

**Meditation for Therapists:
A spiritual inter-viewing of therapy and meditation**

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Introduction

The science and art of meditation is fast being recognized as a medium which fosters self-awareness, self-management and self-healing in the caring professions. Over the past ten years one of the authors (IMcC) was re-introduced to the art and practice of meditation by the other author. (SV). During this time it has become clear that the simple techniques of meditation have an application way beyond the sitting practice of an individual. While an individual or group sitting practice in itself is important for the development of the individual practitioner and potentially necessary for therapists of the future, this inter-view will propose a simultaneous interpersonal aspect in an understanding of meditation.

When we engage with clients in therapy we engage as multi-dimensional beings. We are more than conversational participants, we are more than therapists of the psyche and we are more than social scientists. We are all of that together plus more. And this is where an appreciation of meditation practices comes into play. Anyone who has meditated will know the importance of the environment in which they sit, the importance of body posture and the importance of mindful breathing and a calm mind. Each of these dimensions are facilitative in experiencing the expansion of consciousness or awareness. To further facilitate this expansion there are tried and tested ‘techniques’ to help the ‘would be’ meditator.

There are many suggestions for preparing the environment, the use of candles, images and incense help to provide a space conducive to generating a peaceful silence. Not only is ‘place’ deemed important but also a routine for practice at particular times of the day is also suggested. Meditators are encouraged in most traditions to engage in groups with other meditators (satsang or sanga) in order to benefit from the support for their own sitting practice and as a means of generalizing the practices into their daily lives. The

latter moves the practice from the personal as it were to the interpersonal or 'political'. This is because sitting in groups fosters and facilitates a more peaceful and harmonious life individually, socially and environmentally.

As the outer environment is taken care of and protected, it provides a context conducive for each person's inner journey. As with the outer environment suggestions or directions are also offered to enable the practitioner to become comfortable through correct posture and breathing. Through a developing awareness of breathing both the mind and emotions have a chance to become calmer and hence manageable. Techniques take us to the doorway of meditation. Meditation itself takes us to a space beyond technique and towards greater awareness, consciousness, vitality, health and compassion. (Benson,) Important also for therapists is the developing of one's 'presence'. The more we touch our Being the more powerful our presence, the signature of who we are, becomes. This in turn can enable a more profound connection with others, with our social and with our physical environments. It is in this sense also that meditation links the personal with the political. In transforming ourselves we have the potential to transform our worlds and our environments.

In experiencing and discussing meditation practice there seemed to be a huge resonance with the process and practice of therapy. As a result of this resonance both authors were invited to run a series of international workshops with family therapists on the subject of spirituality, meditation and family therapy. In the course of these workshops with colleagues in Europe, the Caribbean and Canada it became clear that there was a hunger for the inclusion of a more meditative and spiritual approach in therapeutic encounters. In response to this hunger the authors here address the issues of multi-dimensionality, witnessing, presence and love both for therapists and for therapeutic practice. The article will move between the individual aspect of the above issues and their expression in the inter-weave of therapeutic relationships. Relationally oriented therapists are already familiar with the concept of the '*whole being greater than the sum of its individual parts*'. Likewise, when presence is developed the realization that we live and work in an already intelligent space or field of infinite possibilities also becomes stronger.

Multi-dimensionality: Harmony in Body, Mind, Spirit and Environment

Imelda McCarthy: We have been talking in the international workshops we have done over the past few years about the importance of meditation for people who work as psychotherapists. Could you begin to say how you think this is an important practice in our lives and for our work as therapists?

Sri Vasudeva: Meditation helps us to go to a space where we begin to look at our own thoughts and emotions and try to harmonize them or to create balance within us, at the physical, mental and emotional levels and to express the Essence of our Being. If we were to call that the place of peace, love and harmony within us then to express 'That' is one of the goals of meditation. In the case of therapists it also takes us to a place of non-judgment. In spiritual meditation we try to go to a place where we can be non-judgmental, where we don't censure the thoughts and emotions that are coming to us. We look at them without censuring them and we try to bring our body, mind, emotion and spiritual being into harmony.

It is about harmonizing with the 'Spirit', 'Being' or the 'Essence' in the act of observation and in the (inter-)actions of the observer. This allows for us to bring harmony into the inner and outer space of the therapist. That is a very useful 'place' to be when in communication because we can observe what is happening within ourselves and in the communication with another or others. Thereby, we learn how to stay in a space that is stable and not be hijacked by the expressed emotions of another, particularly where they are negative. To maintain that harmonious field throughout a therapeutic conversation is what meditation can give to us. This is because in meditation, we try to hold that stable observer position throughout and so experience harmony with the mind, the emotions, the body and the environment. In meditation we develop the act of witnessing. That is an important part of meditation.

IMcC: All of that brings us naturally to the concept of 'multi-dimensionality' and the importance of recognizing our multi-dimensional nature.

SV: Well, in fact we cannot speak of the witnessing of thoughts and emotions (subtle energy) without having a good understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of human beings.

From my own experience and my growing spiritual awareness in spirituality or from spirituality I have learned that we ARE multi-dimensional beings. We co-exist in different fields at the same time with our 'Essence' or what I would term, 'our Spiritual Being'. It is what holds the other parts of us together. So, I would say that our physical being, our mental being, our emotional being, our intellectual being, our

social being are all held together in the Spiritual Being. We are basically beings of body, mind and spirit. Thoughts, emotions and intellect come under 'mind'. Our bodies are made up of the elements of the environment and interact with the environment. However, our emotional, mental and intellectual being is at a different level of energy. If we think of the body as solid or gross energy we can say that the mental, emotional and intellectual being is a more subtle energy field. So we have a gross field, which is the body and we have a subtle field, which encompasses the mental, emotional and intellectual domains.

The other dimension that exists is the Spiritual field or Spiritual Being. That is what is called in some traditions, 'immortal'. The immortal is that part of us that lives beyond the rest or exists beyond our physical lifetime. Our Spiritual Being gives us our greatest experience of being. When we touch That we seem to touch the source of all possibilities. We tend to feel enormous energy from inside, faith, strength and power. Some say that it is the true source of healing, that it is the true source of creativity, that it is the true source of religious and spiritual experiences and that it is the seat of our true power. The mental, emotional and intellectual fields are more like processing fields. These are functions of our Spiritual Being. They are like the tools of our Spiritual Being that enable It to interact with the world.

