

Dr. Scott Guerin: 5 Steps That Each Of Us Can Take To Proactively Help Heal Our Country



Beau Henderson [Follow](#)

Jun 16 · 15 min read



What I am optimistic about is that our society will address the pandemic in whatever way we choose. I know that seems sarcastic, but in reality, that is what will happen. I see evidence of tremendous generosity and sacrifice, people taking advantage of the situation, and others using the crisis to advance their political agenda. We have to make choices, and I am hopeful that eventually, we will make decisions and take actions that will benefit everyone.e.

. . .

As part of our series about ‘5 Steps That Each Of Us Can Take To Proactively Help Heal Our Country’, I had the pleasure of interviewing Scott Guerin.

Dr. Scott Guerin has two masters and a doctorate in Human Development concentrating on spiritual development and is author of the Angel In Training series. He is an adjunct professor in psychology at Kean University in New Jersey, and works in the healthcare industry, specializing in medical education and health psychology. He is [hopefully] running his first triathlon in August 2020, at the age of 62!

. . .

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you. Can you tell us a bit about how you grew up?

I grew up in rural northwestern New Jersey on a dead-end street next to my grandfather’s 500-acre dairy farm. Common sights and sounds were dozens of grazing cows, wind-swept fields of corn and grass, and the barns a short walk from the house. Being the youngest of four siblings, I saw much of what was headed my way by watching my siblings navigate through their

lives in sports, school, friends, and church. We were a fairly religious family, meaning we attended a Lutheran Church until my oldest brother became born-again and, as a result, each family member followed their spiritual path. From the time I was a teenager, I had a consistent thirst for understanding God, spirituality, and my relationship with these ideas.

Is there a particular book that made a significant impact on you? Can you share a story or explain why it resonated with you so much?

For me, the Conversation with God series by Neal Donald Walsch has been the most impactful on my life. There are several reasons for this all stemming from my passion to understand God and my unsuccessful attempts to integrate organized religion into my life. Possibly because we lived a simpler life on the farm or the way my parents raised us, but my view of God was simple and set in concrete. God gave us the Bible, and you do what it says, or else. This approach was reinforced even further after I left the Lutheran church, following my oldest brother's lead, and adopted the conservative Christian beliefs presented in the born-again movement in the 70s and 80s.

In spite of rigorously pursuing my faith in all aspects for decades, my life completely fell apart starting with depression, divorce, financial ruin, and a night of suicidal ideation. As I was recovering

from these dark times, I stumbled on the first book in the series and, for lack of better words, it woke me up. The books, for me, confirm that God is still communicating with us, shines a light on what religion is and is not doing, suggests our individual journeys span hundreds of lifetimes, and proposes new ways for us to interact with each other in more civil ways. Most importantly, he states that we are a part of God; there is no separation, meaning we are divine beings.

Still reeling from my disastrous experience, attempting to force-fit a narrow ideology into my life, I resisted accepting these or any new concepts wholeheartedly. However, the content Walsch presented served as a springboard to new investigations into spirituality, this time outside of religion, and changing my life forever.

Do you have a favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Do you have a story about how that was relevant in your life or your work?

“Many people cling to their beliefs for their lives like a life raft floating in a deep ocean. Others of us know we are only floating in three feet of water.”

I developed this quote to describe how I felt moving from a religious perspective to the idea that we are divine beings experiencing a temporary physical life. The fears of floating in a

deep ocean came from the idea that if we did not please God, punishment most certainly would rain down on us. Accepting the idea that we are spiritual beings at our source profoundly resonated with me and I realized there is nothing to fear, ever. For the first time in my life, I felt I was on solid ground with nothing to fear, able to consider other ways to think about God and Who I really am.

How do you define “Leadership”? Can you explain what you mean or give an example?

For me, leadership comes from a trusted person or group that provides practical education and direction needed for an individual or group to achieve their goals. Trusted is a keyword for me. To know without a doubt, the leadership is only focused on our best interests makes all the difference.

