

# A 'two-minute' interview with David Prescott



**I got into this area of academic/professional work** I needed a job in the 1980s - there's no marvellous poetic story to it. I went to 'help wanted' and at one interview was asked 'you wouldn't want to work with sex offenders would you?' I said 'sure' as I had a deep belief that all human beings should have the opportunity to rebuild their lives whatever the setting they are in; I wanted to stay true to the values of my social work education.

**What I most enjoy about what I do professionally is** the opportunity to do a little assessment, a little treatment, a little supervision, a little consultancy and a little training – for me it's the combination that's the most enjoyable aspect.

**The hardest aspects of my work are** the incredible political pressures placed on programmes to always do more with less and less. And there can also be a great deal of professional suspicion within our field – there can a sort of competitive jealousy that says 'we know how to do this and others don't'. That can be very tiresome, at least in the US. Also, although things are a bit more reasonable in Maine, in our field we are up against vast societal judgements that once a sex offender, always a sex offender and that nothing works.

**My desk is** like my backpack because I only recently just got an office for the first time in four years. As I go from programme to programme, in Maine and other North Eastern States, one of my hobbies is to refine my travel habits to a place where I arrive rested and have access to everything I need. There's a certain Zen, a certain art to it.

**I attend to my welfare and well-being** by running religiously and, after many years in the field, I became a yoga teacher, starting because I needed to improve my upper body strength (something that reduces as we all age) but turning into something very relaxing. It makes me and everyone who does it – it makes us feel whole.

**My advice to anyone thinking of pursuing a similar career** is to work extremely hard and take extremely good care of yourself and never lose your compassion.

**If I could have had a second career I would also like to have** been a professional musician. I've always been involved in very abstract, modern music, anything that has an atmospheric, contemplative feel to it. In the 1970s we called it 'space music'. I actually prefer musicians from the 1970s and 1980s – there was one group I always liked very much called 'Tangerine Dream'. In the 70s they appealed to people who took too many drugs and then in the 80s they appealed to people fascinated by computers. I used to play a lot of electronic music myself and, in the 1980s, in addition to being a social worker, I had a room full of synthesisers.

**When I'm not working I most like to** spend time with my family and I also have two dogs.

**I wish I was still really** good at music. It feels like a language I have lost since moving to 'another country'. I knew a fellow once who went back to Norway after living in the US and when I saw him 20 years later he'd lost almost all his English – sometimes that's how I feel about music.

**It may not be obvious from looking at me that** I also used to have a very deep connection to Eastern European cultures having published the music of several Eastern European composers. In the 1980s I started two record companies. I've sold them now and one is still around and highly respected, although no thanks to me! I still visit people I knew during that period – Joerg Thomasius in East Berlin and Iancu Dumitrescu in Bucharest. So during the entire 1980s, by day, I was an inner city social worker and, by night, I was having communications with people all over the world about music (in a pre-Internet age).

**The public figure I most admire in the world is** Nelson Mandela – no question, hands down. I've just been listening to 'The Long Walk Home' on audio book – what a life!

**The public figure I most dislike in the world is** (I need even less time to think about that) it would be former US Vice President Dick Cheney – his involvement in the torture at Abu Ghraib – I think no other human being has sacrificed more quickly, more expediently, more efficiently the US's reputation in the world. Through torture, warfare, saying we were right, and defending the fact that we invaded the wrong country leading to the death of 100,000 people. He represents the very worst of American culture – hands down.

**What is really important about life is** the ability of human beings to help one another.

**If I had a magic wand I would** do anything to eliminate violence in the world; to try and reinstate what I consider to be some of the original values of all human beings. The Dalai Lama has said that human beings are gentle in their nature and increasingly I agree with him – we learn to be violent and stupid later on. You only have to observe small children to see that – we enter the world in a gentle state – it would be good to make it last.

