

## Honoring our Proximity and the Spaces between Us Through Mindful Service

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Today, I am before you because a friend requested that I submit a proposal for this conference. Testament that we are eternally responding to relationships! The topic which combined Spirituality with Community Change compelled me, as I work as a mediator in private practice and give much of my volunteer time to Restorative Justice practices. In the latter endeavor, I facilitate Peace Circles and Community Conferences to bring victims of crimes or personal offenses together with the offenders to talk about what happened, how people were impacted by what happened and how to repair the harm. In my private mediation work, I serve as a guide to help people manage conflict and heal relationships within themselves and between each other whether they are staying in marriages or partnerships, divorcing, or navigating new ways of relating to siblings, parents, work or their faith communities.

This afternoon, I hope to give you at least four things: a touch of information about brain chemistry to illustrate the mind-body connection; to speak of that connection in the spiritual sense; to show how the integration of mind, body, spirit and relationships is enhanced through mindfulness; and to demonstrate some options for practice. What I wish for you to take away is to experience interconnectedness, to recognize the possibility of **listening to and living in** the moment in One-ness - in a state of nonduality, the possibility of healing yourself and others and to live, work and love compassionately in joy and generosity.

In my mediation practice and in my RJ Conferences, I define **Conflict** as friction between two or more forces that creates opportunity for growth, transformation and the positive flow of information and energy.

John Paul Lederach identified Several Change Goals in Conflict Transformation. On the personal level, he identified the goal as maximizing “the potential for growth and well-being in the person as an individual human being at the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels.”

In his book, *Mediating Dangerously*, Kenneth Cloke talks about Spirit in our professional (mediation) practice and in a way that is applicable to other professions. “Spirit is suppressed not only by dishonesty, insensitivity and boundary violation, but by formality, inauthenticity, and professional distancing. Mediating spiritually is dangerous because it means stepping away from professional language, definitions and expertise. The real work of mediation cannot be learned through PhD’s, law degrees or traditional forms of certification. Honesty, empathy, awareness, community building and equanimity are not taught in universities, but learned through our lives.”

No doubt, Cloke meant no disrespect to SUNY Brockport or any other place of learning! His words do echo, however, one of the tenets of mindfulness – that it must be directly experienced.

Let's keep that in mind as we think of who we are working with when transformation for our clients or communities seems light years away.

I often work with people who have great difficulties. But what makes some rather than others, "Difficult Clients" is what is triggered in me!

For example: About a year ago, I had clients who came to me with appalling language that they directed to each other and with which they recited and displayed awful, despicable behaviors. As I sat calmly on the outside, my head was silently screaming, "Get out of my office -Go to litigation!" **What a conflict** – and it was in me! How could I wish for them to enter a potentially more contentious environment when I was an advocate for peace, civility, and compassion? "Do no harm" was a suddenly a critical mantra.... I took an internal breath, and recognized my own reactivity, my judgments, **their** pain, and their need for respect. And then, there was a discernible **shift** in the room...What made the difference?

The Uncertainty Principle or Heisenberg Principle in Quantum Physics says that we cannot know both the exact velocity of a particle and the exact position of that particle at the same time. The act of observation changes what is observed. Taken one step further, even in our offices, our classrooms or our communities, *how* we observe, changes what we see.

A shift in my own presence and thus in the way I related to my difficult clients – not as objects (of disgust), but people inherently worthy of compassion, kindness, and respect made the difference in them. I listened for what was behind what I heard as ugly, listened to what was triggered in me, listened to the possibility that I could connect with them. Listened to my belief that as human beings, we are more alike than different and that I could alter the course of our interaction to one of dignity. What touches one, touches another. My shift altered me and thus altered them. During their next visit: THEY said in referring to their own behavior, "We don't do that here." This benefit was sustained in subsequent visits. Perhaps the experience will be again reinforced and create new brain patterns that unlock the old reactions and open new ways of relating to other people if not with one another.

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom."

~~Victor Frankl (Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust Survivor)

When we work not only with our clients, but on one area of our own life, that work affects all areas of our life. If we want our clients or communities to reach peace, we need to bring together the dissonant parts of ourselves.

Today, brain science, particularly, neuroplasticity, informs us about the vertical and horizontal structures of our brain and the ability we have (it has) to create new connections.

There is substantial evidence that “gut feelings” are part of the mind-body connection – reflecting the reality that the neurotransmitters from the viscera (both the heart and gut) are indeed connected to the pre-frontal cortex, where the executive functions, the decision-making part of our “self” lies.

