

SADNESS VERSUS DEPRESSION -- RELATIONSHIP

Greetings, my dearest friends. I welcome you and I bless you.

In this new working year that promises to be as productive as each former year, you may surely expect further growth and liberation. This applies to all who truly desire to face themselves. Many of you, my friends, have progressed greatly, even if you do not feel happy at the moment. The summer was a time of fruition.

Some of you feel discouraged. Your question is: "Where does this path get me when I am as unhappy and confused now as before?" I want to remind you of two things. One is that those who feel liberated and are aware of their growth have also gone through phases when they felt just as you feel now. Yet, they persevered and now they begin to feel very definite results. The second point is that when one experiences stagnation, this is always due to an inner, perhaps hidden, unwillingness to face some area of one's being. This resistance always applies to the area that would be most important to tackle at that very moment. That is why you feel stuck. Therefore, I say to those friends who feel discouraged and stagnating to ask themselves very truthfully: "Is there not a wall in me that prevents insight? Am I, perhaps, guarding against recognizing something, and using justification, self-pity, hopelessness, or a superficial rationalization, blaming outer circumstances?" Test yourself very carefully and you will see that your stagnation is bound to be an avoidance of inner truth. Once you recognize it, you will be so much farther toward liberation and growth.

It is easy to focus on superficial actions and forget that one needs complete inner will to face everything within. To stress the outer actions may so easily lead to self-deception. Evasion can take many forms. I repeat, wherever there is stagnation, discouragement, and depression about the validity of your work, in some corner of your being you are evading yourself. All those who overcome this universal resistance step by step do feel their own growing, do feel liberated from their shackles.

Tonight I should like to discuss, first of all, the difference between sadness and depression. It is important, at this time, to get a fuller comprehension about the decided difference between these two emotions.

If the case is crass, the difference between sadness and depression is very distinct, and I believe you can all remember instances when you experienced the one or the other, knowing how different they are. However, sometimes the differentiation is not easy because both sadness and depression exist simultaneously. They intermingle and overlap. Your sadness may make you believe that depression is absent. You may believe that your feelings of sadness and pain are purely normal and healthy and do not contain any negative, destructive elements. You need more insight and

comprehension to find in yourself the unproductive depression with its underlying cause, in spite of the rational sadness.

Let us first define the difference. In sadness you accept without self-pity a painful fact of life as something beyond your power to change. When you are truly sad, without depression, you not only feel it as a healthy growing pain free of hopelessness, but you are sad due to an outer circumstance, knowing it is going to pass. There is no superimposition, no hiding, no shifting of emotions. In depression the outer circumstance may be the same, but your feelings of pain are, to quite an extent, due to other reasons than the outer occurrence. Although you cannot change the outer circumstance, you can change something within yourself, if you but see the real reasons why you suffer from certain emotions you do not wish to face -- be they hurts, resentments, envies, or wrongs committed by you or someone else.

You are powerless to make yourself feel differently only as long as you do not fully comprehend what is going on in you. That is why depression is always linked with frustration and helplessness. For, strangely enough, you do not feel helpless toward an outer event that you cannot change, if you have a healthy attitude toward it. You feel depressed only when you are unable to change it now, immediately. But you could change something in your life, in your own attitude, if you took the trouble to look inside yourself. When you cannot accept something with the simple feeling of sadness it is because the outer circumstance is not the real or entire reason that underlies your pain. This is very important, my friends, and I wish you would think about it.

Let us take the example of the loss of a beloved person through death. If you are truly sad -- and nothing else -- your feeling is due purely to this loss. Here is something you cannot change; you know it, and in spite of the sorrow you know that you will accept it eventually. Even while you are still in the worst stage of your pain, you know and believe, deep inside, that your life will go on, that it does not even have to be poorer for the bereavement, no matter how genuine your love and affection is for the departed. This pain will not leave a scar, because any healthy, genuine, unshifted, direct emotion is an enriching experience for your whole being.