So, through thoughts I can communicate with the world. Through emotions I can communicate with the world and the world can communicate with me. Through the intellect I can learn how to negotiate and to move about in the world. So, these functions become instruments of communication and interaction with the universe around me. They are not seen to be independent, to be entities on their own but rather they are expressions or qualities of what is deeper. Basically these are the three major fields we exist in, the Spiritual, the subtle and the gross. To put it another way, these are the fields that we co-exist in.

That is what I mean when I talk of the multi-dimensional aspect of being. Today it is a developing field we are becoming more and more aware now of. In the areas of holistic health and medicine, we are now saying that the human being is a spiritual, social, intellectual, mental, emotional and physical being that interacts in a physical environment and that health is really the optimum integration of all of these. We have also seen how we have moved from the traditional definition of health, which was, the absence of disease to the upgraded definition by the WHO which is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. (WHO 1948)

Our Physical Being: Meditation and Health.

IMcC: If we were to look at our physical being in terms of meditation practice and the therapeutic encounter or conversation, how do we begin to give attention to this element of our being?

SV: Well, one of the goals of meditation for those who focus on wellness, is a focus on the physical body. However, not all meditations focus on the physical body. In some meditation practices they are more concerned with silencing the mind and going beyond the mind. But in the health and wellness field we use meditation for creating a more intimate relationship with the body. In this field meditation is used for healing. And, the idea here is that every cell of our body is a living entity even though they cannot be seen with our physical eyes. But under a microscope we can see the cells and in the study of biology we understand how cells function. Also, scientists and practitioners in the mind-body research field tell us that body cells are influenced by emotions and thoughts. It is something I think we all instinctively know. If we look at the times when we get upset, angry or when our emotions are out of balance – we can see directly how that actually affects the body. We also see this communication with the cells in people who refuse to live anymore. We see how quickly they leave and transition from this world. They seem to communicate that message to every cell. From this we can see that all our body cells and body organs operate in an intelligent way. They are influenced by thoughts and emotions and by spiritual qualities that we manifest. In meditation, the goal is to bring the entire body into harmony and to express those harmonious qualities at the physical and mental levels. This is how we begin to express the light of the Spirit. This is like expressing love, deep love on the mental, emotional and physical level. When this love is expressed with attention being given to the body it can have a great impact on health and healing.

IMcC: You seem to be talking here also about a peaceful mind and loving heart?

SV: I am talking about a mind that is attentive to the body along with such affirmations as, “I have a healthy body, I love my body”. This is where the mind affirms health and the emotions enhance the affirmation. When that kind of attention is given to the physical body through meditation it can have a powerful effect on the body in terms of health and healing. This is powerful for a therapist. If they are able to be attentive to the physical field, using the other (mental and emotional) fields, they can actually boost the physical field and keep it in a state of wellness and by extension, in a state of immunity. If we can do this then we have the possibility to have a reserve of health and wellness that in turn can also act as a buffer against negative emotions that may be coming our way. So, when we are more healthy and more well we tend to relate much better to

conflict, to resistance and to negative forms of energy than if we are under the weather, so to speak. Or if we are in a lower state of vitality, we are also more able to deal with it. So, meditation can keep us in an optimum level of energy. It tends to keep us in balance and harmony with body, mind and Spirit. It means the Spirit is expressing Its wonderful qualities at the mental, emotional and physical levels. It is that continuous movement of energy that helps to keep the body in a good or a high state of wellness and brings about the strength that allows for relating without being overwhelmed. Relating in conflict situations without being overwhelmed by the negative energy that is being directed or coming one's way can be a powerful by-product of meditation.

IMcC: Before I go on to the next question, I am just wondering do you think we should define the word, 'energy' as you are using it?

SV: In scientific terms, energy is the capacity to do work. So, anything that can do work has energy. If your mind can do work then it has energy and then energy in motion is what we call, 'power'.

Physical Energy.

IMcC talking about the body again and physicality in therapy, therapists will say that they pick up pains in their body that they do not think are their own pains. It seems to have something to do with the condition that the client is in or some difficulty that the client is having. So, in considering a meditative focus in such situations, what would you suggest?

SV- If a therapist begins in a state of wellness and then is able to feel this, then it can be attributed to the other person. What needs to be looked at however, is if the therapist also has some pre-disposed weakness and the other person is influencing that. For example we would have to know if the therapist already had some pre-existing issues with certain feelings, thoughts or ideas and this then begins to come out in the therapy. We have to be careful whether it is our own weakness that is coming up and being expressed ('projection') or whether it is really that a pain in the client is being resonated with or transferred ('transmission'). We have to see if it is a pre-disposition that we have or a 'transmission'. A transmission presumes that we do not have any weakness within and that we are picking up the weakness of the other. We have to be careful about that. In either case, whether it is our own weakness or the weakness of the other, meditation can be very helpful in the following ways.

We need to be sure that we are in that witness position and giving a certain degree of our attention to the physical field so that we make sure we are relaxed, that our posture is relaxed, that we are breathing deeply and that we are centering ourselves inside. But, the more we can hold this witness

position the clearer we will be in terms of another person's energy, particularly if it is negative.

The ability to witness how we react to the person, how we try and make sense of that reaction and how we understand the reaction, I think that is an extremely important thing.

IMcC: So presumably, if you have a regular practice of meditation you are going to become much more stable and there are not going to be the same fluctuations?

SV: And one of the benefits of this is that we tend to put the other person(s) into a very comfortable place, because meditation impacts. If we are in a meditative state we tend to impact on the people around us. So, if we are very comfortable, if we are in a positive state we tend to affect the other person as well. For me, when I am counseling, when I am speaking with people I try to create that atmosphere in and around me. And, the moment they begin to feel that trust begins to arise and then co-operation follows. Then a lot of what needs to come out, begins to come out. Then I constantly hold that so that I am not just holding myself in a state of comfort but I am trying to hold the other person in a state of comfort too.

IMcC: And, would you pay attention to their breathing as you pay attention to your own?

SV: Not necessarily, unless the whole thing becomes stressful then that may tend to come into it, but, if you begin by naturally trying to relax someone then you may not have to get into that state. By relaxation I mean the way you speak and of the emotions you express. You can begin to relax the other and that itself brings about quite a wonderful state of inner harmony and co-operation. So, I see the need for deep breathing only if we are really stressed in the interaction.

