



The X-factor — What is the Relationship between Counselling and Spirituality?

Judy Gaskell

This question is not a simple one to explain, but I will endeavour to try! I would like to suggest that the relationship between counselling and spirituality has more to do with the nature of the therapist's beliefs and attitudes than with anything else. My observations are that the practitioner who is willing just to be alongside the client, without necessarily needing to solve the case, or even meet a goal, least of all aspire to healing the client, has a better chance of meeting 'the spirit' in 'the other'. Similarly, an enabler whose intention it is to understand totally the client's predicament, to come from the client's reference point, without any preconceived notions and theories, may also have a greater possibility of touching the client's heart and soul.

To work in this way, absolutely, completely, is to embrace the other spiritually. Doing so can be a hard task, because we are all human and can all feel vulnerable at times, but unless we take serious responsibility each and every moment to observe and own our inner process, we will fail to

see clearly our client's pathology and may, I suspect, lose sight of the compassion in our own hearts. Many therapists I imagine will already be relating in a similar manner within their own therapeutic practice and may or may not be aware of themselves in a spiritual light. Perhaps it is in fact the client who will pick up on, recognise and experience the spiritual in the therapist, even though there are no labels for it. This is because the client (I guess) senses genuinely the feelings of warmth, honesty and charisma in the relationship, enough to hold and contain a healing energy for something 'extra' to happen.

This something 'extra' is difficult to define and yet, undoubtedly present and sacred, it fills the empty space between client and counsellor so that their relationship can develop and flower. Within such a union the unknown becomes known and the client's damaged physic is freed and the spirit born. I believe this is the X-factor in working with a spiritual perspective. Who knows?

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