

Chapter 4: Passing it On

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One of the central tenants throughout this book on the ultimate relationship, and other books by this author, has been the concept that there exists a certain type of relationship that directly affects well being through experience. This is a relationship that not only offers transformative and healing experiences which promote human health and development but also it is a relationship that offers a witness to that event – someone who was there and can say, “I was there with you. We saw it together.” This is what is known as passing it on. If you are on the path to becoming a radiant being of compassion then passing it on becomes more than a responsibility, it becomes a way of life.

As a part of assisting the process of passing it on this author has dedicated his life to research, writing, and teaching about the nature of this ultimate relationship. It is a relationship of radiant compassion and penetrating understanding. It is a relationship which helps to expand compassion readiness which in turn is part of passing it on. The success of passing it on is directly related to the compassion readiness of the individuals in that given moment of the relationship offered. It is related to their ability to sit in the between and experience the presence of radiant compassion.

In general, the process of passing it on follows the historical parables that have preceded this current description, for example the parable of the tea cups. When a being of radiant compassion sits with another it is like offering tea – the tea being the experience of radiant compassion. It could happen that the person’s tea cup is totally filled, and then there is no room for the compassion experience to be known. They will present as if they are seeking but will be closed to the experience. For others their tea cup will be partially filled and so they will experiences something, maybe a whisper or a hint of feeling. Sometimes a person will present an empty cup but it is cracked. They experience radiant compassion and it fills them, but then soon after the effects and the meaning of the experience have left (leaked out). There is no lasting change in their lives. Then there are those who either present the empty cup as turned upside down and those who openly present the empty cup. Those with the upside down cup

have gained little wisdom (as distinguished from the filled cup), have no desire to even listen, and will often attack. Those with the open empty cup will receive a transformative experience. The hardest aspect of the responsibility of “passing it on” is understanding how to sit with compassion when pouring tea for each of these people.

Consider also the parable of the sower:

"And when many people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spoke by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."— Luke 8:4-8.

Some seed fell by the wayside – this is upside down cup with no place to receive. Some seed fell on rock – this is the cracked cup with some growth that doesn't last. Some seed fell among thorns – this is the filled cup with the experience choked by one's life. And other seed fell on good ground – this is the empty cup waiting and ready to receive the transformative experience which bears fruit.

Then the phrase “when he had said these things, he cried” is meaningfully connected to the parable. This author interprets this as a deep compassion for all, regardless of how the seed took hold or the nature of the tea cup. It shows that the offering of compassion is still made to all and that the suffering of not being able to witness it being passed on is part of the process, part of the responsibility of the offering radiant compassion. The “crying” is connected to a genuine compassion for all beings. We don't presume to know what tea cup someone will offer in the moment until it is offered. We can only know by experiencing it with them in that moment with the deepest compassion.

There is almost always sadness when witnessing people turn their backs on radiant compassion and the deep relationship that is possible with God and with others. It is sad to see people remain in a state of suffering when the path from that suffering can be seen. In both parables the offering was always made – the tea was ready, the seed was planted. This means that the ground into which the seed was planted was also known, the cup into which the tea was poured was also known. There is no other way to pass it on. This also means that if you are really offering genuine compassion you will experience the individual's resistance to the experience. Experiencing this suffering can be accompanied by tears of sadness.

What are we to do with this experience of sadness as we offer radiant compassion? It is possible to transcend this sadness, but one must take great caution in exploring this. It is very easy to use such an idea to avoid sitting with people in the state in which they exist while attempting to offer radiant compassion (the seed). If you avoid sitting with them then you are not in the between and not offering the tea or the seed. Avoiding sitting with the experience of sadness can result in objectification of other people, of placing them into a category of "heathens" or "sinners" or "sick". It is possible to avoid becoming angry at suffering and placing people into the category of "wrong doers". It is possible to see there is no "us" different from "them". Instead, within the simplicity of the radiant moment is that we are all in some way disconnected from the perfection of God and there is sadness in that.

Transcending the sadness associated with radiant compassion is connected to a process of experiencing the sadness fully and then returning fully to the possibility of improving the radiant ultimate relationship. This is a possibility that exists within everyone. It is sad to see people turn their backs on the possibility of compassion and healing, to return to recurrent patterns of suffering, and even worse – to know that those patterns will ripple out and affect others. We should never become so barren as to not be able to feel this deeply, very deeply. Such suffering is also part of who we were, who we are, and who we can become at any time. It is part of the humility of our humanness. Not one of us is perfect in our development toward becoming a radiant being of compassion. If we are not perfect then the seed has not grown to bear its maximum fruit, the tea cup has never been totally empty. Part of the path of transcendence

through sitting in suffering with another is through our humility, patience and tolerance. The other part is found in holding the possibility.

