

Self Awareness and Self Love

[\(for a disclaimer on this essay, please read this link\)](#)

Recently, [there was an article which describes research indicating that people who have self-compassion have less depression and anxiety, and tend to be happier and more optimistic.](#) Having been intensely pursuing a path of self love, I have been thinking about this for a long time and want to share some of my personal thoughts and experiences here.

During my formative years (many moons ago), in my catechism class I was taught that I was in this world “To know God, to love God and to serve Him forever” (the sexist language included) which at the time did not make much sense. Over the years of wandering and struggling to understand life and God, this teaching stayed with me. Approximately 40+ years later, I was duking it out with God in frustration, angst and desperation. I was before God (completely naked as Richard Rohr would put it) and said to God with all the passion I could muster, “God, all I ever wanted in my life was to know you, love you and serve you. There is nothing I want to do more than this. Why can I not do that? What is getting in my way of doing this?” God turned me with love and compassion and said “Vally, to know me, first you must know yourself and to love me, you must first love yourself. You can know me only as much as you know yourself and love me only as much as you love yourself. So, try and know yourself and love yourself. As you do that, you will find that I will flow through you and allowing me to flow through you is the service that I desire from you”.

I thought I had come into this world to save the world and here I am being told to save myself. As Gandhi said “Be the change you want to see in the world”. This led to my inspection and evaluations of my beliefs and experiences of self awareness and self love.

How does one get to know oneself and then love one self totally and

completely - warts and all? I soon realized that most of what I believed about myself was what was told to me by others. During my late teen years, I was told that others are a mirror to me and by looking at others reaction to me, I can get an idea of who I am. That reinforced what was etched into my being as a little child with the family mantra “what will others think of you”.

As I explored this issue, I soon began to realize that others are a mirror to me but they are mostly warped mirrors. The image I see in them is warped by their value systems, beliefs and life experiences. Thus, I had been looking at the wrong place to find out who I am. This was confirmed by a very powerful experience I had.

Now, in the process of trying to find out who I really am, I began to realize that I am truly an spiritual being having a human experience (as oppose to a human being having a spiritual experience). Thus, there is a spirit which I call my soul which dwells in this physical body. I truly wanted to experience this soul and I figured if I got to know my soul, that would be a good start. Thus, I prayed and meditated and searched for an experience of my soul. One day, when I was in a very deep state of consciousness, I got an experience of my soul. I simply knew that this was my soul.

My soul said to me, “I am glad you want to know me and I want you to know me and knowing each other can be the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship. But, before we begin this relationship, you need to do one thing”.

Of course I was excited beyond words and I said “What? I will do anything, please tell me what you want me to do”

“Okay, go to the bathroom and look in the mirror [Note 1] and look into your eyes and say ‘Vally, you are magnificent. I love you!!!’”

I thought to myself, that should be easy. I have been on a healing

journey for at least a decade and a half. I had done many retreats and many exercises in this direction. Going to the bathroom and looking in the mirror and saying what I need to say should be a breeze.

But things kept distracting me. I listened to some music, read my e-mail and did everything but do what I needed to do. About a half an hour went by and then my soul then said to me.

“Vally, here is the deal. Life is a dance between you and me. If you get to know me, we can have an ecstatic dance. But if you do not get to know me, then we will step on each others toes and it will be a torturous journey. But, to get to know me, you need to do this one thing first”.

Now the pressure was really on since I was choosing between an ecstatic life or a torturous life ahead. I tried and kept wandering around the house but simply could not do it. Another half hour or so went by and then my soul said to me.

“Do you know why you cannot do this”

“No!!!!”

“Do you want to know why you cannot do this”

“YES, please!!!!”

“Okay, go into the bathroom and simply look in the mirror”

I got up, went to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. When I looked into my eyes, I could feel my soul looking back at me.

“Here is the reason why could not do this. Everything that has ever been told to you about yourself is a damn lie. It is a damn lie to hide one simple fact. Do you know what that fact is?”

