

HEARTFELT CONNECTIONS NATURALLY CREATE HEARTFELT CONVERSATIONS

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Heartfelt connection, the felt sense of naturally emerging connecting between two people, can be an anchor in developing a strong sense of self as well as facilitating a stronger lived relationship with others. Heartfelt connection centres at the crossroads of both strengthening the sense of the self and of supporting meaningful, enlivened dialogue between people.

Heartfelt connection creates a living, safe base for each person to feel him/her self more fully as the Self, and for each to experience the ‘ME Here’ of the self. And heartfelt connection also creates the base for the experience of ‘We Here’ that emerges in a natural flow towards heartfelt conversation.

In this article I will speak directly from a felt sense experience of a specific event that led to a heartfelt connection with another person, and how that connection opened further into a heartfelt conversation and more. I will share how the whole experience felt, what unfolded as I stayed with the felt sense of that experience, and finally how this experience enhanced further conversations of mutual interest. This event gave me a whole new way of feeling a safe and deepening connection with another person, and changed the nature of exploring something happening between us that was truly creative and supportive of one another. The language here is from my direct experience as it unfolded. The natural unfolding of the form (of the process) is less linear and logical, as it emerges from the felt sense.

HEARTFELT CONNECTION

I can remember the moment when it happened. It felt so new and unexpected. I felt the quality of another’s presence touching me in a way that felt so totally refreshing, as though the life in him seemed to awaken the life in me. I could feel his presence affecting my own, but differently from what I am used to. In fact, I am used to feeling nothing. I keep a very safe distance to avoid feeling diminished, shamed or inadequate in some way. I often avoid making connections with others so as not to be pulled into or pulled down by them in one way or another. But in this situation I suddenly felt more...*more me!* That feeling came as such a surprise and joy because it contrasted with my usual feeling of being defensive and protective.

So when I say I felt open to another person’s presence and, at the same time, felt more alive in my own body, I am saying that I felt as though I were reacting in an entirely unusual way — the very opposite of my instinctive reactions. I wanted to give this reaction a name as a way of holding my new experience. I called it **heartfelt connection**, a connection that awakened my own presence of what it is to be me, feel me, and love me. It seemed to need to

happen in connection with another person, something I could never have done on my own. Yet I can imagine others might come to this understanding differently, in different ways. Some may feel a heartfelt connection with a tree or a bird or piece of music, something outside of themselves that gives them that sense of the deepening experience of self.

But for me, a heartfelt connection with another person gave me a sense of more me, not less. What a remarkable shift in attitude this was, from the earlier attitude that never wanted to open up and feel connected with anyone. But now, maybe, just maybe, I could find a way to explore a heartfelt connection with *you* (the other person) in order to give me this greater sense of myself that feels so alive, so loving, and so welcoming of others.

As I am writing now, vividly recalling this experience, I am drawn to addressing this other person as a “you” rather than “him” because of the immediate intimacy of our encounter. So my story continues: When I can open up to me as I did just then, I feel very grateful for you being there. I want to open my eyes and look at you and say, “Hi! What is going on in you?” There came a remarkable shift in expectation. My eyes and heart were open to possibilities, but there was also a lot of fear there. The change feels tentative. Do I dare? Dare to want this so much? How can I hold on to it?

Going back to that moment again, I remember how I also want to know more about *you*. I want to know what is alive in you, too. I feel alive in me, and now I want to know how you are. What is going on in you? The word that comes to express all these felt remembrances is **spacious**. I seem to have an abundance of space in me to make room for you — just the way you are. I feel a kind of grounding in myself in the knowing that I will not be pulled off center as I make room for you. I can still stand on my own two feet and just be present to what is going on in you. I like that.

This way of being with myself, standing my ground, opens up the possibility of a conversation with you. I really want to make a lot of space to welcome that. Going back to that moment and allowing that felt sense of it all to come freshly, that connection between us, it feels so physical: my body is expanding and connecting to something that feels met. It feels like there is more room for both of us to be present to ourselves and be present to one another just the way we are, not more, not less. So there is a kind of back and forth quality that seems to happen between us, me and then you, and then more me and then more you. That might be all that is needed now, just the feeling of heartfelt spacious connection between us, that spaciousness that seems to be bigger than both of us.

