

Chapter 1: Characteristics of the Ultimate Relationship

(Last updated: September, 2005 – still in draft form)

Deep peace, mutual well being, relief from suffering and the insight to return are features central to the ultimate relationship experience. This shared mutual well being is something both people in the relationship experience at the same time. It is a moment of bliss, awe, beauty, ecstasy, insight and infinite peace that is beyond most common definitions of relationship. Time seemingly stands still during this moment and both people in the relationship are witnesses to the pinnacle of human relationship development. The level, or intensity/duration, that one experiences the ultimate relationship varies considerably as does the nature of the insight received.

This moment may last a few seconds, minutes, or extend for days. It is difficult to know the nature of this moment without direct experience. It is also difficult to enter into the moment without some form of teaching or guidance. Over the centuries there have been people who have learned to share the ultimate relationship with others – to “pass it on”. Their collective wisdom shapes the words presented within this book on the ultimate relationship (see this author’s other writings on www.SacredHealingNow.com). The writings here are very condensed and the reader is referred to this author’s previous books for a more expanded discussion.

The ultimate relationship can be shared within almost any relationship context. The problems that are faced in trying to do so have to do with a lack of awareness by a broad section of the populace that such a relationship exists, that it can be experienced, that such an experience falls within the context of almost all relationships, and that it promotes well being and personal development for both participants.

The ultimate relationship is always available, which is not the same as saying it is always attainable. Some people have been fortunate to be called to be teachers of the ultimate relationship.

These teachers have written, through out history, about the ultimate relationship (although not calling it that) as a sacred process, as a *deep compassion* for another that is beyond that which is normally developed in relationships. Deep compassion is the combination of advanced empathy and wisdom (wisdom developed through use of empathy in helping to relieve suffering). It is an experience that is deeply moving, penetrating to the very soul of our essence. It is always available, particularly if one happens to sit with one of these teachers, but not always attainable due to each person's particular stance in the concept of relationship at that moment.

Relationship stance refers to how we stand in relationship to all things. This means how we sit (think, act, feel) with another person when we enter into a relationship, or how we “stand” in that relationship. Relationship stance is affected by our history with relationships, our ideas about what a relationship should or should not become. One of the goals of this book is to expand awareness of the relationship concept and to then help people redefine relationship stance. In redefining relationship stance it may be possible to increase the number of people for which ultimate relationship availability becomes attainable. It may be that the simple process of knowing that the ultimate relationship is possible, that it exists, can bring the ultimate relationship into the person's relationships stance and thus make it more attainable.

General Features of the Ultimate Relationship

Describing the general features of the ultimate relationship will hopefully help readers expand their relationship stance to include the possibility of the ultimate relationship. This new relationship stance will then open the door for a greater likelihood for the ultimate relationship experience to occur. The general features of the ultimate relationship are as follows:

- 1) **Agreement and Skilled Communication** – active listening, compassionate expression of needs.

- 2) **Deep Compassion** – the beginning development of empathy with wisdom shared in the moment.
- 3) **Synchronized Pace** – the pace of the moment is a perfect dance between the two.
- 4) **Mutual Connection** – advanced development of empathy, deep empathy shared in the moment.
- 5) **Letting Go with a Shift in Perception** – a new awareness of life is perceived in the moment with special characteristics defining the uniqueness of the moment.
- 6) **Sacredness** – the experience is perceived as sacred.
- 7) **Growth** – the experience is the seed for growth.

These seven general features are common to the ultimate relationship but they are experienced and described in ways that fit the people in the relationship. Resistance, or running into some type of road blocks along the journey, is also a common feature during the process of discovering the ultimate relationship experience. The most common of these roadblocks will be briefly discussed later in this book.

Agreement and Skilled Communication

The very first aspect of the ultimate relationships is that there is an agreement between the two people to openly, and freely, explore the possibility of the experience. Once the agreement is established the details of the agreement are shared between the two through the use of skilled communication.

Skilled communication is not only a key to the ultimate relationship, but to any successful relationship. There are three important aspects of skilled communication: active listening, accurate and compassionate expression of needs, and patience.

Active listening is not the same as listening. When we say we are listening to someone what is the nature of that listening? Most of the time when we are listening to someone we are also listening to our own inner dialog, our own mind as it speaks while we listen. Sometimes our mind is thinking about what to say in response, sometimes it is trying to figure out why the person said that, and at other times there might be some personal agenda (some need) that is trying to be accomplished through the conversation and this need becomes part of the focus of our inner talk. When someone says they are listening to another they also should be saying I am trying to hear what you are saying.

With active listening we actively seek to hear what the other person is saying, to deeply understand their communication. We find ways to quiet down the inner dialog that speaks about our personal needs to express some aspect of self. The focus shifts from self to the other person with the genuine intent to deeply understand. Asking for clarification is not done so as to “unmask” the error of the other person’s thinking or to make our thinking look superior. Questions are asked from the stance of genuine curiosity, interest, and compassion.