I said “No!!! What is it?”

The eyes looked passionate and powerful and my soul said to me “All these lies were to hide a simple fact is that there is absolutely nothing wrong with you. You are perfect just the way you are”.

I felt the intensity of this truth travel down my body and every cell in my body came alive. I was then able to look at my eyes in the mirror and was able to say “Vally, you are magnificent and I love you”. At that moment, it felt like a dam had busted and love came flooding into my being. I was totally filled with love for myself and then my whole being exploded with love for everyone and everything in this world. I was filled with gratitude for every person that I had ever met including my “enemies”, for every stone that carried me, for every brick that housed me, every plant that nourished and healed me. I deeply understood that it was because of all these entities (especially my enemies) I had arrived at a place of perfection, a perfect physical self (a perfect space craft) for my soul to journey through this life. It truly was an ecstatic evening.

I have pondered about influence of others in my self awareness and I do believe that I need a balance (it is a dynamic balance) between looking at others for a reflection of me and knowing that it is a warped mirror.

I now believe that when I see someone, I see a reflection of me in them. If I see them as wounded and flawed, then it is my wounds and flaws that I see in them. Like my friend Jesus said, it is only when I have a beam in my eyes that I see the spec in my brothers eye. If I remove the beam in my eye, then I will not see the speck in my brother’s eye but I will see my brother. Thus, it is my responsibility to look at the beam in my eye when I see my brother as wounded and flawed. Before I point out the wounds and flaws in my brother, I need to get clarity about my own issues. It is my brother’s sacred ground that I am entering and I need to purify myself before I enter.

In my village, there was an old saying that I believe is pertinent to this discussion. It goes “if you see a pile of shit on your path, do not throw a stone at it because it will most likely splash on you.” What this means to me is that when I encounter my brother in a wounded state and acting up, I should simply leave him alone so that he can work out his issues. If I simply poke at him and try to show his woundedness, there is a high probability that I will get splashed. But if I feel called to take some action out of love and compassion for him, then I need to do it with seriousness and sacredness that it deserves. Anthony de Mello makes an important distinction between action and reaction. Throwing a stone would be a reaction but the action driven by love and compassion takes time and effort. My recipe for loving action is as follows.

When I perceive my brother as acting up from his woundedness, I first need to recognize that it is not just my brother's woundedness that I see but a reflection of my own woundedness mixed in with my brother's. I first need to separate out my woundedness from his and get to a place of clarity before I take any action. For example, if I perceive my brother as an angry person, then I am sure that my brother is transmitting some vibrations of anger. Those vibrations are activating the vibrations of anger that are embedded in my being. This gives me an opportunity to examine my anger vibrations and perhaps harmonize them with my core vibrations by becoming aware of them, healing the wounds from which they arise and understanding my own frequencies. But if I am called to help my brother, then it is imperative that I first do my own process and get a clarity on my own issues first. Failure to do this will simply increase the probability that my interactions with my brother will turn into a Jerry Springer show.

There are several processes that can help me get to a place of clarity of my issues. My personal preference for this is the one developed by Dr. Margaret Paul called Inner Bonding [Note 2]. It is a very powerful process which has a systematic 6 steps. Once I have completed these 6 steps, I require one more step before I can approach my brother with intervention toward his behavior. At this point, I need to go into the spirit realm and

talk to my brother's spirit and ask permission to enter my brothers sacred space. A conversation with my brothers spirit may look something like this.

"I see my brother's physical self acting in a way that I believe is not in keeping with the sacredness of his life. I love my brother and I want to help him. Is there anything I can do make him aware of his indiscretions?"

At this point, my brother's spirit may tell me that my brother is acting exactly in a way that is required of him in which case I need to drop the matter, accept my brother's state even if I do not like it and send him love and blessings in the imaginal realm. On the other hand, my brother's spirit may say, "Yes, I need you to give my physical self this information". Now, I have a sacred mission from the spirit which I must fulfill with all the sacredness that I can muster. I need to be make sure that I realize that I am simply a messenger and should not be attached to my brother "getting it". Once I have delivered the message, my sacred responsibility it fulfilled and I need to move on.

