

## **Interview: Robert Kržišnik**

**IP:** So it's my great pleasure to spend some time with Robert Kržišnik, who is a good friend of mine and we've known each other 14 or 15 years. In that time a lot has happened in both our lives. You've moved from Ljubljana, which is a beautiful city in Slovenia, to Israel for love, I believe. Robert is an author of *'This Miraculous Life'* - highly recommended. And you've been writing a new book. I can't wait to read that.

**Robert,** one thing that struck me reading *'This Miraculous Life'*, and also just knowing you, is that I would describe you as a free spirit. There is a lot of adventure and exploration in your life and I'm wondering how you balance this free spirit in you with settling down and the stability of a relationship that a family needs. Because you've started a family with your new partner.

**RK:** Oh. Wow. I love the question Ian. Now I want to pause for 20 minutes to explore before I answer. But somehow, I guess, my understanding of being a free spirit is not so standard or classical as many might see it - that I want to run around all the time.

It is more about my desire, or very strong drive, to explore life. That doesn't necessarily mean to run around and travel. Actually I have way less passion for travelling than I used to have. But what it means is that somehow this drive is to be at the edge of the accessible or known universe for myself. This is why I have been taking things in life very seriously. That's why I've been taking relationships very seriously. Basically I didn't have short relationships. I didn't have adventures. Because of me. I needed to dive into them.

**IP Robert, this desire for life, how does that play out in your current relationship?**

**RK** I'm really hit by your questions. In my situation they're opening me up. Knowing I don't have time to stare through the window and explore, I will try to summarise what I'm experiencing right now as an answer.

That about taking things seriously, or really being serious about this exploration of life, is what brought me together with my partner. With Noa. That something I resonated with or sensed in her as well. Its almost like meeting a very soul level relative.

*"Ah .. you're also serious and crazy about exploring the unknown and learning about the nature of existence."*

So I think this is how it played out, or started it playing out.

Another thing I'm reflecting on in our relationship. I'm celebrating that we obviously totally support each other in our personal exploration as well as exploration as a couple. Noa is aware there is a huge 'Yes' in me to her journey of exploration and vice versa. Also in our relationship we somehow, again and again, end up coming to the question that inspired in us in the first place. That is, how much love is it possible to experience in a relationship?

**IP: Wow. I'm curious, did you find the answer? Did you reach that limit? Is there a limit?**

**RK** I guess we'll be able to evaluate that when dying. It also becomes a bit of a joke. Sometimes when we are grumpy, one of us will remember this idea to explore how much love is possible in a relationship ... and say *'well, maybe not that much'*.

However, what I am experiencing, on a serious note, is what I'm experiencing as love for Noa is definitely increasing. That didn't stop or stay at the same level. That keeps increasing. Lots of celebration from me about that.

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

**IP And bringing a child into the world, because you have a son, a young son. How did that change this exploration of life and of love. What did it add, or what it take away? How did it change the dynamic?**

RK: One thing that was for both of us very interesting . I had already had 2 grown up kids and I never thought I would want another child. I was very clear this part of my life was over. But then about a year into our relationship we agreed we don't know if we want children – to stay open and see.

Then suddenly it become almost physically and emotionally obvious that the field we were opening wanted to bring another life into this world. Its hard for me to explain what I'm saying. But it was a very physical, emotional and energetic experience. The reason I'm saying this is we somehow keep experiencing again and again our son as a the result of our love.

Of course ideally every child is a result of love. And of course my previous children are a result of love from my previous relationship. Somehow this feels even more physical. Like observing this manifestation of specifically our love walking around and evolving. Somehow that became even more embodied with the birth of our son.

And yes, of course, on a practical level we started to notice a shift in dynamic. That started to emerge and become visible quite soon a few weeks or month safter our son was born.

**IP So the picture I'm getting of this exploration of relationship, of love, of life and kind of creating a relationship where you're wanting to experience every manifestation that love has to offer and bringing a child into the world it became an obvious further manifestation of this. Then of course there is a practical side. Presumably not everything is a spiritual exploration. There are diapers that need to be changed and food needs to be bought, and everything else that needs to be taken care of. How does that look like? How do you fit that into the more spiritual and sacred side of your life?**

RK: Fortunately at least I was not shocked by it. I was with my first two kids. I was in my mid 20's and I even wrote an article in which I was expressing my anger and frustration because all these magazines for parenting or mothers and about children. Always on a front page would have this beautiful looking young mother with a very happy baby in her lap and a very joyful father behind them . And it would seem like this is just happiness.

