

## Transcript of Interview with Roger Tolle by Kit Heintzman

**Interviewee:** Roger Tolle

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 05/22/2022

**Location (Interviewee):** Charlottesville, Virginia

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcribed By:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we discussed include:**

Becoming in touch with the body through dance, working as a dancer, working in somatic body work, coming out as gay. Having witnessed the sexual revolution and the mainstreaming of birth control. Witnessing the HIV/AIDS crisis as a pandemic the government handled poorly before witnessing this government handle COVID-19 poorly. Learning to take care of this body, living the practice, connecting with the body, bodywork, and moving training. COVID messaging under Trump; Trumpism, populism, and election deniers. The personal lost opportunity for failing to engage fully in self-exploration, breath-work, and emotional expression during the pandemic. Experiencing depression for the first time during the pandemic. Pandemic isolation when living alone. Forming a small pod, navigating boundaries. Ups and downs in relationship with boyfriend. Going for walks. Teaching the Trager (R) Approach to Somatic Therapy for 30+ years across the world. Teaching in person during the pandemic pre-vaccination, draconian protocols and precautions. Working as a surrogate partner in sex therapy. Being honest with clients about the limitations of what one can offer. Canceling plans to go to Europe to teach in early 2020. Receiving early access to vaccination due to age; poor organization of rollout from the federal government and misinformation. Recently traveling to the Netherlands, changes in traveling after major events like 9/11 and COVID. Catching COVID while traveling in Switzerland. Mild symptoms. Complying to the others' safety requests. Enjoying being mask-free at any available moment. Handling the challenges of having an aging body, needing more medicine and assistive devices as aging; parents modeling aging well. The conflation of "healthcare" and "medical care". Hierarchies in the health care and wellness industries. The limits of health insurance; Obamacare, Medicare, and health as a human right. Discrimination in healthcare for women and trans people. Social pressure and activism, activism getting in the way of equanimity, being enough and being intentional with energy.

**Kit Heintzman 00:02**

Hello.

**Roger Tolle 00:04**

Hello.

**Kit Heintzman 00:06**

Can I please start by asking you to state your name, the date, the time and your location?

**Roger Tolle 00:12**

My name is Roger Tolle, and it is May 22nd Sunday 22. And it's 1:39pm here in the eastern time zone.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:25

And where are you located?

**Roger Tolle** 00:27

In Charlottesville, Virginia.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:30

And you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

**Roger Tolle** 00:39

Yes.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:41

I'd love it if you would just start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this, what would you want them to know about you and the place you're speaking from?

**Roger Tolle** 00:57

It's an interesting question. I have so many ready answers. I've introduced myself a lot to a lot of different people, maybe that's part of it. Quick background, I had a grew up in the Midwest, I had a first, you know, college experience of discovering that my body was really important for me. There was sort of the awakening of interest in the field of dance and a late discovery of that. And I just dove into it full, full on, ended up with a dance career, as a modern dancer, I spent 15 years is that sort of going along at the same time, I grew myself up. No, I was probably pretty naive, pretty sheltered. In a lot of ways in my early life, but I came to the eastern east coast, got a little job with a modern dance company in Boston, came out as gay really early on, in that period of time, basically discovered that I loved sex, and that was a good thing. And in the world of dancing, that was a pretty easy life, and pretty easy. To say, personal to professional connection, I didn't have to worry too much about being gay in that environment. And just sort of wandering here, about around the last decade, I've written a whole bunch of my sort of memoir, stories, I thought I was going to write a book, it didn't make it into a book, but there's a lot of good stories, and I've got a lot of them sort of uploaded onto my website just as as reference for people. And, and a lot of them concern this period of time when I was growing so much I was developing my my sense of my body and my sexuality, but also my emotional life and finding equanimity and myself and discovering that my body energy was a really important thing in all aspects of my life. And then also, in my early 30s, I started really diving into a world of Holistic Health. Broadly speaking, a lot of different things began to meditate. I began to meditate, I began to get classes in somatic movement therapy, I began to explore touch work as a profession. And it took over. It took about a five years transition professionally from being a dancer producing my own dance concerts in New York City to eventually having a full time private practice in the Traeger approach to somatic movement, education, and therapy. So that's a lot of where I got started professionally. Most of my professional career my professional identity is Trager, instructor, Treyger practitioner, I have see clients everywhere here at home in Charlottesville now. And also everywhere where I teach so and I've been teaching for the last now 35 years. I've managed to get myself around the five continents in 16 countries and taught hundreds and hundreds of students and that's been really, really exciting and rewarding. Not everyone I know loves a traveling lifestyle. But

I've I've really enjoyed being a traveler and still do this this year, oddly enough, after the pandemic hiatus, where everything had to shut down for a while and then gradually rebuilt itself and I sort of got out in front of that because I didn't want to be stuck sitting at home. That's its own kind of story, I guess. But just the professional sense that I needed to continue to teach this work, which doesn't feel like it's growing a whole lot. It may not be in existence in No, five years, or 50 years or five centuries, I don't know. But it feels like you know, I want to carry it on and keep moving forward as long as I can. So, yeah, I'm 71 now, I'm still teaching full time, I'm traveling anywhere from 150 to 200 days a year. That's a very busy life. Other things, I've had lots of good living in my body years and taking really good care of my body, because that's what I learned. And that's what I teach. And so I actually do it. So I'm moving more freely and easily, probably than most people in their 50s. And that's kind of the goal of the work that I'm teaching to. So it fits, I'm kind of living what I'm teaching. And that makes the teaching more. Let's say, more effective, I get more, sort of lands better on people. When I say yeah, I've been this, this is what it looks like, when you do this work for 30 years or more. You do it every day, and you engage with it and your body moves really easily. One of the pandemic related projects that I did, was just me just before the pandemic hit, I had decided I wanted to sort of chronicle turning 70 by videotaping me dancing again. Right? So I, you know, found a local videographer and, and we found a little studio. And anyway, we created a little, a little dance, for video sake only, and, and not as a kind of a commercial presentation or anything, but just I wanted to say yeah, this is this is what it feels like, for me, this is what it looks like, this is how I'm dancing. I'm really glad that I did that. It's kind of cool that you know that I have that little bit. And then a year later, after having the rug pulled out from under me, without being able to, you know, for months not being able to see any clients. And practically no friends and I don't live with anyone right now. So just being alone way too much and got kind of depressed and then went, oh gosh, what's happened to my mate when my way of moving? So I as the what we thought was the waning of the first wave of, of COVID. I thought oh, I'm gonna do another one of these little video projects and got the same videographer and the same composer to work with me and created a little video dance. This was just sort of in response to how the how I dealt with COVID. Like, how did I keep myself moving? What was I interested in? The first one was filmed in a little local dance studio, or yoga studio. And the second one was just filmed right here in my own place, because there was really no place to work. So anyway, that's a kind of, there's some other stuff in there that I I'm happy to talk about, but maybe you want to direct a couple of questions.

**Kit Heintzman** 08:37

I thought I'd just start by asking you to introduce more about the trigger technique.

