

Compassion: A path of self healing

Yehuda Tagar

Tagar, Y. (1995). *Compassion: A path of self healing*. Adelaide, South Australia: Golden Age Magazine, July/August, pp25-28.

Compassion, com-passion, passion with, suffering with, feeling for, caring for, flowing with sympathy towards, experiencing within one's own passionate forces - the being of another, reaching out to be within the other's inner position. Compassion, the most human of human qualities, is keeping our flame alive.

Thought of mostly in relation to another human being, or animal, or the forest, did it ever occur to you that compassion could be also experienced towards a part of one's own being? I do not speak of self love, self adoration or self seeking. I am speaking about such a revelation which had an enormous effect on my development as a counsellor- the healing power of the energy of compassion, when directed towards an element of oneself which is in need, a part of oneself which is in trouble, which is wounded, isolated, starved, frozen or frightened. A revelation of a very simple fact is that there is only one heart with which to feel compassion to others, and with which to feel compassion towards oneself. The ability to activate compassion with all its healing power is the same ability, whether the focus is another human being, an animal, a forest, or oneself. It sounds simple, and eventually it is. It is as simple as the warmth of a golden autumn sun radiating through dispersing clouds. But it is not simple to disperse those clouds. It takes a lot of trust in the power of this sun, perseverance and the skill of encouragement. In short, it takes compassion to enkindle the same. It works like a chain reaction.

A woman is suffering from breast cancer, with fear, grief, anger and the desperate attempt to remain centred and positive. Positivity is good for you, they say, you cannot afford not to be positive, they say, it is your fault if you are not positive, they say. Positivity at all cost, teeth-gritting positivity, even to the extent of avoiding that which is not positive at all, but all too real simmering inside, underneath the veneer of positivity. Fear was shrouding the place of the deepest need, and avoidance was covering the fear.

How could all these layers be permeated with heart-warmth, so that the place of need will be reached, addressed, cared for? Put your hands on the part of your body which is in need of help, I suggested. She hesitatingly rests her hands on her suffering breast. Touch it, feel it, what does it need?

There is a long silence with closed eyes, and then tears well up, first slowly, then gradually gushing forth as though not to miss the window of opportunity to be released, acknowledged, to breathe the fresh air. There is sorrow, deep sadness, acute loneliness, being forsaken, being abandoned, being lost in a dark corner of her life. She shows warm, soft, very real tears by passing the facade of imposed positivity, to tell the real story behind the veil of coping, the story of the fear of death. Her suffering, petrified, vulnerable, innocent, defenceless breast has become the perfect representative of that part of herself which could not cope, which was left behind, unsupported, lonely among people and things, an ancient child.

As the tears came out, the breathing came in with a breathing deeper than she had for months, maybe years, right down to the lower belly and the groins, the health-bearing blessed life renewing breath. And the warmth expanded from within, from previously un-accessible regions of the disconnected self within the body, healing, clearing, soothing heart warmth, such as every healer dreams of stimulating within the one in need of healing. She became her own healer at that point.

And then she danced. Encouraged to express her inner warmth in movement, her hands leading, then her shoulders, chest, then standing up and moving - her whole body moving, engulfed with the warmth she has accessed within herself, completely self sufficiently. She danced the dance of life, the dance of sorrow overcome, of fear of death surmounted, of consolation, love and womanhood. No music was needed, but the imagined fresh wind was blowing all around her, the waterfall washed her limbs, and the sun was radiating from her face.

Her heart was opened with an act of self-compassion, following the deed of courage with which she faced the most dangerous of places: her suffering cancerous breast. Her heart which is the inner sun was opened up to feel, to care, to suffer with her suffering self - compassion, suffering with, passionately. We did not assume that we have reached a cure for the cancer as such, but we both knew that we have reached a sustainable dynamic of healing and of inner warmth, through an act of self compassion.

Sometimes we have to go through yet another phase on the way to self-compassion. We have to own and then to shed away the opposite, the hatred for the suffering self. It has to be included in order for it to be let go. Only then can one move to the third position, the position of clarity of heart, from which the heart can open towards a part of oneself which is in need, to feel care, warmth, compassion towards it, to take care of it. In Philophonetics-

Counselling we call the journey between these three positions *The Compassion Triangle*. It became for us a major training in self-care and self-healing.

