

Interview with Roger Voorhoeve



Roger has been Linda Clair's student since 2006. He recently began teaching with Linda at the Simple Meditation Centre in Crafers West, South Australia. On April 30, 2011 he was interviewed at the centre by David Clair.

Roger was born in Leusden, Holland in 1967. He emigrated to Australia in 2005. He now lives in the Adelaide Hills with his wife and three children. He works as an architect designing energy-efficient houses.

David: So we're talking because you have become enlightened. Is that how you would express it, or would you say it in a different way?

Roger: I would use different words for it. Enlightenment never was a word that I felt very comfortable with. It's more that I feel you fall back into your natural state – the state where you feel at home. That's how I would describe it.

David: Do you feel that using the word enlightenment is misleading in some way?

Roger: When people hear the word, they can get so many expectations about what it should be or how it should be that it can be a bit misleading in my view. But if you say natural state – and that's how I feel it as well – that's how you, as a being, are.

David: So when you say natural state, what do you mean?

Roger: I mean connected to life – deeply connected. So instead of operating with your mind the whole day, with your past, and holding together your personality, you just live spontaneously. There are no expectations – or very few expectations. That's a huge relief.

So what happens is that everything that comes in, you're not processing it with your mind, but you live it. That's the whole thing. The more deeply you are in that state, the more natural it becomes. You're letting go all the time.

You're not stuck with your thoughts any more. There are still thoughts. It doesn't matter. You don't identify with them any more. You're not holding that picture of who you think you are. That's just scattered, and not important for you any more. You live in this body, and that's a completely different living to how it was before. Before, this body looked like it was living, but actually it was just operating with the

mind. Now, because it's so energised, you bypass the mind and just work from your heart.

The fear goes to a large extent, and probably for the rest of your life you continue to see your fears more and can continue to let them go. But that's why it feels so natural and why I feel so much more closely connected to pure nature, or a baby, or other things. Because it's the same beat that you are in. When I'm in nature or with somebody else who is really conscious, there is no need to talk any more. You are both living the same thing. You are the living energising beat – and that's enough.

David: So living from the heart – is that living by what you feel, not what you think?

Roger: Yes, what you feel. Sometimes thinking is necessary to live in this world – to make a choice or a decision. But most of it, you just do it from here. (He places his hands on his abdomen). Instead of having your awareness always going out, projecting yourself into the world, it's like all your awareness comes in, and you just live from this – this area. It's feeling, it's energy.

David: So you're saying you let life come into you, rather than projecting yourself on to life?

Roger: That's exactly what it is. With your thoughts you make your life comfortable the way you know it is, by what has already happened to you, and see it as your security. You're always clinging onto this. When you can let go of this more, the boundaries disappear, and it's not me in this body, living here for 60 or 70 years. It's energy, or beat, or life. I can't really say exactly what it is, but it's so much more than just a body. The body is a container in which the energy expresses itself.

David: So your relationship to the world – working, and relating with people who don't see the world as you do – how is that for you? Is it difficult to cope with the world?

Roger: You get a bit less interested in it - in getting things, and being somebody.

David: Ambition?

Roger: That's virtually gone. And I was very ambitious in Holland when I had my own architecture firm. So I know what ambition is. It's something you need if you want to get something done, but you know it's not bringing you something. You know that all you need is inside you. There can still be a little bit of ambition, through the habit of going out and getting something, but it quickly disappears, because I'm so deeply in this body that I just keep coming back.

At work I haven't told them anything, but they know I'm really deeply into this, and they give me all the space I need. When I'm at work I just do my job and that's it. Then I walk out the door, and there's no memory – almost nothing left. So that whole repetitive mind stuff that I had so much in Holland, that's gone. I do my work responsibly with all my capacity, but I'm not dragging it on into the next activity. It's

the same when I talk with people. If I'm talking with my boss or a colleague, I don't want something out of that situation any more. I'm just listening, and I say what I feel is necessary, and what may be helpful. The way I used to operate was to try to manipulate the situation a bit so that there would be an advantage for me – very small things, and everybody does it. It's very innocent.

My children are absolutely fine with it. My partner is not into it, and she found it difficult to see it, but she knows that I will go this way anyway. We have had quite a few discussions and arguments about in the past, because this whole practice takes a lot of time – meditating in the morning and the evening and all the retreats. But in a way she gives me all the space I need. I told her that I felt deeply connected to life, and that was enough for her to understand why I'm so attracted to this.