When we are engaged in active listening our personal needs, if they were to interfere, are put aside (at that moment). We become active listeners, listeners who actively focus their minds and energies solely on the process of listening. We actively seek ways to improve this listening process within every relationship we have. We actively seek to remove those obstacles that inhibit us from deeply listening to the other person. Active listening is not just sitting back and nodding in agreement, or responding in kind with some similar statement that keeps the conversations flowing. Active listening is the process of deeply engaging in the other person’s conversation.

An important part of active listening is to accurately reflect back to the other person what you understand about what has been said. This reflecting back is not simply a parroting of their words, but rather a paraphrase, or summary, of the conversation given in your own words. You may reflect back to the other many times during a conversation. Each time you do you look at the response from the

other to your reflective comments as a way of evaluating the effectiveness of your active listening. The response can be used, with experience, as a measure of the accuracy of your reflective comments and thus, in part, a measure of your skill as an active listener. Through this process you can continue to be active in advancing your skill as an active listener. The more skilled you become as an active listener the less likely you are to misunderstand someone's conversation. Misunderstanding is one of the main sources of relationship distress.

The other major source of relationship distress is the lack of need fulfillment. There are times in every relationship when needs are presented by one person to the other person. Sometimes these needs are stated clearly, but often they are not. Here is where active listening comes into play. A person skilled in active listening will take the time to help the person express the need clearly and accurately so that it can be met or at least fully heard. In this way any distress due to feeling like one's needs were not heard can be minimal.

But the accurate expression of needs is not the responsibility of the active listener. It is the responsibility of the person seeking to have the needs fulfilled. It might seem like an easy thing to incorporate into skilled communication, but it is not. It is not because we are not always closely aware of all our needs. It is not because we are afraid to state our needs. It is not because we have some reason, some idea in our head that says "I am a bad person to have that need". It is not because we have not learned how to state out needs in a timely and compassionate manner.

Learning to state our needs accurately in a timely and compassionate manner take as much practice as active listening. There is also a compassionate response to our communication of needs that will signal to us if we are making progress with this skill. When we state our needs accurately in a timely and compassionate manner then most often the response is also compassionate. When we interject our needs into a conversation without regard to timing or compassion then we could easily receive a less than compassionate response.

Rejection of a personal request to have some need met by the other in the relationship can be a painful experience. Yet it is a common problem in relationships. Unmet needs are linked to poor communication and misunderstanding. Unmet needs are tied to distress, unhappiness, and sometimes suffering. This is why it is important to express ones needs clearly, accurately and compassionately. It is also why it is important, when you are listening to someone who is expressing their needs to use active listening.

As a relationship develops the two people in the relationship may begin to know about each others needs. They may begin to know when to stop and listen and when it is the right time to state their own needs. But there are times in any relationship when both people feel the urgency to have their needs met at the same time. With immature relationships this is more common than not. Both people want to be heard and neither wants to listen. Both want to have their needs met, almost demanding from the other that this happen immediately. When this occurs ONE person must implement the third aspect of skilled listening – patience.

The use of patience is needed because one person is patient enough to wait while using active listening to help meet the others needs. The use of patience is meant to be temporary in the situation of clashing need demands. Because once the other person’s needs are addressed then the patience can be set aside and replaced with compassionate and accurate needs statements. The use of patience is not about being a martyr or a “victim”. It is a compassionate part of skilled communication, a purposeful act done to facilitate the relationship.

The three aspects of skilled listening work in harmony within the ultimate relationship. When compassion is the foundation then they all interact in a way that can help to promote well being within the relationship.

Compassion

Compassion is defined as empathy plus wisdom, wisdom in the experience of empathy as it facilitates well being. Empathy is the

genuinely sharing another's experience by "walking in their shoes", by sharing the person's reliving of **their** experience (not by comparing it to ours and not by taking it on as our own). Empathy is accurate and mutual, meaning it is not just in the mind of one person in the relationship, but it is stated as part of the moment by both people. There is an understanding that empathy occurred and it is clearly and accurately stated as such. Empathy is also developmental, meaning that people have different levels of skill in empathy. This can affect the person's understanding of the ultimate relationship since the ultimate relationship is heavily dependent upon a compassionate state of being.

The most important aspect of empathy is that it promotes well being. Empathy in a relationship between two people simply can not exist unless it is there to promote well being. Empathy is a process of "walking" with another for the purpose of promoting mutual well being. There is no mistaking this process for something else.

Compassion is the wisdom to know what to do with this process. Compassion is linked to our knowledge and experience with empathy throughout our life. In the same sense the absence of compassion is linked to our history with the absence of compassion in our lives. It is possible for a child to have more compassion than an adult. It is also possible for an adult to become more compassionate through increased exposure to life compassion experiences. Wisdom in this instance does not refer to scholarly acquisition of information. Wisdom here does not refer to being "old" or to have gathered worldly experiences. Wisdom here refers to the practice of, and exposure to, compassion. Wisdom here refers to becoming a radiant compassionate being.

