

Lead

Humanity at a Crossroads

A Conversation with Gregg Braden, author of *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief* and *The Isaiah Effect*

By John David Mann

Gregg Braden spans two worlds. His ability to find innovative solutions to complex problems led to successful careers as a computer geologist for Phillips Petroleum during the 1970's energy crisis, and in the 1980's as a senior computer systems designer for Martin Marietta Aerospace during the last years of the Cold War. In 1991 he became the first Technical Operations Manager for Cisco Systems.

At the same time, Gregg has spent months over the past twenty years in some of the most remote, pristine places on Earth, in the monasteries of Bolivia, Peru, Nepal, India and Tibet, exploring connections between the cutting edge of quantum science and the core of ancient spiritual traditions. ("While my colleagues would take a week at a seaside resort," says Gregg, "my idea of a vacation was a twenty-two-day pilgrimage into the Tibetan plateau at 17,000 feet above sea level.") The New York Times bestselling author is now widely heralded as a pioneer in bridging the worlds of science and spirituality. He spoke with us recently about how today's world is at a crossroads in perspective, and how network marketing reflects that shift. — J.D.M.

Gregg, does the work you're doing with spirituality and the power of thought represent a break from your technical, corporate past, or is it a continuation of that past?

I see it as a clear progression. I have always had the belief that there was no difference between science and spirituality, that when we study chemistry and physics, we're learning about the nuts and bolts of how God works in the world.

I was born and raised in northern Missouri in a relatively conservative Midwestern community; these were not the kind of things people talked about every day. But I assumed everyone thought pretty much along these same lines and believed what I believed. As I soon learned, nothing could be further from the truth.

When I went to work in the corporate world, I discovered that most people believed science and spirituality were mutually exclusive—that we had to follow the path of science or the path of spirituality, we couldn't do both together.

But you believe that point of view is now changing in a big way?

Absolutely. It *has* to change, and everybody feels it. Everybody feels that something is happening, but they can't quite put their finger on what it is. There's an underlying tension that transcends borders and nations; people everywhere feel that something has changed.

There was a conference in 2005, "Crossroads for Planet Earth," that brought together scientists, engineers, philosophers, religious leaders and spiritual leaders from all over the world to consider the question, "What's going on? Is this just early twenty-first-century paranoia, or is there really something unique going on here?"

The outcome of this question was so profound that *Scientific American* dedicated their September 2005 issue to the conference proceedings.

In the symposium, they identified six different scenarios (climate change, the threat of nuclear war, virulent and untreatable strains of viruses, et al.), any one of which, if allowed to go full-cycle, could forever end civilization and possibly life on Earth. Our ancestors may have dealt with one or two of these problems at different times. But what makes this time in history so unique, said the symposium, is that we're experiencing *all six* of these situations at the same time.

If we're going to survive this time, they concluded, we've got to figure it out in the next eight to fifteen years. "And the only way we're going to do that," they said, "is to think of ourselves and our relationship to the world completely differently than we have in the past."

And that has to do with marrying the best of scientific insight with the best of spiritual wisdom.

Exactly. This convergence of crises may really be our opportunity to redefine who we are, how we work, and what is our role in the universe.

It comes down to the scientific question that occupied much of the twentieth century: Are we passive observers, insignificant specks with very little influence on the world? Or are we powerful creators that play a significant role in the way that reality unfolds?

Interestingly, the answer to both questions is "Yes." It's determined by how we choose to be, by our willingness to accept the power that's born within each of us, to influence the quality of our relationships, the healing of our bodies, the success of our careers, and the peace between nations.

As an individual it's easy to get into kind of an existential angst about feeling insignificant. Are you saying we've adopted that "I don't matter" stance on a societal scale?

Yes, I think it's our unconscious conditioning. We became a science-based society about 300 years ago, when Sir Isaac Newton formalized the laws of physics. Since that time, we have come to believe that we are powerless beings, victims of a world where everything is separate from everything else and we have very little influence over any of it.

This isn't necessarily something we talk about around the water cooler at the office; it's an unconscious conditioning that we all deal with to some degree.

It filters into our approach to health and medicine, the economy, the environment, geopolitics, everything.

Right. Our entire civilization has been based upon two central false assumptions that are still being taught in our schools today.

The first false assumption is that *the space between things is empty*. We say, "Ninety-six percent of the universe is empty space." What is matter—or you could say, *what matters*—is at most 4 percent.

The second false assumption is that *our inner experience*—our thought, feeling, emotion and belief—*has no effect on the world beyond our own bodies*.