**Roger Tolle** 08:43

Sure. The the name trigger comes from the man who developed it. i He was mid Dr. Milton Trager born 9010 died about 1990 was it 97 or 98, I forget 97 And I got a chance to study with him from 85 to 97. So over the last 12 years of his life, he taught all the way up to the end. And his work sort of was something he developed on his own out of a background. I think at least from what I understand a background of self exploration in movement and awareness and some with breath and then taking some training and becoming what we would today call it physical therapists. I think it was called he got a doctor's doctorate in physical medicine, and that which he then practiced mostly in the context of rehabilitation and then went back to med school. One of the things is kind of fascinating that he didn't decide he really wanted to get an MD until he was in his 40s. And by that point, at that point in the US, US universities didn't take new medical students that old. And so he went to Mexico and got enough Spanish to get do his, you know, his, his all of his doctor training down there, then came back to us and did a residency in psychiatry. With all of that personal exploration with his rehabilitation work that we've been

doing, we've been doing a lot of work with his hands in discovery had a really gift in the way he worked with his hands. Then the medical training and some and the investigations in psychiatry that working with the mind and he was one of the earliest students of the Mahara. Say this right. One of the Indian master teachers, the transcendental meditation was his thing, and came into that mind awareness of the expansiveness of the universe. So he brought a lot of different parts together, mostly just worked with it his in his own practice in Hawaii. That's where he ended up living, then came to the Esalen Institute. And when he retired, he was invited to sort of present his work at Esalen, in 1975. That caught the attention of some of the movers and shakers in the field, the developing field of human potential development, and that included different kinds of body work and process work and psychology and, and spiritual work and movement work and all kinds of stuff that people were just kind of exploring in the 70s. He caught the attention of some people, and particularly one very influential woman and Betty Fuller, who watched him do a demo and said, Milton, you've got to teach me what you're doing. I gotta learn, he said, I don't know how to teach. This is just something I do. You know, he's kind of a casual guy. And, and she said, Yeah, but somehow you have to like to figure out how to teach me well, okay, I'll give you a session, I'll explain what I do. Anyway. They figured it out. Well, a lot of it was hand on hand teaching, and kind of just here, this is what I'm feeling. Can you feel what I'm feeling? Can you do what I'm feeling? Can you create this, you know? And then she went off and practice some on her own with some of her colleagues. And when he came back to visit some months later, she said, you know, let me show you what I think I learned from you. And he said, Ah, okay, I guess it is teachable. So they, along with some others, developed a whole training program in what became known as the trigger approach to somatic movement, education in therapy, or there many different monikers their mind body medicine, psychophysical integration. There's also a word that he coined mantastic, which is the mental gymnastics the way he used his mind to shift the attention on different qualities and different experiences, both in what he was doing for himself, and, and developing himself the way you use Mind and Movement together as self development, but also the way he used those same kinds of explorations to assist or train or give clients the kind of new patterning that in his way of thinking about it is the the best or maybe the only way of reaching the unconscious patterns in mind. Many of us who do this kind of work now, not just building triggers approach to it, but many other approaches to somatic movement, work, are feeling very heartened that the newest of the neurologists are are sort of concurring that it is the way we physically move that eventually trains the, the unconscious patterns in the brain that they require that those patterns were built from birth or even before into how we organize ourselves in the world, how we experience the world, how we express ourselves out in the world. There's a lot of the work that I've studied Firstly, in dancing and with other somatic movement trainers, but also with milk and cheese. Gregor, in his approach about how our human life experience is built from various little movements that we do or don't do, how we do them, including the way we breathe and speak, swallow. Certainly the way we sit, stand walk are expressive more or less, more attention to a life of movement or more stationary pneus in our lives, all of those things that influence the patterning that, that organizes the brain. And in his view, if we can reach that patterning through movement, passive or active movement, it is possible possible to convince the unconscious parts of the brain that there's another option of a way of being, and particularly another option of a way of being that is lighter, and freer. That is more like a dance more like a song, more joyful, more open, more passionate, more expressive, more delighted, more delightful, kinder, more engaged, more connected, just the list of those adjectives can go on and on. So that's kind of broad sense of goals of the work, what my, what my clients, most of us see are, since I'm not medically trained, I see clients in the in the world that we now would call the context of bodywork, and movement training. So I'm that right now registered with as an in with an international organization, as well as with the National Association. As a somatic movement educator and therapist. That's the sort of broad thing. So some of my work is more therapeutically focused, some more educationally focused, some with individuals, and a lot because I love

working with groups. So a lot of it is in the professional retraining or training of professionals to become somatic movement educators and therapists. That that's, that's a lot. Again, there's a lot written about it. You know, and, and their video, I made a bunch of videos about this, this work to help more and more people kind of understand what that's all about.

**Kit Heintzman** 17:47

Tell me a little bit about your client base.

**Roger Tolle** 17:51

In Trager, my client base spans from teenagers to very old people, but really, the large majority are working adults. In this culture right now, without the fact that I can't, I'm not a medically trained person, I can't accept insurance payments. So people have to be able to afford my fees, I guess. I mean, I could also work for free but I don't do that so much. And I means that my clients have a certain amount of financial flexibility, that's one thing. They are wherever I am in the world. So right now I'm in Charlottesville for 20 years, I was in New York City and you know, the the location matters. And I would say a large portion of them are functioning adults, not in dire situations in one way or another. They just have something uncomfortable about their lives emotionally more often physically, my knees hurt. I'm supposed to get a hip replacement, rather not consider some way of working around that. I'm, I've got chronic low back pain and I'm trying to figure out how to sort of rebuild my body, doing a lot of exercise, taking yoga classes and stuff. And this is another way of helping me build back my ease and comfort in my body movement. Clients have included folks with migraine headaches, Parkinson's disease, the movement challenges and sort of mind based challenges of having an a debilitating disease like that. Multiple Sclerosis. Some of my colleagues work more in the arena of that neuromuscular diseases populations Um, I've found that because I teach a lot, and I'm on the road a lot, I really can't see clients that need twice a week, once a week real, real regular care. So part of my ethical statement to clients right up front is, I'm happy to work with you. But here's my limitations, I will be gone for a month, I'll be gone for a week, we'll just have to find times that work with our schedules. If that's okay with you, I'd be delighted to fit you into my my practice. So they are folks that are not real dependent on the work that I'm doing with them. And one of my goals is to help them move into more self independence and self care. So I want to teach a lot around how they can become more careful caring of themselves. I noticed my image, my image seems to frozen.

**Kit Heintzman** 20:59

It's still working on my end. And like that happens on this end, too. With Google meet, sometimes I will look frozen, but the recording keeps,

**Roger Tolle** 21:07

Okay.

**Kit Heintzman** 21:08

It's magic.

**Roger Tolle** 21:09

Magic, I'm going to not look at myself at all, I just put that way over to the side. Good.

**Kit Heintzman** 21:16

What was your day to day life looking like pre pandemic?