David: Can she see that there's been a big change in you?

Roger: She sees that I'm very independent, and like to be by myself, not needing holidays or social events. I enjoy family life, but it's not like giving and taking any more. I love her and enjoy her company, but I don't want to get anything from her.

David: Was there a point of realisation for you, where everything turned around or changed in a dramatic way?

Roger: Yes, there was. Leading up to it there were many insights, but in the June 7 day retreat last year – I think it was the fourth or fifth day – there came a point where I felt that maybe I was pushing it all too hard, wanting it too much. I remember in a break that I was reading Linda's book, and I read that you had to forget even enlightenment. I'm probably quoting it wrongly, but it was something like that. They were the last words I read before I sat again for a couple of hours.

I sat through the break, and I had built up a lot of energy. I was keeping my awareness down in the abdomen as much as possible, and suddenly I could feel a breakthrough. It felt like a thunderstorm at that moment. I was taken over by huge energy current, and there was a lot of noise, just as if I was in a thunderstorm.

I just gave up resisting it, because I think that's what you keep doing until that point. Your body just can't take it. So the energy comes in, and it's so attractive to everybody because it's impersonal. All the other stuff is personal. The energy clears it all out. Even if it costs you a lot of pain, you still want it. It struck me really deeply in my body, and I was shaking.

After that sitting I had a shower, and I was feeling very energised and vulnerable, and maybe at the same time shocked by the whole thing. I was just sitting quietly on that couch over there. People were having lunch. I just knew that something really deep had happened to me. I felt connected – connected to life. Suddenly I realised that this huge energy field that is around me is actually doing everything. I realised that I am connected to it, rather than just being a person, thinking that I am

operating from this body. You just know or feel that's not how it works. That's just what you think.

That's why life can be so hard and difficult, because you're holding onto the small person in this immense ocean of energy or life – whatever you want to call it – that's why you feel so separated, because from this immense ocean you take one drop and you say that is me! (He laughs) Look, this is me, and *that* is life. (He points away from himself.) You feel that you've come back home, and instead of pointing at your life, you're expressing it all the time.

Linda said that day that I was in the early stages of enlightenment, but that there was still more work to do, and I knew that because my mind could still grab me. I could still become a bit emotional, but that was the turning point. That was the time that the curtain opened for me, and I saw really clearly. I say 'saw', but is not really seeing, it is just being your true nature.

David: And when that happened, was there anything that you could compare it to? Was it anything like the glimpses you'd had before? Or was it a new revelation that was nothing like the glimpses?

Roger: It's the same thing, except that with the glimpses, you're still looking through the mind. There is always fear. 'This is not for me or I will never have it'. With the glimpses, it's like you are looking at it through a very small telescope or something like that. So you see one spot. You get something and you feel really alive for a moment. But it's an experience. It comes and goes. You need those glimpses to keep going, to keep motivated. But you don't know what it is. Your teacher can tell you, but it doesn't help you. It helps you to keep going, but you need to realise it yourself.

David: What tells you now that this state is permanent and that you won't lose it? Is it the loss of fear?

Roger: Yes, that's the biggest thing. And instead of weakening, the state is getting stronger and stronger. It all takes time, so when I had that big realisation last year, I still had a bumpy six months or so before I felt more established in this state. There was fear of what was going on. 'Is this what it is?' There was still mind stuff going on. The mind was saying it should be more like this or that. It was clearing out, and taking me over more.

There is just no way back. It's not an experience which you hang on to after it's gone. This is like your heartbeat. You can compare it with that. It's always there. I'm feeling it all the time. This is life. This is how it is.

David: I'd like to ask you about the history of your search. How long have you been working towards enlightenment, or realisation?

Roger: I started in Holland and it was around the time my son was born, so that's 12 years ago that I went to a meditation class for the first time.

David: Do you remember what you were looking for? Were you conscious of looking for something, or was there just a feeling that there was something else . . .

Roger: I had the feeling more and more that this can't be it.

David: Your experience of life at the time?

Roger: I had a great life - beautiful house, everything.

David: But at the same time a deep sense of dissatisfaction?

Roger: No, not deep dissatisfaction, just something missing. It's the same for everybody. Everybody has this missing link. You want to be connected to life. Otherwise you try to find it in this world with all your desires. You think that will make you a whole person – if you have this or that, then it will be fine. But that's just making you more separate.

