

The Power of Loving Presence in Therapy

by Donna Martin

Loving Presence is a state of mind, an attitude which provides the secure attachment which is the basis for a healthy emotional life. It offers whatever is missing from the person's implicit reality based on their emotional and relational history. When a person is with someone in loving presence and perceives it, that person will take in the kind of emotional nourishment they need and are ready to believe in and receive.

Loving presence offers to fill that need and will be recognized differently depending on the person's core beliefs. For example, the interpretation of what loving presence means could be "You're safe with me" or "I won't hurt you... judge you, leave you, laugh at you..." Or "you're okay just as you are", "I accept you, appreciate you, acknowledge you, respect you, I'm not afraid of you, I hear you, I'm here with you (for you)..."

Loving presence could be interpreted as saying "I'm interested in you... I value you... all parts of you are welcome... I welcome you."

Loving Presence, to some, says "I'll protect you, stand up for you, stand by you..." or "I care about you, I care about how you feel, I want to know how you feel... what you think..."

For some, Loving presence might mean reassurance: "everything's going to be okay."

Or comfort: "I'm touched and want you to feel better."

Or joy: "I enjoy you... I like being with you... I'm happy to be here with you."

Or it might say something about being calm: "I'm okay with whatever happens here... I'm not upset."

Or service: "I'll help you... I offer myself to you..."

The power of Loving Presence for the person experiencing it is the full aliveness of being open to another's beauty and strength, to the human spirit with all its beauty and pain. It brings with it the experience of compassion – of heart opening – a spontaneous opening that happens effortlessly when we are able to behold another's suffering, vulnerability, or child-like qualities.

The gift of Loving Presence is in the experience of being nourished simply as a result of seeing another with appreciation, with a willingness to be inspired, to enjoy the other person's presence as a blessing, to see the divine in them perhaps...

Loving Presence isn't something we do- it emerges as a natural state when we are calm, open, fully present, appreciative and relaxed – not impatient, not efforting or acting in a role, feeling overly responsible or worried or bored. It emerges as naturally as between a mother and newborn child, between lovers, between friends. It blossoms from an attitude or state of mind into a full-bodied experience of joy.