IMcC: There is an interesting way of mirroring where we might pay attention to a client's breathing and then begin to very consciously mirror their breathing and then begin to deepen it and then to relax them.

SV: I have never looked at that but I guess it is possible. It would give the therapist a point of connection with the person. Here we are then actually working emotionally with clients. In my practice breath and emotion are connected so, that if the emotions are disturbed then the breathing will be disturbed. So, once you begin to connect with the breathing you actually begin to connect emotionally.

IMcC: so, you actually bring mind and emotions into harmony.

SV: Yes, for me it really is a way of connecting with the other person

IMcC: Do you think that could be used in a meditative way of practicing?

SV: I don't see it as a MAIN thing. But I think it may be worthwhile to take clients into a state of relaxation if they are disposed to it.

It may be a useful tool but I have never really investigated it or gave attention to it. I generally give attention to how I treat the person, using the mind and emotion to bring them to relaxation, rather than starting with the breathing. That is what I normally do but I think it perhaps can also be a starting point.

IMcC: I am also thinking in the way that you would use 'tone' or 'softness'?

SV: Softness, yes. For example, when I begin to talk with a person I am looking for their response and I find myself naturally going into a response that quiets the person. So, how they speak with me and how they react to me as I begin conversation would tell me what they are receptive to. I look for this in the way they smile, in the way they look at me, whether they are stressed or whether they make eye contact with me or whether they give me the hand. It is in that kind of communal response that I will begin to see how I am affecting the other person.

SV: This is also how we are present in our interactions, which is a function of the Witness. The idea of being present to ourselves and the other person is an important thing.

Our Mental Being: *Witnessing and Inner Conversations in Therapy.*

IMcC: One of the things in thinking about presence and witnessing is that in meditation one is trying to still the mind and observe the thoughts as they arise but not identify with them. In therapy, therapists often have inner conversations while the client is speaking in terms of making decisions, will they track one direction rather than another and which idea or direction might be the most useful or they might, while listening form an hypothesis.

SV: For me that is natural. When I am dealing with a person I am beginning to do that but I hold the thoughts very loosely in my mind. This is because I don't just want to use my idea. I want to open myself to a new field so I play with the ideas loosely while I am listening. This field is a field of expanded awareness or consciousness, which can also be accessed in meditation. When I do this I begin to think in a larger field so that even

when I am forming an idea I am simultaneously opening it up to the possibility of change. In holding an idea loosely in a larger field I am inviting another intelligence whilst I listen to the person at the same time. So, these three elements co-exist,

- 1) My awareness of an expanded field,
- 2) My own ideas that are being formed while I talk with the other person, held loosely and flexible in every moment and,
- 3) My listening to the other person(s).

IMcC: The average therapist is probably not necessarily going to have access to that idea of an expanded field of awareness based on current training.

SV: Yes, so they will continue to work based on their training, having conversations based on the models they know and the training that they have had.

Subtle energy.

IMcC: So, you were saying that when you hold ideas, you hold them lightly in order to maintain an openness to a field of possibilities. Is there also an energetic element to that process?

SV: Well, when the mind works it has energy. In working it expresses energy. We can feel that. We can feel the energy that comes from another person when they are very positive and they come into our field. It is like an invisible boost we can actually feel. That is what I call, 'subtle energy'. We cannot see it but we can feel it. It is the same with emotions, we can actually feel emotions passing through our being or coming from another into our own being. We don't see it but we can feel it. So, there has to be some kind of energy to be able to do that kind of work. As I said, I call it 'subtle energy'.

IMcC: Like the vibes you pick up from someone?

SV: Right ..

IMcC or from a room or a place?

SV: Right, right

A not knowing or empty mind position in therapy

IMcC: If holding thoughts lightly augments the possibility of attracting other useful thoughts and also thoughts constitute subtle energy what would you say about the idea that perhaps we should have an empty mind when we are in conversation?

SV: In my opinion, an empty mind is not the perfect position. I am saying this because if we think of an expanded field, then we need to prompt that field. So, we need to have and hold ideas in our minds that the field can actually bring information to. It is like needing a nucleus that the information can come to. It is like creating a language that the expanded field can use. So, if we begin to work with something then that can be shaped in the field as other information comes. But if we have nothing then what tools are we going to use interpret what is going to come? What is the point of communication? So, if you hold something it is likely that the communication is going to become attracted to that. For example, if I hold an idea then the communication is most likely to be around the idea. If I am counseling someone and I am thinking I need to do something in relation to this person then an idea is being formulated within me about the person. So, I am listening and ideas are coming to my mind about the person or persons. I am looking at these ideas and because of this I feel that the intelligence that *IS* the expanded field is then able to fashion my ideas, move my ideas, play with my ideas. But, I need to have an idea to begin to work with. So, having a completely empty mind and just listening and hoping that something will fall into the mind, for me is not a positive way of utilizing that field (laughing).

IMcC: In terms of traditions, does that speak to different meditation traditions, because there are some practices that go towards emptiness?

SV: Yes, but you have to remember that in those practices that go towards emptiness the idea is that if you clear the mind that you are going to jump into a super-conscious experience. The 'no mind' is a position of high awareness. In this practice the mind is often seen as an obstacle and a limitation. Therefore, moving towards 'no mind' is moving into a place of heightened awareness where there is no thinking. These traditions then try to go a state of high awareness and into a super-conscious experience. So, what we are talking about here is different. We are talking about bringing new ideas to a situation or of developing new ideas in a situation.

IMcC: Could you say more about that and meditation practices and teaching?

SV: Well, for example we may hold thoughts in the mind or we may hold an intention and then we find that something comes to support that intention or something comes to strengthen that thought. So, the thoughts and

intentions are like seeds, seed thoughts, seed intentions or seed emotions. In the meditations I guide, when I am inviting meditators to develop love or to open themselves to surrender there are a number of seed concepts I am bringing in these situations. I do this so we can invite an expanded field to enter. So, in this we are not just keeping a clear mind. For me, keeping a clear or empty mind is for those who live solitary lives and who live away from the secular world. They try to go into a world where they do not have to think because to think is to be in the secular world. They try to go to a space where they would want a different kind of experience and not a secular one.

IMcC: So the type of meditation we are talking about here is actually very geared to people who are operating every day in the secular world.

SV: Yes, we want to develop a mind that is receptive to the Higher Field whether we are sitting in meditation or we are in activity.

IMcC: So, it is to have an idea and to observe it but not be identified with that idea?