Compassion is the knowing of another's suffering and in knowing also having the wisdom of what that knowing signifies for that person at that moment. The more deeply we can sit and share in how another experiences suffering the more deeply we can know the significance of that suffering in that person's life. Deeply sitting in a person's experience of suffering is a characteristic of well developed empathy (not sympathy).

Empathy in a relationship can expand from active listening to being sensitive to the other's feelings, to feeling the other's feelings, to well developed empathy – experiencing the other's life (a true sense of walking in the other's shoes). People who experience the ultimate relationship often say that they feel deeply known, at a level that is not common in most relationships. This well developed empathy is combined with wisdom of knowing what to do with the connection within the moment and after the moment as the relationship continues to develop. Empathy is the process of walking together toward well being. Compassion is the wisdom of knowing what to do during that walk together and afterwards. Without empathy compassion has no walk toward well being. Without wisdom compassion has no history of moving through suffering to well being experiences for one to draw upon as a basis of wisdom. Compassion, like empathy, is something that can be developed, enhanced, expanded. Both require the frequent practice of compassion in order for such development to occur.

Compassion is linked to the ultimate relationship because deep peace and mutual well being are features central to the ultimate relationships experience. One can not experience a relationship that promotes mutual well being within a state of deep peace when compassion is absent.

Perhaps one of the most significant problems facing our culture is a lack of deep understanding about both compassion and empathy. Empathy is the “hearing” and in being heard, or known, a person may experience well being. But compassion is that active process of shifting from suffering into well being (even if only for a fraction of a moment and at the slightest intensity) and applying the insights gained. At the most advanced levels of empathy development, at moments of flow or oneness, compassion is experienced.

Synchronized Pace

In every compassionate relationship, at every moment, there is a flow or a natural dance of communication and understanding. Within the ultimate relationship both people are connected to this flow, both are participating in the dance as partners. They each keep

pace with each other. No one is out of step as they are walking down the path toward mutual well being together. It is a dance synchronized to help promote the experience of mutual well being.

Pace is a fairly easy thing to describe – it simply means that you are moving with the other person and the other person moves with you. But it is not an easy thing to maintain. We have lots of ways to get distracted, forgetting to maintain pace. Most of these distractions have to do with our inner habits and needs at that moment. Developing radiant compassion helps to maintain pace.

Mutual Connection

The ultimate relationship is one that promotes mutual well being and it does so within a mutual connection. The intensity of this connection varies with the depth of the person's compassion and it varies according to the nature of the situation. The intensity also changes within the ultimate relationship experience depending on the nature of what is being explored and understood at that moment.

Once some of the resistance to the connection has been “let go” then this deep connection is often experienced as a magnetic attraction, a feeling of safety and comfort, a feeling of “I can say anything, be anything, and it's all accepted”. This sense of feeling very safe, comforted and secure is a very important part of the ultimate relationship, and it can be mutual.

This sense of feeling very safe, when combined with the sense of being deeply known (compassion) could be described as “love”. And perhaps this is what is meant by the term love in some of the ancient spiritual writings. But in modern day Western culture the term love had developed a wide variety of meanings that can easily confuse the relationship. In my writings I prefer to use the term compassion. It is the creation of a deeply compassionate relationship that allows for both knowing and safety to be mutually experienced.

Within the feeling of safety it is possible to experience a “letting go” and a freedom from, or a release of, one's burdens. This can be experienced in a wide variety of ways, from a gentle quiet

release to an intense thunderbolt surging through the person. The intensity of the mutual connection often varies in direct connection with the dynamics of the “letting go” process. Often people need to feel an intense inner safety before they will let go. The more intense the letting go (or the greater the resistance to letting go) the more secure the sense of safety needs to be. This is the main reason for the deep mutual connection – it provides the safe place.

For some the resistance is just too powerful as they struggle to form the mutual connection. For some people this will be as far as their ultimate relationship experience will take them. They will remain in a struggle with forming the mutual connection. This is because they will not, refuse to, enter into the deeper mutual connection, into a deep level of compassion. Because of this there is no deep sense of safety for the process of “letting go”. And with no deep sense of safety it is extremely difficult to let go. They remain stuck in a particular perception of relationship and its connection to well being that prevents them from moving further. There are numerous roadblocks contributing to why people “get stuck”. But it is a fairly common part of the experience of those seeking to “pass it on”.

Roadblocks are most frequently met when encountering the process of forming a mutual connection at a deep level of compassion. It is quite common. I have yet to meet a person who is permanently in the ultimate relationship. In some sense we each encounter the roadblocks every hour we are not sitting in the ultimate relationship. These roadblocks teach us about our relationship stance and teach us about compassion. The most common roadblocks, and some general tips of how to get around them, will be discussed in later chapters. Letting go is about learning how to move around, or transcend, our road blocks.

Letting Go with a Shift in Perception

Letting go is a process of discovering the “death of self”, or the “empty self” with “empty desire”. Letting go is a process of sitting and being without doing and allowing compassion to fill one’s being to overflowing radiance. This filling can not happen if there are

things in the way. The cup can not be filled with tea if it already has water in it.