Creativity is enhanced by the Right Brain having a higher integration of neurons within itself and up and down the limbic system; whereas the Left Brain has fewer connections within itself and those connections are “stacked” rather than traverse vertically. The magic of neurotransmitters carrying instinct, memory and needs from the viscera (the gut and heart) to the centers of emotional language, is the potential to integrate the parts of ourselves, which are seemingly distinct parts, into a whole that is truly greater than the identified pieces.

In Internal Family Systems Therapy terms, as promulgated by Marriage and Family therapist Richard Schwartz, the “subpersonalities” or “parts” within us can be integrated into the higher Self. We might wonder how the seemingly disparate parts of ourselves - **for example**, the anguished adolescent, the vulnerable child, the caring friend, the excited child part, the nurturing parent, the logical teacher part, the critic echoing the voice of ...fill in the blank... - all of those – might become blended. Schwartz posits that every person has a unique self whose wholeness, sometimes referred to as the Soul, Essence, or Spirit, or The Light, has an “unlimited capacity for compassion, curiosity, courage, confidence, clarity, creativity, connection and calm.” Our “parts are brought in to awareness and harmony through Self-leadership.”

Daniel Goleman in his work on Emotional Intelligence would call this Self-mastery.

In Kabbalistic terms, it is the healing within ourselves that allows for us to **be** ourselves and transcend ourselves. Jason Shulman, of the Society of Souls, says that to heal others “is the same as healing ourselves – we have to make an evolutionary leap.”

Let’s look at the evolutionary components of ourselves as well as our human awareness. The most **primal structures** of the brain - sometimes referred to as the reptilian parts - are closer to the brain stem, and as you move forward, we become more metacognitive and more “human” The **hippocampus** ( in the limbic part of the brain), holds our memory, spatial details and autobiographical information; the **amygdala** (in the mid-brain) , holds our emotional memory as well as fear and conditioning – commonly known as our fight, flight or freeze responses; **the cingulated cortex** (in the more recently developed part of our brain), is responsible for awareness.

Goleman tells that the neural activity between those areas affects self mastery – the combination of self-awareness and self-management.

His assertion that although emotions “may come unbidden” from the amygdala and other sub-cortical areas, “our choice point comes once we feel a certain way.” In other words, how do we deal with those emotions?

Jill Bolte Taylor, author of *My Stroke of Insight* (Her story begins by how as a neuroanatomist, affiliated with Harvard Medical School and with a keen and personal interest in the Brain Tissue Bank, she realizes one morning that she is having a massive stroke. Ms. Bolte Taylor continues to tell of her recovery and insights gained en route to a new normal over and after six years.) informs us that it takes less than 90 seconds for some internal emotional programs from the limbic system “to be triggered, surge through our bodies and then be completely flushed out of our bloodstreams.” After 90 seconds – our automatic response, if it remains, is deliberately chosen – we choose to “hook into that neurocircuitry or move back to the present moment.”

This is a fascinating reminder and update of the old-school Count to Ten rule. We have the capacity to act responsively rather than reactively. Doing so, helps us to behave responsibly. In fact, Bolte defines responsibility as “The ability to choose how we respond to stimulation coming in through our sensory systems at any moment in time.”

This echoes one of the existential options of the spiritual or mindful practitioner. If we have integrated and thus balanced the different yet connected parts of ourselves, we may respond with grace and elicit that in others.

Shulman says, “To heal fully – in the spiritual sense – we need to experience the nondual state of the acceptance of all things and all states of being, despite the ego’s attempt to control Reality and choose what it likes over what it does not like.”

In the realm of non-duality, lies the paradox of accepting both differentiation and oneness. We can learn to suspend judgments of people, situations, and even our thoughts while maintaining discretion by using, as Egyptologist and philosopher, PA. Schwaller de Lubicz – termed, *the intelligence of the heart*. That is the spirit which embraces all sides of people and things, recognizing that without dark – there is no light; **without ego – there is no other part of us which can seek awareness and consciously connect to the whole of life.**

If our **attention** (from the region of the cingulated cortex) **can be directed with intention**, then we hold the key to our own healing.

In Daniel Siegel’s Mindsight Theory, this wholeness is described another way. He ties the integration of the brain and its connection with mind-brain thusly:

“Integration in relationships involves the attuned communication among people who are honored for their differences and then linked together to become a “we.” “The focus of

our attention directs the flow of energy and information through particular neural circuits”. (His language is reminiscent of Douglas Hofstadter, Professor of Cognitive Science at Indiana University, who talks about the mind using the brain to create itself.)