When you are depressed due to the loss of a beloved person, there are in you confused, ambiguous, as well as ambivalent emotions you are unaware of. They vaguely disturb you and you attribute that to the legitimate pain of loss. Thus you have shifted your emotions and used an actual, valid occurrence to cover up something you are unwilling to face and come to terms with. Whether that something is directly connected with the departed one -- guilt, resentment, or what have you -- or whether the loss has merely triggered off some unresolved, festering inner conflict in you, does not matter. It may be both. It may be your identification with that person. You may experience your own fear of death and your fear of the passing of life which you do not permit yourself to become aware of. Since you are not aware, you cannot cope with it. This, then, causes depression, and depression, as opposed to sadness, is a very stifling, frustrating, unhealthy feeling.

Let us clearly see exactly what is unhealthy. Take self-pity, which is always a byproduct of depression. It is unhealthy because it is unfounded. There is always a way out if you are willing to see it. In self-pity you are unwilling to see the way out; instead, the world around you should change, sympathize with you, and make allowances for you. Moreover, in depression, as I just explained, you deceive yourself about the real reason for your unhappiness. You use a false reason you call "legitimate" to justify running away from yourself and to strengthen your self-pity. Thus

you subtly exert a forcing current upon the world. Furthermore, depression is unhealthy because you passively remain unchanged, falsely accepting what need not be accepted because you could change it if you faced yourself. At the same time you battle against that which truly cannot be changed. All these characterize the unhealthy state of depression.

The example of loss through death is purposely a crass one. There are so many instances when one is depressed with less valid outer reason, and sometimes with no reason. One simply does not know why. One may try to find legitimate excuses and reasons, but in one's heart of hearts one knows very well that the real explanation for one's feelings is other than those of which one arduously tries to convince oneself.

It is of great importance, my friends, to understand this whenever you feel depressed. When you believe you are sad due to a good outer reason, test your emotion in the sense in which I have discussed it. Is it really just sadness? Do you not feel hopeless and frustrated? Are you free of self-pity? Do you feel strong and secure enough to know your life cannot be harmed by circumstances outside yourself, no matter how painful a situation might be? If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, you need to use healthy introspection to find the gnawing undercurrents that cause the depression. Only then can you free yourself forever of the cause that will come up again and again in your life until you bring about its dissolution: not by forcing away what you feel, but by first calmly looking at it with the aim of understanding it.

The dissolution of the cause of depression not only serves the purpose of freeing you of very unpleasant feelings, but above all it liberates faculties which will work for you rather than against you. Depression makes you feel as though life slipped by without your fully utilizing it. Life then cannot be the dynamic experience it otherwise is.

Depression is self-generating. Since depression is the effect, it is its cause that prevents you from really living and fulfilling yourself. What is so easily forgotten is that depression needs to be considered a problem in itself rather than something that happens and will eventually go away. A particular depression may indeed do just that after a while, but you have not protected yourself against its recurrence when life provokes you again. Nor have you protected yourself against the destructive effects of the inner cause. Therefore please take up depression as a problem in your work.

Every affliction of the psyche hinders living. It does so because it prevents you from relating to others. We began discussing, working on, and understanding the importance of relationship. You have learned that fruitful relationships can exist only to the degree your soul is healthy and free. But we have to understand more profoundly what relationship and relating are.

Life is relationship, my friends. "What is life?" is a question asked by many. Many answers can be given, they may all be truthful. But above all else, life is relationship! If you do not relate at all, you do not live. Life, or relationship, is relative -- relative to your attitude. You may relate positively or negatively. But the moment you relate, you live. That is why the person who relates negatively lives more than the person who relates little. I cannot say not at all, for then that person would not live. Destructive relationships lead to a climax that is ultimately bound to dissolve the destructiveness, while non-relating, even under the guise of false serenity, is further down the scale.

