

Healing and Psychotherapy – a Personal Integration

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This is an attempt to describe how I experience healing in my psychotherapy practice, and to feel for rather than justify or prove where the two might meet.

Sometimes I have listened to healers who say, with what can feel like an amount of superiority, too much certainty, that healing can reach and resolve issues much more quickly than psychotherapy. I've become defensive, feel superior in return. How can all that hard work, that depth of study and understanding of the psyche be less effective than merely channelling energy into someone? How can someone's emotions or behaviours be transformed without their participation, without making the issues conscious?

It is possible that some of the healers who discount or diminish psychotherapy are in spiritual defence, splitting from the shadow and aspiring to the same for their clients. It is also obvious, because I react with superiority, that I am defensive of my

practice. On some level, I want to be 'better than'. Oh what an old, old struggle that is for me.

Actually, what I really believe is that the best of both psychotherapy and healing is about acceptance, not self improvement, not 'getting rid of' or getting better, but feeling for the potential of what is and understanding the necessity of what has been in terms of doing our best, self-protection, survival. It is only when we get invested in 'results' that the competition starts.

I also believe that the channelling of healing energy invites a communication with the unconscious and with the recipient's Self (with a little 's' in Jung, a big 'S' in psychosynthesis), or source (in the Core Process model). Whichever, all are attempts to

define the place of deep wisdom and knowing, of some sort of connection with Spirit, whether this is seen as 'inner' or 'outer' or both. I don't believe that healing, any more than psychotherapy, is something which is 'done to' the recipient and which they play no part in. The unconscious needs to be in a state of receptivity, of readiness, of willingness to receive communication from a different depth of being.

Though I never believed that simply understanding an issue was enough, I used to believe that shifts could only take place through making issues and experiences conscious. I felt that conscious understanding needed to be embraced by the heart and reprocessed at an unconscious level, so that, eventually, a new conscious 'naming' could root the change. (I have to be careful here - I am aware of the contradiction of not desiring results but seeking a model which embraces the fact that people come to therapy, or healing, in order to make shifts. The difference might be that the shifts come about through self-acceptance, through the ability to let in love, not through the desire to improve a not good enough self). Now I am not so sure how conscious the process needs to be - do we have to translate all the metaphors which arise in dreams, or is the fact that we have dreamed the metaphors an indication that the shift has already been made? Is the creation of a powerful piece of artwork enough in itself, or do we have to analyse it to benefit? And doesn't both the dream and the artwork come from the unconscious, even if the

metaphor manifests consciously? Can we 'damage' the dream or the metaphor in some way by over-defining it? We can certainly misdefine it, and that won't help. My sense now is that as psychotherapists we need to stand more often on the delicate edge between conscious and unconscious, that place of heightened but not always literal perception. I believe this is also the attunement which healers seek.

In order to connect with what I will call healing, I believe that clients need to have a readiness to accept a responsibility for themselves, a willingness to face their own truths with compassion rather than judgement. They also need to honour their gifts and their potentials, with joy rather than superiority. I believe this is what healing is - an invitation to shine light on the self. The client needs to be in on the work, whether it be psychotherapy or healing. Similarly, I have to hold this responsibility for myself, meet the truth of my own shortcomings and defences, that in me which is wounded, my humanness. I need also to honour my skills without grandiosity and with a kind of humility and gratitude (though I'm not sure who I'm grateful too, and the humility does not reduce me.) This is sounding like a very 'conscious' process; what I'm trying to feel for is how much of this can be sensed, 'lived in', rather than spelt out. A bit like how we learn our first language, and how, despite our best efforts to get the grammar and vocabulary right, a second language sinks in. Sometimes the more conscious I am of a process, the less I can

be in it, and the more clumsy I become.

So how do I work on this level, bring healing into my practice? When I remember, I prepare the room and myself. Sometimes I sit quietly, inviting my focused depth, that almost meditational space within me which I believe holds the most wisdom. I ask for support. I do not know from whom. I do not know what spirit is. My own sense is that it is both within me and all around me, a combination of the best of all our energies, and more. I do not know what the more is. I do not know whether the guidance I receive is from within me, from the collective, or from the 'more', but sometimes I have a sense during sessions of being strongly urged to ask a particular question, or to make an observation that feels 'risky'. The resulting interventions often elicit profound responses. Again I need to be wary – does this come from my Self or my own drivenness? I hope I can tell the difference now, energetically: although the Self guidance is insistent, it does not have the driven quality of my neediness, where it is as if my energy is almost running in front of me, very 'headstrong' (head directed, not from the heart) rather than at peace within me.

