

Psoma as The Art of Not Doing Psychotherapy

... at least not in any traditional sense...

Here is the way “psychotherapy” is defined: **Psychotherapy** (also **talking therapy**) is the use of psychological methods ... to *help a person change* behavior, increase happiness, and overcome problems. Psychotherapy *aims to improve* an individual's well-being and mental health, to resolve or mitigate troublesome behaviors, beliefs, compulsions, thoughts, or emotions, and to improve relationships and social skills.

It might seem paradoxical to think of an approach that can be healing and transformative in a positive way but where we are not trying to change anything, improve anything, resolve anything. What could possibly be the role of someone assisting another in this way without trying to make anything happen? If it is not “psychotherapy”, can we still think of it as healing?

Healing is the verb of wholeness. I like to define healing, therefore, as wholeness happening. It is wholeness unfolding, which is natural. Wholeness is intrinsic. So, healing – as they say – is an “inside job”. When we really trust this, we can shift our sense of our role as assistant on this healing journey. We are not “therapists” who try to heal or change or even help someone.

*If we can give up attachment to our roles as helpers,
then maybe our clients can give up attachment to their roles as patients
and we can meet as fellow souls on this incredible journey.
~ Ram Dass*

The key characteristic of this approach which makes it different from “psychotherapy” or even “therapy” is that in psoma we are not trying to make something happen. This is not a method of diagnosis and treatment. The role of a psoma partner is one of assisting by supporting awareness. We do not presume to know what form someone’s healing should take. We know we are simply but profoundly a participant in someone’s healing, and we want to be as skillful and loving as possible as we accompany someone on their healing journey. Our presence supports discoveries about the embodied habits that are generating their experiences in ways that may be unnecessarily stressful. This awareness leads to finding other possibilities for new experiences that would be nourishing. We know it is our presence as a psoma partner that is the key to creating the right conditions for healing to unfold in a natural but mysterious and unpredictable way. This is healing but not “therapy”, let alone “psychotherapy”. And it is certainly an art.

The art of psoma is like any art form – allowing creative energy and intuition to direct the process... trusting that what emerges is going to be surprising and beautiful and not something we can totally control. We engage in it with love and appreciation and humility, knowing that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. There is a sense of awe and wonder about what emerges. There is an element of mystery, unpredictability, and even something sacred. We engage in the process whole-heartedly and we let go of attachment to any particular outcome. This is both art and spiritual practice.