You are used to associating the word "relationship" with human beings around you. But in truth, this word applies to everything, even to inanimate objects, to concepts and ideas. It applies to the circumstances of living, to the world, to yourself, to your thoughts and attitudes. To the degree you relate, you will no longer experience frustration but have a sense of fulfillment.

The scale of the possibilities of relationship is enormous. Let us begin with the lowest form on earth, which is mineral. Since a mineral is without consciousness you may believe that it does not relate. That is untrue. Since it lives, it relates, but its degree of relating is limited to its degree of life -- or more correctly put, it is a mineral because it is incapable of relating more. The mineral relates by the fact that it lets itself be perceived and used. Thus it relates in a completely passive way. The relating capacity of an animal is already more dynamic. It actively responds to other animals, to nature, and to human beings.

The scale of the capacity to relate is much wider among human beings than you remotely realize at the moment. Let us begin with those on the lowest scale among human beings. That would be the completely insane person, the one who has to be put into solitary confinement, or the criminal -- who is not so different from the former. They are both completely withdrawn, live in outer and inner isolation. They can hardly relate to other human beings. But since they are still alive, they must continue to relate somehow. They relate to other aspects of life: to things, to their environment, even if it is in the most negative way, to food, to certain bodily functions, perhaps even to some ideas, or art, or nature. It will be very useful, my friends, to begin to think about life and people from this point of view. If you meditate on this subject, it will help you greatly and will increase your understanding about many things, not the least about your own life.

Now, by contrast, let me immediately go to the highest form of human beings. These are people who relate beautifully; who are deeply involved with others; who are unafraid of involvement; who have no protective covering against experience and feeling. Therefore they love. They permit themselves to love. In the last analysis, the ability to love always involves the inner willingness and readiness to do so. People belonging in this category love not only abstractly and generally, but they love personally and concretely, regardless of risk. Such people are not necessarily saints, or holy, or anywhere near perfect. They may have their faults. They may be wrong at times. They have negative emotions too. But, on the whole, they love, relate, and do not fear involvement. They have freed themselves from defense. Such people, in spite of occasional disappointments or setbacks, have a life full of fruitful, meaningful relationships.

What is this life for the so-called average person? It is a combination of the two extremes. The possibilities are manifold. A person may be relatively free and relate well in certain areas of life and be very much obstructed in others. Only deep personal insight will enable you to find the truth in this respect about yourself. Most deceptive, however, are the cases in which apparently good relationships exist on the surface, but they are devoid of depth and inner meaning. Then it is so easy to deceive oneself and say, "Look how many good friends I have! There is nothing wrong with my relationships, and yet I am unhappy, lonely, and unfulfilled." If this is the case with you, my friends, it cannot be true that your relationships are good or that you are truly willing to relate.

You cannot be lonely and unhappy if your relationships are genuine. The way in which you relate may fulfill a superficial function. It may be pleasant and distracting, but somehow shallow. Your true self is never revealed, and therefore you are unfulfilled. Thus you also prevent others

from relating and do not give what they search for, whether or not they know it. This is due to your unconscious fear of exposure, to your various inner conflicts. As long as you are not willing to resolve them, you cannot have meaningful relationships -- and you therefore must be unfulfilled.

The average person has some capacity and willingness for involvement and relationship, but not enough. The drama of mutual exchange and communication takes place on a superficial level. Hence unconscious tendencies and currents affect the involved parties and sooner or later cause a disturbance if the shallow relationship is a close one. If the shallow relationship never becomes close, nothing will happen, but neither can one deceive oneself, in that case, that it is a real tie. Unconscious destructive tendencies can only be dissolved if one faces and understands them. This will not harm the relationship, because through the mutual exchange the communication automatically takes place on a more profound level.