Ironically, I have run ahead of myself, and arrived in the session before completing my attunement. As I do sometimes. So, again, when I remember, I find a way of focusing, trusting that something energetic is about to happen, and that it is already preparing itself before my clients arrive. With this in mind, I sound the temple bells, brought back to

me as a present from India. Sometimes. Sometimes I self-neglect, cut corners, rush from admin to session with a full head, not taking enough time for lunch. On these occasions I am not taking care of the sacred space which is the practice room, or the sacred space which I invite within me. Yet my energy wave is a strong one and I like the feeling of stretch, being taxed, and its sigh of relief aftermath. Manic? Compulsive? Determined? Or just making good use of a strong wave?

Too tight an observation of the rules sends me into a good girl space where I feel 'boxy' – square at the edges, over-contained, unconnected. I have to find a flexibility that is not too onerous and restrictive, too 'good', but which does not leave me in the neglectful space, where I'm bluffing containment.

So sometimes I sit quiet, invite spirit and Self, attuning. And sometimes I sound the temple bells. I need to be very sensitive – if I put any effort whatsoever into bringing them together the sound they make is diffuse, fuzzy, like an untuned radio. The merest touch is what makes the clearest sound. This is the energy I need for my spiritual practice, my attention to the sacred space, the relationship with myself and with others. Sometimes I push too hard to compensate for the neglect.

This morning, after the sounding, I resisted the urge to go down and check the answerphone because my client was late. I was told clearly to wait five minutes. After five minutes, she arrived. On a good day, as I walk

towards the bus stop after my sessions have finished, I get similar information about whether my bus is coming. Inner or outer? Does it matter? Is it the same?

In the sessions I invite healing by holding an awareness of the energetic – what can I see, hear, feel, sense on this 'extra-sensory' level? Am I working from the heart? What do I understand intuitively? What is the imagery within me?

What else? Sitting quiet with the depths of the dilemma, or the depths of the realisations. Reaching that place of calm with a client – the 'still small voice' which helps them carry through when life seems impossible, when what has to be faced is too much. We don't arrive at this place because I tell them to go there – I believe it is the quality of our tuning in, and our ability to attune with each other, that enables us to reach this place. This is not conscious. This is near as I get to channelling. This will be very familiar to many psychotherapists who would not define this depth of holding and experiencing and sensing as 'healing', but just what they do in the course of their work.

I've found something I wrote eight years ago, about working transpersonally. It feels very similar:

'The transpersonal is in the silences, the waiting for something to emerge, like in yoga the decision/remembering not to push and the joy and relief at noticing the still moment when I choose not to push any more, when I let go of the struggle

between 'try harder' and 'you shouldn't be pushing'. It's how I want to hold me holding the client, so that each of us can find this ease of being, this still point which makes room for transformation. And it's in the sparky conversations, full of energy, where our words are catalysts for each other and there's a feeling of bright wisdom in the room, a depth of discovery which is more about joy than ego.

It's about being in my being, my Self, as I work, responding with the whole of me, mind, body, heart and spirit, as if the energy within me is opening like rays to receive and to communicate. So it's also about inviting this level of being and seeing from my client, whether explicitly or simply through my being there in this focus.

It's about seeing my clients' journey towards wholeness. It's also about supporting them with this quality of listening when they're in the pits, without trying to make it bright, and yet afterwards, with the hurt sufficiently seen by us both, to help find the opportunity in the crisis, the turning points, the growth, the new choices, the reconnecting with the Self more deeply than before.

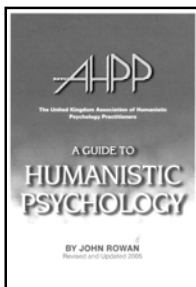
It's about helping people to meet chaos and to trust to the letting go of control and rigidity, letting the clarity and direction emerge, so that choice instead of fear directs them, or sometimes even surrender, a letting be into what is which can tap into a more universal sense of the journey, a trusting to the more which takes the pressure off doing

anything other than being held by the connection with earth, spirit, universality, life and death, death and rebirth.'

Sometimes we do this through words. Sometimes it is beyond words, and, if so, sometimes it is untranslatable. Sometimes it is a combination of words and no words.

Unless we work only from the head, I believe that many counsellors and psychotherapists are healers. I think that this is

the process which happens, consciously or unconsciously, when we connect from the heart. Another contradiction: we can come to this place of awareness, of the edge between consciousness and unconsciousness, through conscious invitation – we can practise this and become more fluent, more attuned. But the place of deep focus is not our 'normal' conscious reality – it is deeper than that, and less definable. It is the edge. It is the deep. It is the at-one-ness. It is the ability to invite love.



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