And whenever I would read an interview with a famous person who just became a mother and they would ask her how did this change your life. The answer was always *"the child brought meaning to my life and its so blissful and beautiful"*.

As funny as it may sound with my first 2 kids I was shocked. I knew about it theoretically. But it was almost like I became enraged at other parents for not telling me the truth about reality.

27 years later I was well prepared. Noa of course was not as naïve as I had been. And we are also blessed in the situation where we could take several months of not working and just being there with our son. Somehow this shift into practical – diapers, cooking, cleaning - somehow didn't come as a shock. Even more, living in this eco-village I was touched to tears to realise the tradition is when a new child is born into the village this family would not cook for at least a month because they would be bringing lunches.

So it was ideal and still is in terms of how we collaborate and care for each other.

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

One thing I am noticing though in terms of my personal pattern that I have this tendency to be easy go lucky. Ok we do whatever. I go very easily. However, then I have difficulty to notice when things are not so easy anymore. I would happily stretch out of my balance not noticing anything. Then suddenly a few weeks into it I become very grumpy and I notice I totally lack sleep and I'm needing more balance in care for the household. I need some time for self.

Nothing that Noa would say 'No' to but I need to, from time to time, have my own clarity about my needs and speak them. If both are very attentive it flows beautifully. If we (mostly me) am not, I get into this cycle of grumpiness or depression and then getting more clear about what I need.

**IP Listening to you I'm slightly disappointed. I was half hoping to hear you had managed to transcend these day to day things. That when you've reached some kind of enlightenment that all this day to day stuff didn't need to take place.**

**Changing track. One thing I know about you Robert – and should say we're in the summer of 2020 and still in the grips of pandemic which has changed all out life styles. Before that, you are pretty much in demand on the international scene as a trainer of NVC and in organisation work. So you're on the road quite a lot. We've spoken to each other from many far flung places.**

**How do you make sure you get quality time with Noa and with Dorian? How do you preserve that?**

RK So before Corona that was much easier. Because I work internationally Noa and me explored what is a balanced way of me travelling so it works for her and for me. We found a ratio which meant when I was travelling giving workshop every day or flying. I had this sense of being alone and completely in my temple with my thoughts. You know I'm an introvert very happy with eyes closed and following my thoughts. So even though I was travelling a lot I was also getting a lot alone time. Then of course I would come back and take over and Noa gets her alone time.

Now with Corona this is a bit more challenging. Because I need more time alone than Noa. She enjoys socialising and meeting with friends a bit more than I do. Not because I don't like friends but because I'm not so excited about many and long meetings. There is some discrepancy. So Noa would like us to go as a family. I'm happy to do that but there is some discrepancy and also in the evenings when our son falls asleep.

Part of me always wants to be alone. So to navigate between that and the precious time together. Is a bit more challenging now than before when I was travelling. And again I want to celebrate I'm having an incredible..... support form my partner in the sense that she knows that I'm slightly different and supporting me in that way.

And also I believe I'm trying to be really attentive to that. Again dozens of years ago I had this experience when I was working with parents a lot in Slovenia. Maybe its only valid for a certain cultural setting. Something about this mythology that we seem to be carrying in culture that first you need to sacrifice for your child – you need to do everything for your child. And then, when you have some time and energy at 2:00am then you can have some joy and pleasure. Long time ago I realised if I do that, my child will have a very tired and grumpy and unhappy father to live with.

But if I focus on meeting my own needs and making sure I'm a happy man - that my needs are met and my passions are met. Then by default I'm giving my child the happiest parent ever. Rested and fulfilled. From that point its very easy to be with a child. Otherwise it's quite a struggle as we both know.

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

**IP So a lot of people talk as a couple about quality time and it sounds like quality time for you is what you need to take care of yourself so that you can show up with your family. Is that fair enough? Your priority is to make sure as individuals you are well taken care so you together be there?**

RK Yes

**IP I'm assuming that's been a process that was not necessarily easy and has needed to develop. And with other things I'm wondering how has nonviolent communication helped you navigate some of these differences when two very different people come together and form a relationship?**

RK Well, very much. We are both practitioners and trainers of NVC and so we are quite skilled lets say. Even though what is consider quite skilled in regular interactions with people proves to be absolutely not skilled enough in a relationship.