Both these assumptions have been proven absolutely false. That isn't theory, it's scientific fact, documented in peer-reviewed journals. It just hasn't made its way into our high school and college text books.

You're speaking of "zero point field" research?

We now know there's a field of energy that underlies all physical existence. This field so new in its discovery that scientists have yet to agree upon a single term; it's called everything from simply "the field" to "the mind of God," to "nature's mind." In 1944, Max Planck, the father of quantum theory, called it "the matrix."

We also know that we have the ability to "speak" in a language that resonates with this field, a nonverbal language of feeling and belief in our hearts. When we do this, we effect physical healing within our bodies' cells. The key is to feel the feeling in a very precise way, as if the outcome of our heart's desire has already happened. This sets into motion a response within our bodies where the chemistry matches that feeling.

Likewise, when we create the very precise feelings as if our career is already successful, our relationships and our partnerships are already in place and we have just the right people to accomplish all of the goals in just the right way, this sets into motion a mechanism in this field that allows those things to come to fruition.

Once we understand the mechanism, it becomes a technology, and we can do it consistently and repeatedly.

Is this approach connected with your work in mass prayer and focusing attention in large groups?

Exactly, the same principle applies whether with a relationship, healing the body, or peace between nations. If we want to influence the outcome, we can claim the feeling of it in our hearts, as if the outcome has already come to pass, rather than thinking we have to engineer the outcome step by step.

If you're building a space shuttle or cooking a pie, then you want to go step by step. In the external, physical world, sometimes we have to gather our ingredients and then go through a sequence, building toward a goal bit by bit.

But in the quantum world of thought, emotion and belief, these principles don't apply. In fact, it's just the opposite: we have to identify, clearly and concisely, what the outcome is, because the universe can't hit a moving target.

We were brought up to think strategic and tactical. But you're saying that on that level, reality transcends the strategic and tactical, and you instead effect the result by starting with the end in mind.

Right. We still put everything in place for it to happen; we can't just sit back in our armchairs. But we're shifting from a purely Newtonian way of engineering and solving problems, believing that everything is separate and we must work *toward* our goal, to a quantum way of thinking, where we strongly and clearly identify with the outcome.

We've got powerful video documentation of just how quickly the physical world responds to this language. In one video, we see a woman who is diagnosed with an inoperable, cancerous tumor, in the presence of three practitioners who are trained in this language we're talking about. Through ultrasound, you see that tumor melt away and literally vanish from the screen.

This is through the power of their thoughts?

It's not a thought, it's a *feeling*—such a powerful feeling that the tumor responds and dissipates in less than three minutes. This is not a one-time phenomenon; they do this for brain and bladder tumors all the time in this part of China.

The same principle applies when numbers of people get together to feel peace in a broad geographic region, or to feel the successful outcome of their project in a business.

Interesting that you say it's a feeling, not a thinking. All our success literature uses the term "think"—*Think and Grow Rich, The Magic of Thinking Big, As a Man Thinketh*. But thinking tends to be sequential.

That's a natural outgrowth of our male-dominated, schematically-oriented, technologically-based, left-brained society. It's no wonder we would take these principles and try to force them into the realm of what we *think*; that's our conditioning.

But here's the bottom line: our world is made of electromagnetic fields of information. If you want to change something in the world, you've got to communicate within that electromagnetic field.

Interestingly, science has now found—and this has been published in peer-reviewed journals over the last few years—that the human heart is the largest generator of electrical and magnetic fields in the body.

So our language was right all along! It's a heart thing.

Our brains generate an electrical and a magnetic field, but they're relatively weak, as compared to the heart. The electrical field of the heart is about 100 times stronger than that of the brain, and the heart's magnetic field is about 5,000 times stronger than the magnetic field of the brain.

Our own physics textbooks say that if you want to change the atoms of physical matter, you have to change either the electrical field or the magnetic field; the heart does both.

We change the magnet, and the iron filings follow its shape.

Absolutely. Which is why feeling is in some ways much more effective than thinking. In our society, we've been conditioned to believe that feelings and emotions are ineffective. Men have largely been told not to have them, and women have been told, "If you're going to have them, go have them somewhere else, where it won't bother anyone!"

But outside our society you find quite the opposite. In the monasteries in Tibet, for example, they say that feeling is the most powerful force in the universe.

At one monastery, I asked the abbot, "In your tradition, what is the force that connects everything in the universe?" He answered with a single word. I thought it was a mistranslation, so I asked our translator to ask him again, and he came back with that same word: "Compassion."

