohlman

It's such a joy to share this with you, in particular. For some reason, I have one other moment in time that happened over the years. I remember this was I believe in Marin County, where you are now, where I lived for many years just north of San Francisco.

There was one moment I remember, working with a series of nurses because I had done so much work in psychiatric hospitals with my body therapy and teaching springboard diving to mental patients and so on.

There was one nurse, I remember, in a particular session that I was leading, who stood up in front of the group and said, "We women have, even though we may have the same abilities, and the same gifts are often not paid as well [as men]." We're kind of pulling back. This is historically how she saw things and not my view. But that was her view. Here are the keywords, "We've **been held back**." I've been held back. It doesn't matter, women, men, whatever – [We can all relate to this] "I've been held back." I want to get that image of what to do next. I [often] can see the next scene.

Next scene was, I asked her permission, just like I asked you for permission, to hold her back. I said, "Can I hold your shoulders back?" You can have a physical experience. Instead of you doing it, I'll do it for you or with you, so I started pulling her back. She said, "Yes." [giving me permission] "We've been held back all these years", [she said while I literally was holding her back]. She didn't like this [the sensation of being held back by me]. Once she broke free, at that moment, in just that one moment, I asked her to [repeat] and do it [again] in slow motion and she remembered the sensations of breaking free. It only takes an instant, but with that instant comes a new self-talk. *"It's safe for me to be on stage and all myself authentically on stage on all platforms of my life."* It then becomes something that others can also benefit from. One person making the breakthrough, the entire room also has that same benefit. How powerful a moment was that!

(21:49) Dr. Doreen Downing

Oh, it is. Though the two things that I just got from you are, the breakthrough is something that then what I know that you do is how you anchor it in the moment physically for the person. You pointed to your forehead and said there's an instant kind of shift. But it's not just the shift, there's something that you do to have the person claim it or something.

(22:18) Dr. Gary Wohlman

That's right. I'll explain that now. Let's say that that woman had just broken free. I will then anchor it. I say to her, "Let's go back to what just happened. Let's do this in slow motion. Okay, I hold myself on your shoulders. You're saying I'm tired of being held back. What's the first thing you remember that you can recall when you come back to this moment." She said, "I could breathe easier. There's a feeling of relief about what I've been tensed up about all these years." I say, "Good. That's the physical sensation. What's the difference in the self-talk?" "Oh, the [old] self-talk was, 'I'm more comfortable in the familiar zone of being held back'. From now on I will always remember, I feel freer when I'm breathing easier and moving forward." Then I may ask her to turn that into an affirmation, she might say, as other people have over the years, please say this with me, so that you can participate, you who are listening, "The more I move forward towards my audience..."

(23:38) Dr. Doreen Downing

The more I move forward toward my audience...

(23:42) Dr. Gary Wohlman

"...The more my audience listens to me."

(23:46) Dr. Doreen Downing

...The more my audience listens to me.

(23:50) Dr. Gary Wohlman

I take the moment of breakthrough and I turn it into something creative that connects the mental, emotional and spiritual elements with the physicality. Physicality moving forward, and physicality moving towards audience. So, it becomes something instantly memorable, and that's why it becomes encoded in the muscle memory, and they return to that as the new default program, rather than the old litany. Because we've, as I like to use this, and I knew I'd say this word today, **multi-sensorising** their experience, so they don't remember it, but the physical sensations of breaking free from holding back, they may remember from the breathing or the new self-talk, a combination of what they're able to recall in their physical body, in their emotional state, in their mental words, and I often have them say it in the fewest words, and then sing it, whisper it, have the audience repeat it to them, so someone might say, "It's safe for me to reach you with my message," even if they don't believe it. One of the people in the audience, if it's me as the coach online, I'd say, "Yes, it is easy for you to reach us, me, now being your audience, and I noticed that in particular, because your eye contact is strong, your hands, and your movements are fluid. You have a beautiful smile on your face." We connect again the visceral, the physical,

the visual, with the mental, and that is the sandwich that makes it indelible. That's the magic of it all.

(25:31) Dr. Doreen Downing

Like I said, magic, magic, magic. Oh, my goodness. Well, we've got lots more examples, lots more we could unfold here for people to get excited about you. But we're coming to the end, so I want to make sure that we get to say goodbye in a way that is memorable for our listeners. Dr. Gary, how do we do that?

(25:59) Dr. Gary Wohlman

How do we do that? You're asking me a question of how to make this last moment memorable? I think the best way to make this memorable would be to have the people who are listening to this live podcast right now, be able to say something yourself that you can remember, that you can put on and practice on your own as well. Here's what I would recommend. Let's do the thing that I just said last because it stands out in my memory. That is, let's say these words out loud even if you don't believe it, okay? Say these words, and let your gestures make pictures of these words at the same time that you're saying it. The words are, "It's safe for me..."

(26:53) Dr. Doreen Downing

It's safe for me...

(26:57) Dr. Gary Wohlman

"...To reach you."

(26:59) Dr. Doreen Downing

...To reach you.