My wrestling coach in high school was a great example of a leader. He knew what we needed to learn and prepared us to be good wrestlers. His leadership was not just in telling us and showing us what to do, but by exemplifying the type of people we needed to be in order to succeed. These things included discipline, integrity, and respect for others that that not only validated what he was teaching us but provided a role model for us to emulate.

Ok, thank you for all that. Now let's move to the main focus of our interview. The United States is currently facing a series of unprecedented crises. So many of us see the news and ask how we can help. We'd love to talk about the steps that each of us can take to help heal our country, in our own way. Which particular crisis would you like to discuss with us today? Why does that resonate with you so much?

I would like to address the pandemic that began in the US earlier this year. The reasons why this is important is that it certainly has impacted all areas of our society in terms of health care, jobs, many businesses, and the overall economy. Personally, it ripped through my heart like a knife because my mother passed three weeks after being diagnosed with COVID-19 and my father, at the time I am writing this, is losing his battle with it as well.

This is likely a huge topic. But briefly, can you share your view on how this crisis inexorably evolved to the boiling point that it's at now?

All conspiracy theories aside, my opinion is that COVID-19 originated from bats in China and then transferred to humans through animals raised for food supply. From what I understand, it spread from China to the west coast of the US and to the east coast through Europe.

I believe most people would agree that there was a delay in a coordinated response the first months the virus was identified in the US. What most people do not agree on was why. Was it because our government was not prepared? Or, that some leaders wanted to downplay it so it would not impact the economy? I heard just a few days ago (June 4th) a radio talk show host in New Jersey proposing that COVID-19 was just like the flu, and all of the social distancing, masks, and business closures were “ridiculous.” Another reason could be that the first stage of grief is denial. Maybe it just took some people time to accept this was a real problem.

I am not sure what the reasons were, but it seems like the measures put in place to slow the spread were eventually accepted and has a positive and significant impact. I understand how this situation has placed enormous pressure and stress on millions of people and see where it pushes people to their limits. What I am embarrassed about as a human being is the politicizing and finger-pointing meant to divert blame or responsibility. What is missing is constructive discussion and planning to minimize the effects if/when it happens again. This is what effective leadership will do.

Can you tell our readers a bit about your experience either working on this cause or your experience being impacted by it? Can you share a story with us?

In the beginning, the self-isolation impacted my wife and me like most people. With everything shut down and my ability to work from home, thankfully, we were not lacking. My adult children were doing ok for the short term. My parents, both 91 and in reasonably good health, were in a nursing home a few hours away. Early in April, we were notified that the facility was in lockdown and we could not see them due to the vulnerability of the residents. Then, a few weeks later, we got word that Mom was diagnosed with COVID-19 on April 11th. I was shocked. I always thought Dad would go first because he had some heart issues and frailer. The worst part was not being able to see her. The wonderful staff at the nursing home set up Facetime sessions with her, my sister, brother, and me, which was good. We saw her fade over the next few weeks, but during that time, she would have days where she perked up, which sparked feelings of hope that maybe she could beat it. We heard stories of older people recovering. Those high points were dashed with one horrible Facetime session where she looked so gaunt and frail it moved me to tears. On May 2nd she passed, three weeks to the day from her diagnosis.

Her wishes were to be cremated so that answered the question of a viewing. It also gave us time to think through what we wanted to do. Do we have something now, do we wait for Dad to pass years from now? Waiting was a strange concept for me. Then I learned that when my friend's mom died their family waited 7

years for their father to pass and then buried them together. My sister and I had a need for closure so we called three churches that Mom and Dad attended in New Jersey to see if we could have some sort of an in person service and possibly connect to others via Zoom. Two of the churches were reluctant to do anything, especially since Mom's ashes were in an urn and no viewing was necessary. We continued our search and the Lutheran church we grew up attending agreed to have a service. Finally, we had a plan. But then the second shoe dropped when Dad was diagnosed.