Many a spiritualist has said that we hold the universe within us. As we attend to our intention, we are consciously tracking our internal world and keeping open the sense of discovery we associate with the outside world. This is **mindfulness in the present**.

It is the self looking at Self....dependent upon ego for self-reflection and intention and ultimately letting go of ego to relate to the world while healing other parts of Self.

How do we look internally to see/feel and understand what transpires between our gut/heart and the reasoning mind? How could I again know to take an internal breath when reacting viscerally to my clients?

We first must become body-aware; to literally feel where we store our memories, our joys, and our wounds; where we hold current tension and the stress of past experiences. When we can do this, we gain an understanding of the sensations that indicate we are being triggered before those triggers escape us in negative ways. We can prevent them escaping as words we don't want to say; or as physical stances that contradict our neutrality with our clients; or in biases that close off our curiosity, openness, creativity and ultimately – our love.

Charles Bell, and later, William James used the term “Sixth Sense” not as a movie title, but to “refer to our ability to perceive the internal state of the body.”

So with your permission let us take a moment to feel ; in stillness – to be aware of our bodies and their many sensations; to be conscious of our thoughts without judging them or expanding the internal dialogue they often stimulate. Acknowledge them – that is OK; then let them go. I am asking you, too, to pay attention to your breath.

### Guided Meditation

Invite you to close your eyes. If this is uncomfortable, focus your sight on the floor, on a point on the wall or on another neutral space.

Breathing in deeply... exhaling slowly....

Feeling your lungs fill as the oxygen penetrates all your cells, which so often work in harmony with one another.

Breathing out any trepidations or disappointments of yesterday or the anxieties of the morning. Breathing in this quiet moment, the chance to relax your body and mind and opening yourself to new possibilities.

Being aware of your body's contact with your chair, your feet with the floor. Imagining a string at the top of your head gently lifting you straight, stretching your vertebrae and then relaxing into alignment with the rest of your body. Feeling if there is any tension in your neck and shoulders and if it is easing or holding course, staying the same.

Breathing; sensing any tension in your hands, in the muscles in your face, your eyes, your jaw, your tongue, your lips.

Breathing; Noticing the contact with the chair of your back, bottom, thighs. Being aware of the muscles of those areas and your limbs down to your feet.

Feeling your breath as you inhale through your nostrils; the breath touching the back of your throat, opening through the diaphragm, expanding the belly. Feeling the reverse as you gently, perhaps rhythmically, exhale.

Noticing your mind wandering, as you are focusing on your breathing; gently bringing it back to the present moment - allowing your mind to experience stillness, consciousness without distraction.

Drinking in the cleansing breath of life. Feeling it expand your chest and your heart within it. While we continue to digest our lunch, let us feed our souls in this quiet space, trusting ourselves to honesty. In our authenticity, may we allow ourselves to connect with one another through our proximity and also within the spaces between us. In those spaces, we may see our differences, and we may recognize our similarities. In each other, we may see ourselves. Breathing in deeply; breathing out slowly. In this given moment before we prepare to open our eyes, we may rediscover - or find for the first time - peace. Breathing in your potential; breathing out fear and limitations. Breathing in and being in awareness, wholeness, oneness.

When you are ready, open your eyes and let your thoughts rest for a moment on your intentions this day for yourself, for your clients, your classmates, for your loved ones.

Thank you for joining each other and me to create this space in which we might hear our own still voice.

~ Gail Ferraioli, Clarity Mediations

How did that feel? ? ?

Mindfulness, and mindful meditation that focuses on awareness of the body, allows that space the Victor Frankl speaks of. To choose our response, to find growth and freedom. We can hear the small still voice inside of us that is our true nature and from which we learn, we know and can be. In the moment... alone... with our loved ones...with our clients, classmates, or colleagues.

There are many ways to **Practice mindfulness** (through guided body scans, mindful walking or eating, through prayer, journaling, poetry reading or writing, yoga, tai chi or other exercise, taking a break from electronics – cell phone, radio, TV, taking in nature... Practice leads to what Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli call its “central aim” – “the relief of suffering and the uncovering of our true nature.” Thich Nhat Hanh offers smiling upon awakening as one of many mindful practices we can do throughout the day, without carving out extra time. Scott Rogers, the Mindful Lawyer and author who writes an online newsletter called the Morning Cup suggests a one minute mindfulness practice for families. “Everyone can close or lower their eyes and pay attention to (or count) their breathing. Everyone can look into each others eyes and smile. Everyone can hold hands.”