It is often not clear to you what constitutes a profound and meaningful relationship. At times you think that mutual exchange of ideas is the criterion, while at other times, it is the mutual exchange of sexual pleasure. Both may indeed be present, yet their presence will not necessarily make the communication very deep. The only true criterion is how genuine you are, how open and undefensive. How willing are you to feel, to involve and expose yourself and all that really matters to you? How many people do you know to whom you can express your real sorrows, needs, worries, longings, wishes? Very few, if any. To the degree you permit yourself to become aware of these feelings, to that degree will you find a few others with whom you can share and whose life you are capable of truly understanding. If you shy away from yourself, how can you be willing to relate to others what you do not dare to acknowledge to yourself? Thus you live in isolation and unfulfillment. You fear death because you let life pass by in the pseudo-safety of solitary confinement.

This is why we are so very much concerned in this work with your admitting the truth to yourself, for only then can you begin to have real relationships instead of false ones and lead a meaningful life. Even your relationship to other aspects of life, such as the arts, nature, ideas, will take on a new form that is very much alive, whereas before you used them as substitutes.

Often, real relating and communication is confused with the childish compulsion to tell everyone everything. Thus you may share your feelings indiscriminately and jeopardize yourself, in the misunderstood idea that foolish candor, or unwise exposure, or cruel "honesty" are proof of your openness and willingness to relate. In reality this merely covers up your withdrawal, which exists on a much more hidden level and in a more subtle manifestation. Thus you provoke the "proof" that it does not pay to involve yourself.

With true self-understanding, and the consequent liberation from your self-inflicted prison, there will be nothing strained in your self-revelation and your relationships. You will intuitively choose the right people and the right opportunities and the right manner. Occasional misjudgments will never crush you or put you back into hiding. But this freedom, this organic growing process, happens only gradually, and only after you have started to pursue this path of self-knowledge.

Psychiatrists often diagnose people according to their ability to relate, and the depth and meaningfulness of their relationships. It is also true that some of the more severely disturbed people can receive help more easily than those whose disturbance is less obvious, because the latter can

more easily deceive themselves and pretend that things are not so bad, and thus can continue to hide from the truth within. This subterfuge is not available to those who are more disturbed. They therefore come to a point where they have to make a choice: they can look at their inner life squarely, without self-deception, or they may have a severe breakdown which will postpone self-confrontation. In any case, they are nearer that point of decision -- which they may reach only in the following life -- than the milder neurotic person who continues to evade.

As long as you cannot admit that you are human and that you need help in exposing your vulnerabilities, you cannot be helped in your problems, nor can you form real relationships. Thus your life will always remain empty, at least in some important areas.

For the moment, most of you, my friends, do not even have a clear concept of what it is to really relate or love. Your concern is still mainly centered around yourself. If you are outgoing to others, it is not a natural, spontaneous process, but artificial and compulsive. But this natural concern and warmth for others will come if you persevere on this road.

In the past we have discussed the wall that you keep around your heart. We will investigate it further, so as to gain more comprehension about it. This is very important and necessary. Without comprehension and awareness of this wall in you, you cannot understand your loneliness. You cannot understand how you affect others. Often you do not even understand how others really affect you, because you do not permit yourself to feel the real effect, due to reasons we have discussed in the past. Thus you color your real impressions and experiences, and you are no longer in truth. You have to become much more acutely aware of what you experience and how others affect you in truth. Your continuous work along this path in private sessions in addition to the group work is most important. This will help you greatly toward self-awareness in understanding your relationships.

And now to your questions.

QUESTION: What about a relationship that changes? Also, what about seeking variety and flow? Is it a manifestation of healthy relating if a relationship changes and if a person wishes many relationships?

ANSWER: This is again one of those questions that cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no." Both a changing relationship and the desire for variety may indicate healthy or unhealthy motives. Often it is a combination of both, though one side may be predominant. One must beware of oversimplification. The fact that a relationship changes for the worse does not necessarily indicate relapse or stagnation. It may be a necessary, temporary reaction to an unhealthy submissiveness, to the craving for affection, or to any other one-sided neurotic bondage. Before a healthy relationship can come into being between two people who have been tied together by a variety of mutual distortions, such a temporary outer or inner storm may fulfill the same balancing function that an electric storm or earthquake fulfills in nature.

