

Yogic Communication and Healing

“Communication is the basis of who we are and what we seek to become. We do not exist in isolation, nor can we grow apart from the cultural matrix that sustains us. The mind itself is primarily a communication device, not only for relating outwardly to other people, but relating inwardly to the spiritual forces of the universe. This importance of communication extends into the sphere of healing as well.” (Ayurveda and the Mind p. 149)

At the root of our capacity to communicate is our ability to create authentic relationships based on giving, empathy and Love. Even when the words “come out wrong” and our thoughts seem jumbled, when we act from a place of *genuine* Love, kindness and compassion we are in a better position to create sustained loving relationships with those around us and to our own deeper selves as well. A few factors about intention become important when looking at this process of forming relationships and communication. Who we choose to spend time with, in both social and intimate settings, determines the type of energy associated with that relationship. When we surround our selves with people who drink a lot, swear and gossip the potential for creating these loving and sattvic relationships is affected because the actual energy of those conversations or interactions can change, dampen and possibly darken our own moods.

Metabolism of Emotions:

If the feelings we take in are unwholesome, like fear, anger and hatred, this will disturb our emotional nature. It will derange the mind through the emotions. If, however, we are receptive only to love, friendship and happiness, this will promote emotional calm and contentment.

Thus, it is very important that we do not react to the negative emotions of others, that we do not get mad at them when they get mad at us or feel afraid. Emotional reactions allow negative emotions from the environment to enter our minds, where they can only promote disturbance and unhappiness.” (AHC Part IV p. 45)

Knowing this, if our intention is to become more loving and spiritual then we could chose those people who’s mere presence uplifts us and gives us strength and courage to be our better selves. This is also true of our own energy: “. . . it is important to realize that in our communications with others we are feeding their minds, positively or negatively. We should, therefore, give off only communications that nurture the soul and promote wholeness, not those that have an energy of decay or disintegration.” (AHC Part IV p. 47)

Do you see the terms of responsibility in yogic communication? We can no longer simply move away from those that bring us down, this is not enough. We must actually be the ones who facilitate a greater conscious change in our relationship to communication itself.

Empathy is the actual foundation for yogic communication. Empathy itself is an embodiment of Love and so in the process of empathizing, genuinely, we come to know Love itself as well. When we are practicing non-empathetic strategies, (please refer back to our list from the beginning of this course) we engage with others from a self-centered perspective and are thus cut off from building authentic relationships.

I had just finished teaching a daylong workshop at Oregon State Penitentiary, the only maximum-security prison in Oregon, and found myself in deep sadness and grief. I attributed these feelings to my need for their well-being, regardless of what they had committed. I learned that at the prison they have no time to heal and work on the inner pain that came with their actions; basically, Oregon prisons are set up solely as punitive, nor restorative. And while leaving the prisoners I felt sadness at knowing they were going back into a very cold and emotionally oppressive life-style. A few days later I had a session with Richard, my Ayurvedic consultant, and related this story to him, still feeling a wealth of sadness in my chest. I said, "I really want them to heal," and he looked at me in shock and said, "Oh really???" At first I didn't understand what his reaction meant for my story and so said with a hint of pride, "Of course I want them to heal, what else would I be doing there?" His response was simple and to the point, "Listening, and being aware of what *they* need, not what *you want!*"

Now, while at the prison I was able to empathize with awareness and leave my agenda behind, because I was present and the Dharma flowed through me. It wasn't until afterwards when my small mind and ego became engaged that I fell back into my old habit of sympathizing, correcting, adjusting, and manipulating. My sadness was empathic and authentic by nature; the story behind those feelings, in the end of the day, disconnected me from my purpose and work as a healer. I was more invested in the agenda that they heal than in being present and aware to what they need and who they are. And this is what I carried with me, rather than the original feeling. If I had acted from this place while teaching that day, how present would I be to their feelings and needs? I would have been stuck in the cell of my own mind, isolated from those around me.

"Communication breaks down the walls of isolation in which we suffer and helps us look at ourselves in a new light, allowing old patterns of constriction to be broken down and discarded." (*AM* p. 153)

While we practice empathy, which happens while we are present and aware, we can truly create sustained and loving relationships and our communication itself will actually facilitate this process and become Love in action. No other process of communication can create stronger bonds of Love than empathy. Anything less is uncivilized!