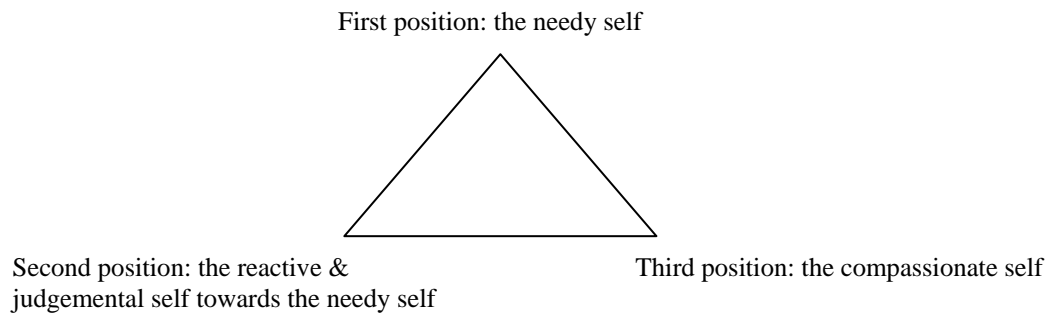
A young man enters the position of his pained, crushed heart. Something in his body and in his life is eating him up, scorching him and rendering his whole being dysfunctional. He becomes the heart, contorted, defenceless and frozen. This is the ***First position-the position of the one in need.***

He gets out of this position, shakes it all off, breathes, turns around and looks at the after image of himself in that contorted position. His mind is filled with that image and what it means to him.

I asked him to express what he really feels towards that part of himself. Not surprisingly to me an enormous rage welled up within him, raging anger with fuming spite, hostility and aggression towards that part of himself which for such a long time had caused him so much suffering, limitation, low self esteem, lost opportunities. I encouraged him to express it all towards the cushion which now represented his heart-contorted position. He vented towards it his hatred, his loathing and despise. The word "pathetic" was repeated many times. Worse words were hurled at it. A whole load of self anger was released and emptied. He was empty and tired at this point, and strangely relieved. This is the ***Second position-the position of reaction to the one in need.***

I asked him to shake it all off, to take a deep breath and to move to a third position. We have created a triangle. From the third position I asked him to look back at the position of the angry reaction he has just been in. He saw the full extent of his self negativity towards himself. He could see how he had become his own worst enemy, embodying every possible negative response towards himself he has ever absorbed from other people. He saw the very self-cruelty of that position. He shuddered.

Then I asked him to turn his gaze toward the First position, the position of the contorted, helpless crushed heart. He saw his own vulnerability now with new eyes, free from anger. Warmth welled up in him, his heart opened up. The love that always was in him and available for others, was now available for the wounded part of himself. I asked him gently to say what did he think his heart really needed when in such suffering- "Care, protection, warmth, love, soothing, holding" were his answers. I asked him whether he was in a position to give any of those qualities to himself and he replied, yes he could. We had reached the ***Third Position- Compassion.***



Then I invited him to act on these caring feelings which welled up within him. He went to the position of that cushion, took it in his hands, and spent a long moment with it in his arms. He reached a great intimacy with himself.

Later on we will need to discover the nature of that which wounded him so, that which is still crushing him, to understand it, to fend it off, neutralise its impact on him; to find ways of protecting himself from those inner and outer influences; to change his life accordingly. We will be taking all these necessary steps later, when the time is ripe for it. For now what we have done is enough. His heart is safe in a way it was not before, safe in his own hands, safe from the onslaught of his own bitterness and anger, benefiting from his own warmth, healing power, love and compassion. He has reached heart safety, which is a precondition of any further healing work with Philophonetics-Counselling. On that basis we can build.

This is the journey of the Compassion Triangle. This is how an amazing discovery can take place within oneself: That a human being has only got one heart, not two or three for different usages; that to open my heart to others and to close it to myself is damaging to the heart and to my whole being, just as damaging as hardening my heart towards others while caring for myself; that compassion is the heart's very true nature, and that the healing power of compassion is as applicable to a part of my inner life which is in need of it, as it is to any other human being, bird or flower.

Compassion, passion with, suffering with, feeling with and embracing every aspect with heart consciousness, is important so that I can see clearly what is truly needed. Intimacy is being in the inside of things, knowing them from their own point of view. The future of humanity is intimacy, or else death. Compassion is leading the way to that future. We can practice it on ourselves.