I didn't know what it was, but there was always that empty feeling. So you can do several things. You can socialise a lot, but that's just covering it up, so you start to look deeper, and you find places where you feel a bit more connected. For me that was Nature. That was a really great place to be. I couldn't explain it but when I was in Nature, there was a feeling of wanting to be more strongly connected to it. So it wasn't that I was in Nature having such a great time. I was in Nature to see what was missing at that time. I had no idea that the ego was separating me from that moment.

So I started doing a course. It was called Practical Philosophy. I remember it really well. They started with a body scan. Within a month or six weeks I started to feel expansions, like my limbs were really long. This was a confirmation for me that this is not all there is. From then I just started trying to find what it was. Practical Philosophy was based on being mindful. We only came together once a week, so it wasn't that intense, but at that time it was the best thing for me to do. I worked with it in my daily life, but a lot of the time I just forgot it, and I was just lost in my thoughts and my desires.

For a few months before I left Holland I had a teacher called Adriaan. He was very sick at that time, but he was still teaching. He was really open about his dying. So he died, and I went to his funeral, and it had a huge impact on me, having been taught by him for six months – with that body in front of me – his honesty.

We emigrated to Australia. We left family and friends and everything, and came to a new country, and that was huge for me as well. I realised maybe a few months before we left how deep this step was – saying goodbye to all our security, no jobs, three kids we had to feed. When we got to Australia I saw that life just keeps going. You don't need all that security. Life just keeps going.

We set up in Adelaide and that's when I met Linda for the first time for a meditation evening. Her approach was just exactly what I was looking for. There were no rituals,

and it was really honestly sitting deeply in your body. It was different to what I'd done in Holland. This was much more body-based. And this was at exactly the right time for me to step into this. My personal life was clean as well, because when we came here we didn't have friends and family. I could just jump right into it and give my full attention to doing this. This was also the first time that I heard the term enlightenment.

David: so you have been with Linda for how long now?

Roger: It's around five and a half years.

David: Why do you think that you became enlightened, when so many other people who are searching, don't? There are people all over the world living in monasteries meditating for hours and hours a day, in a very disciplined environment, and very few of them seem to become enlightened. What do you think it is about you? How were you different? How was your situation different?

Roger: Well, I'm not different! The discipline here really helped me, and having a teacher who was so incredibly available. I think the best thing that happened to me was that Linda started teaching at that time. In the beginning there were maybe 10 people here. When I got into it I got a lot of attention from her. You need that. You need the guidance of a teacher. Otherwise you can get deluded so quickly, or you get frustrated. The way the meditation retreats are set up here worked very well for me. You can stay in your family life, in the world, but you also have this discipline.

David: I guess when you do a retreat here, it's like being in a temporary monastery.

Roger: Well it depends on the person, you know. When I come here, I unpack my stuff, and I know I'm staying here for four days or whatever. I've always seen it as precious time. But you can think on day two – oh, only two days to go. It depends on how you approach it. I always put everything into it. In my practice I was always really fearful that Linda might attract a large group of people, and I would no longer have that access to her – that direct contact. I also had a big fear that we wouldn't get a visa to stay here longer. So these things put a lot of pressure on me. That's really necessary, but it doesn't mean that if you do all that, that it will happen. That's not how it is.

David: But there must be something else about you, because other people have been coming here for as long as you have, and putting in a lot of effort, and they haven't come to this realisation.

Roger: Not yet, no.

David: Do you think it was that you worked harder, or were more motivated, or do you think there were karmic factors?

Roger: I don't know anything about karma. It was the right time with the right teacher. It wasn't just sitting, but it was also like a deep friendship. The practice is

hard sometimes – or most of the time – but I also had the opposite, which is really warm and loving, and that really opened me up. Sitting for those long hours and going through my stuff – everybody has their stuff – from memories, from the past, *and* having a strong connection with your teacher guides you through it. For me, that was what did it.

For other people, maybe it will happen. You don't know. I know a lot of people sit for 20 years in a monastery, but it's not only about discipline. You have to discipline yourself to be mindful all the time, but it doesn't have to be in a monastery where you are shut off from the world. I found it hard sometimes after a retreat, having that openness and going back to work, but that was a very good practice for me as well.

David: You said that being mindful in your daily life is very important.

Roger: Yes, that's a really strong thing to do. So you'll not here for four days and then go home and hang out in front of the television or whatever. You can do that, but mindfulness makes the practice your life. One thing that I realised was that this is for life. This *is* life. Finally, this is life!

David: People talk about the meaning of life, and it's almost a joke to talk about the meaning of life. But can I ask you the question – what is the meaning of life?

