Dear Friends,
Below are materials presented during the first Compassionate Communication class from Munira, Daniel, Rahima, and Abraham. May you continue to deepen your experience, understanding, and skillfulness cultivating compassionate communication.

The recording will be available if you missed the first class. Hope you can watch it and catch the next class live. There is definitely a palpable magnetism in the group sharing practice. Registered members, for class recordings (posted 24-48 hours after each class) see your email (sender: Tarana)

From Munira

Attunement: Bismillah er-Rahman er-Rahim

As always, we begin in the vibrational Reality of the One, connecting in Breath to Source, returning to the Womb of Mercy and Compassion. We return to the Womb, the Source, the place before we rayed forth into embodied existence. This place is Subhanallah -- the place of purity of essence, before we were shaped by any impressions, before impressions formed our nafs, creating patterns of reactivity. This place is also Ya Salaam, the place of deepest peace, purest peace, the rest before entering the created realm.

Practice: Ya Rahman, Ya Rahim, Subhanallah, Ya Salaam

- Ya Rahman - Turn head right - entering the womb, breathe
- Ya Rahim - Turn head left - deeper into the womb, breathe
- Subhanallah - Head up - reconnecting to the place of purity before impressions, breathe
- Ya Salaam -Head down, blowing into the heart - feeling the deep peace of this practice returning to Source

From this state, we no longer are looking outside of ourselves for the answers. What is needed is already within, in this state of being "before." Everything that emerges from/through us in life is the awakening of what is already within.

And with this awakening we are able to utilize the various tools that we seek and/or are offered to us (i.e. in Compassionate Communication).

Attunement: Realm of the Feminine  The metaphor of "womb" places us firmly in the realm of the Divine Feminine. We focus here on her expressions as "Hokhmah" from Hebrew Scriptures (particularly Proverbs) and "Sophia" (Greek) in the Christian Scriptures. Her names are Holy Wisdom, Sacred Intuition, Sacred Sense. The one who gathers all to the table with love and respect for all the voices. Inner and outer. Both our own inner voices (compassion for self) and for all the voices outside ourselves, outer justice.
From Paleolithic times, the great Feminine has been the Source (womb and tomb) and worshipped in many forms until cultural shifts suppressed her as the Ground of Being and focus of reverence. Holy Wisdom can be understood as Consciousness itself. She is the sense of "I" that develops, makes sense of surface impressions, that rises above to see the larger picture of the individual's inner world.

This intuitive sense that develops, that focuses inner and outer mercy/compassion and justice, is directly related to the reactivity patterns and how we work within ourselves towards more compassionate communication. More to come in this session and next week.

Practice: (this is not on the recording, with thanks to Halima S. for conversation and creativity): Part 2, deepening into the practice above:

- Ya Rahman - turn head to right - sense of deepening into the Womb of mercy, feeling love and respect for the outer voices in your life
- Ya Rahim - turn head to left - sense of deepening into the Womb of compassion, feeling love and respect for the inner voices arising within
- Subhanallah - turn head up - merging in this womb to the place "before the before" in purity, before receiving any impressions from manifested existence
- Ya Salaam - gently and slowly blowing into the heart - feeling the deep peace of the return to Source, return to Essence

Contemplation: Gems from Hazrat Inayat Khan. These phrases invite us to go within and reflect on our communications

Read each phrase aloud. Slowly. Take time with each phrase:

- Present the truth to each person so she/he can understand it
- Every initiated soul has its own note. The initiator must harmonize with that note for which s/he must step down to then raise up.
- Don’t be impatient with those who cannot respond fully... Unripe fruit is different than ripe fruit and they must ripen in their own time.
- Become large in outlook

One main principle in Compassionate Communication is that we "become large in outlook" and accept the reality that the burden of responsibility in communication is upon the person with the Highest/Deepest/Widest development of Consciousness (choose your own spatial metaphor).

From this place we take a breath, return to Womb as Source, listen with love and respect to all the voices, and return to Breath in holding our sacred responsibility in communication.
From Rahima

Contemplating the Sacred Relationship within Compassionate Communication
“Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.” Simone Weil

Practice of Darood
Creating a rhythmic four count pattern with the breath. Inhaling four counts Toward the One. Exhaling four counts Toward the One.

From Vol.VII of HIK’s In an Eastern Rose Garden, Friendship (1) p.252-253

“When a person judges one’s friend, then the spirit of friendship is not awakened in one’s heart, for a friend never judges. When a person talks to another about one’s friend, when one blames them, when one criticizes them, one does not know what friendship is. The meaning of friendship is too sacred to realize. All other relationships and connections in this life are empty if friendship is not at the back of them to strengthen them. The relationship between mother and daughter, father and son, brother and sister, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, all these connections need a spirit behind them: and this spirit is the spirit of friendship.”

A tall order practice in daily life.

Practice: MUJAHIDA MEDITATION from In the Garden Samuel L. Lewis, Lama Foundation, 1975 or 2009 SRI

One begins by simply watching the breath, gradually refining it and making it rhythmical throughout. Consciousness is focused on the heart center in the middle of the breast. You feel your breath gradually massaging and soothing this center of feeling. After doing this for a few minutes until it is a natural process with no mental strain…One then internally looks into one’s heart and feels the impressions (samskaras) that are lodged therein. There may be the surface impressions of the day, the mundane worries of one’s existence. One notices and releases each and all of these; they are released by the gentle massaging action of the breath on the heart. As surface impressions are released, deeper impressions make themselves known. One may come face to face with a grudge against someone, with an impression of rejection and self-pity, with deeply ingrained emotions of fear or anger. Whatever impression comes up, you face it forthrightly, shining the light of your consciousness on it, continuing the massaging action of the breath…You may come up with impressions that resist your efforts; they have lain for so long in your heart that a rusting process has set in. Be assured that by patient effort and trust in Allah, even the most persistent impression can be released, if not in one meditation, then in one hundred and one perhaps. This process has been called polishing the Aladdin’s Lamp of the heart.