**Roger Tolle** 21:27

Yeah, it's a lot like what it looks like by now too. So, living here in Charlottesville, comfortable environment, I've got my little loft that supports me, I see my clients here. A day here, when I'm not on the road would be, you know, me getting my act together in the early morning with meditation and some movement play of my own, taking myself out for a nice long walk, often down by the river, or in the woods, and then coming back and seeing one two or three clients, I work in 90 minute sessions. And so in between the client work, I have a whole lot of and way more than I wish I had of time sitting at a computer doing the prep work or follow up work for all the travel and teaching and working with groups. End of day, if I'm or middle of the day, my boyfriend might come over and have lunch and we'll take a little nap. Because both of us are this age and napping is really lovely and and maybe dinner and an overnight stay with him a couple times a week. We don't live together. It's a complicated relationship. He still lives with his wife, and they have a farm out in the country. And that's that's what we've negotiated for the as our way of being able to be together. And for him to be able to figure out what how do we make that all work. Yeah, I think that's kind of my, my daily scoop. There's not a lot of social life that I do with a lot of people but I do have half a dozen pretty good friends dinner together or, you know, meet to go for a walk together. Certainly during the pandemic It was all my all my dates with friends were walking dates, you know, we just didn't feel comfortable being in indoor spaces. We were warned against that. So we said, Okay, we still want to meet and talk and it seems like it's pretty safe to if we're just outside and moving and you know, in fresh air. So do a lot of walking dates with friends. And then the yeah, then the other time. Yeah, when Sorry, just the other part of my life is the traveling and teaching. So a day in the life, you know, could be that I'd be on the road either heading two or heading back from or in residence for a few days or a week or more in a couple of different places. In the last decade have been teaching really frequently up in the DC area. No, I don't live there but my sister lives there. So I have a place to say and there's a welcoming School of Massage there that has been a place that has often sponsored workshops with me. Beyond that, though, the whole international trader community is my playground and I teach workshops. A lot in Europe. I go I've been going to Europe, usually twice a year for anywhere from a couple of weeks to a month, kind of setting up a tour of classes for myself over there. I've always been I've also over the years, you know, that's included five, four trips to Japan for trips to Australia. So those are far afield, even taught in South Africa ones, Egypt ones, Israel a couple of times, you know. So there's been a lot of variety, but it's mostly North America and in Europe is my gig. And because, luckily, back in college, before I got completely smitten with my dancing, I learned German and went and studied German in Germany. And so my German is pretty good. And so I can teach trigger classes in German now, which is kind of fun, fun for them. They liked hearing my bad American accented German, but anyway.

**Kit Heintzman** 25:57

When was the last time you travelled outside of the continent?

**Roger Tolle** 26:05

Last month, I was in the Netherlands for two weeks, in April.

**Kit Heintzman** 26:12

How was it, how did it feel to be traveling?

**Roger Tolle** 26:17

All about traveling has gotten more complicated starting with you know, 2001 9/11, and all the restrictions, the TSA checks at all the airports just having to get to airports sooner. And then with COVID now there's more layers of it being just a little more inconvenient. To me, it's just inconvenience, it doesn't feel scary. I've been reassured. As best that I know out that, you know, sitting in an airplane with a mask on. It's not on particularly but sitting in an airplane without a mask on isn't fun, either. What do I do when I fly with a long flight to Europe or something like that, I'm sitting on this plane watching a movie or falling asleep, I can do that with a mask on. So not such a big deal. Doesn't feel any more risky. I'm double vaccinated and boosted. So I have that reassurance, although, oddly enough, even though is that I was in Switzerland in January teaching and got COVID and ended up having to stay for an extra 10 days, which turned out to not be a huge hardship, except that I just had to cancel a whole lot of stuff, including missing my niece's wedding in Mexico. Because anyway, because I couldn't get there. I couldn't leave Switzerland. And I wasn't terribly sick. It's just you know, the whole regulatory stuff that has been very complicated, constantly changing. Most of my stress around travel has been the constantly changing landscape and trying to like figure out what can I do? What can't I do? Where do I have to go? How do I have to do this? And it not being really clear because it kept evolving? Both from the US government stuff about how you can come back into the United States, and all the different places that I might go, Netherlands had a different regulation than Switzerland and Germany than other places. And I'm thinking, God, it just so complicated to keep all that in mind. It's getting easier because more of the European nations particularly have kind of eased up on the restrictiveness of traveling, while still setting in place things like wearing masks is really helpful. But here there are lots of places you don't have to so when I went to teaching in the Netherlands, nobody was wearing masks and I wasn't either.

**Kit Heintzman** 29:09

Do you remember when you first heard about the pandemic?

**Roger Tolle** 29:18

Not any big event. Just I mean, read the paper fairly regularly and you know, reports of this COVID disease and how you know what's coming so it came in little dribs and drabs. And and we all go in and wonder what this is going to be and reports of first cases in the US and say, Oh, we better pay attention. Part of the thing was, it was during the Trump years and the whole all the messaging was so messed up. That's more of what I remember was how badly it was handled how, how many miscommunications or even false views were ramped up around in the internet and in news channels and. And but I don't have any particular like, oh, a personal first. Oh my god, there's this thing. No, it's just like, okay, yeah, we're gonna have to deal with this wonder how that's gonna happen. I taught my last class before the pandemic in February of 2020. And came back and I had scheduled April in a month of teaching in April in Europe. And when I got back here to Charlottesville sort of regroup and called the people I was going to that were organizing the classes in Europe, everybody was saying, it doesn't look like it's going to happen, because Europe was a little further along. And so they had started closing everything down, even before. I mean, I think of mid March is when everything closed down here in the United States. But over there, it was earlier. And so by mid February, my conversations with them were no, you can't come, you probably literally can't get in it. Or if you did, if you really, really did had to, you'd probably have to come in quarantine for two weeks, all by yourself in a hotel, if even that would be allowed. So there was it was obvious, no, I just have to cancel that whole trip. Complicated guide. So much of the of the first year, the 2020 you into 2021, with all these complicated conversations with class organizers and people in other places where I was going to go or wanted to go or had been invited to go. And I'd say okay, but we need a plan B and A Plan C and then trying to multiply all these different layers of plans into can we even do it? Oh, maybe we can if we do this, this and that. The first time

I got to teach during the pancake and Pandemic was late July of that summer, the school up in Maryland, up in DC, DC, Maryland straighter than border, the school up there was really needing to reopen to in order to survive, they had to actually have some, some students can, you know, start studying, and they put a lot of classes, you know, they tried to create a lot of classes online. I said, I can't teach this stuff online because it's hand on hand. It's in person. So we cancelled some stuff. But then they said well, okay, we're now starting to open the campus back up to some teaching. You'll everybody's gonna have to wear mask, we're gonna have all these hygienic practices in place. Everybody has to be vaccinated. No, no, we didn't have vaccination yet. Everybody, you know, it's like everybody has to just do all these little it seemed draconian, the kind of things we were asked to do. And, and totally redundant, you know, you cleaned yourself after cleaning this before cleaning that and clean yourself again, and change your shirt and wood feels horrible. And we had I had I remember, there was a phone call with the staff. And we were talking about all the like, getting all the protocols that we're gonna have to do just to be there. And I said, you know, one of the things that's really you, we're trying to make it safe, but we're also making it less safe. It feels less safe to all of us when we can't see each other thesis, because facial expression is one of the key ways we humans register, who feels safe to us, in any given moment. How we're going to we're going to create that feeling of safety. And I didn't know but I decided well, I'm gonna go try. And wearing a mask was exhausting for me because it's harder to speak through a mask and talk to a whole group of students. But the students were so grateful and so hungry for some opportunity to do something, to be playful to be engaged in movement to discover, you know, we don't have to take off any layers of clothes to do this work so you can touch straight through clothing. You can be wearing your mask and an apron and there You know, draped and you have to do all this stuff. But still, it feels good. Oh my god, this feels so much better. Let's do it. And so I said, Yeah, I guess I can start teaching this way. And over the course of the year, things got easier. And the protocols became a little less intense. And by 2021, I was asking the students, okay, now all of us have been vaccinated, and I'm, would you be okay with me, taking off my mask while I'm teaching so that you can hear me and see me better. And I can explain things and show things better. And then we will just be wearing masks when we're up close with each other. That became the one of the transitional points.

**Kit Heintzman 35:54**

What were your early reactions to the mid March moment?