Through mindfulness practices, we often seek silence. It is different from hiding in silence. You and I might remember times that we avoided confronting or asking for something we really wanted in the guise of silence. This is not mindful silence. Mindful silence is also not the silence of avoiding the search within ourselves for our truths.

Our goal in being SILENT is to be able to LISTEN (the secret word in silent). To listen to our gut, our heart, feelings, our 6<sup>th</sup> sense, the sound of neurotransmitters conveying information that we can reinterpret, and hear anew with each present moment. To hear our own still voice and to hear the wisdom conveyed to us in myriad forms.

From mindfulness practice, **many benefits** emerge. **Any thoughts** on what they might be?

1. Helps us become aware of stress
2. It reduces self-criticism
3. It quiets the other (volatile or overly sensitive) “parts” of ourselves
4. It relaxes the sympathetic or autonomic responses: the fight or flight responses to real or imagined threats
5. Reduces negative behaviors or reactivity
6. Counters our own transference in mediation or in other relationships
7. Serves as reminder to be curious about internal and external events
8. Helps us to follow the flow, reduces procrastination and other avoidance behaviors and negative ruminations
9. Increases physical health (lowers cortisol levels, influences the strength of our immune systems, lowers blood pressure, helps reduce diabetes and obesity)
10. Increases pleasure capacities and sensations and reduces pain.
11. Improves moods, memory, attention, the ease of decision-making, the ability to learn new skills and ways of looking at things and relationships.
12. Allows us to awaken to a non-self-centered world.

Jon Kabat Zinn offers that through mindfulness practice, “we can begin to see that we can actually choose not to get caught identifying with (our thoughts and feelings) or with the body....in this way, we cultivate equanimity.”

Thus, we do not have to change our thoughts, feelings, or emotions, but rather we change how we relate to them, and relinquish their control on us.

The Arbinger Institute might say that mindfulness allows us to get out of the boxes we place ourselves in defensively against others, disrupting our relationships with them. As I have shared with my clients, when we are fully aware and engaged in self-healing, we no longer have to be:

“Better than” ...“More deserving of”...“Must be seen as” or consider ourselves “Worse than”.....in order to justify our actions and our perceptions/judgments of others. We can have hearts at peace that yearn for relationship; that see the needs of others as equal to our own. Through mindful self-awareness, we can foster and find acceptance of ourselves, of others and of our experiences.

In Martin Buber’s words, we would relate to each other in the I-Thou Relationship, fostering a religion of compassion, respect, understanding, humility and love.

This type of relating leads us to seek the Divine Sparks in each other and everything.

***Speak to yourself  
Everything depends on you  
The conflicts between you and others  
Are nothing but the conflicts in your own soul.***

***Overcome this inner conflict  
So that you may go out to him and her  
And enter into new, transformed relationships.***

***Seek peace in your own place  
You cannot find peace anywhere except in your own place.  
When you have made peace within yourself  
You will be able to make peace in the whole world.  
— Martin Buber***

How does mindfulness feel? Let us literally have a taste of it!

Experience #2 The Chocolate Kiss Exercise (Here participants were given a chocolate kiss (or box of raisins, if they suspected an allergy to the chocolate) and experienced it by sight, feel, taste, intention, assumptions through a guided process of mindful awareness.

**(After experiencing this exercise): Chocolate is the special essence derived from the cacao tree.**

**Here, different participants read about the attributes of chocolate as follows:**

Chocolate – especially in its raw state is full of nutrients and neuro-peptides. Like cacao powder, it has high amounts of magnesium, sulfur and antioxidants. The magnesium content is higher than any other known food and it is an important factor in the development of bone strength. It also contains many minerals including calcium, zinc, iron, copper, and potassium.

Studies have shown that chocolate positively affects neurotransmitters in the brain, elevating mood and calming the reactivity of the amygdala.

**Cacao also is imbued with a plethora of physical- and mental health-enhancing chemicals** such as alkaloids, proteins, magnesium, beta-carotene, leucine, linoleic acid, lipase, lysine, and the neurotransmitters such as dopamine and anandamine, serotonin and phenylethylamine(PEA). **Because of the nutritional content** and its mild levels of MAO inhibitors and PEA, **chocolate is thought to have positive improvements on insulin sensitivity, intestinal health, focus and mood.**

Raw cacao nibs contain more antioxidant flavanoids than any other food tested including Red Wine, Green Tea and Blueberries.