The process of letting go is an important part of the wisdom we gain in seeking the ultimate relationship. We can discover those things that prevent us from sitting in the ultimate relationships more often, and with more people.

Letting go is also not a permanent experience. If we once experience letting go of our roadblocks that does not guarantee the roadblocks will never again appear. Letting go is often not a thinking thing, but more of a feeling experience. It is nearly impossible to follow some cookbook formula, to say “According to the book, if I do this, and this, then that will get me to letting go.” One must experience letting go and this often happens through some extraordinary life event, or with the help of a properly trained teacher. In either case, returning to letting go can also be aided by a trained practitioner.

It is important to state again that letting go happens within the mutual compassionate connection, within a strong sense of peace and safety. It is a shared process within the ultimate relationship, with one person letting go and the other witnessing and supporting that letting go.

Once a person does “let go”, experiences that release of burden, then there is a dramatic shift in perception. This shift in perception, like the letting go experience, is experienced in a wide variation of intensity and duration. For some it may be a second or two of gentle peace that is mutually experienced with the other person. For others it may be hours, sometimes days, of a deep peace and awe that penetrates into all aspects of life. Insight and wisdom accompany this shift in perception. Processing this insight is the responsibility of the one who received it – for that is how the seed becomes fruit.

Sacredness

Once people experience all the features described above then they often seek to make some sense of the experience. They often take time to process the event. They reflect upon it, think about it, and sometimes talk about it with others (although this can at times prove to be difficult). The most common result of this processing is that there is a sense of the sacred, that the event was sacred in some way. Sometimes this sense is spoken about during the shift in perception. Sometimes it is spoken about later, but attributed to the ultimate relationship experience. Sometimes it is just acted upon, for example a person might start going back to church after being away for years.

This sacred character of relationships that promote mutual well being is not a new discovery. It is simply been rephrased within this author's writings in attempt to reawaken people to ancient wisdom.

Growth

The ultimate experience, in whatever form it is experienced, always offers the people involved personal wisdom that can be used for promoting growth and a way to return to the deep peace/well being. This is not the same as saying that it WILL promote growth. Some people take the wisdom and almost immediately nurture it. Others store it away and then later it enters into their lives to flourish. Some simply cast it aside as unknowable and thus not possible as a contributor to personal growth.

Benefits and Risks of the Ultimate Relationship

There are many benefits to the ultimate relationship, and some risks (due to misunderstanding). The benefits and the risks seem to be regular occurring phenomena that are associated either with the moment of the ultimate relationship, or soon after. These benefits and risks include the following:

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Risk</u>
Experience of being known	Feeling “exposed”
Sitting in suffering	Overwhelmed/Stuck
Shift into well being	Hunger
Insight	Misapplication
Mutuality/Witness	Relation Confusion
The Way (Journey)	Avoidance/Resistance
Passing it On	Lost in Translation

These are the seven most common risks and benefits associated with the ultimate relationship.

Each of the above listed risks are so commonly tied to the benefits that they could be considered part of the characteristics of how the ultimate relationship is generally experienced. But the reader should take caution in doing so because with experience sitting in the ultimate relationship these risks seem to diminish. In addition those who seem to lack experience with compassion, those who have the greatest resistance to sitting in the compassionate relationship, also seem to experience the strongest risk effects. It may be that the risks have more to do with the lack of compassion than with defining the ultimate relationship. It may be that since the ultimate relationship is

characterized by the shared experience of deep, radiant, compassion, than those who are estranged to such will encounter “risks” in their struggle to know, to sit, to be. Whereas those who have known deeper levels of compassion will find it easier, encounter less “risk”.

The idea of “risk” is probably tied more to the individual’s suffering than to the ultimate relationship experience. But the ultimate relationship and the experience of suffering can not be separated as the ultimate relationship is about a journey from suffering into well being. The risks are closely linked to the struggle we all have in taking that journey. The risks are tied to our difficulty with BEING radiant with compassion as we face our own suffering and the suffering of others. The risks are associated with our return to sitting in suffering while also being radiantly compassionate. The more we practice entering into the ultimate relationship the easier it becomes, the more we move toward the expression of a radiant compassionate being, and the further we move from the common risks.

The experience of being known and feeling “exposed”

Deep compassion, composed of deep empathy and wisdom, is a part of the ultimate relationship. This compassion is often associated with a feeling of being known or understood at a deep level. For most people this is a pleasing experience. But there are some people who have developed habits of keeping themselves from being known. These mask wearers may feel dangerously exposed when what is behind the mask has been made clearly visible.

When people seek out the ultimate relationship it is often, at least initially, done so in an effort to improve personal well being. People will seek out this personal well being using a relationship stance with which they are comfortable. This sometimes includes masks. Getting beyond the masks is often part of the journey toward well being.

Some people will let the masks down and move beyond the feeling of being “exposed”. They will sit with the discomfort and allow themselves to be known. In sitting the discomfort can then transform to peace and comfort.