Whether or not a relationship can become predominantly free and healthy depends on both parties involved. By the same token, a smooth outer relationship, apparently devoid of friction, is not necessarily an indication of its health and meaningfulness. Close examination of the ties and their significance is the only answer. One can never generalize. If two people grow together in any

kind of relationship -- be it partnership, love, friendship, whatever -- they have to go through various phases. If they muster sufficient insight about themselves, and not only about the other, such relationship will become more securely rooted and ever more fruitful.

As far as seeking variety is concerned, that too depends on the real motivation. If variety is sought hastily, compulsively, due predominantly to reasons of fear, greed, and grasping; due to being unable to genuinely relate to any one person, and therefore supplementing this lack with a lot of superficial ties; if others are constantly sought as a safeguard against not being dependent on and deserted by those few with whom a deeper relationship exists, then, needless to say, it indicates unhealthy trends. But if variety is sought because of the richness of different human beings and of one's relationship to them in a free spirit, and not in order to use one relationship against the other, then it is healthy. Often, both motivations exist. But even in the former case, there may be a temporary necessity because of a reaction to previous withdrawal, and, as such, the seeking of variety may be a step toward health. A negative manifestation is often an indication that a positive transitory phase is occurring.

QUESTION: How does that tie in with a person manipulating his reactions to other people?

ANSWER: Actually, this question is already answered. Manipulation happens out of defensiveness and pseudo-needs. The one that is manipulated, whether or not he or she is aware of it, will either react by giving in due to fears, needs, and dependency, and lose integrity, or will rebel. Then it will be out of wanting affection without being a slave, yet the person does not yet know that there is no need to rebel if one can relinquish. If a person is free enough not to need another so desperately as if it were a matter of life and death, he or she would not need to resent the condition which the other's domination unconsciously imposes. They will let go and quietly preserve their integrity. Only when both are fighting as to who is the stronger one -- and this fight usually happens in a hidden way -- does their relationship fluctuate between domination, rebellion, submission, appeasement and resentments. Both want something from each other that neither is willing to give. Both claims are distorted and unrealistic. Thus a battle evolves that overshadows the potential for a real relationship which is always free.

QUESTION: Between two human beings who want to relate, but both, for various reasons manipulate, or one manipulates, where does the element of real love come in? Does this not dissolve or alleviate the manipulation?

ANSWER: To the degree a person feels the need for manipulation -- which is an unconscious protective measure -- to that degree real love cannot exist. These two elements are mutually exclusive. The pseudo-need for manipulation, if you examine it, stems from egocentric fear and an over-cautiousness about letting go to feeling and to being. Therefore manipulation prohibits love, even though some measure of real love may also exist, but is hindered by the aspect in question.

If real love is greater than the distortion, it will not dissolve the distortion, but the weight of love will be greater, and thus the relationship will be less problematic. Dissolution of problematic areas can only happen through understanding. Then love can blossom. But where darkness and confusion exist, and the partners do not face reality, love cannot come into being. The fact that you do love does not simply dissolve all the negative currents and distortions, conflicts and fears, unconscious defensive measures and manipulations. It is not as easy as all that.

Your ability to relate is actually simple to measure: your outer life furnishes you with many clues if you but understand them. To the degree that a relationship has problems, unconscious distortions exist in both parties. One alternately blames the other, or assumes self-blame. It takes time and understanding, as well as some experience on this path, to recognize that one wrong does not eliminate another; that all involved are responsible for all the problems of a relationship. Such insight always has a very liberating effect, simply because it is the truth. This truth will free you of guilt and of the necessity to accuse, to blame, and to judge.

QUESTION: Isn't it sometimes much easier to relate to somebody one is not too close to? One is less critical ...