The cacao tree itself, Theobroma cacao, thrives in moist, well-drained soil of rainforests, and other riparian zones, growing up to 15 meters in the natural environment and living up to 100 years!

Once rooted, these sturdy trees bear fruit in 4-5 years and continue to do so for over 30 years.

After each of the hundreds of delicate white flowers on a tree appear, it takes 5-8 months for the fruit to emerge. Each year, 50-100 pods grow on a given tree. Within this fruit, or pod, which is itself edible, are the (20-40) seeds - aka cacao beans - from which chocolate is made.

It is from the seed that another tree may be born.

There is mystery in this little piece of chocolate! We can accept the mystery that lies within its silver wrapper or its natural seed.

We can also accept that **within us** is the seed of consciousness of our human capacity to grow in untold ways – in wisdom, in consciousness, and in relationship to each other and the world. *Options:* look at the shell only or look at the whole and the potential of something and others. Remen says, “Wholeness

is a basic human need.” I believe that as we pay attention without judgment, we can embrace the mystery in life and in the people we meet through our work. We never know what will unfold.

In my work, I guide people to unwrap their protective shells which may have hardened them to the soft pleasures of vulnerability; to the joys of life and love. It is through the encouragement of words, silence and exploration that we can penetrate that outer layer and discover the mystery inside of someone, a couple, a family, a community or a situation.

When we see the potential of a fruit – we are doing more than looking beyond the seed in its present state. We are simultaneously holding the past (remembering where it came from, for instance) and the future. I am reminded of the quote, **“The future of a relationship is within the relationship.”** In the realm of spirit, there is much less of a linear approach to time. The evolution of feelings and attitudes are traceable in part, to previous occurrences, relationships and circumstances that have affected our outlook and patterns of response to stimuli and thoughts. So the same or similar stimuli that evokes loneliness in one person, may elicit happiness in someone else.

There is a dual approach to time inherent in attaining the joy that welcomes non-duality and imparts connection to a greater whole. Reaching this state may require a discipline not typically seen or expected of young children who nonetheless are capable of spontaneous joy. This discipline is linear and yet yields to what nonetheless is made possible by an element of timelessness and grace. **Linear** - in that we deliberately undertake steps to increase our awareness of our surroundings, internal states and intentions; **timeless** - in our recognition of belonging to a greater whole. This ensuing happiness is less momentary; it creates a positive energy, receptiveness to and seeking of uplifting experiences. It is a state of being that leads us to interpret stimuli and occurrences in a positive manner and to appreciate life and life-giving forces.

When you again look at a piece of chocolate and imagine the cocoa pods, which contains the seed of a tree and often of delight, you may think about the words of the Dalai Lama... “Within all being there is the sense of perfection. However, compassion is required in order to activate that seed which is inherent in our hearts and minds.”

In Buddhism, the Buddha seed – that potential to be a Buddha – that seed of compassionate wisdom, is found within ourselves.

In my faith tradition, there is an obligation to seek perfection – which is simultaneously acknowledged to be unattainable! That which is unattainable may only be sought mindfully and with awareness of the duality of our nature and potential to reflect the Divine. The marriage therapist, David Schnarch reminds

us that one must know oneself in order to share or self-reveal oneself. He postulates that techniques cannot “dissolve problems, only changes in us can do that.”

The mindfulness practices in which we engage help us to see ourselves as we really are, to find acceptance and compassion for the self. We are then able to share our healing for the healing of others. As has oft been said, “We see things not as they are but as we are.”

As we give forth honestly, we may see honestly. As we allow for self-healing and open our hearts to love, we are able to love, not just our partners, our children, and friends, but our clients, classmates, professors as well as the people we may never lay eyes on...the person who grows our food, who sews the buttons on our shirts, who wrote the books we read, who starves in Somalia, who creates firework displays, who tests the water we drink, who grows up with parents who neglected them.