Holding the possibility means that the possibility of radiant compassion is held for all beings, always. Just because you experience the upside down cup, and no place to pour the tea, does not mean that you close the door to the possibility for that person to share tea. What it means is that the door is apparently not open at that moment. Maybe you will meet again and the person will have increased their compassion readiness, turned the cup over. Maybe by holding the possibility for the person they may see a glimpse of that possibility for themselves, a possibility that will take root at some later date. Finally it is of great importance for you, the person seeking to pass it on, to see, feel, know, experience holding that possibility in that given moment. This holding of the possibility occurs side-by-side with the resistance to that moment. The sadness of suffering and the possibility of transformative bliss occur side-by-side in every moment.

Experiencing the possibility of witnessing radiant compassion within any relationship is strongly connected to holding the possibility of transformative bliss for that specific person. It is not about holding some abstract concept. It is not about holding on to some explanatory system and a set of associated rituals – although these may be used to help communicate the process. It is not about bringing other’s testimony to that moment – although stories often help people to feel more comfortable. It is about a special moment where you feel, share, the soul’s response of another and the possibility of radiant compassion for them in that single moment. To do this you must be have deep empathy for them in that moment. This is why the sadness occurs – “when he said these things he cried”.

In passing it on one must be extremely careful that the sadness is not about “too bad, I wish you could experience this”. This is a place of projecting one’s personal experience on to the moment and wishing the other person could have an experience like the one you had. The sadness is also not about thinking “I’m sad that you just don’t get the message of our great teacher” (or great book). This is wishing the other person could know just like you know. Passing it on is about holding the space of possibility in a way that is unique to that specific person. It is holding the possibility and allowing it to unfold according to the nature of the

individual and the sacred qualities of that given moment. Each individual discovers that moment in a way that is very personal to them. You are there just as a witness, first to the possibility and then to what ever unfolds. Sometimes what unfolds is transformative and sometimes it is revisiting suffering. Both are part of the process of passing it on.

Since the process of passing it on is both unique to the moment and to the individual within that moment it is not possible to describe all the variations that can occur. But it is possible to speak to generalities that are frequently encountered during the process of passing it on. These generalities are:

Grasping and burning with hunger,

Understanding the founding Concepts,

Facing the sadness,

Where are you?

The radiance will generate a response,

Addressing the greater compassion,

The still and moving presence, and

Community support.

Some of these have been briefly discussed above, and most have been briefly touched upon in other writings by this author. What will be presented here is a discussion of how these generalities relate specifically to the process of passing it on. This information is based largely on this writer's decades of experiences with passing it on.

Grasping and Burning with Hunger

The two experiences that early students face when seeking to pass it on are grasping and burning with hunger. These are both to be expected

and are considered normal to learning about passing on radiant compassion. They can be faced, understood, and the student can learn to limit the negative consequences that can occur.

Grasping refers to trying to grab, or hold on to, certain aspects of the bliss, awe, joy, insight and infinite peace that accompanies the ultimate relationship. Burning with hunger refers to the burning desire to share this experience with everyone. Both the hunger for more and the desire to share are common to the process of passing it on. The concern is not about the feeling associated with hunger and burning desire, but rather with the actions and thoughts that can be associated. This is where negative consequences can arise. Many students along the journey of soul awakening get lost at this fork in the road. There can be great suffering that is associated with the consequences.

Understanding the Founding Concepts

At the start of this author's books on relationships that help others there is a discussion of the six founding concepts of the helping relationship. The ultimate relationship is fundamentally a helping relationship. In the process of passing in on we can come to a deeper understanding of the fundamental qualities of the helping relationship and learn how these concepts apply. This then helps us to become more skilled in passing it on. Integrating the founding concepts into a personal conceptual system of helping others is something that must be done internally, individually, and hopefully with some wise guidance. It is also something that can be fine tuned through practical experience.

The basic premise of the founding concepts is that when seeking to pass it on we will enter different types of relationships – much like what was described in the parables. There is the healing relationship and the similar mystic relationship. These are relationship where the transformative phenomenon of radiant compassion is directly experienced. That is the nature of these relationships. Then there is the support relationship. The support relationship is focused more on processes of gradual change, on supporting the change that can follow a transformative experience, and on education. The education is directed toward informing others about the nature of radiant compassion using an explanatory system

that is fitting to their culture and level of understanding. The third relationship is the habitual relationship, or the relationship of resistance. Most people's resistance to the transformative experience of radiant compassion is connected to their habitual patterns of interaction. Sometimes when we seek to pass it on we will experience resistance and these habitual patterns. These different relationships are encountered during the process of passing it on and understanding them helps us to be more skilled in our responsibility.