As I feel this heartfelt connection between us, I seem moved to look around beyond us, enjoying the environment surrounding us. My eyes seem more open and alert. Because I can feel your presence, I seem to have more desire to look beyond the periphery of my vision in a way I am not used to. My eyes seem to be able to float from one thing to another without feeling constrained or held. And I seem to be able to take in other things, things that are happening around me and between us. Right now, I am seeing the garden beyond the trees, the sound of the birds. I have room or spaciousness to just enjoy the sounds, the light and the texture of my surroundings. Those external events outside of me, including you, seem to enhance my own sense of me. I suddenly appreciate these clumps of ferns over there as though they have a life of their own. They seem to be almost growing taller as they

are blown by the wind. It is like the life in ferns are being felt in me, and I am feeling more alive too! I like that.

In this moment of writing, I want to come back to this lovely moment of heartfelt connection with you. That is how it began, and now in this moment, sitting in my garden writing, the feeling is coming back to life again. I am noticing my environment, the life around me that supports me but which I usually don't take in. Now life feels more three dimensional; I am so much more engaged rather than just taking in information flatly.

This experience feels different, and it awakens all my senses: my sensitivity to taste, smell, my skin, my visual centers, my nervous system, and especially my sense of well-being. Suddenly my arms and legs want to stretch out to their full extension spontaneously and effortlessly, taking even more space, more physical presence, a sense of **'me here'**! There is a sense of **'we'** here now! I love that.

HEARTFELT CONVERSATION

All of a sudden I become aware that I am in a **heartfelt conversation** already. Here we are together, sharing a conversation with one another, and I didn't recognize what was happening. I was feeling a connection with you, and didn't realize we were already in a conversation about something.

(Here I switch back to 'he' and 'him')

Up to this moment, I have been sharing a story about something in my own life that I feel passionate about. The felt sense of my partner is right here. I can feel his presence actively supporting me, which seems to help me move through the whole thing and stay with it until I am done. From time to time he adds something from his own experience that enhances mine, helping my experiences to move forward and even expand upon them. I am so appreciative of feeling so heard and feeling his support each step of the way as my story unfolds.

But then there comes a moment when I feel like I want something else, something more from him. So I ask him, "What is going on in you right now, as I tell you my story?" I continue to feel my partner's presence keeping me in such close company, but I am also curious to know how all this is affecting him. His response is very warm and supportive and really adds more to what I am experiencing and deepens *the more* as he shares parts of his own life that seem directly connected to where I am. I do feel deeply supported. But then I suggest something that is quite out of the box. "Is there something happening in you, connecting to your life separate from my story?"

He pauses a moment and says, "Well there is *something there*, and it didn't seem at all connected to you so I dismissed it. What came unexpectedly in me showed me a very different picture of where I am in this situation! There is something else happening in me, as I was listening to you. There was this thing you said about relationships and how you are more a one-on-one kind of person, and not really comfortable with the dynamics that often

happen in a larger community. But in myself came something quite different. It was like a light turning on! Oh! I love that sense of community! That is me, not Kevin.”

He said he felt a little hesitant to share this part because my reaction was so different from his own. He said he didn't want to pull me off track, but in truth he realized, “I feel a delight in a small group community which brings a sense of excitement and promise for me!”

When I heard that, and when I took the time to take in his meaning and fully receive the way he gave **that** back to me, something really expanded dramatically in me. My whole body came alive in heightened possibilities. It is true; I am not comfortable with community as such. But when he said he was comfortable, and how he took delight in his own sense of community, somehow I got it; at least I got that his sense of community could somehow live in me, too. What had come alive in him seemed to open me up to the unknown that seem to want to stretch and expand my limiting world view. I said that I noticed what felt so alive in him affected me too. His words awakened something in my own body right here, as I pointed to my body.

My revelation came as a kind of shock to him because he could feel in his body my sense of heightened possibilities. More was happening between us now, and the feelings were palpable. We were both acutely aware of a door opening that felt like a mutual and deeply connected space between us that seemed so much more real, and so much more personal. Clearly, this *aha-connection* was a very **WE** moment between us happening right here, right now, at that moment and...we knew that there were even more possibilities ahead emerging for both of us.