Some people do not like the feeling of being deeply known and find the feeling of being “exposed” unbearable. Even though they may have entered into the agreement to discover well being they are not ready to do the work. The mask remains in place, the message is given about the mask being in place, and the person often leaves feeling a bit dissatisfied.

Sitting in suffering and being overwhelmed or stuck

In the large majority of times when two people seek to enter into the ultimate relationship there is some time spent sitting in suffering. Sitting in suffering is the door way to deeper compassion. There are so many different ways that people experience this process of sitting in suffering, with some experiences being gentle, some being volcanic and some so distant as to seem empty or void.

One of the main reasons that people are not closer to the ultimate relationship in their lives is because they have not learned how to sit with suffering in a compassionate way. In their seeking the ultimate relationship experience this problem of sitting with suffering is encountered. Sitting with suffering is the doorway to greater compassion and a deeper connection to the ultimate relationship.

- 1) Our suffering allows others to be compassionate to us.
- 2) Our suffering allows each of us to be compassionate with ourselves.
- 3) Our suffering helps us to be compassionate with others.
- 4) Other people’s suffering helps us to practice our own compassion.
- 5) Suffering and healing are directly linked to each other; all suffering is an opportunity to experience healing with compassion.

Healing is not the same as curing and opportunity is not the same thing as certainty. The link between compassion and suffering is a difficult one to get to know well.

Sometimes people can feel overwhelmed by the suffering because the feelings are just too intense. This can lead to “burn out”. Sometimes people feel “stuck”, unable to move from their experiences with suffering. This can lead to feeling trapped, hopeless. Learning a healthy way to sit with suffering is not easy for some people. This is why the ultimate relationship is so intertwined with a deep experience of compassion, a place of comfort that helps people to sit in suffering. This deep compassion is like a safety net, a sense of security, which allows people to sit in suffering (theirs and others) without feeling overwhelmed or stuck. They can sit in the suffering and take the time needed to explore, learn, and find the doorway to a deeper compassion and that deeper experience of well being. And the more times that doorway is discovered the stronger the safety net becomes.

Some people, even though they seek well being, will not be able to sit in suffering and will react in ways that are connected to feeling overwhelmed or stuck. They will react in ways they have used to escape the suffering. They won’t be able to find that doorway. This “risk” is linked to a lack of understanding and openness regarding the depth of compassion and its significance in relation to relief from suffering (finding that doorway). Skilled practitioners sometimes can find it difficult to face this in a person seeking help. If we have loved ones who are stuck or overwhelmed it can be very difficult to face. Yet it is part of the journey to well being for so many people. Letting go, releasing one’s habits, moving on to a new level of perception, a new way of experiencing well being requires, for those who are stuck, is a new way of sitting with suffering. Once they discover this new way of sitting then the shift into a deeper sense of well being occurs.

Shift into well being and the hunger

Sitting in suffering, letting go, and then experiencing a shift into well being are the central features of the ultimate relationship. The ultimate relationship is defined as one that promotes the experience of well being and fosters personal growth. The shift into well being is experienced in a wide variety of ways, but universal to them all is a sense of pleasure and peace. For some this sense of peace and pleasure can be experienced at heightened levels inside the ultimate

relationship – levels greater than anything the individual had experienced prior to that moment.

It is also important to now that the deep connection that is formed should be treated gently. It is easy to forget that the connection is a sacred experience and that gently moving out of it and back into one's life is something that needs to be given sincere mindfulness. The deep connection and the deep peace are special features of the ultimate relationship, features that often stir a desire to stay and never leave.

This heightened sense of peace can last for minutes, hours, days, but it eventually fades into memory. When the sensation is gone there is often a hunger to return, to have more, to get it back. This can even turn into an addiction which this author has called “chasing the feel goods”. Chasing after the feel goods is like going after a mirage and thinking that one can get a drink.

What is important in the experience is the wisdom and insight for growth and well being. The “feel good” is simply a pleasant side effect, like the fragrance of a rose.

This place of chasing the hunger is where the risk of cults, and cult leaders, can be found. It is also found in many places that offer “religion” or “healing” to those seeking help. Great caution is advised.

Finding a balance between the “hunger” and “being called”, and helping others to also know that difference, requires some wisdom. There is a balance between “empty desire/empty self” and the sense of desire to pursue features associated with the ultimate relationship. Understanding this balance is one of the more difficult aspects of coming to know the ultimate relationship more fully. Empty self, empty desire, allows us to hear our calling more completely.

The doorway to this balance is in knowing that the calling is already there to follow – no desire is needed – one simply needs to be. It is also important to know that if you are not following your calling then that will trigger the hunger – like when you don't eat, or drink.

Insight and misapplication

Insight always accompanies a true and sacred shift into well being. If here is no insight or wisdom, and just a sense of “feeling good” then the person should proceed with great caution. The absence of insight can be due to a lack of spiritual guidance, the absence of a witness, ignorance, roadblocks or other internal barriers that cloud one’s vision. The “high” without the wisdom is an illusion.

It is possible to experience some insight and then to ignore it, and even forget it. It is possible to experience insight and not know that insight was experienced. In both cases this is why it is important to process the event with someone who is wise. Left alone to our own internal dialog it can be easy to miss the significance of the sacred event.

