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INTERVIEW: MARANDA PLEASANT

The importance of meditation and choosing wisely in a world out of balance

MARANDA PLEASANT: How has Transcendental Meditation played a role in your life? Why is it important to you?

GREG REITMAN: First, it's about getting in touch with my inner self. As a filmmaker and also a married man, I'm constantly on the run. Whether it's organizing an interview for a film shoot, meeting with a financier, going through story notes with my editor, or just trying to find some quiet time to be with my significant other, it's a constant juggle.

I heard about meditation and tried many types. Believe me, there are tons of choices out there, but the one that worked for me the best was TM. This meditation technique only lasts twenty minutes, but its effects are staggering on my mind, body, and well-being. I do it when I wake up and before dinner. It's important to me because it centers me. It allows me to remove my fear and anxieties and knots that are rattling in my mind before I start the day and that accumulate at the end of the day. It allows me to move or transcend those thoughts to

a happier place. It's important because happiness is contagious, and I like to be happy and be around happy people.

MP: When things get hectic, how do you stay grounded?

GR: The answer is very simple: breathe. Just stopping what you're doing and allowing the body to get centered. I also believe in having daily or weekly routines. For me, I love hiking with my wife, Britta, in the Santa Monica Mountains or biking with her along the bike path from Marina del Rey to the Pacific Palisades.

MP: Why did you make *Rooted in Peace*?

GR: As a fellow Sundance alumnus, I thought it was important to connect the dots between ourselves and Earth. Post-9/11, I was walking through JFK terminal, heading back to Los Angeles. I was a bit frazzled about the long lines and the TSA agents confiscating water bottles and other items. I mean, we live in America, the land of the free. As I headed through the secu-

rity gate, I was harassed for not giving up my water bottle. I started to question how we live and the role of government. I also started to notice a lot of my friends and family members getting sick, even myself. I also noticed a pattern of our country constantly going to war. Everything seemed out of balance. Something wasn't right.

I wanted to make a film to connect the dots between humanity and the world we live in today, to make our home a better place. My hope is that people will realize that change begins within. It starts with oneself. We sometimes tend to blame others or situations, but the real cause of suffering in life is to understand that we are the root cause of change. We have a choice of how we want to live: we can either be part of the violence or we can become peaceful within ourselves. Nature is our greatest ally. It's always in balance. It guides us to a peaceful coexistence. The big idea of the film is, it starts with you, me, and the tree—literally, to get back to our roots.