ANSWER: Why, of course. This is just the proof that it is not a real relationship, but a superficial one. A real relationship means involvement. That does not merely mean looking at the negative aspects and currents. Involvement means the staking of one's whole being. A relationship of deep involvement is bound to suffer friction because there are so many unrecognized and unresolved problem areas within both parties. That is why each friction can become such a stepping stone if it is approached with a constructive attitude. Now with all that I do not mean that you should have only such deep relationships. This would be impossible and unrealistic. But there must be quite a few, all different, if you are to feel that your life is dynamic and fruitful.

To be more specific, I may add that unconscious expectations, claims and demands cause havoc in relation-ships. This is not because all expectations are necessarily "wrong," but because they smolder underground and cause a mutual strain as they clash with the demands of the other person. Apart from the fact that some demands are really unjustified and unreasonable, and they can only be recognized as such if they come to your surface awareness, even justified expectations will cause problems for you because of your unawareness of them.

QUESTION: In the same connection, when a person thinks that he relates instantaneously to other people is that not a projection of a kind of "black magic," due to the childish belief in one's omnipotence?

ANSWER: Yes, of course. The child who wants to be infallible exists in every human being. It may often be true that a person has an intuitive understanding of others. The danger then is that he or she develops a tendency to believe to be always right. It takes quite a bit of growth, maturity, and wisdom to realize that one may be right sometimes, but certainly not always. Once this is recognized and one's own limitations are accepted, it is no longer a crushing shame to be wrong.

Growth, in this respect, often proceeds in stages. At first, people may be so completely unsure of themselves that they may not put any value on themselves and their perceptions. They may be feeling so inferior that they do not trust their intuition at all -- or even their reason. They may always believe that only others are right, whether or not this is true, whether or not they are aware of this hidden conviction against which they may erroneously battle with an over-assertiveness -- which, of course, is the worst way to remedy the situation, because no ill can disappear before its existence is acknowledged. Then such people would go through a certain process of growing and experience that their perceptions are often valid. This is a great relief and joy. Self-confidence begins to blossom. But this is only a tiny step on the ladder and they are not yet quite sure of the

reality of this phenomenon. Since they are so unsure, they are frightened to find out that they have only imagined it all, and so they guard against the dreaded disappointment by summoning their inherently childish claim for omnipotence as a counter-measure. If they remain at that stage, without recognizing this factor, they will never completely grow out of their inferiority feelings. But by recognizing this, they will learn that they are not without worth or value just because they are not always right. They will no longer fear being wrong, and will therefore enter into a more realistic relationship with themselves.

All growing and learning is determined by curves and cycles. If the cycle is stopped, growth is stopped and the person eventually reverts to the old state where he or she had begun to take the first tentative steps. When the temporary improvement is not followed through, the person is blinded by some actual success, but is not yet secure enough not to fear that the experience may turn out to have been an illusion. Therefore nothing is really resolved yet.

The immature psyche always fluctuates between underestimation and overestimation. Neither is in reality. Only by continuing on this curve can one attain true perspective, and then self-assurance will be gained in a genuine way.

If the frequent wrong conclusion, "If I admit I am not always right, then I fall back into my inferior state," is recognized, then all is well, and the fear of being wrong will vanish. You will realize that the more you can allow for not having to be right, the more your intuition will grow; the validity of your judgment will increase -- but by no means will it always be accurate. Of crucial importance at this stage of the curve is the awareness of the fear of being wrong, due to the unfounded danger that the growth experienced was illusory.

I close with very special blessings for every one of you, for everyone who reads these words, for everyone entering this work now, or being in it already, or entering it in the future. I bless this entire working year and I leave you with my love and warmth for all of you, and with the promise of active help that can come to you to the degree that you recognize and humor your own resistance to self-awareness. Find your willingness to recognize your rationalizations that keep you from truth and reality within yourself, that keep you from growing into a meaningful, full life. May this blessing that is going into you and enveloping you help each and every one, wherever you stand. And may you come to know that life is benign and that your depressions are unreal. The flow of living is continuous and only in your limited view is there any need to fear. The more you remove the shackles of your unconscious, voluntary blindness, the more will you experience the truth of these words. Be blessed in God!

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