For almost two weeks, Dad's symptoms were, as with many COVID patients, loss of appetite. The staff at the nursing home feed him high calorie milk-shake-type drinks when he was willing, and we had a few Facetime sessions. He was doing great, he was going to beat this, I felt. We knew he was losing weight, but he was alert and knew who were on the Facetime visits, even though he was looking at us on the small screen of an aid's iPhone. But then we had our scheduled Monday afternoon Facetime session on a Tuesday afternoon. My wife answered the call on her iPhone and I could tell something was wrong by the look on her face as she handed me the phone. Dad looked horrible, his face was thin and pale, his eyes sunken and mouth open. He could barely talk but said hi to us and then said he was tired, and we ended the call. That image tore through me and I cried on and off for a few days. Dad is my rock, my hero and

seeing him like this took me completely by surprise, I was devastated. At the time I'm writing this, we are waiting for the next clinical update with a scheduled Facetime call in a few days. I do not know what to expect.

Ok. Here is the main question of our discussion. Can you please share your “5 Steps That Each Of Us Can Take To Proactively Help Heal Our Country”. Kindly share a story or example for each.

My perspective on how our country can heal runs contrary to our natural tendency to look outside of ourselves for help. Certainly, there are actions we, others, and our government can take to address this pandemic and the desolation it has brought to so many lives. However, I believe that unless we engage in a healing process within ourselves, the pain, anger, and sadness that surrounds us in these times will continue. If we can commit to take initial steps to reconnect with our inner strengths, practice appreciation, meditation, and counseling if needed, healing can begin, from the inside out.

1. Check out meditation — this practice is becoming quite popular with many books, apps, and programs available. There are three reasons why practicing meditation can help in times of need. The first is that it can teach you to quiet your mind. Not just for a few mins here and there, but throughout the day. Among the

many benefits of this, relief from stress is a common result. The second reason is that it can help you gain control of your thoughts. The goal is to focus on positive thoughts and minimize the negative. Thirdly, it can help you learn to observe everything going on in your life without judgment. This means that whatever comes into your awareness during the day, you can begin to understand they are neither good nor bad until you decide what label you are going to apply. For me, this connects me to my divine nature and ushers in waves of peace, contentment, and connectedness to everyone and everything.

What you can do: Take some time to investigate meditation. Look into different kinds and methods. I strongly suggest, when able, to participate in sessions that last for hours or even days. Our minds are programmed to run at top speed, to slow it down takes time and is not easy. The benefits you will experience will be well worth the effort.

2. Get outside. What I love about spending time in nature is, is just is. A tree is a tree, it does not worry about not being tall enough or what kind of tree it is, it just stands there rooted and lifting its branches to the sky. The same for other plants, flowers, and animals of the forest. I realize they do not have the ability to think, but they seem comfortable with who they are. Walking outside many times I think of the American Indian who saw “The Great Spirit in the fleecy clouds and heard God’s voice in the

rustlings leaves and babbling brook.” For me, spending time outside provides a break from whatever is happening in my life and provides a sense of peace seeing the harmony of nature.

What you can do: Wherever you are, look for areas where you can walk or hike. Even if it’s a small area. When you do, spend time there, if you can, turn your cell phone off or silent during your walk. Take the time to observe all the details, the plant growth, insects, birds, ground cover, and any streams or rivers. Notice after how you feel, if it was a positive experience, get back there soon!

3. Focus on the positive — One of my pet peeves is the misquoting of Darwin’s theory about the “survival of the fittest.” Many people confidently state it means the survival of the strongest, but that is incorrect. Darwin’s research was all about adaptability, relating to the ability of an organism to change to survive in new environments. This could be no more applicable than today. But how can we adapt? It is easier for some than others. The field of psychology has recently started to address this concept by shifting from only focusing on the causes of psychological problems to identifying an individual’s strengths and building on them. The term used frequently refers to a person’s resilience, meaning how people can adapt in times of adversity, loss, or tragedy. The area of study is called positive psychology and, while still in the early stages, is yielding good

information about how to help people adapt and even thrive in times of great need. To learn more about this or incorporate positive psychology in your life, research the topic online or contact a mental health provider through your health benefits or Employee Assistance program.

What you can do: “You got to ac-cent-tchu-ate the positive. E-lim-i-nate the negative. Latch on to the affirmative. Don’t mess with mister in-between.” These are lyrics from a song recorded by the famous jazz musician Louis Armstrong in 1944, my father’s favorite musician. While an entertaining song, it happens to sum up Eastern philosophy dozens of centuries old. It takes no more energy to focus on the positive aspects of our lives rather than the negative, and with some help, we can be experts at it!