(27:03) Dr. Gary Wohlman

"...With my message."

(27:05) Dr. Doreen Downing

...With my message.

(27:07) Dr. Gary Wohlman

Notice, even as you said that with beautiful pausing, and presence and spaciousness with your words, and your gestures, and your sound. The three V's of communication, verbal, visual, vocal. But you who are listening or practicing this statement, this one simple statement, [perhaps] it doesn't feel congruent. Let's say your words are saying "it's safe for me." But your your hands, your gestures are going like this. No, it's not safe for you. What we want to do is then train, [through] joyful discipline, the body to match, to

make pictures of the words that you're saying, so that what you're **showing is what you're telling**, rather than you being a talking head.

Now, one way of doing that, first, let's do the opposite. Let's do a Monty Python version of the same statement. You don't believe it at all. Let's do something that covers your face, whatever it is. I might do this version of it. Okay, so this is me adding the velocity of "ridiculousity" to my presentations, I'm going to go like this. I'm acting a bit, but not really, because in the exaggeration is the pain of being rejected, of being tormented, and not being seen all these years. Please say that with me now, as though you didn't mean it, you who are listening. Ready? I'll say it first, and you do your version. "It's safe for me to reach you with my message." Go ahead.

(28:50) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

It's safe for me to reach you with my message.

(29:00) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Exactly. So no, it couldn't be when you're doing that. But the whole freedom, to see that the freedom of doing what you're already self-conscious of doing gives you the ability to go, so what? Who cares? Now we do the opposite because you've given yourself permission to do what doesn't work. Now, we can say the same statement more easily. That then allows the physical gestures, the vocal voice, and the words to match up.

Now notice how much easier it is to say it as though you really do believe it. Here we go. Slow down a bit and have the hand, the mouth, the upper body because we can't see more of each other than that this instance, make a picture of what you're saying. I'll do it again. My version of it. You don't have to do it like me, but your version of what looks like what you're telling so I'm going to do it. It's safe for me to reach you with my message. Go ahead. Your version.

(30:05) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

It's safe for me. It's safe for me to reach you with my message.

(30:15) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Exactly. Again, that's a little bit over the top and exaggerated than the other extreme, so when we do the double extreme technique, what we will do is, first, this exaggeration of what you're already doing, then the opposite, and then the best of both, because there may be something that allows you to have bravado in your movements and sounds, those sorts of things that have gentleness of combining. The power of being held back is that there's a certain reserve and presence that comes before you even say a word.

We combine what wasn't working because there's some elements of that that actually have strengthened it. The power of the unconscious to hold on to anything, whether it's a familiar thought that doesn't serve you, still has power in it.

We're showing ways to evoke power, majesty, magnificence, illumination, and tapping into one's deepest intuition. You asked me a question, what are you going to remember the most in what happened here today, so we can have a good ending moment with Dr. Gary?

I think what I can do is offer a gift to people who are watching. What I could do is offer for people who are watching that they can have a 15 minute, 20 minute, half an hour zoom session with me, with my compliments, to take you who are listening to another level. Then, whether you're working with Doreen, or you've never seen her, or may never see us again, you'll have these tools. I also have lots on this website, **www.mypresentationdoctor.com**. Perhaps you can write that one down. Even more than the Garywohlman.com [website], [this one] has all these pictures and videos of people making breakthroughs. What to remember the most? What are you going to remember the most about this interview?

(32:06) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

Well, I think two things. When I asked you to give something to the audience, and you ushered them into an experience, and you taught something right then and there, so anybody who's listening to this episode has learned from you already today. I loved being able to be— Two things about what I loved about today with you is I'm in awe of the way words flow out of you. It's like the natural movement of words that dance and play together. The second thing is I got to play myself. I wasn't just hosting a guest. Thank you.

(33:00) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Beautiful. What a way to connect after two decades that we haven't really communicated much at all. Unbelievable. How wonderful to see you in the light of you, shining this light on so many others who are breaking free. I'm so proud of you. I'm at a different stage of life now myself. I'm happy to continue doing this transformational work, because it fills me with joy, fills me with a feeling of fulfillment to be able to do this.

I'm in Australia, you're in California, who knows what our world is going to look like in the next month, six months and longer? We're into some huge shifts. I'm so happy to be of service and to connect more with you too, Doreen. Such a delight. I've missed you. Somehow, California was where a lot of this started for me over the last 50 years. It's kept me young. Yes.

For those of you who are interested too, I would love to send an audio book version of my book to you. Please contact me. You can reach me at my website or drgary@garywohlman.com. I can also send you these examples, and you can practice on your own. It's all about practice on your own really, and then seeing how it makes sense. I mean that in every sense of the word. When you speak in this multi-sensory way, everything makes more sense in your life and in life itself. That's a good place to end and to start.

(34:39) **Dr. Doreen Downing**

Oh yes. Great words. Thank you.

(34:49) **Dr. Gary Wohlman**

Bringing in the new. Thank you, Doreen. What a blessing to connect anew with you and with all of those whose lives you touch. Bless you.