Roger: To be it. To be life. To become life. You come as life, and you are life.

David: When you're a baby?

Roger: That's just life – when you see a newborn baby . . .

David: Purity.

Roger: Yes. And then you become a person. That's really important as well, and then you have to let that go of that person, to become that purity again. Learning to let go all the time – that's what meditation is about. So that's my view of the meaning of life – being here all the time. Being life.

David: The terms absolute and relative are used a lot in spiritual circles. What do they mean to you?

Roger: I would say that absolute is the impersonal and relative is just the person. What happens when you realise that in your body, the absolute, the energy, takes you over. So your small personal view of the world transforms into the impersonal as just a being. The relative is part of the absolute, only very fixed and limited - it's about me. I am the central part of it. The relative is always about you.

David: But at the same time, after realisation, you retain your individuality. So how do you see that relationship between the self and individuality?

Roger: You keep most of your characteristics, but your habitual behaviours don't live or rule your life any more. You don't become 'perfect'. That's a big shock, after it all happens. But the main thing about the person, is that it's always about him – that he wants to keep all his security as it is, or improve it.

David: Why was it a shock?

Roger: Because I had – as most people have – a personal ideal of perfection. Now I see that perfection is acceptance – total acceptance of whatever is happening.

David: You said we come into life as pure life, so babies are individual expressions of pure life, and all people once they are enlightened are also individual expressions of pure life?

Roger: Absolutely!

David: Are there any disadvantages to being in the state that you are now in? Do you feel that you've lost anything that you wish you hadn't lost? Does enlightenment have a downside?

Roger: Well, I can answer it a bit differently. The only thing you want is to lose more and more. And this is what I'd like to explain: once you are hit by it, once you're in that stream, there is still lots more work to do, because maybe before it was like I was looking at myself with a flashlight, and now there is this massive beam always shining at me. So every time I see some impurity, I have to let it go. That's what my meaning is now – being here all the time.

David: So that is your main motivation now?

Roger: Yes, to vibrate with Now all the time.

David: I've heard it said that enlightenment is like being deeply in love. Some people have said that.

Roger: That's exactly what it is.

David: Would that be the best comparison, for want of a better term?

Roger: Well, yes, because everybody knows that feeling when you're in love – what happens to you. Your body starts to shake, and the only thing you want is to be with her or him. And it's the same with this. It's a really deep feeling in your body and the only thing you want is more, and you don't want anything else.

Love can be a bit personal for most people, because their experience of love is for another person, so I really like to use the term 'life' which for me is the same. What happens with love is that it just flows. You're not hanging on to something any more. And when you're in love, your whole body starts to energise. You feel it in your heart most of the time. Exactly the same happens with this, only you don't need someone else to answer your love, because . . .

David: it's in you.

Roger: I would say, that's what it is.

David: What's your relationship to your desires now?

Roger: Over the five years that I've been intensively practising here in this centre, my desires have become progressively less. It wasn't that in June or July last year they were all gone. It's a really gradual process. And then when you really get the full picture, you know that all those things will never make you satisfied. So then they disappear more. There are still desires, but they are very simple. Sometimes I can have a desire for some nice food – to relax in the evening, and watch a movie. I was really happy to see my family when they came in December last year. There was a desire to see them. There can be a desire to see Linda. There can be a desire to go for a retreat – to be with this group again, to unite more. So the desire is to drop deeper and deeper.

David: So you feel the desire to relax?

Roger: Yes, it can be nice sometimes to relax. It's full on in your body, and especially after a retreat, it's good to do some things that relax your body a bit more deeply - softening the vibration a bit. I'm just a normal human being, and to watch a movie is a nice thing to do. I also like swimming – things you do with your body for enjoyment.

But you need a break from the intensity in your body. It's like this! (At this point Roger gets up, grabs David by the arm and starts shaking him.) It's just so intense being in this energy, this vibration all the time. Sometimes I wake up, and it's stronger than when I'm sitting. The alarm goes, and I need 10 or 15 minutes to adapt to it. It's really nice. (Laughs.)

David: It doesn't sound very nice. (Laughs.)

Roger: It's what you want. It's what you are! You don't have to be somebody any more. That's the peace. As you let go more, you feel the peace deeper and deeper. You may look at your own life and think, I am average. This is how life is. But if you look closely, you see so many habits, so many things you do during the day to distract yourself, so once that habit goes, everything changes.

David: Thank you.

Roger: Thank you.