We seemed to really be able to listen deeply to one another, from that authentic place inside us. He was alive to himself, and I was even more alive to myself. There was a back and forth sense of connection between us. It was like our two worlds seem to open up and coexist with one another. Neither of us were collapsing onto the other, dominating, or trying to mirror the other. I could feel the life in him, the whole of it, a sense of him of having a separate life, separate from me, experiencing something very different than what I might experience, but which opened up possibilities for me that I might be able to expand into in my own way. I realized this profound connection was a gift to me. My life just expanded its possibilities of finding ways of being in community in ways I could never have imagined until I was able to touch into his world in this way. It was as though the life in me touched the life in him but differently. This is about a shared life together and what that might feel like, how two worlds can coexist and complement and enhance each other's possibilities in a way that would not have been possible for either of us to do alone.

The entire experience felt so good, so heart warming and so fulfilling. My heart remained open, and I felt so grateful for having this conversation with my friend. I want more of this, more of this **heartfelt conversation** about many other topics that we might like to explore together! Maybe this is what it means to feel *met*, not only met but *matched*. As my friend said, ‘toe to toe’.

HEARTFELT CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD TO *MORE...*

As I reflected on those moments of heartfelt conversation with my friend, I realize there was a similar quality in another conversation with him in which the subject matter was completely different, but I noticed and welcomed the contrast.

Looking back, we realized that we often conversed like this together — openly and spontaneously. This time the topic was about the role of a Focusing Coordinator. He'd asked earlier, "What is a Coordinator's role now, given the changes in the structure of our evolving community?" As he asked the question this time, I was able to hear him differently; I could feel the many deeper layers of meaning for him and why he might be asking this question. I felt a new spaciousness with a sense of appreciation of the complexity of his wondering, that I hadn't experienced before.

And then I asked myself a similar question, "What do I think the role of a Focusing Coordinator is, given the changes going on in our community?" But my response to the question brought me to a very different kind of place than my friend's. For me, the question was not so much about the present as about the past, and how I remembered the early discussions of the duties and purposes of a Focusing Coordinator.

His question, on the other hand, was about *now*, what was happening *now*, and I really welcomed the freshness of his wonderings. I saw that we were coming from different, but complementary places on this subject. I was able to fill him in more about the unfolding history of the Coordinator's role, and its origin and purpose as I saw it, which led us to noticing the many evolving steps into the current definitions today. His next question seemed so appropriate to ask, "Where does it want to go now? What are the next steps, given all that came before?" He offered a lot of new possibilities regarding where things might go now that I had never even began to think about!

Throughout this conversation there was a genuine mutual respect and spaciousness to explore each other's experience and fully hear each other. For him it was *all about...now* and *new possibilities* that are available, given his experience of community building. For me it was about *now* and also *back then*, a dual perspective which opened up so many more possibilities than the fixed ideas that I had held before. Suddenly, because of this shared experience, I began to realize there are many more possibilities for new directions around the question of the role of a Focusing Coordinator. We did not have a solution, nor did we need to arrive at one. We had a heartfelt conversation and that was enough. Again, this sharing is an example of a heart-to-heart conversation — a conversation that would not have been possible unless we were both grounded, in a solid sense of ourselves, and hence able to make room for one another and our differences.

CONCLUSION

Heartfelt Conversations, like Wholebody Focusing, begin with coming back to our *self*, finding our own grounded presence, with a sense of self separate from anything else, so that I can have space in me to have room for you and visa versa. Grounding needs to be there. We each have to be solidly based in our own lives, each standing on our own two feet.

Paradoxically, that sense of ‘ME HERE’ arises when we take the time to first feel a connection with another person. I want to feel that I am not alone, and that someone else is *here*. I don’t have to get caught up in ‘other’. (In fact I would run away if I felt as if I had to take all of that on). I just need to know that I am not alone. Something about not being alone opens my body up to being grounded in myself, especially if I sense that the other person also knows the importance of both of us being grounded. Then I can find myself and feel spacious, while supporting that sense of self and spaciousness in the other person, as well. Then the experience feels *met, matched* and *mutual!*

Others may have different ways of coming to a *sense of self* that works differently for them. Our unique organisms instinctively search out various ways that they need to connect with themselves. But every organism needs to connect with something outside itself in order to find itself, how to be, what to do, in order to find its own ground, to find its own place in the world, and a sense of its own belonging.

In the same way, I need the grounded presence of other persons in order to know and grow myself. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once said, “A person grows as a person in connection with another person and in no other way.” **Heartfelt Connection** and **Heartfelt Conversation** attests to the truth of that thought. So be it!

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