It is also possible to misinterpret the event, to misapply its meaning. The wisdom and the insights from sitting in the ultimate relationship are never meant to be used to harm others. This is a place of deep compassion.

Mutuality, being the witness and relation confusion

The ultimate relationship is one where the experience of deep compassion is mutually experienced - meaning both people know that the movement through suffering is occurring and that well being is being experienced. This is not to say that both people move through their own suffering simultaneously. That is not the nature of deep compassion. Rather one person moves and the other is a witness to that movement through a sharing, a mutuality, in the experience.

This is the true nature of being a witness. It is being a witness to the shift from suffering into well being. It is a witness to sitting in the sacred deep compassion of the ultimate relationship. It is not being a witness to the sound of one’s own voice or to the “righteousness” of one’s own actions.

Mutually sharing the ultimate relationship experience with another is a moving experience. It can be deeply moving. There can be a sense of a deep connection, a bond, and it can be difficult to move away from that sense of connection. But the connection that occurs in that sacred moment may be meant only for that moment. It may be meant to facilitate the process of insight, shift into well being, compassion development, sacred growth and a deeper understanding of peace. It may not be meant to be interpreted as a “relationship” in the way most people think of the concept.

Relation confusion is a risk that accompanies entry into, and exit from, the ultimate relationship. This is because most of us have no other way to enter and leave the ultimate relationship except through our current relationship stance. This is one of the reasons why it is good to have a wise teacher who can help us to move beyond our relationship stance and beyond the risks of relation confusion. Many of the roadblocks and barriers we have to expanding our ability to sit with, and share, the ultimate relationship have to do with relation confusion. We can come with resistances because it is habitually part of our relationship history, and since the ultimate relationship is another relationship we carry that history with us.

The Way (journey) and avoidance/resistance

When we have moved through agreement, compassion, pace, mutuality, shift in perception, wisdom and sacredness then we have experienced The Way or the sacred journey that brings us to the ultimate relationship. This journey has features similar across many cultures and peoples, yet each journey is unique to each individual. The entire journey is a message about compassion, about well being, about happiness, about societal improvement, and about sacred communication. It is like a personal map that shows us how to take the journey again. It shows us The Way.

Yet, even with map in hand, it is very easy to avoid following the path shown on the map. We may fold the map and tuck it away in some safe place. We may think about it, fondly, and with great respect. But the map stays folded and not used.

The reasons for not using the map to take the journey are connected to our personal roadblocks, those that seem too difficult to face. We may have started to try to use the map only to get lost, or we forgot how to read the map properly, or we took a “wrong turn” becoming entangled in the briars of our own confusion.

It seems odd sometimes that there can be so much resistance to sitting in the ultimate relationship. Nothing of harm is associated with the ultimate relationship, only with our misinterpretation of it. The ultimate relationship is a place of deep peace and compassion. So then why do we fold up the map? Why do we get lost in confusion?

It seems that we have done so throughout history. It is a part of how the journey seems to unfold over a life time. There is both the sitting within the ultimate relationship and there is the sitting outside that relationship. Wisdom can be obtained from both views provided we are willing to see how these views enhance the map that shows us The Way.

Passing it on and lost in translation

At some point in the development of sitting in the ultimate relationship one gets the sense (urge, calling, desire, need) to share the experience with another person – to pass it on. If one tries to do pass on the nature of the ultimate relationship simply through explaining and describing then it become quickly evident that something gets “lost in the translation”. This is such a very common feature and one that can become a risk, and perhaps one of the most dangerous as it hideously changes into zealous righteousness.

In experiencing the ultimate relationship people often have the desire to “pass it on”. This desire leads to having to find some way to communicate about the experiences associated with the ultimate relationship. Communication about the ultimate relationship often involves a struggle to get around the “lost in translation” problem. This is a problem of trying to communicate a phenomenon rich in sensation and emotion.

One can simply accept that the ultimate relationship must be experienced, in some manner, to be understood in mutual communication. This does not mean that both people have to have entered the same moment. It simply means that both people have experienced the journey (The Way) and are will to enter into a discourse about the similarities of their journeys. The language used to discuss the similarities is culturally based, often rich with symbolism, and sometimes accompanied by ritual. The explanatory systems are cultural based, and need to be so in order to deal with the translation loss. But the explanatory system, and its rituals, is simply that – just an explanation.

Unfortunately what can happen is that the essence of the phenomenon is replaced by a focus on the explanatory system, or on the cultural differences, even to the point of objectification. The differences in how the phenomenon is described become the object of discussion and the person no longer exists. This is the opposite of the ultimate relationship. It is a very dangerous risk as there is so much suffering happens because of it.

The other risk in the misinterpretation of “lost in translation” is encountering ignorance. Many people have not experienced the ultimate relationship and have no way, no ideas, and no experiences, to tap into to help them understand what it is that you are trying to say when attempting to “pass on”. The risk here is the “us” versus “them” stance, which again is a form of objectification. The “us” would be those that say they understand and the “them” would be those who say they don’t, can’t, or won’t. Anyone who has sought to “pass it on” has encountered this.