Through this type of love, we can honor the other and seek understanding even as we serve the other. The I-Thou relationship comes from consciousness and self-determination. It must be encountered to be known, according to Martin Buber. It is devoid of manipulation and exploitation, lest it become an I-It relationship. To preclude it becoming so skewed, it must also be devoid of dependency. The authenticity of the I-Thou relationship then, is one through which a person knows his or herself **and accepts the differences that exist or arise from their uniqueness**. Even in conflict, we can accept and acknowledge the other person and the needs and feelings that he/she is holding. When mediating or otherwise facilitating the resolution of conflict, we can model that acceptance and encourage respect for the other person’s integrity. **It is in conflict that one can most intensify dialogue and heighten understanding** of oneself and the world. It is an example of the **spiritual paradox** ...that in order to actualize ourselves, we must relate to another person. That is because the spiritual goal is to connect with the greater, the whole, a One-ness... and that relationship requires honesty, justice and love. By retaining our unique individuated self and maintaining purity of soul, we have opportunity to unite with others and with a greater sense of Spirit.” W. Abrams paraphrased Buber’s message when he said, “the most permanent, most profound, most fundamental faith we can have is in one another and in the power of human love to be a cosmic force.”

When I am Mediating honestly in relationship with my clients, my work becomes a service between equals. When we “help” our clients, we may objectify them and cross the dangerous boundary into an I-It relationship. When we “serve”, it is with our whole being and strengthens the wholeness in both our clients and ourselves. Giving of ourselves is not the same as imposing our way but

respecting the mystery, integrity and potential of the people with whom we work, play and otherwise know and interact.

Lederach talks about how conflict affects us personally, relationally, structurally and culturally. Our time together today is focused on the personal and relational. Relevant to our purposes, he poses, "What kind of changes do we seek?" He answers himself, "...we need to ask what our values and intentions might be."

**Exercise #3 Rank Order Life Values:** Here, participants were given sheet of paper marked "Values." They were asked to rank 26 life values or things/concepts that some people value, according to what was most important in their work and were told that their academic career counts!

After having time to do this, the participants were then asked to rank order those same values according to what was most important to them personally.

Are anyone's two lists identical?

How do you feel about the differences in your lists? How did they surprise or disappoint you? Do your feelings create positive or negative energy? How can these differences be reconciled to live and work more authentically – in keeping with the values you most treasure?

Do you see your values in each sphere? What values and where in your life do these values reflect harmony, wholeness, and an embracing of duality? How do you physically feel as you observe through this values-identification exercise? What, if any, intentions are spawned by this awareness?

### **Thoughts? Experience? Care to share?**

Our self-determination becomes greater as we free our inner aspects. In science and business, creativity often flourishes when an 'outside' person interprets or applies his/her specialty to a new discipline. So too, may creativity flow from the space between our dual natures and from their interplay. The more integration we allow of our darkness and lightness, masculine and feminine, passivity and assertiveness, seriousness and levity, analytical and intuitive, introspective and extroversion, the greater our ability to explore our own potential and increase the authenticity of ourselves and our relationship with others. This self-acceptance stimulates growth toward actualization. In the process, we increase our levels of engagement with others as we reveal greater flexibility in the process of creating ourselves anew – not to *present*, but to be present. The freedom to do just that is not only our ethical and existential responsibility, but also gives rise to joy! This is in part the message of Kabbalah...love is a yearning to be whole and wholeness gives rise to our higher self and then and thus to the higher selves of others.

When we leave our selves vulnerable through our honesty, we are met with sincerity from people and partners who welcome the chance to connect soulfully with us. In that connection there is truth and honesty from which radiate joy. Rabbi Jonathan Omerman, in a dialogue with the Dalai Lama illuminated this succinctly, “Joy is ecstatic knowledge with all parts of one’s being, an integrated way of knowing. It’s truly a quest.”

In my work, I have found that to effectively guide others in that process of self-revelation, it is critical to be secure in my own truths and be honest about my internal feelings, thoughts, needs, judgments, inattention, avoidance and the plethora of things that get in the way of being present for our own clients in a way that engenders trust.

The duality of being - a state enhanced by mindfulness practices – and of doing – such as doing the work we do – yields a non-dual benefit. When we work to heal others, Shulman says that “the healer and the one being healed share equally. There is no longer a separation between the two. Grace falls equally upon both.”

Our own presence then, leads to trust, to openness, to healing, which is to say – wholeness. It is in one-ness that we find love.

We are close to closing: We are mediators in life. You are from and will enter many different disciplines. We can all be peace-makers. Even if it is not specifically part of our chosen profession it is in our innate nature to give. Shulman says, “So we give to others not by sacrifice...but from the overflow of our fullness.”

Reflections....

Thank you for your presence here, today.

To increase your mindful practice, tonight or every night, you might ask yourself:

What touched me today?

What surprised me today?

What inspired me today?

**My wish for you: *May you live fully, yielding to life’s mysteries, may you be full of positive energy and calm, and may your loving hearts overflow with peace.***

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