That brought me to the next question that bothered me. How do I deal with people who insist on throwing stones at my shit? Do I simply splash on them or cut them out of my life? The answer to this question came to me as an image.

I can view my life as symphony and I am the conductor. The choices I make determines if the music I make is harmonious or a cacophonous. Various people who will play a variety of instruments will come into my life and interact with me. The position I place these people in my life will influence the quality of music that is produced in my life.

A while ago I saw an interview with Dalai Lama that influenced my thoughts on this. The interviewer said that some people believe that Tibet is sacred because it is the center of the Universe and asked Dalai Lama if he agreed with that. I found Dalai Lama's answer to this very profound.

He said "Every person believes that their country is the center of the

universe. Every person believes that his or her village and their home is the center of the universe. In fact, every person believes that they and their life is the center of the universe. And you know what, it is absolutely true. Each person is the center of his or her own universe”

As I began to realize that I am the center of my universe, I began to realize that other people are orbiting around my self in this universe and I can choose the orbit that each person occupies in my universe. The next image I got in this exploration is that at the very center of my universe, I am all alone. At that depth there is no one except me and my God, naked me and naked God and nothing else. Once I have experienced and accepted this aloneness [Note 3] with God, most other feelings are not hard to deal with. Now, I could begin to place various people in my life at different orbits. There are people I resonate with and there are others with whom I dissonate. As a conductor of the symphony of my life, if I place people with whom I resonate with close to me and keep people who dissonate with further away, I believe that I have a better probability of making divine sounds. Thus, I now try to keep people who are going to throw a stone at my shit on a distant orbit so that when I splash, I do not hit them too hard. Only people who are on my spiritual plane are allowed into the depth of my soul. I heard a distinguished speaker once say that our spiritual journey is enhanced if we have a higher order of friends, meaning if we make friends with spiritual people, our spirituality is enhanced. For me, it translate to mean, I need to keep spiritual people who can resonate with my process close to the center of my universe and as we resonate together we will make sweet divine music.

Happy listening....

Blessings and love always.

Vally

Post-ramble:

My dear dear friend Nick, who literally walked away from the snares of death shared this with me once.

He said that he had read somewhere that Narcissus (from whom the terms narcissism and narcissistic are derived) is a much misunderstood person. Narcissus, when he looked into pond of water and saw his own reflection, saw the incredible abundant light that he was. He actually saw the splendor and glory of his own soul and fell in love with it. He so loved his soul that he could not get away from it. When they tried to pry him away from the pond, his soul called to him and asked him not to go away but come and be one with him. Narcissus then plunged into the pond and united with his soul. Narcissus followed the call for his soul.

The question is when I see my reflection in the mirror, can I see my soul, can I see the splendor glory of your own soul? Can I love my true self so much that when it calls me, am I willing to plunge into that pond of love especially when I know that it will mean the death of my ego (or false self)? Am I willing to follow my soul's call to shine ever so brightly in all its glory and give up the false self that I have taken up for my survival?

Note 1: Several years ago when I was in the process of buying a house, the only house I could afford in the area I wanted to live in had lot of mirrors. Floor to ceiling mirrors in the hallway, half wall mirrors in the dining room and huge mirrors in the bathroom. I had no idea why I was being led to buying this house.

Note 2. Those not familiar with this process and some of the terms I have used here, I strongly recommend the book written by Dr. Margaret Paul entitled "Do I have to give up me to be loved by God". It is the best book I have come across on the topic of self awareness.

Note 3. There has been some confusion in my mind about the terms

aleness and loneliness. I prefer Anthony de Mello's descriptions of these terms. Loneliness is a feeling that I get when I am alone and there is no one else with me where as aleness is solitude, the deep feeling that I feel when I alone with God.

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