I said, "Wait a minute. Is compassion a force of nature that connects everything in the universe—or is it an experience that we have in our hearts?"

After the translator had made sure he understood exactly what I'd asked, he answered again with one word: "Yes."

How did these experiences carry over into your corporate work?

In my work with Fortune 500 companies, I would repeatedly find myself in a project that was behind schedule, over budget and in trouble. Using the principles I saw operating in the monasteries of Tibet, I would find ways to navigate through all these dilemmas and come to a successful conclusion. After a while, it occurred to me that these same principles could be applied in a much larger context.

What precipitated that realization?

The last years of the Cold War were a very frightening time. Although the public was largely not aware of it, we came very close to having an all-out nuclear exchange; in fact this happened twice that I'm aware of.

Recognizing how close we had come to destroying all that we cherish, it hit me that this was just like any other project that's behind schedule, over budget and in trouble! I began researching ways to apply the principles I'd used in the boardrooms at Cisco and Martin-Marietta to this project we call "life and consciousness in the twenty-first century."

When we discard those false assumptions you mentioned—when we realize that space is not empty, and that our interior world can have tremendous impact on the external world—what different behaviors emerge from that shift?

We begin seeing that everything is connected to everything else, and we can no longer think of ourselves only when we make decisions, whether in the context of our family, our community or the world. There's more to the world than just the United States.

The next generation will be steeped in this new understanding, but this generation is unique in that both perspectives are happening right now at the same time. Some people are very entrenched in the three-hundred-year-old beliefs, and others are more readily open to the new understanding, but this generation as a whole is straddling both world views.

Which takes us back to Crossroads for Planet Earth. We're faced with unprecedented challenges that will only be solved by recognizing that we're part of a greater community—that whether we like it or not, we are a family and need one another.

In a network marketing structure, we're all 1099 independents, yet we have to learn how to cohere in a field of perhaps several hundred thousand people. Is that in any way a harbinger of this different way of organizing ourselves as a society?

Absolutely. As complex as our world seems and as much as we try to separate business from life, from physics and the universe, all these areas are based on the same simple fractal principles.

A stalk of broccoli is a perfect example of a fractal pattern. A little broccoli twig looks like the bigger branch it came from, which in turn looks like the bigger stalk that it came from—exactly the same pattern on different scales of magnitude.

All of life seems to work that way, including the human body. What's good for one cell in the human body will affirm life to the whole body.

It's the same for society: what's good for the individual is also good for the whole. When we help others, we're helping ourselves.

In 2004 I wrote a book, *The God Code*, about the unifying principles that bring us together as a family on the planet. That book cited more than 400 separate scientific studies, published in peer-reviewed journals, to determine whether or not we are a violent species by nature, that is, whether or not competition is our truest nature.

The results of all these 400 studies were unanimous: we are not a violent and a competitive species by nature. However, they found, we will betray our true benevolent, cooperative nature and become violently competitive in the presence of any one of three conditions: 1) when we feel threatened personally; 2) when we feel our families are threatened; or 3) when we feel our way of life is threatened.

You can see this, for example, in places like Iraq or the Palestinian Territories, where people are typically experiencing all three of these conditions. Is that kind of violent conflict inevitable? Not at all: it's not our natural state, it's a behavior being produced by those conditions.

Under threat, we lose sight of our fractal nature—we think that self-interest and acting in others' interests are mutually exclusive directions. We start thinking there's empty space between us.

Another conclusion from these studies was that every species in nature benefits from cooperation. When they behave cooperatively, they consistently produce more offspring, live longer and live more successfully. And they found the same thing within indigenous human populations throughout the world: longevity and quality of life increases when they cooperate in the gathering and sharing of food, water and other resources.

The same principles apply in business: the more we can cooperate, the better we'll do. That's what network marketing is all about.

How do you see these two ways of thought playing out?

In the political realm, we've got people who are looking only in our own backyard, and others who are thinking more globally. We've got scientists who are looking at what's good for America, and others who are thinking about what's good for the world.

What's especially interesting is that the nations that are the major players in these issues are all electing new leaders within this year or two.

Over the past five years, I've been on every continent except Antarctica and Greenland, and what I've found everywhere is that people are ready for something more than the suffering, war, conflict and fear that we experienced in the twentieth century. If they can make their willingness to live a different way known through the election process, were going to find these very spiritual principles very quickly playing out on the world stage.