SV: Yes

IMcC: So that ideas can arise but there is also space for ideas or insights from the larger field or context to emerge?

SV: Right, right. Yes

SV: Also when I think of 'empty mind', I think of it as a restful mind. As I said before from my experience you need to have some nucleus when you want intuitive flashes from an expanded awareness. An 'empty mind' in therapy refers therefore in my view more to a resting or restful mind. Normally one has so many thoughts moving across the mind and all of these could engage the mind at a lower level of energy. If thoughts represent energy, a mind that is naturally free of thoughts will actually be a mind that is not dispensing or giving out energy. Having an empty mind is a way to open the mind to a higher level of experience and awareness. This is like an altered state of consciousness or a state of super-consciousness, which is often accompanied by some kind of ecstatic feeling. In this state the mind is moved from a limited silence to an unlimited silence, from a limited state of awareness and silence to an unlimited state of awareness and silence. So, a solitary monk for example, might try to capture that and of course in the super-expanded mind there is a different kind of wisdom that comes from the seeing from that position.

However, I was saying that for the therapist, where one is in a situation of trying to intuit wisdom in the context of a conversation and of finding a

solution then one would want to have some kind of nucleic idea that will prompt a solution relative to the idea.

IMcC: That will draw a solution or attract it?

SV: Right, it will attract a solution relative to the idea. Otherwise if thoughts are removed from the mind, and thoughts are also energy, then when the mind is thoughtless the energy of the mind is conserved and there is rest in that particular period. This is not generally a situation, which in my view would be so useful in therapy.

Our Spiritual Being: *Spiritual Energy.*

IMcC In writings on spirituality and therapy there is much talk the Self and expressing that in life and in therapy. Would you see that those who touch the Self also emit energy, a spiritual energy? How would you define that?

SV: Yes, and for me, 'Spiritual Energy' is that energy, which is coming directly from the Self or what is influenced by the Self. When we say 'mental energy', this is the energy of thoughts and as we know these can be destructive as well as positive. When thoughts or emotions rise to a certain level or height of positive energy and remain stable, I would call that Spiritual Energy.

Spirituality is often seen in terms of qualities, such as love, peace, compassion, goodness and so on. When we see these qualities we can refer to them as 'spiritual'. We can do this as the Spirit is the source of all love, the source of all peace, the source of all goodness, the source of all joy, the source of all wisdom. When energy seems to come from that place, even if it manifests through the mind, then we tend to call that spiritual energy. The qualities seem much more profound, much more deep. For example, ordinary love will change to unconditional love. Peace will change to a deep abiding peace. Wisdom will seem to be coming from much more than the limited mind. When we move from the limited to a sense of the unlimited that is when the values become spiritual. When it moves much more beyond the boundaries of 'normal' intelligence and normal love, when it goes to a super kind of normal, that is when wisdom becomes spiritual. We know that some kind of extra light is coming into our field. We know that some kind of extra energy has come into our field.

IMcC Is there a contradiction in saying that energy would come from an 'Self' that has no substance? How would you explain that?

SV No, I don't think that that is how it is as I think that the 'Self' contains all possibilities, so it must contain energy as well. Something cannot come out of nothing. So, the energy is there but it is latent. We feel it as it is manifested through the qualities I mentioned, but when it is resolved back into its Self, it seems that only the Self exists.

IMcC So, it is something that you cannot experience until it manifests ..

SV: But it is always there

IMcC like the sun behind the clouds? It is always there.

SV Yes.

IMcC We can then say we recognize it as 'Spirit' when it manifests?

SV Yes, yes.

'Self' as a personal and transpersonal concept?

IMcC: Would you see 'Self' as both an individual concept and as a larger concept than that?

SV: Yes and that also has to be experiential. We could look at it from a theoretical point of view for example, that we are part of a human family. Perhaps then, we could say we have a larger 'self' as a human family, that we have a 'collective self'. But I think that the more we get into our 'Essence', our 'inner being', the more we seem to make an invisible connection with those around us. We then seem to touch the other's 'essence' as well. That also gives us the idea of an expanded 'Self'. That is a wonderful experience. When you go into a group, you actually begin to bond at such a deep level that people begin to feel so comfortable that they begin to share in a way that is magical. It just happens spontaneously.

Yes, so, theoretically we can call any group a larger 'Self' when we identify with the group in a particular way. But, when we begin to experience what I have been talking about then we begin to feel that we are actually a part of a larger 'Self' in a different way. However, to connect with the core of others we first have to connect with our own 'Essence' or 'Core'.

Singularity in Plurality: Unity in Diversity

- IMcC: The reason I asked you that question is because it has seemed to me to be important that therapists consider both aspects of 'Self' in their work. Also, when you talk about the notion of a 'field' and connecting with one's own 'Self', it seems to combine those two notions. The 'Self' is not just confined to an individual because in the depth of meditation you touch both the singularity and the expansiveness of the Self. Of course there are no words for it, but you experience it.
- SV: yes and here you have introduced a nice idea. This is the idea that you are able to feel your individuality and the collectivity at the same time, because you do not lose yourself in the collective. You can actually feel that you are a part of the collective while also seeing your own individuality. That can be exciting because you do not lose yourself. It is like a cultural mix in a way. When I say this I am thinking that one of the fears of religious and cultural groups of people is that if they come into another culture they are likely to lose their identity. But, if you are in a spiritual space and if you mix with any group you need not lose your individuality whilst harmonizing. It is like the concept of 'unity in diversity', which I feel is possible for human existence in a culturally and religiously diverse environment. We do not lose our singularity in the plurality as it were. Here I believe that people from different religious traditions could harmonise with people from other faiths without losing their 'Essence'. Also someone of a particular race or ethnic group can learn to harmonise with those of other races and groups without losing the beauty of their own.
- IMcC: So for me you are saying that meditation contributes at three levels – one is at the level of developing the ability to witness, the second one is the removal of stress from one's life and the third one is, that ability to move or to hold the singularity of the individual Self and the expansiveness of the collective Self.
- SV: It is not like we consciously hold the singularity and the expansiveness.
- IMcC: They co-exist?
- SV: Yes, and it is also about the ability to experience it. It is really about 'self management'. So, we could say that firstly there is a development of 'Witnessing', secondly there is a development of a greater degree of self-management, and thirdly, the body becomes more deeply relaxed. So, we never lose our individuality in the expansiveness when we make the connection inside. The individuality is there and the collective is there simultaneously. So, in that way it is not like something that you hold, it is something that is naturally there for us to enjoy.