So there are loads of challenges. However, I can't even imagine how we would go through and deepen the relationship if I didn't have the capacity to empathically listen to her. If I didn't have that but continuously hearing whatever she says as being about me. Which before I actually did. So its very helpful. Also having this experience through NVC dialogue how my authenticity is really welcomed. I can say the fact that I have experienced being fully empathically received by Noa was encouraging me to be more authentic than before - and that encouraged me to be even more empathic.

So yes, I can't imagine how we could be at the place we are without the skills and awareness of NVC.

However I just want to mention that doesn't mean all of the quality time we have together – mostly in the evenings – means we sit and do NVC style of conversation. Sometimes we do but it's mostly integrated in the way we function together.

We very often spend doing meaningful time in the evenings, for example, we do dancing together or for each other. Or we both do contact improvisation. Or we do a dyad. Or massage each other while the person being massaged is sharing something vulnerable etc .. I believe this space of possibilities remains very often untapped by partners when they get a child. For us we have a sense we are just beginning in what different ways we can spend quality time so it will not only be enriching but deepening our connection.

**IP Yeah, thank you Robert. I'm just coming back to your book which struck me the 1<sup>st</sup> part of your life - it's an autobiography - and coming up date date with birth of your son. It seems there was a huge journey of your life. Do you have any sense what's next? Where is life taking you on the next part of your journey?**

RK I'm laughing because its' a bit vulnerable to share that. I mean I don't have to answer it, but actually I want to because there is something about full authenticity that I really like or wish for.

So what's next? As you know I've just finished my next book which is going to reveal me way more than my autobiography . Even though there is not a word about me, it is in way revealing my soul or my core or my essence to the full nakedness. What I am sensing might be opening up for me is in a way coming back full circle to the journey when I started attending Enlightenment Intensive in the early 80's of the previous century. In a way slowly shredding everything that is not fully in the focus of my exploration of what is the nature of existence. Slowly or quickly for that matter to peel off everything I learned. All the clothes, all the suits I learned to wear in my life. A good husband, son,

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

trainer etc. I was so much identifying myself with the layers I couldn't even fully distinguish what is me and what is not me.

And of course there is this bathing in the love of Noa and my son and the beauty of the love for my other two kids and friends. And this journey of exploring the very nature of existence is coming back full force or full throttle and reclaiming its space. I'm pretty sure its something to do with this. For sure I'm not just going to start a random business to make lots of money.

**IP it sounds like the relationship is, if not central, is an important supporting system to allow that exploration around that. Fundamentally its about your own exploration of the meaning of life. How do you see Noa in this? As an accompanying soul, or something else? How does the relationship go hand in hand with that?**

RK I will start by quoting Noa from a few years ago when I was overwhelmed with love I was experiencing. I said *"Wow I'm so grateful to you for accepting me into your life"*. And Noa, in her habit of cutting with one sentence to the core, she said *"Don't be grateful to me, be grateful to that which brought us together"*.

So in a way I have a continuous – even in the most difficult moments we have - deep experience of gratitude for being together in this life deepening. Its hard to say my soul mate or so forth but I would say a companion I was searching for throughout my life. A companion that in a way is not the same as I am. Made from the same fabric but different.

So with me and her I get a stereo sound of the universe and what it is to be alive. I keep learning and being supported and experiencing beauty and love. I'm sometimes melting in gratitude for.

I guess something like you know Israeli car racing when there is a driver and co-pilot. The driver cannot drive as fast without the co-pilot who is giving directions. I would say she is the co-pilot and completely trust her. I can close my eyes and drive. And I know for here , I am the co-driver. So both of us are driving our own lives and exploring what we need to explore. And we both have incredible co-drivers.

**IP Nice metaphor. I'd like to turn briefly to parenting. You are a couple and have what for me sounds like a beautiful relationship about exploring love and life. And you are also parents. To what extent are you aligned about raising a child and how do you bring the two of you together? You've both had different cultural upbringing and different journeys through life. I'm assuming you have some differences. How do you navigate your beliefs about parenting and bring them together?**

RK Three answers come up.

One thing is about this kind of conscious – how do we consciously want to raise kids. What would be the manual she would write and what would be mine? I think on the conscious level would be very similar and that makes it so much easier.

However unconsciously there are quite some differences in how we function in the relationship. In the relationship towards our son, Noa sometimes says I remind her of her grandfather who is a holocaust survivor from eastern Europe who went through these difficult experiences. He developed a bit of a survivalist approach to life. This is what we eat, we don't throw anything away.