**Roger Tolle 35:57**

Like a lot of people, I thought, I have to close all this stuff down. I can't see any clients. Oh, my God, I can't see any friends. This is gonna be a whole horribly hard month or two, right, a month or two, I really thought. What I didn't anticipate was that it was going to be a half year of really curtailing any contact with people and me getting really kind of depressed. Because I live for the contact for the joy of connection. And the feeling of moving with people and doing a lot of touch other human beings. And without that, it's just, my whole world felt like it was boring. Although I kept reminding myself, I feel like I'm in jail. But I'm incarcerated in luxury. It's a lovely place. Charlottesville, Virginia, nice little town. I have my own space, safe that way. But I'm also isolated that way. And I don't do well with isolation. First reactions weren't all that strong, just a lot of confusion. And what do we do and asking friends having phone calls with people saying what do we do? How do we do this? If you have to close my practice completely, or window how or bad?

**Kit Heintzman 37:33**

Did you end up closing the practice for a while?



**Roger Tolle 37:35**

Yeah. Four

**Kit Heintzman 37:37**

What did that look like?

**Roger Tolle 37:41**

Mid March to probably mid July or later. I didn't see any clients. I also wasn't teaching any groups. I wasn't getting the kind of joyful exploration of movement that was part of my habit. That was part of I would say that be a deep failing on my part not to use that time of separation from variability to go deeply inside and explore more of myself, which I've done. Over the years, I've taken big chunks of time to do that self exploration. I have moved my self through some of my biggest losses. By isolating myself, and doing lots of deep slow movement, inquiry inside, breath, work, lots of work with sound and movement to gather permission to let my body express all the emotional places that it needed to go in any given day. And there's a story this is wandering off a little bit but just that that I didn't do during the pandemic which resulted in me feeling just really yucky and you know, depressed, having a hard time sleeping, waking up. No, without feeling any energy to go through the rest of the day. Like Well, that's probably good for me to have experienced depression because I lived that was the first time but I'd experienced a lot of grief before grief and loss of my first really, really intense relationship which was a very short term one back in my 20s but it didn't matter. It was intense. And I just I went right into the dance studio and yelled and rolled and tossed myself on the floor and and put all that energy into my dancing moves rather quickly through that one. Had another relay kinship the last six years, just really the love of my life, who, when we separated, I just found my world felt like it had crumbled. And yet, I was still dancing full time. And we go into the studio and just move that grief through me. Like, my dance company at the time just got used to me, used to walking in the studio and finding me sobbing on the floor or, or just weeping or whatever, anyway, all of that stuff. And, okay, I just, this is how I process stuff. And then I lived with Michael for 13 years, and we moved down into Charlottesville. And when we finally decided we just couldn't hang out together, we couldn't keep working on this, it was too hard for us. And we needed to go separate directions. So a very amicable breakup, but it left me with a big empty space in my life. And I moved myself to a little cabin in the woods, thinking that would be really healing. It was but it was really hard because I was alone a lot. And again, just yelling into the woods in long long walks through doors, but also putting on music and dancing in my little space and rolling. Yeah, lots of expressive movement to move stuff through. So I didn't and then I didn't do a very good job when the pandemic hit. I didn't realize I needed to do it, I didn't realize I was missing it until way too late. And I would already already feeling the effects of being really kind of depressed at the isolation. I think that isolation has happened much worse for a lot of other people. I also, you know, feel grateful for the scent the luxury within which I was able to do it. And the fact that I had lots of resources, personal resources inside emotional resources to be able to handle it. That my current boyfriend didn't agree to keep seeing me and so I became part of his little COVID pod along with one other neighbor who had become a good friend and now it's like, Okay, two people, I now allow into my space. And they're very careful because they only go one other place and like, yeah, okay, taking care with all that and but doing it consciously and choosing choosing to really make it something an important thing I had to talk about it and think about

**Kit Heintzman 42:54**

How did you negotiate safety and boundaries and needs with your pod?

**Roger Tolle 43:05**

Well, my pod where people with whom I'd already negotiated over a decade or more, a lot of safety boundaries needs. Yeah. You know, when and where we contact each other, how we, how we talk about what the relationship is that it was consciously built with, with both of them. One just as a sweet friendship that was based mostly on cooking dinner together, and taking walks, where we would just share anything that was going on in our in our lives, and that didn't have so there wasn't any emotional boundary required there. Or it wasn't we were really, you know, me emotionally quite vulnerable, but we weren't in a winter trying to be in a lover relationship. So that made it okay, there are boundaries that neither of us were even approaching. But with Nick, it's been fraught and difficult from the beginning. With his particular personality, he has Asperger's, so you know, high functioning, high functioning autism, his own admission and my concurrence, it's true. That and that's, that's a lot of challenges already in a relationship. He misses social cues a lot. I can count on him not noticing a lot of what I am feeling or needing, and, you know, just I get what I get out of the relationship as best I can and know that it's really limited So that that's what has been these last few years, that has not changed a whole lot. That, you know, I had to remember to have some empathy for him and for my neighbor, Jennifer, about who they were having to have in relationship, while still, you know, engaging with me. So it's like everybody, but we were conscious about this, we were saying, okay, these are the people I see beside you. Okay, this is who I've been in contact with, that hasn't changed. I'm not, you know, I've not been risky. Any hit any of any of these ways. This is what I am doing. I go to the grocery store with my mask on, I do wash my hands all the time. But I, after when I started seeing clients, it was like, Okay, I'm going to start seeing clients with this masking protocol with my extra air filters with the extra the cleaning procedures. And I'm hoping you guys are still going to be okay with what feels like me opening up just a little, but really safely. And they were doing the same. So you know, looking for where and how they might expand their little boundary just a little bit. Okay, I can add in this or I can let myself have that. And then talking about are you okay with this that I'm doing? And there were times when we didn't agree in and go, Okay, well, what do we do about that? You know, is it really a risk? Let's talk about this. What's the reality of that? Is this more risky that I'm starting to see some people in this very controlled way which is more risky. Going to just go into the grocery store? I think that's more risky than my working with clients one on one in my private space with all the things that I'm doing to make it COVID safe. What do you think? And probably lots of people will end up talking about this, that there's so much time and effort spent in negotiating risk with everybody on all kinds of circumstances, some of it not friendly conversations. So mostly though I was it was in friendly context.

**Kit Heintzman 47:34**

Would you be willing to share an unfriendly moment?

**Roger Tolle 47:47**

Yeah, there were some really uncomfortable conversations with, with assistants that I had teaching assistants in the classes and when I started to say can I you know, can I take my mask off to be able to be seen more and then you know, conversation at the end of the day about house this person in that person was really uncomfortable with that level of risk taking and I'm going well, okay, but what should I do? I'm the after the fact here. And I just was, you know, pleading please don't you know, I just don't want to take away this this gift that I'm giving these people it just having to I don't know swallow my deep frustration, admit that we collectively are not as in a sacred place as I personally feel. But collectively, we're not and I just have to suck it up. And you know, be okay with all of this extra stuff that I really hate doing. So that felt some of that was really uncomfortable. Because in the beginning of some of this conversation, there was always often always already a kind of fraught energy of desperation, fear, confusion so much uncertainty and people respond to that uncertainty in different ways. And

when I just times even trying to say something like that there are, there are people in the community of students that have been who would have said, it's not as uncertain as that it really is risky and we should be ignorant in an internet, I have to have this certainty of everybody protected keeping themselves separate here, you know, don't touch me, and I'm going well, I can't teach you if you can't, if I can't touch you so or you're gonna have to just sit and watch if you feel like that much fear around being involved. And the sadness of people not not showing up on you know, not coming to classes dropping out, because they just couldn't handle the complexities of all those conversations. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman 51:04**

Do you feel like your skills in Cymatics have helped you emotionally navigate certain pieces of the pandemic?