IMcC: This co-existence of the singular and the plural or unity in diversity which one experiences in meditation would presumably also augment the therapists 'presence' then. Could you describe this process from your experience.

Developing Presence

SV: Well, this is a quality of the 'Self', that exists within us. This is my belief. Meditation helps to tap into that. Meditation is the art of going to the Self, to realize the Self, to manifest the Self. This is the goal of meditation.

IMcC: And so, tapping into the Self also allows us to be more present.

SV: Yes.

IMcC: Could we talk a little about presence, about developing 'presence'? It has seemed to me that when we touch that space, when we are in that space, that there is a greater openness not only to the potentiality of the universe and to co-creation there but also we become more present to each other.

SV: Yes, and being present is also a matter of self-awareness. There are two things there from my point of view. The first one is that we create a presence because of the energies that we transmit. That is almost like a personal signature and when a person comes into our presence we can almost tell the difference between that person and another if we are aware of it. That is something that I practice, the observation of how different people affect me when they come into my space, into my presence. It is a very interesting observation, the way they can create different kinds of feelings within me, which is like their signature. I can almost tell what that feeling will be and so I enjoy, so to speak, the company of some people and in some cases I am almost prepared to know that some of my energy is going to be depleted when other people come. So, I almost know the difference between people or I know the differences of people's presence.

Presence then is what a person transmits energetically, emotionally, mentally and physically. On the physical level it is vitality. We transmit a certain amount of vitality and we can actually feel a person's physical vitality across the relational space when we are communicating. Then on the mental level it is the optimism, hope, faith and positive thinking that transmits itself energetically. It is the same with emotion. Even though we are not transmitting thoughts but a feeling, for example fear, it can be communicated almost instantly from one person to another. It is the same

with love and optimism. So, based on our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual being we communicate our signatures as it were.

At a deeper level we also transmit what you might call our spirituality through our emotions and through our mindsets. When I talk of spirituality, I am referring to an expanded field of consciousness. The more our consciousness is expanded the more it seems to reflect a greater power in thought and in mind and sometimes in body as well. So then we have the idea of Spirit as consciousness or awareness in expansion or limitation. More of our Spirit manifests when there is higher awareness. I would also say that less Spirit manifests when there is limited awareness. Spirit then, has to do with the heightening of awareness. So, if there is heightened awareness then the spiritual being can manifest more as consciousness is expanded. In that way Spirit manifesting from that higher awareness into the mental, emotional and physical fields begins to create a strong presence.

To be present also means to be in full attendance or giving full attention to what you are doing. I just wanted to define these two meanings of the word 'presence'. One meaning has to do with the presence of a person, which comes from their being and what is transmitted from their being. Then there is the idea of being present. This is to be fully attentive to whatever you are doing.

IMcC: So, in that you can see the direct benefits of meditation for a person and particularly for a person who is going into social fields, like therapy.

SV: Well, we can link this all up because the more we can develop our meditation practice the more we can develop presence. When we are able, from a spiritual point of view, to expand our awareness to higher levels of peacefulness and higher levels of oneness or harmony with things around us then, we tend to generate more positive thoughts and emotions. That creates a very welcoming, comforting and nurturing kind of presence. It is important for people who are involved in communication or working with others, to have the ability to create with their presence a field or space where there is comfort, where there is openness and where there is non-judgment. In such a space we can generate a lot of communication with the other.

Meditation helps us to be able to expand our consciousness and tap into the spiritual field. By virtue of that, our presence begins to change. What we emit, what we manifest or what we express begins to change. That opening or expanding of our consciousness can radically change our presence. We can then come to know the strong spiritual presence of a person as well as the negative presence of a person in limited consciousness. The presence that they both emit will be different.

Therefore, what is important is the ability to heighten our Self-awareness so our presence will be greater.

Presence and Ethics

Furthermore, the ability to use this presence in communication or conversations is important because when we can carry a powerful presence there is also a danger that we may not use it appropriately. For example, we can carry a high awareness, which is capable of creating a wonderful presence but we may not use the high awareness. We have a choice in each situation. In some situations, we can put up a wall whereas in others we can express our thoughts, love and openness. We have the ability to do that, to use the full effect of our potential presence and this can be a very wonderful thing in a relational space. If we are aware of the power of our presence and are able to use that we can actually create a wonderful atmosphere for the co-creation of anything.

IMcC: How can we begin to discriminate and make the kind of choices to use it more appropriately?

SV: Again this calls for a high degree of self-awareness and Self-awareness. If I come into a conversation with you I need to be faithful to the goal of this and I need to do everything I can. I need to optimise my potential. If I have had a conflict with somebody earlier in the day and then when I come here and I am still carrying it then, I am not really faithful to what I can co-create in the conversation with you.

There may be distractions in our day from time to time and that limits how much we utilize the presence that we are capable of. That is where our power lies. We can choose to put the distractions behind us, be faithful to our potential and to the goal of whatever the meeting is about. That is where the power of choice lies and if we want to create the greatest effect or get the greatest benefit out of the conversation we need to be faithful to the goal. We have a choice to be distracted or not to be distracted and that is the power that we carry, the power of choice.

IMcC: I am just thinking that we can also be distracted by our theories and by models.

SV: Definitely

IMcC: Particularly in a therapeutic situation, philosophies and ways of thinking about treating people can be a distraction.

Opening to a field of all Possibilities

SV: Definitely, if we think that we are a ‘therapist’ or a ‘systemic therapist’ or whatever else then we are already holding ourselves in a state of distraction, in a state of limitation. For me the idea of a ‘true’ therapist or the idea of a ‘true’ therapy is when we feel that we are not a learned person who knows it all. When we think like this, there is much more that can come into our understanding. Then, we are working in a different space because we are thinking, “now, I am a therapist and I have been trained in this particular field but I don’t think I know it all. I think there is more”. In this situation we open ourselves. We are already open to new ideas. When we think that we are just a ‘systemic therapist’ (or any other kind of therapist) then we have to be careful in case we are really limiting ourselves to what might exist that we are not seeing because of that particular lens

IMcC The etymology of the word, ‘therapy’ is to be ‘in attendance’ as healing takes place

SV: Right, well that’s fantastic

IMcC: That really captures what we are talking about.