I have a bit of that without having any connection to the holocaust. Maybe it's Slavic or maybe left over from socialism after the war. My parents probably had it integrated in their system. So unconsciously we have differences.

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

So far, our son is just 16 months its not yet the most challenging time. So far we are navigating ways. Who can kind of care for my sons needs if Noa is doing something I don't agree with and care for her, him and our relationship. It's sometimes hard to navigate not to bark out .. *"why did you do that?"* So it's an exploration how can we be together and and support. So I do say if you even see me doing this then please let me know like this.

And we are very quick to acknowledge that we don't know. We don't have difficulties to acknowledge that. Just yesterday in the evening we were talking about a certain behaviour our son has started to develop. We don't like it. It hurts. He's hitting us. It's different than what I experienced with my first 2 kids that when they realised they were causing pain they would stop. Noa used to work in the kindergarten with little kids. So she also has a lot experience.

But we notice he really wants to collaborate but as though something is not clear to him .. he will hold the stick and say 'No? Ouch? No?' and then hit me with innocent laughter. He doesn't want to hurt. In this situation we just don't know. And it's a quality I'm very much enjoying where we will accept we don't know what to do and then talk about it and explore it. Getting rid of this idea that as a partner I need to be perfect and know all the answers. Getting rid of this is life-saving. Knowing I'm not perfect and will make mistakes I will regret later. So I can be an honest parent and come to my son and say look I don't like what I did.

**IP That sounds to me like a great quality to bring to any relationship whether with children or my partner – this approach if I'm not perfect but I want to get better.**

RK I just want say one thing I remembered. Which is an indirect answer to a previous question about how NVC supports us. And there is one thing we are just learning to balance which is the focus and precision of the approach of NVC where every word can be so upsetting to the other and we're really trying to be clear.

I love it . I teach it. But I notice if we don't balance it with humour and lightness ... if we don't keep bringing in fun and ease then this NVC, like every other approach to communication, can become a rigid procedure that is lifeless and triggers resistance in me. There needs to be a ground of trust already built that this fun or joy can remind us its not so heavy or dramatic.

We love each other and have a beautiful son. Sometimes we will say something like when I notice that I've done something I'm regretting I want to be really fast and say to Noa with honesty and sometimes it will be almost like .. ok I'm the first one to regret something ... you see how spiritually developed I am?

And I'm proud of a joke I made the other day when I said to Noa

*"I can easily forgive you ... but the main thing is can you forgive yourself?"*. And it was really obvious I was about to express regret about something I did or said.

**IP: So Robert we're approaching the end of our time together I have one final question. You said earlier if you wrote your manual of parenting they would be fairly similar. What about if you wrote the manual of relationship? Could you tell me chapter headings of your manual – three things that are important to make a relationship successful? Not to put pressure on you or anything. This is the final question by which the quality of this interview will be judged.**

RK The first thing – not necessarily the most important is gratitude and appreciation. I believe it is so incredibly important. With our socially conditioned mind it tends to be pushed away so we are

## Interview: Robert Kržišnik

looking for the problems. You know the mechanical approach where we are trying to work out where it's not working and fix it. And I believe there are two parts.

First to really sense. Before I go to sleep I go out to my hammock and sense into gratitude - it is almost always my practice. Just feeling. Even if we are really pissed at each other – my heart is still full of gratitude. Really sinking into this gratitude. After I've really sensed into it then I want to bring it and speak it out or Noa doesn't have knowledge of my gratitude. It melts away.

Another that comes up to me is really fully support to each other's journey. To be fully aware that my partner is not an object in my life. Her life is about her. Mine is about mine. I can be her co-driver and do what I can and still stay balanced to support her journey.

Symbolically saying *"dance my beloved. Sing. Yes enter this life fully. Sing your song and do whatever you are here for."* And inviting me to do the same.

And the third that comes up is really spend time together .. quality time .. in which we celebrate life. It can be sitting and talking. But searching for things we can do together often or a regular basis where we celebrate and enjoy ourselves and being together. Is it dancing? Drawing? Whatever .. but something that is really fun.

Did I answer correct?

**IP It was a pretty good answer Robert. I was very inspired and touched by it. And I'm already holding it up to my own relationship and wondering how can I bring more of what I'm hearing into mine. I'm deeply grateful for this time. Getting to know an aspect of your life that I know something about but you sharing it this way is bringing a different dive into it. I enjoyed it a lot.**

RK Thank you .. I love the questions it was an incredibly enjoyable experience and I'm sad its over.