This is another place where cults and cult leaders can be found.

But there is a compassionate stance to be taken in regard to the difficulties of “lost in translation” and “passing it on”. It is a stance that makes the process not only easier, but generally more successful. This is the process of becoming a radiant compassionate being. The radiance speaks. It does the passing on. The radiance is the universal component of the ultimate relationship that is present across gender, culture, ritual, and explanatory system. We may each develop our own preferences to how we explain the ultimate relationship, but these

explanations are not a replacement for radiant compassion. The practice of the ultimate relationship is also learning how to become a being of radiant compassion.

Risks of Practice

If you seek to practice offering the ultimate relationship to others then, in addition to facing the risks described above, there are some risks of practice. Risks of practice mean that as you seek to practice sitting in, and sharing the ultimate relationship (one of radiant compassion) with others there are risks that you may encounter. The risks of practice are as follows:

Personal Roadblocks – Habits and relationship stance that adds to confusion and sitting outside the ultimate relationship.

No Agreement – We seek to help another, or are asked to help another, when no agreement is in place.

No Support - We seek to help another, or are asked to help another, when no support for the ultimate relationship is in place.

Contamination Effect – We take on the suffering of others without knowing how to properly sit and then cleanse.

Contamination Fatigue – Continual exposure to the contamination effect results in contamination fatigue, and eventually burnout.

Addressing the “Truth” of Harmful Behavior – Misunderstanding the ties between our actions toward another to change a “wrong” that is creating suffering and our responsibilities of compassion.

Most of these risks of practice become less problematic as you acquire more experience with sitting in the ultimate relationship. In addition most of the risks of practice become less of an issue when your personal roadblocks are lowered. In addition, with practice one learns that these risks can be a function of the environment, internally and externally.

Personal Roadblocks

There are habits of thought, action and reaction that can shape our efforts to share the ultimate relationship with another. In addition our relationship stance can add to confusion and our sitting outside the ultimate relationship. It is important to know that we all have them, that they occur often, that no matter how far we expand our awareness of the ultimate relationship we will still find more to address (perfection is not a reality, just a direction).

The roadblocks are a risk of practice because they interfere with sitting in the ultimate relationship. They can be identified, at any moment, and then transcended. This is the process of letting go, becoming empty and filling up with the experiences of the ultimate relationship. This requires mindfulness.

So many of the risks associated with the ultimate relationship, whether seeking to develop it, to understand it after having experienced it, or seeking to share it, are tied to our roadblocks.

The next chapter will discuss roadblocks in more detail.

No Agreement

There are times in the lives of those who wish to help others, and those who wish to “pass it on” that we encounter people who have trouble agreeing to being helped. We may desire to help the person because we can see the suffering. We may be asked by another to help the person. But if the person did not ask specifically for the type of help that is associated with the ultimate relationship experience then no agreement is in place.

There can be many situations where a helper comes face-to-face with someone who refuses to enter the agreement. Sometimes we are asked to help others by concerned loved ones or by a concerned community. Sometimes it can be a legal matter, sometimes it can be a close friend or a loved one, and sometimes it can be a crisis where help needs to be administered. But even though there are situations where an agreement is not established that does not mean that one forgets compassion. It simply means that the ultimate relationship will not occur. There are other types of helping relationships that can be wisely applied.

Understanding that there is no agreement is not as simple as asking the person, “Do you agree to enter the ultimate relationship”. In addition because a person is not ready at one moment does not mean that they are forever not ready. The ultimate relationship is always available but not always attainable.

In a general way there are three types of experiences during the agreement process: 1) those willing, 2) those curious and 3) those with heavy resistance. With practice sitting in the ultimate relationship one becomes familiar with these different types of experiences and then one develops a way of working within them. This would be a way that is unique to each person. It takes time, and many experiences, to develop a successful way of working into the agreement. What helps is to have mentor, and perhaps even community, support.

No Support

It is possible to be placed in an environment where there is no support for practicing the ultimate relationship. This can happen in a family, a school, a workplace, a health care facility or even a religious setting. When we seek to help another, or are asked to help another, and when no support for the ultimate relationship is in place then the issues with translation loss and establishing agreement become even more difficult.

Throughout time the tribal communities have “selected” their sacred healers. These sacred wise practitioners have been held in high esteem by the communities, given respect and support. It has been the

way it has been practiced for centuries. There are good reasons for the support being part of the process. It makes the process more likely to be successful.

Support for a culturally shaped explanatory system is not the same as support for the practitioner “passing on” the ultimate relationship. This distinction is important. It is the practitioner who needs the support. It is compassion that needs the support. It is hard to barbeque with only one coal.