SV: The idea of being really open to all kinds of ideas is very important because we can think that we are being open but we may only be open in a limited sense. We want to be open but we still have limits to that openness or we are willing to be open BUT we still impose conditions. It is nice when we can generate the idea that perhaps anything is possible in a field and to be able to intuit or to tap into the kind of wisdom that can exist in any situation.

Working in an already intelligent field

SV: In terms of finding a solution for example, we may have an idea that the solution may exist within this or that particular person, relationship, situation or place and we may actually be thinking in a box. I think that the notion that a solution can come from any where, is such a wonderful idea. This is how I work. I try to move out of frames quickly when I see that they are limiting and I open myself to all possibilities. I do not hold on to ideas and even if another one comes I hold it loosely too and wait until the Universe ‘decides’ which is the right one. Even that, I hold loosely until at some point it is going to come together and I know that this is the one that is going to be used here

IMcC: So, we would hold our ideas lightly and not be in the grip of them.

SV: I see it so. I say don't define yourself by your ideas but hold ideas in a field knowing that an infinite number of ideas exist.

IMcC This also comes back now to what we set out to discuss – that the whole exercise of communication with a client will become like a spiritual practice because we will be able to see that we are actually acting in an intelligent field. It seems to me that this is a hallmark of spirituality – that we exist in an intelligent field, we interact in an intelligent field and that this kind of awareness will develop when we do personal meditation.

So, personal training in meditation is one thing that will help therapists to go into a new space and the actual work will seem like a meditation in itself. It will actually look like a meditation because your basic posture (your mental, emotional posture) will be more stable. You are also observing not only yourself but also the 'drama' that exists in the (play) of the conversation. This is like witnessing in meditation.

I guess that when a therapy session is seen from that level it can become highly fulfilling. This is because in personal meditation when we open ourselves to this witnessing, to the Witness inside, one of the great benefits is the intuitive response that comes. We begin to discover all kinds of new information coming into our space or field. It is almost as if a new intelligence is entering into our domain and all kinds of solutions, new ideas and new creativity just seem to dawn. When this is taken into the therapy conversation it has been my experience that I actually begin to see all kinds of new things in the communication, new perspectives. A new kind of wisdom can dawn in that kind of situation.

Perhaps if we can take some of these practices and ideas we could explore them further in the arena of therapy. For example if we explore the ideas Witnessing and Co-Creation that might be useful?

Meditation for Therapists: *Becoming the Witness in Therapy*

SV: Well, perhaps, the first thing I would say is that we need to be in a place where we can be a non-judgmental observer or witness. We need to be in a place where we can look at our own emotions and our own thoughts even while in communication with another., That is what we call, in the meditative field or the spiritual field, being the Witness.

This means witnessing not only what is around us but also being the witness or observer of what is happening in our inner world. Sometimes, I think when we are dealing with people especially in communication we overlook what is happening within us in response to another person. For

example, whether we are experiencing aggression because of the communication or whether we are becoming compulsive and reactive because of the communication. We are so caught up in the other that we are losing awareness of what is happening to us in that moment.

Observing the Breath

In fact in some traditions witnessing can be achieved through observing the breath. And because we continuously breathe that becomes a wonderful tool to use to develop the Witness, just to look at the natural movement of the breath. Because we have something to turn our attention to, the mind can become calm. We can move away from thoughts and just go into that space where we become the observer of the breath. That is one form of meditation.

Observing Thoughts and Emotions

Another form of meditation is where we look at thoughts. We can look at thoughts, their coming and going. Likewise with emotions, we can observe their coming and going. When we begin to get into observer mode we find the mind naturally becoming quieter as we are not identifying with the thoughts or emotions because we are in a different space. That is one of the objectives of meditation and one of the benefits that a therapist can derive from being in that observer position. That benefit is the non-identification with one's thoughts and emotions.

Therapy as a Spiritual Process: Witnessing, Spirituality and Therapy

IMcC: In terms of Witnessing, that first aspect of meditation – how would you see witnessing being related to a therapist becoming more spiritually aware. To put it another way how do you see therapists having spirituality as a basis for the work they are doing? How do you see that these are related?

SV: Again it is how we define 'Spirituality' because sometimes we are inclined to think that being spiritual means being religious. I like to think of spirituality as us becoming aware of our essence, our core qualities. I believe that at the very essence of our being there is a source of peace, of unconditional love and of wisdom. So, touching that core is what spirituality is for me. In my experience, when you touch that core you can actually differentiate that core from the rest of your being. You begin to actually feel that that core is the 'real you' so to speak and that body, mind and emotion are external to that core. They are like functions of that core.

For me, spirituality is the awareness of the totality of our being and believing that our essence is different from the rest of us. The spiritual person defines themselves by their Self, by their Source or by their Inner Being. So, if we are making a spiritual journey, following a spiritual path, following a spiritual science or a practical form of spiritual discipline then the goal would be going into that space, that core. When we go into that core, in my experience, we become the Witness to the rest. That is the way I define spirituality. That is how I see that spirituality, spiritual discipline or spiritual pursuit can make a difference. It makes a difference if it takes us to the Self where we naturally become a witness. What is wonderful about that is that when we become more aware of our Self and we begin to feel it as our true Self, our true Being, then it gives us the ability to manage the rest of our being. Self-management is much more in our hands. We are able to take charge of our lives in much more powerful ways.

When we are seated there we feel the power to manage the rest of our lives. We feel we can manage our minds better or manage our emotions better and even our physical field. So, for me if we really are in that spiritual space, if we make that spiritual journey and if we begin to feel that place inside we naturally become a witness and it gives the ability to manage the rest.

Witnessing and self-management

IMcC: Thinking about individual client sessions and being a witness, in terms of self-management how would you see this as a useful tool in conducting conversations with two or more people?

SV: When we are in a group and we listen to the group the ability to be able to witness all that is happening, including our own response and to be able to see all of that and feel as if we were on a stage and we were looking at a play that is the true value or place of witnessing. Also when we are in a group the value of witnessing is to be able to see what and how each person is responding and communicating including our own internal and external responses and communication. The ability to see all of that as though we were looking at a play is the idea of truly witnessing. Most times in conversation we are caught up in the group and we may sometimes act impulsively without seeing how we are reacting in the situation. But, the ability to see all of it, is for me, the true space of witnessing. We are able to pick up the 'drama' of the entire group. We are able to pick up what is happening with the entire group, how we are all affecting each other including the one who is observing. The ability to see all of it, the whole play of the conversation that is real witnessing – the

person who is truly centred in that space of witnessing is able to pick it all up.