Each of these relationships (healing, mystic, support, habitual) is described in writings. It is possible to come to understand these relationships a little better through reading about them, but it is also fruitful to spend time with a skilled teacher and to experience them. After experiencing them it is wise to process through them with the teacher. Unfortunately some people are not ready to do such process work as their compassion readiness is not well developed. This is when sitting in suffering becomes necessary.

Facing the Sadness

Sitting in suffering is directly related to one's compassion readiness. Compassion is directly linked to your development of empathy. As you develop your empathy so also you develop your potential to become more compassionate. As you progress toward radiant compassion you also progress toward deeper empathy with others. This will mean that you will experience more fully the nature of the other person's condition and situation at the time that you offer radiant compassion. This is simply the nature of the act. It is impossible to become a radiant being of compassion and not develop in this way.

Facing the sadness of people's suffering, their roadblocks to compassion readiness, and their need to attack others is part of becoming a radiant being of compassion. Experiencing how an individual's actions spreads suffering in their world is part of becoming radiant. If we did not feel with, share their suffering, if we somehow were to remain distant and "protected" from feeling then we would also remain distant from sitting with radiant compassion. This "distance" stance is something many people in the helping profession use when facing suffering. But the distance

stance is quite dangerous because it removes you from deep empathy and thus from radiant compassion. The solution is found in learning how to sit in suffering and radiant compassion at the same time.

One of the most difficult aspects of facing the sadness has to do with sitting in suffering. Sitting in suffering is an easy phrase to say, but it implies so much more than its apparent simplicity. The level at which we understand the concept of sitting with suffering is directly related to our skill in facing the sadness. The more skilled we are at facing the sadness in a deeply compassionate and genuine manner the more movement we have made toward becoming a radiant being of compassion. Sitting in suffering is a multifaceted and deep process that is continually learned for one's entire life.

Where are you?

Where are you in your awareness of radiant compassion? Each of us are somewhere along the path of becoming a radiant being of compassion. Some have not yet started, some have just begun seeking, and others have been seeking and a rare few have made considerable progress. One of the most frequently encountered blockades to learning about passing it on has been a poor self awareness of compassion readiness. The writings by this author are meant to help those who wish to offer compassion by describing, in detail, the nature of the relationships that foster the offering of deep levels of compassion. These relationships are not usually part of the average person's life and so it often takes some time to learn about them – to make the progression from ignorance to knowing to doing and finally to being. The only way to learn about compassionate relationships is to experience them and to do so in as many healthy ways as one can. Where are you in this learning? How open are you to sitting in a compassionate relationship with another? Where are you in your development to becoming a radiant being of compassion?

Perhaps what is often not understood by those professing to be on the path of compassion development is that ALL beings can sense, share, and witness radiant compassion at some level. In addition sharing radiant compassion adds to one's understanding of compassion and thus to one's development toward becoming a being of radiant compassion. If, for whatever reason, you can not sit with one who has demonstrated radiant

compassion then you have the responsibility to search deeply within yourself to find out why. There is likely to be something there that is slowing down your personal development. Almost always the radiant compassionate person will be able to help you discover, provided you can take the journey.

There are people who think they are further along in their development of compassion then their actions demonstrate. This is often linked to their development of empathy, their definition of empathy, the way compassion is practiced and lack of deep insight into these concepts as connected to the concept of self. Radiant compassion will always generate a response but understanding the response requires one to sit calmly, openly, within the radiance and to explore the response with a wise guide.

The Radiance will Generate a Response

The tea cup and sower parables are ways of speaking about peoples responses to radiant compassion, or their compassion readiness. Whenever you offer radiant compassion, even enter a room with it, it will generate a response. The nature of this response is multifaceted and it takes some time to learn about the dynamic interactions that occur. Part of learning to pass it on is learning about this in as much detail as is possible. This is what the parables begin to speak about. There is much to discover about the response and how we each sit with that response. There is a book of parables and poetry entitled “The Healer’s Journey” which speaks to this aspect of passing it on. The different types of relationships described in the various books by this author also speak to understanding the different responses that people generate when encountering the offering of radiant compassion.

There are aspects to the response that have been common throughout the history of healer/mystics. The parables speak to this age old wisdom that teachers seek to pass down to their students.