An essential thing about this practice is that all external judgment is suspended. When the faults of friends and enemies well up as realities in one’s inner vision, one looks for and finds the resonance in one’s own heart. Then instead of trying to correct the person or situation on the
outside, one gently and patiently massages and releases this impression inside oneself. The without is the same as the within. When this becomes conscious and the inner purification takes place, then the within becomes as the without, and this is the secret behind this meditation. For one finds that by working on the impression inside one’s self with love and forthrightness, one actually helps purify the outward situation as well. (*Prepared by Wali Ali Meyer*)

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**From Daniel**

Notes on Nonviolent (Compassionate) Communication

Two premises of NVC:
1. There is an inherent human satisfaction in knowingly contributing to the well-being of another.
2. Judgment is the antecedent of violence. Violence is a tragic expression of unmet need.

Speaking and listening with empathy and honesty in the present moment leads to enlivening, heartfelt, and life-connecting communication. They are skillful. Speaking and listening with judgment, criticism, or condemnation leads to deadening, contracting, life-alienating expression. They are unskillful, and can be quite harmful. Applying NVC principles creates accurate, responsible, and respectful interaction.

Four steps of the NVC model:
1. Observation - nonjudgmental, non-evaluative description of a situation; it is sensory & concrete.
2. Feeling - an actual experience happening within me.
3. Need - basic, universal, life-serving, human requirements for living; or what I value.
4. Request - a clear, undemanding statement as to what action would meet my need if another person would be willing to do it. It gives a road map for satisfaction and fulfillment.

Feelings subdivide into two categories. “Positive” feelings arise when a person’s needs are met (“happy, peaceful, pleasant, comfortable, satisfied, fulfilled, excited, engaged, enthralled, relaxed, inspired, awed,” etc.), while “negative” feelings occur when needs are unmet (“disappointed, tense, frustrated, hurt, scared, angry, guilty, anxious, ashamed, dreading, uncomfortable, devastated,” etc.).

In everyday language, we often use the expression “I feel _________” to mean many things that are not actually feelings: “I feel it’s going to rain today” (prediction), “I feel like going to the store; listening to music” (plan, wish), or “I feel this is a good/bad idea” (positive/negative assessment), or “I feel I’m an idiot” or “I feel I’m wonderful” (neg./pos. judgment of self), or “I feel you’re controlling” or “I feel you’re fabulous” (neg./pos. judgment of other). In the NVC
model, “feel” and “feeling” are technical terms that have specific meanings and applications, always pointing to something that someone actually is experiencing. The NVC model requires training and practice to limit use of the words “feel” and “feeling” to name heartfelt, emotional experiences—and to use other words for everything else: “I think, opine, sense, believe, predict, assess, judge, evaluate,” etc.

In addition, please note that there are words that seem so much like feelings, but actually are not, that they deserve special mention. Examples (both negative and positive) are: “judged, demeaned, rejected, criticized, abandoned, violated, abused, ignored, humiliated, intimidated, controlled, used, understood, accepted, admired, loved, hated,” etc. These refer to what one thinks someone else is doing, misstated as “my feelings.” This creates confusion. In the NVC model, the statement, “I feel rejected” is nonsense because it confuses what one thinks another is doing with the actual experience one is having in relation to it. To be sure, one has feelings when one thinks one is being rejected: “When you turn away, I feel hurt.” When we communicate in clear language, situations become much easier to address effectively.

Strategies versus needs: Human needs are universal, and do not conflict with one another. However, the strategies people employ in attempting to meet their needs may come into conflict. Differentiating between needs and strategies for meeting needs can create a safe, peaceful atmosphere for solving problems successfully and for having more loving relationships. Sometimes expressing our needs will not result in their being met. Then, we are called to grieve our unmet needs, which is inner work.

Listening with NVC: The same NVC principles that help to create clear, effective speaking can be used to create clear, effective listening. We can listen for the feelings and needs of others whether or not these are stated in NVC language. Only one person using NVC language can lead to deep, human connecting.


From Abraham

Attunement: Bowl of Saki July 18

*There is a light within every soul; it only needs the clouds that overshadow it to be broken, for it to beam forth.*—Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

Commentary by Murshid Samuel L. Lewis (Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti):

Clouds are caused by mind, by thought of self and by nothing else. Not those whom we meet, not those who cause us pain, not those who seem to stand in our way, cause this light to be
hidden. The light is hidden within the heart of each one and nowhere else. It is awakened by pain, and therefore many of our enemies, many of the obstacles in life, instead of hindering the higher self-expression, do more to enable us to bring it forth than anything else in life. It is only when we escape the bonds of self—either voluntarily and gladly or through pain and tribulation—that this light comes to the surface.

Practice:
Unblaming. Taking responsibility for your own feelings. A practice in reframing
1) Find a place where you can be comfortable and sit quietly.
2) Come into the rhythm of your breath, feeling yourself relaxed and present.
3) Breathe in and out of your heart center.
3) After a few minutes, begin to scan your personal relationships
4) When you come across a relationship where there is some feeling or experience of conflict, stay with this relationship and the feelings that arise
5) check into a critical thought or judgement you might hold towards this person, ie. one that identifies the other person as negative or at fault.
6) Consciously reframe your thoughts about this person by restating the critical thought or judgement in terms of your own feelings and needs. There is power in speaking this out loud. Keep refining your language to return to deeper and deeper self-inquiry.

If you would like to share your experience of this practice, you may write me confidentially at abraham.sussman@gmail.com.

Wishing you well.
River of Guidance team