Meditation in Action.

IMcC: One of the tasks of therapy is to be able to be 'inside' and 'outside' at the same time, to be an observer and to also participate, how do you link those two tasks?

SV: That is a good question. It is the idea of being able to be the observer and to participate while still observing. Because the observing function is like a transcendental function as it is outside of the sphere of activity. So, it doesn't mean then that when you are acting you have lost the observer status. It means that we have the ability to act and observe while acting, to process while acting from that observer place. So, it is possible to be engaged in the conversation and still be in that place of witnessing. That is what we also call meditation in action. Because, when you are observing in your personal sitting meditation, then you are observing your mind and your emotions but not in relation to the surroundings and how the surroundings are impacting upon you. But, in a conversation, it is like a meditation in activity when you can witness the communication exchanges even while you are acting. I do not know how to describe this further but in my own experience, it is also one of the benefits that come from meditation, the ability to act without losing the observer status.

IMcC: Well, that would appear to be a core advantage to any therapist in their work ...

SV: Yes, yes... I guess so.

Personal Meditation and Meditation in Action

IMcC: I am thinking as we have talked that how important it might be for therapists not only to look at meditation for their' own spiritual practice but also to prepare them to work in a spiritual way, if that is what they are interested in. This then is another way of exploring how meditation in action can occur within the practice of therapy. They are two distinct practices if you like, associated but done at different times. One is done as a therapy, therapy as a spiritual process or a meditative process and the other is a sitting meditation done alone. Could we talk about that?

SV: While you were talking there my mind was going back to another place so you may have to bear with me. What I was thinking was, that therapists are asked to do something that they have not been trained to do.

Internal and External Witnessing

They are expected to be able to be a witness of their internal and external processes. However, in the spiritual world that can only happen through rigorous training. So, I am seeing how difficult it can be for a therapist to do this without the kind of training that a spiritual person is exposed to. So, it is going to be very difficult to do this unless we are naturally disposed towards it or if we are born with this special quality.

In my opinion, this is where personal meditation is going to be important for therapists because it will give them the tool to be able to go to that space of witnessing.

Witnessing and a silent mind

IMcC: To link that back to witnessing in that silent mind or resting mind and being in witness mode – are these the same in your view?

SV: Witnessing in relation to a silent mind is the ability to ‘see’ from a different place. However, I spoke about witnessing in therapy as being about seeing both the internal processes of the therapist and the external processes occurring in the context. Sometimes we can miss the internal processes when we only focus on the external processes. So, the witnessing that we are speaking about here in relation to therapy is being able to see all the internal movements as well as the external ones. You are looking at mind, emotion, the movement of the intellect and so on as well as the relational environment.

IMcC: And when the mind is more at rest, not occupied by too many thoughts, it is more likely to do that?

SV: Yes, in a sense this is so but it really does not make a difference whether it is resting or in activity, the idea of witnessing is an act of seeing.

IMcC: That is what I was wondering ...

SV: Witnessing is an act of seeing from a different place. It is more like a function of intelligence. It is more like looking from a different place. That can happen in silence or it can happen in activity. It requires shifting to a new space. In a deeply spiritual sense if you sit with a person who is in a different space the chances are you can begin to automatically shift to that space. This is the idea of ‘Presence’ we talked about. In this situation one presence resonates with another as it were and we can actually begin to shift to that space, almost in a natural way.

Co-Creation and Presence.

IMcC: Being in a space of witnessing opens us therefore to the practices of co-creation?

SV: For me the idea of co-creation can be seen in different ways. If I think of the Universe as having been created by a Creator or some creative force that is also constantly in the process of creating in 'an infinity of ways'. Alongside this, we as individuals also show the ability to create. So, we can think of that whole process as one of co-creation. Because we can create ideas, we can create thoughts, we are reflecting the creative Universe and for me that is what the idea of co-creation means in a spiritual sense. We have the power to create as the Life Principle in the Universe is also continuously creating. So, we are co-creating. Now, if we are in a conversation, you and I, then we can co-create a conversation. If we are two persons in communication, we can co-create the conversation. We can co-create ideas in the conversation, we can co-create a path in the conversation and we can co-create a solution in the conversation. So, that is another aspect of co-creating.

The same thing can happen in a group. We can co-create an idea. We can look at possibilities together and we can co-create a solution. The idea here is where each one of the group would equally participate or each one would participate in an optimal way so that the resources that exist within the group can manifest freely. We all know of situations where the resources exist but there is little space for them to manifest because of some personality conflict, etc. A resource may lie hidden or unexpressed. In a good co-creating environment however, there will be freedom to express all the resources in that particular moment to solve the problem at hand.

IMcC; And, there is a feeling of spontaneity and a particular kind of energy associated with it.

SV: Right, yes. It is really an invitation. We have to invite participation into the space. True co-creation is an invitation to bring out all the resources that exist in the group or within the individual in the process of generating the solution or solutions.

IMcC: And how does the notion of co-creation reflect back into individual meditation? How do you see that?

SV: Well for me, the idea of co-creation in relation to meditation is to bring in the subjective element. The idea of co-creation in meditation is to create

as the Universe creates. It is to mirror the Universe. We always need a reference in order to co-create. We need to co-create with some 'thing' or someone. So the individual in co-creation means to co-create as the Universe co-creates. Co-creation cannot happen in singularity, in isolation. It must be done in response to something, with something or someone.

IMcC: So, is it also like tapping into a super-conscious space, a space of unlimited potential?

SV: Yes, but also a new idea has come to my mind. Because, as the individual is, for example, sitting in meditation they are also in an intelligent environment and so the Universe is already working in that environment. In this way the individual is also reacting, responding and/or being pro-active in an intelligent space.

IMcC: in an already dynamic space!

SV: Right, right and co-creation therefore would actually refer to participating intelligently in the space. So, let us say that we are in a retreat centre, as we are at this moment, and the goal of this centre is to create a silent space for reflection and for self-discovery. If we come and sit in this space, begin to engage in silent reflection and self-discovery and enter into a space within us that harmonises with the environment then we are actually co-creating in the space and with the space. We exist and co-create in a Universe that is evolving.

Co-Creating and Co-Evolving.

