

Letters to the Editor

Dear Vivian,

I was interested in your interview with Will Grossman published in the July issue of **Self and Society**. In Co-counselling you are taught to give your full attention to the other - and I've been wondering for some time what this really means. What does it mean when you give your attention to the other - or to anything? What I have decided is that it means what Krishnamurti calls "choiceless awareness" - i.e. the awareness that comes when you empty your mind of all thought. But in Co-counselling you are allowed to interrupt at times and to interrupt you must think. So how do you know when to interrupt if you are not thinking - approving, evaluating, disagreeing, comparing and so on, which is what you do when you think? When that happens you are obviously not giving your full attention to the other.

Will Grossman says that when you're focusing your attention on the other, there is an alchemical process going on, there are things happening in terms of subtle energy changes which you can't describe in any other way. As the other reveals his "I" to me he becomes a meditational object for me. I may have a strong reaction to what is being said, but since I've accepted the no-interruption rule I don't react. "If the energy of sympathy, anger, rage starts in me," says Grossman, "Then I just let the energy start and see how it moves through me." The danger is the other person becomes more important to me - more important than I am - and then I start depreciating myself and set up a programme for future rage.

Now what follows from this, I think -

although Grossman doesn't say so - is that in order to stop yourself getting off balance you must make the relationship I - and - You a meditational object: you must be able to see yourself at the moment you react to the other - not think about it but observe what is going on, including what is said when you interrupt. This is what Gurdjieff called Self-remembering: it is being aware of the self that is reacting as well as the other whose words produce the reaction, and what is going on between us.

When you are aware in this way it is not the "me" that is aware. As Krishnamurti says, the "me" comes from the past - it is an image or concept created by memory, experience and so on. There is no "me" in the present. Everything the "me" sees is a conditioned response.

Self-remembering is seeing the conditioned response. It is seeing without the "me" seeing. Ouspensky explains the way we normally see as follows:

SELF ----- Object/other.

But self-remembering, Ouspensky says, is more like this:

SELF ----- OBJECT/OTHER

In the first instance the self is more important than the other (which is an object I swallow up), but in the second instance the self and the other are equally important. Both are concepts - my self-concept or self-image and your self-concept or self-image; my self-image, as such, is no more important or less important than yours.

In self-remembering you see yourself and your relationship with the other in the same way as you see anything in the present: you just see what is going on, that's all, and in the very act of seeing you will change what is going on in you. This is the meditative approach which Krishnamurti teaches. There is no barrier created by the "me". What is going on in you includes the alchemical process Grossman talks about.

Co-counselling could be an exercise in self-remembering: the counsellor would pay attention to what is happening in her when she is listening or interrupting, and the client would likewise pay attention to the way she is discharging her feelings and to what is happening to her as she talks about her problems to the other. In this way both would be relating on a much deeper level than is usually the case in co-counselling. Buber described this relationship with what he called the primary word, I-Thou, which precedes the "I". It is the "I" that creates the separate "Thou" and leads to dualistic fixation, which is the source of all conflict.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Ridgway
Sparsholt, Winchester .

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you for three reasons: 1). To give some insight into what Handicapped people think about emotions. 2). The way they react to these emotions, in relation to others, especially institutions. 3). Show the need for a rethink.

One of the difficulties is that handicaps differ from one to another.

This means, that I can only write on my particular type of handicap - Muscular Dystrophy. Dystrophy is hereditary: it causes the muscles to deteriorate from birth, thus leaving the sufferer weak and leading to a short life. So the people we come into contact with know this and are usually afraid of getting involved, especially getting emotionally hurt.

There are many ways of coping with being handicapped, like life itself. There is the positive way or the negative way. The former way is for the individual to have a "frame of orientation" (attitude) that both accepts his handicap and fights to overcome it; like any other normal being (whatever normal refers to). Then the negative way, you simply give up. I prefer the former; as long as you can express emotions; a tear, a smile, a touch. All these handicapped people have, but very often out of fear they are kept latent and unexpressed. The trouble is, which includes me; handicapped people are frightened of emotions and expressing them due to the lack of interaction with others. Yet, handicapped people want to express their feelings and be regarded as "Normal", in this regard at least.

Though things are not as straightforward as that. For many handicapped live in social environments which offer limited stimulations, e.g. institutions; plus many of these institutions are run by Moralists or Social minded pseudos. Even when run by people who genuinely care, often through their over protective or ignorant attitudes they fail to accept and realise our needs, especially emotional ones, like love. This is why such emotions are not always encouraged. This is also why such films as, "Raging Moon", when two handicapped adults wanted to

marry caused such a dichotomy - it represented (though very romantically) handicapped people with emotions. Though there is a need to some degrees to be protective; but emotions cause sorrow to everyone (even those who protect us). Like everyone else; handicapped people have been hurt by people who needed them for support, and have then dropped them out of fear of getting involved.

I suppose it all comes down to one fact, we don't have much freedom. When you are only physically handicapped (and can think !), you can see how others live together and achieve the things they do. Something as simple as having your own flat and living your life without having to rely on others.

Being able to do things which normal people do without a thought, e.g. cooking, going out. I recall getting emotionally hurt and wanting to go for a long lonely walk on my own. But I was unable to; I needed someone to get me about. Thus our freedom is curtailed, not only by others, but by our own physical-bodies. and I wanted to write this, I wanted readers to see that handicapped people have "hang ups" too. That providing nice clean, accessible accomodation is not the only way to help handicapped people. We have psychological needs too.

Yours faithfully,

G. S. Kasba
Southwood House Hostel,
Northants.

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