

Healing Conversations 2011 – Session Five

1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 2 minutes.

A poem by Rumi:

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

2. Check-in/Sharing: up to 30 minutes.

Is there anything that has eased your suffering this week?

3. Topic: TOTAL TIME 60 minutes.

Grief can come with judgment, shame, anger, guilt, resentment, regret,
bitterness, fear.

WHO'S KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR?

A. Introduction and Questions: 10 minutes.

1. A FEW READINGS FROM Thich Nhat Hanh's spiritual book, Taming the Tiger Within:

“Just like our organs, our anger is part of us. When we are angry, we have to go back to ourselves and take good care of our anger. We cannot say, ‘Go away, anger, I don’t want you.’ When you have a stomachache, you don’t say, ‘I don’t want you stomach, go away.’ No, you take care of it. In the same way, we have to embrace and take good care of our anger.”

“Just because anger or hate is present does not mean that the capacity to love and accept is not there; love is always with you.”

“In a time of anger or despair, even if we feel overwhelmed, our love is still there. Our capacity to communicate, to forgive, to be compassionate is still there. You have to believe this. We are more than our anger, we are more than our suffering. We must recognize that we do have within us the capacity to love, to understand, to be compassionate, always.”

“When we embrace anger and take good care of our anger, we obtain relief. We can look deeply into it and gain many insights. One of the first insights may be that the seed of anger in us has grown too big, and is the main cause of our misery. As we begin to see this reality, we realize that the other person, whom our anger is directed at, is only a secondary cause. The other person is not the real cause of our anger.”

2. The Dragon Princess, by Rainer Maria Rilke

This passage by Rainer Maria Rilke is often called The Dragon Princess. It is part of one of the ten letters Rilke wrote to the so called young poet, a young man named Franz Kappus, who first wrote to Rilke asking for advice about writing and life. The letter from which the Dragon Princess passage comes was written on August 12, 1904. This is Stephen Mitchell's translation from the German. (With insert and word choice from John J. L. Mood's translation, in Rilke on Love and Other Difficulties.)

Insert: (From John J. L. Mood's translation), ...if we think of this existence of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it appears evident that most people learn to know only a corner of their room, a place by the window, a strip of floor on which they walk up and down. Thus they have a certain security. And yet that dangerous insecurity is so much more human which drives the prisoners in Poe's stories to feel out the shapes of their horrible dungeons and not be strangers to the unspeakable terror of their abode.

We, however, are not prisoners. No traps or snares have been set around us, and there is nothing that should frighten or upset us. We have been put into life as into the element we most accord with, and we have, moreover, through thousands of years of adaptation, come to resemble this life so greatly that when we hold still, through a fortunate mimicry, we can hardly be differentiated from everything around us.

We have no reason to harbor any mistrust against our world, for it is not against us. If it has terrors, they are our terrors; if it has abysses, these abysses belong to us; if there are dangers, we must try to love them. And if only we arrange our life in accordance with the principle which tells us that we must always trust in the difficult, then what now appears to us as the most alien will become our most intimate and trusted experience.

How could we forget those ancient myths that stand at the beginning of all races, - (*Mood translates as "peoples" which I prefer*) - the myths about dragons that at the last moment are transformed into princesses? Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love.

3. Where is God? By Mark Nepo

It's as if what is unbreakable—
the very pulse of life—waits for
everything else to be torn away,
and then in the bareness that
only silence and suffering and
great love can expose, it dares
to speak through us and to us.
It seems to say, if you want to last,
hold on to nothing. If you want
to know love, let in everything.
If you want to feel the presence
of everything, stop counting the
things that break along the way.

4. Excerpt from Rainer Maria Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God:

“Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.”

QUESTIONS:

- When you suffer a great loss, you are entitled to feelings of loss; these may include judgment, shame, anger, guilt, resentment, regret, bitterness, fear; fatigue, exhaustion, confusion ... the list goes on.
- What is the emotion that comes to you most often? What are the other ones, the ones that hover in the background?
- What surprised you most?
- How do you receive and accommodate these “guests” – as Rumi calls them - into your home? Into your heart?
- What helps you?

B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: up to 10 minutes.

C. Sharing: 40 minutes.

4. Check-out: 10 minutes.

- What moved you today?
- What resonates with you?
- What will you carry with you into the week ahead?

5. Introducing Next Session's Questions (optional): 2 minutes.

HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?

6. Closing Meditation: 5 Minutes.

What is your emotional state in this moment? Name it. Try to find the place in your physical body where that emotion seems to be settled just now and breathe into that place. Rub hands to warm them; rest palms on that place in the body and feel the healing warmth of your own hands from without, your own breath from within.

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QUESTIONS for Reflection:

You are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. And if none of these questions speaks to your experience, please create your own question and respond to that.

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