IMcC: Yes, I just thought of that word, 'co-evolving' before you said the word, 'evolving'. This idea of co-evolving with(in) the space is both a co-creation, which is pro-active but is it also a moving alongside the space in a co-evolving way?

SV: I don't think it is alongside unless you are thinking of the Universe as a central 'person'. Then that is one way you could look at it. We could say that the individual IS IN a co-evolving field with a 'central person'. This would be reminiscent of the biblical saying, "in Him we live, move and have our being" (St. Paul, Acts, 17:28)"

IMcC: So, it is more to resonate with(in) a field?

SV: Right, so to co-create means to, as you say, resonate with(in) a space or to harmonise with(in) a space.

IMcC: Now, is the co-creative principle a more active principle than a co-evolving principle, in your view?

SV: Well, they both go hand in hand. Co-evolving means that we move from one place to another and when we devolve we go to a lesser level. So, if we are evolving that means we are going from one state to a better state. But the idea of co-creation is the ability to create as the Universe is creating because we are centred in a creative Life Principle, in a creative Universe. To co-create is that is to follow or align ourselves with the evolutionary principle of the Universe. As the Universe is evolving and if we play our part in this evolving process by way of alignment, then, we too are co-creating and co-evolving with the Universe.

Let us say that the world is in a state of social evolution and there seem to be seeds of change germinating. Then, we begin to see an evolutionary process in communities towards higher social consciousness with greater peace and harmony in the human family. If we begin to align ourselves with that change and begin to use the resources we have in harmony with the change then we are co-creating a Universe that is already co-evolving. So, in that way we can use our co-creative abilities to co-evolve.

IMcC: Could you talk a little about that because you often state that whilst sitting in meditation you can co-create with(in) the community towards greater harmony and peace. Could you say a little bit about that?

SV: Well, it is the idea that if we are sitting in a room by ourselves we are still participating in an active Universe. So, if we send an intention out such as, 'may there be peace, love and harmony in the Universe', we are actually doing something very powerful. We are sending out a thought or an emotion that is going to go like a wave, like a ripple into the Universe. We don't see it but this impacts upon the Universe. If I sit in a room and begin to think and open my heart, open my love into the space and begin to send out intentions of love and positive thinking, may there be peace, love and harmony everywhere, may everybody be happy' and if there are more individuals doing this in the community then we are co-creating a wonderful space at a level that is non-physical.

We may be sitting in different places, seeming to be isolated but we are actually doing something that is connecting. We are connecting at another level where there is no isolation. So, in the realm of ideas and emotions we are actually co-creating a unified field in a field where there is unity. This for me is exciting. I can network in a different space that can actually impact upon the community and the environment. I am thus not be limited by physical isolation.

IMcC It seems to me that there are some similar ideas to that, those 'field' ideas, in science (Sheldrake, 1987; McTaggart, 2003). Are you familiar with any specific examples of that?

SV: Yes and I use the word, 'field' because of my scientific background, my engineering background. We think of an electrical field or an electromagnetic field that surrounds the earth. So, the field is the space where the observation or activity takes place. You yourself talk about 'space' in the human and social sense. For example, we can say, "I have come into your space" or "you are creating a peaceful space" or "you are in an emotional space". From my point of view, the words, 'field' and 'space' are interchangeable. However, in the scientific and engineering sense I use the word, 'field' and for me it is synonymous with your idea of 'space'. It is the area of observation, of activity and of operation of the person.

Love: as a state of being

IMcC: We have talked about multi-dimensionality, witnessing, presence and co-creation in therapy and now I would like to talk about bringing love into therapeutic conversations. That is something you concentrate quite a bit in your meditation teachings. It has also been an important element for me in therapy practice. Could we end this conversation by talking about 'Love' in therapy?

SV: Love is a misunderstood word, a misunderstood concept.

IMcC In what way?

SV: I think we need to redefine it because love for me is a *state of being*. It is not necessarily just about expressing something to another person. It is actually a state of internal harmony. It is a state of opening oneself to another or to life in harmonious interaction where two becomes more. It is the idea of synergy. It is opening yourself into a space that is tremendous, to experience that is love. Love is opening yourself, moving away from one's individuality into a greater relationship with the environment around us or with the world around us and feeling the amplification of that in almost an exponential way. To feel the synergy is to feel what love is. Then the idea of love does not only exist in relation to another but love is like a state of being that is open to all. It is a way of being. It is a place of being. It is an expression of being.

So, for example in leading meditations I often say, "be loving". I am not talking then about necessarily being loving towards a particular person but of just *being* loving. I might choose in the beginning of the meditation to

focus on an object of love to begin facilitating a feeling of the qualities of love and then I would suggest letting the object disappear and just feeling the quality on its own. Then the quality of love would stand on its own as it were and would enable the person to generate that state of love within themselves. Being able to develop that state of love within one's own being together with the ability to express that love in relationships would be an ideal for anyone who is working in therapy. To be integrated within, to be able to express love within one's own being without the presence of another and in the presence of another is what is aimed for. This means that one must be self-loving and also loving to others.

Unconditional Love.

When love is taken to a certain level it becomes unconditional. Unconditional love means, loving the other not because of any condition and not in any selfish way. It is to love beyond conditionality. When one reaches that kind of love it is an incredible quality in human interaction that brings about marvelous transformation. It is a way of bringing transformation without any 'force'. You find it when you are with someone and you begin to express unconditional love as a state of being, they seem to interact or respond in magical ways.

I have always found that when you begin to show unconditional love to people a great relationship of trust develops, a great relationship of friendship develops and a great amount of sharing results. That can be very powerful. The kind of healing that comes from that is also magical. It also becomes a model for the other person in that they begin to believe that such is possible when they can see it. So, in a way we model that to another. This is an example of the messenger being the message. If we begin to manifest a certain quality then people begin to pick it up naturally without even conscious effort on our part. They pick it up naturally.

IMcC: Isn't there a notion in physics as well as in meditation approaches that if you conserve a set of conditions, change is then more likely to occur around the conservation. Is that a similar idea to 'unconditional love'? If you hold a person, no matter what they have done, in a state of unconditional love this in itself is an invitation to change because they do not feel they have to change. The transformation just occurs naturally.

SV: I agree with that and that is why I always believe that the more we embody and manifest the qualities we might want to see in others, or the balance or integrity we want to see in others, the more we make it possible. This is what I mean when I say if we can transform ourselves we can transform our worlds.

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