

Being a Healing Presence

by Anne Bonnefin

What is a Healing Presence?

In *'The Art of Being a Healing Presence'* James E Miller says *'Healing presence is the condition of being consciously and compassionately in the present moment with another or with others, believing in and affirming their potential for wholeness, wherever they are in life.'*⁴

The love and support of friends and family are so important for someone going through grief or loss. Being a healing presence is mostly about slowing down, doing one thing at a time and regularly checking that you are being present in the moment and fully available to those you are with. It's about showing empathy, non-judgement, acceptance, genuineness and unconditional positive regard. About using your uniqueness and combining it with intuition and vision.

When someone is really present with you it helps you to be present also. When someone else is life affirming it helps you to begin to believe in it as well yourself.

Are you awake?

Are you awake to yourself? What are you feeling? What are you thinking? Are you aware of what your body is telling you? Are you curious about yourself, your individuality, your humanness, your brokenness? When you can be honest and give voice to your own brokenness and accept it you create a safe space for others to explore their own vulnerability and brokenness.

Are you present?

Are you present with the other person? Who are they? What are they like? What are they going through?

Have you let go of the busyness of everyday life and set it aside to be in the present moment? Life can get in the way of our presence. Have you let go of the chatter in your mind to really be present with the other person to hear their story?

In your desire to help, do you run ahead and take action rather than stay with the moment and help the other person explore a solution from their own inner wisdom?

Have you really heard what the other person is saying?

Are you alert to wholeness?

Healing is not the same as curing. Healing is about wholeness or movement toward wholeness. Miller says *'You can be alert for healing potential and share this awareness as you see it arising. You can bring attention to what you already notice taking place deep within another, helping that person name it for himself, claim it for herself.'*⁴

In being a healing presence, you approach the other in reverence and openness. Your responsibility isn't to try and fix what has happened. Your role is to appreciate, encourage, and bless any impulse towards wholeness that you see and to recognise any response. Then reflect

back to the other person what you see, 'This is what I've heard you say - is this correct?' Stay curious. Ask them 'What do you think you need?'.... it could be to focus on their physical health, stress, relaxation or seeking added support. Help them recognise a positive response. You don't have to know the answers – the purpose is to allow them to voice their story.

Are you intentional?

Being a healing presence is to walk on Holy Ground.

Before you are going to meet with someone prepare a sanctuary within yourself. Use prayer or meditation or a spiritual practice as preparation.

A spiritual practice that you can undertake as preparation is to set aside each stress you may be feeling. Name them one by one and visualise yourself laying them aside for a time.

Another preparation you can do is to take a moment to stand and breath slowly and deeply – as you do remember your intention to be present.

Or practice an Arrow Prayer – where you can say a prayer in just a few words. It could be something like 'May I be present for them in their need.'

Have you created a stress free external environment? A space of calm. You could create a sacred space with flowers or quotes, a bible verse or objects that are inspirational.

Remember to speak less and listen more – any time your mind wanders and you get caught up in your own thoughts or feelings intentionally bring yourself back to the other person and to what they are saying.

Are you listening?

Listening is validating. You show you value someone by listening to them. Encourage them to express how they are feeling and take time to listen and understand what they are going through. Remember that everyone grieves in different ways – there is no right or wrong way.

How can you help them honour their loss? Maybe they could plant a tree or write a journal of memories, treasure precious possessions or write a song; whatever feels meaningful.

Someone who validates you by really listening helps you feel you are not alone.

Are you grateful?

Afterwards remember to take time to be thankful for the encounter and what it has brought in the way of healing to both you and the other person. You could write in your journal about your experience and what it has taught you. Remember to care for your own needs and to live your life mindful of the sacredness of life and thankful for the message of love hidden within healing presence.

⁴ *The Art of Being a Healing Presence. A Guide for those in Caring Relationships* James E Miller with Susan C Cutshall
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