Sacred practitioners have also been persecuted, and so have their disciples. But this does not negate the importance of a group, or community, of supporters for the practice of radiant compassion. Sacred practitioners have gone into the most “unfriendly” of places to offer compassion. But this too does not negate the importance of support. Few people take a solo journey with zero support and still have something to offer in terms of wisdom for their community. Few people can survive truly sitting in suffering with others, in any great frequency, without support. One of the major problems is “contamination” which becomes very hard to deal with, and sometimes to even recognize, without support.

Contamination Effect

“Contamination” refers to an effect that can be associated with deep empathy, particularly when there is little support in the surrounding environment. We take on the suffering of others without knowing how to properly sit and then cleanse ourselves. Sometimes we do not recognize that the contamination is happening – again the reason for having a strong support group.

If empathy can be experienced along a spectrum of intensities then so it is true with experiencing the suffering of others. When we “relive” the suffering of another than it must surely be possible that we also relive the difficulties of facing that suffering. Furthermore in reliving the suffering of others we also experience all its side effects, personally. At deeper levels of empathy it is not as if we are standing off to the side just observing in some detached manner. It is a

mutually shared experience. That is one of the fundamental characteristics of the ultimate relationship.

What this means is that as we open ourselves to share deeply with others we also open ourselves to feeling, experiencing, both their suffering and their healing, their tears and their joys. In doing so it is easy to become “contaminated” in the process. Being “contaminated” means that you have acquired something unhealthy to you as a result of the mutual process. It also means you haven’t used your support network, and your own skills, to move through it and to return to your own balance.

The question has been posed to me, “Can’t I just put up my walls to protect me?” I answer yes and no. If you know that the relationship will not move in the direction of the ultimate relationship, that it is stuck in some type of resistance AND you sense that this resistance is draining you simply to help the other person “feel good” then put up the walls. If you experience some suffering which takes you uncontrollably into the history of your own suffering and away from the other person then put up the walls. But if it’s just “hard to do” (for so many reasons I have heard) then all that the walls do is make it harder to deeply experience the essence of another.

The effects of contamination can be decreased proportionately to the strength of the radiance that is present within you during the mutual process. In most instances walls are not needed as the radiance is bright enough to remove all darkness.

Contamination Fatigue

Continual exposure to the contamination effect, without support and the practice of self cleansing, results in contamination fatigue, and eventually burnout. Recently this has inappropriately been termed compassion fatigue. It is important to repeat here that it is not the process of compassion that is causing the fatigue. Compassion, when practiced with radiance and community support does not create fatigue. What is causing the fatigue is regular exposure to the contamination effect without appropriate healing steps being followed.

Again we face the problems of not enough adequate training in the fundamental characteristics of the sacred compassionate healing relationship. Most of the time people are just trying to do the best with what they have learned on their own - people with caring hearts and sensitive souls. But the journey along the path to becoming a radiant compassionate being is one that is filled with difficulties. One of those being the absence of wise teachers to whom we can turn to.

Another problem is the absence of community support. It is possible to build a culture of compassion, but it must start with the agreement that this is the goal. A culture of compassion can be built anywhere – in a couple, a home, a health care facility, a school, or a religious organization. The first step would be to receive training in the fundamental characteristics of the deeply compassionate relationship. This will help with contamination fatigue (falsely labeled compassion fatigue).

Addressing the “Truth” of Harmful Behavior

This may be one of the hardest risks of practice to understand. It is obvious that there are people who act in a manner that causes suffering. As a compassionate being what is to be our response? It is also clear that we may see “the truth” about someone’s behavior and how it contributes to suffering. As a compassionate being how are we to address our insights into the “truth”?

It is easy to misunderstand the relationship between our actions toward another to change a “wrong” that is creating suffering and our responsibilities to demonstrate compassion. Being “right” and being compassionate are often not the same thing (yet at times they are the same). Our sense of a personal truth may not match the sense of compassion that is applicable at that moment. This is largely due to the shift in relationship stance. The relationship stance of personal truth is centered on self. The relationship stance of compassion is centered on “the between”. Stating personal truth under the guise of compassion is a lie. You can not honestly speak their personal truth while saying, “I am saying this for your own good”. Instead say, “I am offering my personal opinion and you can use it as you may”. Doing so may, or may not, be compassionate. Most of the time when

you feel the need to speak your own opinion you are not standing in the place of compassion.

Once the issue of “being right” has been addressed then you can move on to developing a compassionate stance when addressing harmful behavior. When considering harmful behavior there are three compassionate viewpoints to consider: 1) the view of the individual, 2) the view of the community (the people around the individual), and 3) the view of yourself. In addressing each of these views you need to be looking from the compassionate stance not the “being right” stance. What that means is that you are standing in a place of compassion for 1) the individual, 2) the community, and 3) yourself. It is from this place, and with this view, that you then temper your response to observed harmful behavior.

So much suffering is done in the name of “being right”.

Chapter Summary

The general characteristics of the ultimate relationship have been presented, along with benefits and risks. This has been a condensed presentation and the reader is referred to this author’s other writings for additional materials for a more detailed portrait.

If you seek to develop the ultimate relationship in your life, for you and your mate, for your family or community, then it is suggested that you seek additional training. Knowing something about the general characteristics is just a first step.