4. Try new things. Everyone can agree that our world has changed profoundly in many ways. The fact that in almost every household most days everyone would wake up, get ready for their day, and depart for work, school, or appointments. Well, that’s not happening. The family dynamics are upside down. Everyone is in the house, all day, all the time. It does not require an advanced degree to understand this can lead to tension between spouses, children, and even pets. Certainly, if a major issue surfaces, we need to admit there is a problem and seek help. Otherwise, in order to adapt, give everyone permission to try new things like rearranging the day, switching household

responsibilities, experimenting with new activities or hobbies. Above all, do not be afraid that it will not work out, we are in uncharted territory, we can give ourselves a pass.

What you can do: This is a topic that is being talked and written about frequently. Look up how other people are dealing with life as it is now, consider adapting your life in the same way. Have a family meeting to brainstorm to consider all possible ideas with no judgment. Then decide to try out a new routine or talk through making a major change.

5. Maintain deep hope. The Merriam-Webster definition of hope is “to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true, hopes for a promotion, hoping for the best.” But in Diane Rizzetto’s book *Deep Hope*, a much different definition is presented. The author suggests that the Zen Buddhist tradition discourages hope that focuses on specific outcomes because it will lead to further suffering. This happens because our happiness is contingent on something happening and diverts our attention away from the present moment. In other words, hope is best viewed as a journey rather than a destination. Maintaining a deep hope has a much broader vision and provides the patience and peace we all crave. In Rizzetto’s words “[Deep hope] arises when we purposely engage in living in such a way as to nurture and sustain our deepest capacity to continue on, knowing that, in spite of what appears on the surface, there exists a fundamental

love and connection between all things.”

What you can do: In the dark times, do what you can to connect to God, the Universe, Spirit, whatever your understanding is to connect to something greater than yourself and what is happening. As hard as it may seem at first, if you focus on the bigger, eternal picture, you will get to a more peaceful place and feel a connection to all things.

It's very nice to suggest ideas, but what can we do to make these ideas a reality? What specific steps can you suggest to make these ideas actually happen? Are there things that the community can do to help you promote these ideas?

I have added suggestions of what individuals can do in relation to the five steps. Communities can respond by organizing events that can help people get outside with open areas retrofitted with social distancing messaging and markings. My local library just sent an email about a remote book club they started to keep people engaged. We can also donate money, even if a few dollars, to causes that support struggling people and businesses. Another option is not to take advantage of support or funds that we may be able to access but can afford to pass up, leaving more for others in need.

We are going through a rough period now. Are you optimistic

that this issue can eventually be resolved? Can you explain?

What I am optimistic about is that our society will address the pandemic in whatever way we choose. I know that seems sarcastic, but in reality, that is what will happen. I see evidence of tremendous generosity and sacrifice, people taking advantage of the situation, and others using the crisis to advance their political agenda. We have to make choices, and I am hopeful that eventually, we will make decisions and take actions that will benefit everyone.

If you could tell other young people one thing about why they should consider making a positive impact on our environment or society, like you, what would you tell them?

You have what the current leadership has left for you. You have more knowledge, abilities, and social consciousness than any previous generation. Please learn from our mistakes to make the Earth a better place for all people.

Is there a person in the world, or in the US, with whom you would like to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might just see this, especially if we tag them. :-)

I would like to meet with Gabrielle Bernstein, a thought leader in new areas of spirituality, and bringing much hope to people

searching for help.

How can our readers follow you online?

Angelintraining.org

This was very meaningful, thank you so much. We wish you only continued success on your great work!

Wellness

Discover Medium

Welcome to a place where words matter. On Medium, smart voices and original ideas take center stage - with no ads in sight. Watch

Make Medium yours

Follow all the topics you care about, and we'll deliver the best stories for you to your homepage and inbox. Explore

Become a member

Get unlimited access to the best stories on Medium — and support writers while you're at it. Just \$5/month. Upgrade

[About](#)

[Help](#)

[Legal](#)