**Roger Tolle 51:15**

Oh, my God, yes. Absolutely. You know, a cymatic way back to some level of equanimity, a recognition that this body is only going to keep itself healthy, if I keep it moving. If I, you know, get it outdoors and breathe fresh air and open my eyes and, and move around. If I, you know, if I can't exercise, if I can't get movement stuff there, I just got to find it somewhere. I know that about my body over these years. I also know that about humanity's bodies, not just mine, everybody. So I'm teaching that to people, which means I'm hearing myself say it, the best thing you can do during this is get yourself moving, get your breath going, get your legs, rebounding off the Earth, get yourself out there swinging and bouncing in a good walk. If nothing else, put some music on at home and dance if that's your style, do you know, get into a quiet place, put out your yoga mat, stretch mat and stretch yourself out, do some deep breathing in a private space in a place to feel safe, where you don't have to wear a mask. Be mask free, four times, you know, wherever you can, wherever that is safe. So for people who have, you know, families that they were living with, you know, if you're not going to if you're going to be part of the same pod, you know, you're eating together, you're sleeping together, you're, you know, kissing and hugging, still, you're probably not wearing masks with each other, enjoy that contact, get the juice out of it, spend lots of extra time giving each other touch and movement, play and smiles and laughter in the mask free spaces where that's possible. In the COVID, safe spaces where that's possible, along with when you need to just do it by yourself, do it, do it by yourself. Get moving. That's from and I also recognized the kind of gift that I get to be able to say those things that I'm in a place in my life that I'm in a kind of work that lets me talk about it in positive terms like that. Other people do other kinds of work in in other kinds of environments where they needed to have just the opposite kinds of conversations about protecting but closing holding tightening.

**Kit Heintzman 54:07**

2020 was sort of notoriously a big year beyond the pandemic and 2021 had its own legacy of thickness and 2022 has all that's happening with us right now. I'm wondering what some of the issues beyond the pandemic have been on your mind over the last few years?

**Roger Tolle 54:25**

Well, when you context it like that I think of Oh, the the 2020 election here in the United States and the the big hullabaloo and now they're the election deniers and the whole evolution of Trumpism in a way that just makes me cringe and be totally sad and and also just recognize that if you keep saying you know, in a big view, this too will pass but boy, it's hard to live through this really angry populace angry half of the populace angry at each other distrustful. I wish we could move out of that place in politics but I also recognize that it's not just in America that there's this wave of energy of hyper mass hyper nationalism and the protectionist kind of mind rather than the

more open, interconnected mind where I thought we were gradually and inexorably headed. I thought that was just the drift of his history was going to be more and more connected. And perhaps it is and this is this no fighting to hold on to a past a world that no longer exists feels really sad for me? Yeah, there, your question will also was also sort of about what's been sort of preoccupy me or occupying more of my attention. Since my whole world has been very body focused, very, very focused on movement and touch and health and healing and being living in the body. There's some real difficulties that I'm having, handling the challenges of my own aging body. Sometimes get very angry at or frustrated with or really deeply despondent when I realized I need a different kind of care or I actually need some medical care as opposed to just you know, better little bit of lifestyle now. It's not so not going to be enough. I'm going to need Yeah, a drug for hypertension. I'm gonna and I'm gonna need better glasses and growing realization they need hearing aids and really, yeah, okay. Way too good. attentive to the realities and the practicalities of things to be denying that, yeah, hearing and seeing are not as easy as they were. I can dance pretty well, but not with the stamina. I used to have a guy to take care in other ways. And one of the biggest issues that's really just continually blindsiding is difficulty sleeping, like, what's that about? Looking for help with that. We'll see where I go.

**Kit Heintzman 58:27**

What are some of the things you were taught about aging when you were younger?

**Roger Tolle 58:31**

I don't remember being taught anything specific in a didactic way about aging. But I had parents who aged in my view really well. So they modeled you know, they modeled being together. From the time they got married in their I guess dad was 30 Mom 25 when they got married, until they died in their 80s. Now they were together. So modeling that this long term relationship with the support, modeling aging with a big family, you know, as one to five kids as well. Not huge family, but pretty big. And modeling good communication around the way the family operated together while we are together, and even then, when we were all off on our own lives, all my siblings and I off in our separate lives. They continued to model communicating about what their lives were about, and I just am so grateful for the way my Parents, particularly my dad modeled, taking care of end of life stuff. Making choices about that before it was too late. My mom got Alzheimer's. So the last years for her were real degeneration, which was real hard to see and very difficult for dad. But no, he just modeled okay, this is this is what's happening. We have to I have to deal with this. What's the best way to deal with this? And there were, it was a graduated, what's the best way, now? Oh, now something else is needed. Oh, now something else is needed. And yeah, the step by step dismantling of the physical stuff, the big house that became a smaller house, and you know, you know, a nice apartment that they can take care of easily. That was great for them for a while until mom's condition said, no, she needs more care, and assisted living scenario that didn't last terribly long because mom's health went down pretty fast. And when the diagnosis of Alzheimer's came, came, my dad said, Okay, we're, we're now moving someplace else, we just have to have full time care for my mom. So now let's be let's live someplace where I can be next to her and she can have full time. And what they you know, lockdown, 24 hour care. All of that, you know, just and the constant that I'm being willing to have these conversations, this is what's going on. So these are the choices we're making. Modeling, also, when dad retired, finally retired. Then mom chose to take their years while they were still physically active enough to travel a lot. And the way they traveled was to do service projects, not to spend gobs of money on fancy vacations, sitting by a beach or taking luxury cruises. But going remember, one of their projects was catalog, they went and worked with some social science scientists to help catalog the, the diggings from an archeological dig. And, you know, sort of set them up and that was in South American someplace. They did another project, I think it was Haiti where they went to do

support for a prenatal care clinic and was mostly about interviews and helping the the the sort of the, the nurses handle some of the the staff needs, can remember there's some project they they worked in, in Africa and these things that that gave, and they did a lot of service for their church community back home and very avid engaged participants in Planned Parenthood. I think my mom was the president of the local chapter of Planned Parenthood. They were involved with a number of service things in their years as long as they were physically able. So that's a kind of modeling of aging can mean good communication with family, setting things up their planned financially well for having enough money set aside to handle what they might need, and not spending a lot of money on anything kind of frivolous they didn't really want anyway. And they took good care of their health only as best as they knew how at the time and yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:04:30

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

**Roger Tolle** 1:04:36

I mean, the first obvious one is physical health, the body being able to do what it's supposed to do what it naturally will do and given the right environment, the right circumstances. So health is what we see when somebody eats well, sleeps well does good work, enjoys what they do. engages with community. So those are all some of the social aspects of what builds good health. And exercise. Diet is or just good health building what healthy looks like and because the field I mean, I'm, I'm really defining that for clients as in terms of healthy movement that feeds your healthy, healthier patterns for your unconscious mind for the brain that operates your body. And so we talked about the feeling of ease and openness and well coordinated, evenly distributed, evenly distributed, expansion through the body evenly distributed muscle tone, or tissue tone, evenly distributed flexibility throughout the body. Many hands make light work, so many parts of me all working together, make it all work better. That seems like really good health. And, I mean, I'm really frustrated that the the word health has been just so equated erroneously equated with medical care. I don't think they're the same thing. So that's the frustration because I feel like I'm a health care worker, but I can't be part of what's called the health care system because I'm not medically trained. It feels to me like we ought to be having health care being something that's taught better, and it's in how do you take care of your own and your family's health and give a lot more weight to that than all of the how do you handle when your own healthcare isn't enough, and you need medical care. I'm grateful for medical care, and grateful that we have my that I have medical insurance, and I call it medical insurance, not health insurance. Although, you know, I have to say that it's health insurance, but it's not insuring my health, it's ensuring the cost of medical care. So I get that really, that's a really important distinction. And when I go to my medical doctor, and he asked me, how's my health, I talk about my movement, and my diet and my sleep and all that said, and what kind of medical care you need. And I said, well, I need I think I'm going to need glasses I'm going to need hearing I'm going to need these extra helps something with my sleep these things that I can't seem to solve with just my own self health care.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:00

I'd love to hear more about the hierarchies you see happening in a healthcare industry very broadly understood and medical care.