Addressing the Greater Compassion

This author's writings have been about illuminating the qualities of relationships that can foster well being during the helping process. The writings deal with the dyad, with one person seeking help and another able to offer it. But there is another form of compassion that begins to be known after many years of accumulated compassion experiences. This is called The Greater Compassion.

Picture your self standing in a still pond with the water at a level quite comfortable. The water temperature is soothing, the air is still and pleasant. You can see across the surface of the pond and it is like looking across the surface of a mirror. A fly lands and small ripples are sent out. You can watch as these ripples travel away from the fly's interaction with the pond's surface. A fish jumps and larger ripples are sent out. Some youths arrive at the shore and skim rocks creating ripples. A motor boat passes by creating a wake and even larger ripples. All of these ripples interact with each other and affect all living being in contact with the pond. This is the nature of Greater Compassion.

There are aspects of sitting with the Greater Compassion that are difficult to comprehend. It is an experience that extends beyond the soul of one person and outward from that one person to the souls interconnected to that person – like the ripples on a pond. In addition, as was described for deep levels of empathy, these ripples are experienced. The sense of compassion then comes when wisdom follows these ripples.

The Still and Moving Presence

When seeking to become a being of radiant compassion there are effects that can happen to a person that do not contribute to good health. These have been called “shaman sickness”, “kundalini”, “compassion fatigue” and by this author “the contamination effect”. It seems through out history that people who have traveled the path toward radiant compassion have also moved through their own suffering. Part of the reason for this is the lack of training regarding the links between sitting in suffering, radiant compassion and the practice of a still and moving presence.

As we develop our compassion to deeper levels, moving toward becoming a radiant, then we also become more open to hearing, feeling and experiencing the suffering of others. This is our facing the sadness, and it is done both on an individual level and with a community. It also starts to become ever present.

Many have suggested to me that developing walls, or “shields of protection”, is the best way to face this apparent risk to one’s health. Having tried such an approach I have found it to be dangerous. Although walls protect they also obscure one’s view and thus do more to increase the risk of harm to all those involved. It seems wiser to me to develop a more expansive view, a view that can penetrate time and space to reveal the nature of what is being presented. Such a view can be revealed within the moment of radiant compassion.

The difficulty is that for most of us moments of radiant compassion, along with their discernment, are far and few between. The rest of the time we live within our own existence, our own frame of mind. It is here that we can so easily get lost while trying to sit with suffering. It is here that we need to work on developing a still and moving presence.

There are many traditions that teach ways to developing the still and moving presence. Personally I think it is a feature common to the path of spiritual health regardless of tradition. But the still and moving presence is not an easy thing to develop and it is something that when initially discovered it is like a doorway to a vast universe.

For this text it is simply important to know that the still and moving presence is the balance for sitting in suffering. The deeper that we develop our compassion the deeper we need to develop the still and moving presence. This is a process that is quite different than developing walls of protection. Yet the concept of building walls is strong throughout our culture.

The concepts of compassion readiness, consensus of compassion understanding, holding the potential of radiant compassion, sitting in suffering and the still and moving presence are all parts of building a culture of compassion. They are all elements for which we will need community support for if we are to evolve to a sustainable and healthy society.

Community Support

Compassion can not flourish without community support, which is not to say that it can not exist. One person can be a voice in the wilderness. One person can make a difference. What becomes difficult is the process of passing it on when you are but just one voice. Community support can make the process of passing it on easier provided that the support is built on a sound foundation.

The problem with community support is that there are too many competing compassion definitions. If you agree that compassion is about acting to relieve suffering then the door is opened to personal interpretation and cultural variations. If you follow the logic behind why empathy must be included in the definition of empathy then the variations begin to have some limits set upon them. If you then further add that one's understanding of empathy is developmental in nature then additional limits on the nature of community support can be established. Community support can not be effective if it is spread out to all that could be termed compassionate in nature.

One of the reasons for this author's work has been to more clearly define the nature of radiant compassion so that it can be distinguished from other variations and then given strong community support. But this becomes something that is inherently difficult to accomplish due to the qualities associated with experiencing radiant compassion. It is quite difficult to understand radiant compassion without the experiential knowledge. This is one of the reasons passing it on, being a witness, is important. It helps to build community support which then helps to open the doors of possibility for more people.

If we are to move toward a culture of compassion then there is much work to do on building a foundation of understanding. This is where we need community support. It is support that simply promotes a deeper understanding of compassion. Pass on the information so that we can move toward a shared understanding of compassion. That will be the first step toward a culture of compassion.