**Roger Tolle** 1:08:13

Yeah, well, it's no secret that the you know, the top of the hierarchy are the most highly trained medical doctors you know, the MD after your name makes a big difference in people how you're treated, but it's also often a

hierarchy that build the uncomfortable imbalance of the weight of opinion and self and self self opinion. There is, I am encouraged to say a lot of conversation in our culture, not necessarily good conversation, but a lot of conversation about lots of different ways of building health into your everyday life and I'm glad for that. I don't think that was happening when I was young. I don't remember it at all growing up. My mom was kind of an outlier in talking to us and saying we need to eat healthy. Here's these are the healthy foods but the transition to really you know, healthy lifestyle focus is I think it's been a really good one. That I know there's this the frustrating issue of how the in this country, we don't guarantee medical insurance for everyone. So then people have to make these choices about their capacity to handle the hierarchy that is established between what is covered by their particular brand or style of medical insurance, and what would actually be useful for them. It, it just seems like it makes so much more sense if we could get Reddits for keeping ourselves healthy, that reduced the, you know, reduce some of the costs for us as individuals, but also for this whole society. But somehow that got valued and, and articulated in, in the culture in a more selectively agreeable way. And we're not in a place in our, in our current conversation around other things to be able to have that kind of conversation, really, I mean, right now, just the backlash against medical care for pregnant women, for transgender kids, for the whole LGBT community, the hell that, that there's politics now inserting itself back into what should be just a human right to get the kind of care that you absolutely need for medical procedures that you can't do for yourself. Really frustrating.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:11:44

I'd like to draw on your lifetime of experience, and ask how you see the current attacks on trans youth and women's health in a, in a longer context, how you, were, how is our moment now situated from like, what came before? And what do you notice about now based on what you've lived through?

**Roger Tolle** 1:12:17

Well, I did live through the sexual revolution of the 60s, as it was a cold and lived my own sexual revolution in the 70s, as I was sort of coming into my own sexuality. And along with that, these you know, I'm not sure where to go with this exactly. What I have been had been feeling for the decades pre Trump, basically, was that we were slowly and sometimes frustratingly slowly, as a culture and as a country in in ways that were being written into legal statutes and infrastructures that seemed unassailable. Building in a kind of a right to all the best available medical care the disappointment, and the the celebration around what became known as Obamacare, right, this, that he managed to negotiate at least that for our, for our nation, some ways of people getting some help with, with the medical insurance they needed from a governmental process. But we weren't able to get all the way to universal health care as a or medical means universal medical care as a, as a right of every citizen. I feel that was a real sad thing, but it seemed like okay, but we're still on the way. I mean, yeah. And I lived through the AIDS crisis in the 80s in New York City as a active gay man and somehow did not get AIDS. So I lived to tell about it and think the government was so not there. And then a decade later, there was finally some governmental support and some collective understanding that that was a pandemic of sorts that we should have handled better. And then we have this pandemic and we're not handling it very well. God but that, that I wouldn't call it an an attack but a an ignoring of the huge weight on the gay community that I was living in, of diseases that could have been researched, much better, much faster. Had there been government funding and the quick action on it. We can be grateful we now have medical treatment for that. And, you know, all of which is great. But that also ended is part of that. You know, the slow growth, okay, we, with some treatments at first, and then better and better, and, and now even some pills too. You know, if you feel like you've been exposed, you can like take something to Yeah. Oh, that's great. We got it in regarding making sex a little bit less fraught with a death sentence. And it seemed to me, you know, I had a girlfriend in, in college, and we were negotiating those early on, we're negotiating having

sex, and went to, you know, Planned Parenthood office in our college town to get her on the pill. Wow, that was a huge step, then we were out in front, you know, that was, that was really something. Yeah, it was really a step in the way it felt like the right direction, and then lots more steps in that direction and became so Oh, yeah. By, you know, by the 2000s. Like, you know, yeah, when you're in sex, you need to need to wear a condom in your, okay, you know, like, let's, let's just get on with that. And, and then we have gay marriage finally arriving. And I'm thinking, wow, this is amazing. And, you know, early on in there to recognizing that, yeah, it was still a privilege to be able to get married because you still had to go through a lot and it wasn't yet for all the margins, the other marginalized communities, the intersectionality of marginalization. The gay people that weren't white and financially solvent and the, you know, the the focus of development on each new marginalized community, I think we're going someplace we're going and then the setbacks in these myths last well, with the real likely possibility of the overturning Roe v. Wade, and the potential that any of the things that we thought were now guaranteed in law could be they could be somehow overturned by a really back word thinking self righteous bunch of politically motivated bozos who are just so disrespectful have the right of all human beings to have their lives for themselves. It seems so heartless, the this new legislation, curtailing medical treatment for for trans folks it's like, and for pregnant women. It's like you're worthless schools. Like why should you be the ones you don't you aren't pregnant and you're not trans? Why should you be the one saying that this stuff isn't. And all the research, medical research, Treatment Research in, in the world of mental health as well as physical health says this is the healthy thing to do. This is what helps these people become healthy. The trans folks being folks being able to get that the hormonal shifts and the surgeries that they require to feel safe and comfortable in their bodies. And the women that need this simple procedure at the right time in a safe space to be able to plan their lives is as women and choose when and where they want to be pregnant. Oh, oh, the distortion of all of that feels really heavy for me. And yet I don't feel like I'm in a place to be very powerful to do anything about that. There are many of the political kind of arenas like that where I just say, Okay, I'm voting my conscious for sure. But I'm not going to become politically active in that because I'm Working so hard in the arena where I am, I'm just enough to keep, you know, letting people know about the work that is really good that I that I do and that I know about and teaching the students that the to be able to do this work that is so useful.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:20:24

I'm trying to think of how to word this question, I want to know more about how having lived through the 80s and AIDS shaped you in general and then as well how it how it shaped your reaction to what's been happening now?

**Roger Tolle** 1:21:03

One of the things that was going on for me in the 80s when friends and fellow dancers and me all the performing arts world was was falling all around me, one of the things that I was doing was starting to really cultivate this internal life and spirit and though I sometimes think gosh, I just did not engage enough as an activist then, which then colors like okay, I'm just not engaging that much as an activist now in that arena of my life, but at the time, it was really learning to work with my mind for the capacity of equity of more equanimity. And activism was Act would have ended from time to time, activate and annek win them back and economics was the word a much more distracted and distractible kind of mind and I tend to be my my personality tends to be pretty volatile, very emotional, emotionally expressive, or dramatic. which I like but it also means that it's it's something to work with in for me in this life just to be able to keep myself in in order I also think there's an I learned then that being a calm voice amid stormy environments was really useful visiting friends who are sick and being able to be there and say, I think this is what I'm seeing. How are you feeling without it being a kind of panic stricken face without it being on the other side too emotionally rot fraught or rot and right were somehow to the place where I wouldn't

be able to be helpful at all but also not ignoring what was going on not closing my eyes to it or denying it but really identifying as I just think I'm it's really wonderful that I'm able to be present have my feet on the ground my my energies grounded really in my own still healthy body not get overcome by the whole social media, then and that's been helping me now. That I, I learned to keep focusing, focusing on what was possible. What was what could be my role. That would be the most useful and end game this you know this perspective then, that not every fight that needs to be fought is my fight to fight. Where do I need to put some energy The you know the recreated a game and stance company that was putting energy into creating that. And getting that out there and doing all the work of getting that out there, not making any money doing that. Not even gaining any particular notoriety or anything, but just like doing that as a service using my own lived experience, in the way that I was able to as a performer, producer of performances, as a teacher feels like the this prioritizing where I can be most effective is something that I began to develop then. In the 80s, I would say that was a really, as I said, real time of personal growth there and real formative of of some of the ways that I had been going about my you know, my own choices around life, what I do.

**Kit Heintzman 1:26:16**

What does safety mean to you?

**Roger Tolle 1:26:29**

I talk about it, as I teach about it, there's a deep part of the brain that is watching. For all of us, each of us from the inside is alert to could be a little dangerous or a lot life threatening that level of danger, and all of our reactivity that needs to happen all the ways we protect each other detect ourselves. Resiliency is one of the best ways in our physical experience, to build safety into what's happening because the world will throw curveballs at us. So the more we can handle those, you know, a car suddenly pulls out in front of me, I need to be able to react to it respond quickly, I need to have my resources, I trip and I need to have my resources to be able to catch my weight. I notice a social circumstance that does not feel welcoming to me. And I need to be develop the resilience in insert myself to negotiate out of it, if that feels really unsafe, emotionally or socially. Choose not to go there or to be able to communicate well in social circumstances so that I can help build safety for myself and others. Certainly, with clients and students we talked about and practice, putting as many of the safeties as possible in place, recognizing that there's no such thing as 100%, safe safety for any of us. But that we can reduce the the risk of unwanted traumas a lot by creating safeties. Within private practice, it's sufferers talking about wearing masks or being conscious of the space that you're in, but also becoming a safe person, not to overly overbearing, and you're not sort of deliberately irritating, like not not trying to create conflict, but really like okay, now I'm just going to, I'm going to make this as smooth as possible for the people around. So that's the place. There's another meaning of safety. For me that is maybe a little more tricky, which is how do I get the feeling of the level of safety that I would like in my intimate environment, intimate relationships where I can really let go, I create safety for all my students and my clients, but when, but how do I negotiate a safe enough place for surrender to a partner? I haven't worked that one out yet. I may have many times but it's not. It needs to continually be reworked out. Oh, it's I mean, I didn't talk about yet the work that I do as a surrogate partner. In the in the space of mental health work, a subset of sex therapy, or sex therapists. I work as a surrogate partner for other men who are having difficulties with intimacy and intimate relationships and sexual functioning. And if they need somatically, to experience, what it is that intimacy can feel like both touch and movement and breath, and even erotic and sexual behaviors, if they need a partner to experience all that, to learn how to deal with it. That's the work that I've been doing. I don't do very much of it. I haven't done very much, although it's certified over a decade ago, but it's really important to work for the people that I do with and they are really vulnerable, in lots of ways, psychologically,



socially, emotionally, and physically very vulnerable. And my need for in the end, my job in that scenario was to create all kinds of safety. That includes just conversations about safety, and regular check ins. But it also is all the unspoken things that I've come to understand and be good at the quality of touch that feels safe, and creating safer and even safer kinds of touch touch that feels like oh, yeah, this is something that I really want and create rather than being afraid of, and closeness and intimacy, when, when and how do we make help make it safer for somebody to be intimate with us, or for us to be intimate with them? That's an arena where the conversation around safety never stop. I mean, I'm when I'm working with when I'm in conversation with their therapist, which I do to triadic relationships. So I I mean conversation with their mental health provider. All the time, I'm working with the client, and we're talking about now, are they feeling safe for this next step in the therapeutic process? Would they be safe with moving into more sensuality? Is that going to feel okay, right now? Do they feel AB Do they have enough? Personal trust in me trust in the process? Are they feeling comfortable enough with where they are and what's happening, to be able to move more into some some sense of safety in being able to become more vulnerable, more available, more open, taking that risk of letting themselves see and be seen, feel and be felt, hear and be heard. The risk that that entails for all of us is a big issue. Oh, are often like measuring Okay, as things get a little bit more close, a little bit more intimate, a little bit more exciting, maybe a little bit erratic, more fear comes up, new safety has to be discussed new sense of what's okay to express and, and with, and how and how we ask for permission and give permission. Gosh, it's really complicated and wonderfully interesting.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:33:20

What brought you to your work in healing?

**Roger Tolle** 1:33:37

The first place was just this passion for touch. As a dancer, I was loving moving and loving teaching people. But I hadn't thought of it as part of a healing process except to suggest that there's a kind of accept to know and have conversations about how the arts in general and the dancing that I was creating was, was a healing process for a culture. It is part of the cultural expression. But getting into more directly the one on one work with clients who are seeing me for a particular kind of health support. That was motivated mostly by discovering this work that had that first trigger session, and it was just so incredibly pleasurable. I went oh my god being touched like this being moved like this being invited into my own body experience like this. This is so wonderful. And boy have I missed something about this in my upbringing, but there was nothing traumatic mattering just not as much touch and pleasure and connection and intimacy as I would have liked. And so I thought I just wanted to be able to do this. And so I started with the training which there's some technical stuff that you have to learn In stuff about anatomy and physiology and neurology on animal stuff wasn't always all that exciting at the beginning. But now I understand why it's also really, really important that I learned all that stuff, and particularly, the really important stuff about quality of touch. That changes everything for people receiving it. So, and that that quality of touch is something that I so desperately deliciously wanted for myself. I couldn't imagine anybody else not wanting it for themselves. So it just felt like a perfect match for me to be wanting to, to do this work with people. And my early years of practice, and practice, it felt like such a gift and such a pleasure to be able to be paid to touch people in a way that was pleasurable for me, hugely pleasurable for me. Finding the right balance of admitting how pleasurable it is for me, but not going for pleasure that was just mind, also recognizing that the focus was on the client's sensory safety and pleasure and their tissue, and that my pleasure was a byproduct. But isn't that lovely that I can do something for others that has this byproduct of keeping me moving well, and getting more of it, a lot of my touch needs my needs for being in physical touch with people.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:36:45

You've mentioned getting vaccinated, how did you come to that decision?

**Roger Tolle** 1:36:55

The moment it started to be discussed, I said, Yeah, hang on there. I don't. I mean, you know, throughout my life, I've been vaccinated for tetanus or whatever it will be for making a trip and you know, the smallpox vaccinations, the measles, mumps, what are they called? Any all that the childhood vaccinations that I'd had? Okay, yeah, vaccination makes sense to me, as a concept as a collective social awareness. As a public policy, it makes sense. So just, yeah, I'm gonna do this, I have some of my far out far on the scale, friends who are against the whole idea of vaccinations at all, because it just somehow for them doesn't make sense. And personally, I would say, yeah, if we lived in isolation, we probably wouldn't need need or want or ought to be getting vaccinated, but that we are in a social environment and that, you know, stopping something like COVID, trying to limit to its capacity to grab hold, and basically wipe through whole populations. And seems like how many millions of lives have been saved by smallpox vaccinations and malarial vaccinations and whatever? I mean, yeah, and probably now so COVID vaccinations. So that wasn't a hard decision. And as soon as I was able, and since I was old enough, I was high on the list or early on the list of who is able to as soon as I was able, I made the appointments, although that was complicated because it was so badly organized anyway.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:38:48

Tell me about that complicatedness and it being poorly organized.

**Roger Tolle** 1:38:53

There's all about the miscommunications and disinformation that was being pushed around. And then just government at various levels put the blame straight on the federal government and Trump was just like we're not taking responsibility for this seemed really just a heinous crime. Not immediately, you know, getting all everything organized for the for the vaccinations, making it really clear how you get them where you get them making them available everywhere. Not making it difficult for unity for people to get that the website crashed the first time they set it up that that you know that there were it wasn't just offered anywhere easy and convenient at first then it was but only sometimes and then it was you know, the you'd set up an appointment for a vaccination and then you know, it would get pulled up. The testing thing was also just crazy, badly organized. And when I wanted to be able to get tested to travel, like why is this so hard? Why is there no simple clarity on within this window of time here you just go there you show up you get your test and you get the response back right away. Jake Gillis in this current level of digitized medical records and that we can't handle this that in this country was a to me just a meeting ridiculous thing.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:40:38

And you'd mentioned catching COVID recently in Switzerland, what was that physical experience like?

**Roger Tolle** 1:40:48

Oh, well I just had a couple days it's flu like symptoms I had a fever and congestion my head felt like a flu I was very lucky in having some my colleagues have space for me to just semi quarantine in their place but with the separate bedroom and bathroom that I could sort of get through the the sick days which were only two and then I was better two days worth of feeling really fluish and I was better and I started just building up there was a you know, a lingering congestion in my sinuses and chest. But it didn't become long COVID For me, or a hacking

cough that went on and on forever was like Okay, a couple more days when I would was you know, not quite fully back up and lemon. But you know five days after I graduated I went out for a nice three hour hike in the mountains like this is I'm better so the you know, the social part of it was complicated and the the disruption of my plans that sometimes happens so

**Kit Heintzman** 1:42:16

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

**Roger Tolle** 1:42:29

I don't have a lot of happiness when I think about our collective political immediate future where we're going in this country feel pretty down discouraged on a more personal level I'm not as wide open positive and comfortable walking into my future as I would have been a decade ago because of aging things because of the world that's more complicated that makes it harder for me to do the work I really want to do complicated politically complicated socially I don't have any major you know, fears directly for me I'm grateful I'm not living in Ukraine right now. And any of the other many many places on the earth that are in this world that are just ravaged by social political strife Yeah, kind of resigned to Okay, I'm gonna do the best I can with what I've got where I am.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:44:00

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

**Roger Tolle** 1:44:10

On a very personal relationship level, I'd love to get connected to another guy that could really meet me fully where I am. I love my partner, Nick, but he's just so restricted in what he can offer up to have more intimacy, more depth of connection. And I'd love to know long term hope of maybe getting comfortable not traveling so much so that I can really invest in local communities so that I can develop a sense of, of a reliable family have chosen others to be supported for and supported by wouldn't be a really wonderful future. That would be very, I've been very hopeful about that possibly happening. But I also recognize that that my travelling lifestyle puts that really in jeopardy that hope really in jeopardy. And I don't know yet what to do about all that.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:45:20

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last few years?

**Roger Tolle** 1:45:31

Mostly stuff that I've been doing for decades, and I just eat really well, like I I continue to, you know, exercise my body really regularly, keep my mind keep, keep reading stuff and trying to open new ideas, engage with new people be connected with lots of people. And some of the struggle around that I try and address as I go, you know, what's, what's the exercise I need now? Different than a decade ago? Yeah, okay. It's different. Okay. So how does it change? What do I do? What can I do? What, what do I need to let go of doing because it didn't serve me so well anymore. I had a very vigorous ashtanga yoga practice that kept me really energized for most 15 years, that was really an important part of my and, and then in the last couple of years, I began to realize that I was working really hard at it. And that it was way too focused on being flexible in places I was no longer comfortable being so flexible, and kind of all of a sudden gave that, that practice up and shifted to more, more of the pedestrian movement, but done in a really kind of authentic and deeply curious way that in the museum still invest a lot of mental attention and emotional attention in the ordinary things that I do. Long walks, for instance,

or the ways that I said, or the fact that right now sitting, you know, looking at the computer screen, which I do wait more than I would like to do. But I'm sitting on a little wobble chair, that keeps me moving just a little bit so that I don't get too clamped up in my lower back. Do stuff like that.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:47:28

I'm coming to some of the end of my questions. How do you think historians might remember this moment?

**Roger Tolle** 1:47:42

Oh, it seems like there's so many issues that are in flux. So I would imagine that, you know, this time period will be a period characterized by that deeply divided sensibility in our country, and the huge challenges of, of a pandemic, a war, political division, all and culture wars happening, and taking, you know, taking over again. So what I'm hoping is that we come out of it better. But I don't feel confident that will happen right away. So.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:48:33

What do you think people in the social sciences and humanities so like Literature Department, sociology, Poli Sci, what should we be doing right now to help us understand the social experience of the pandemic?

**Roger Tolle** 1:49:00

I guess just what you're doing, you know, interviewing people getting records of what's happening. So much is recorded now. In ways that it will most certainly be available. So there will be a whole lot of data I don't know. I'm not that in that field so much. I'm curious about it. And I'm curious about what does eventually get sorted out. You know, and I, I like leaving about people who've, like, come to conclusions about where we are right now that I go, Oh, really? Is that where we are? Oh, that's helpful. That's a good framework. I like having that person's framework. This person, or Oh, that was a really interesting you know, interview I listened to or book I read the gave me a perspective that lets me put right now into perspective where right where we are right now. I think that's a great thing to be doing all the assessments of where we are, through whatever means your easiest and most comfortable in.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:50:24

History is such a big field. And there's so much room for chasms. I want you to speak to some imagined historian of the future one far enough in the future that they have no lived experience at this moment. What do you want to tell them cannot be forgotten?

**Roger Tolle** 1:50:53

I think one thing that's coming to light that's really important is don't forget all the marginalized communities. And there are lots of them in various ways in this country. And we've already talked about, you know, the LGBT community that the lives of women whose bodies are now being, you know, targeted, again, that it's certainly the trans folks, the kids that are facing all this. Yeah. Don't forget to be looking at all of those other voices, the non mainstream voices, not just the main political fights, but the internal conflicts to that within other within groups. So that it so we keep looking at our world as hugely complex and not try to simplify it too much.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:52:05

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time, and the beauty and the kindness of your answers. Those are all of the questions that I know how to ask right now. But I'd like to open some space, if there's anything you'd like to share that I haven't made room for. Please take that space now.

**Roger Tolle** 1:52:25

Mostly, I'm just feeling myself kind of, okay. foof this is already you know, two hours and then two hours of kind of conversation focused, very interesting and, and, and rewarding to have those questions and to have a chance to answer to talk about them. So a kind of gratitude they're back, back atcha as some people would say. It's it's good that we actually get to record some of these kinds of conversations. I don't think I have anything more major to offer are things I really want to talk about right now. I think I kind of talked about a lot of the stuff that's really important I had really enjoyed it. You mentioned it that I really enjoyed sort of writing memoir pieces and they are sort of already some of them have been published and are out there. A little dances that I've done that have videos of them, they're all available to be seen. So just like okay, yeah, there's there's there's marks that we all are making in the in the world, and they're part of the context of this whole rich, lovely landscape.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:53:58

Thank you so much.