

Sharing Our Understanding

When we are beginning to taste the innate peace and happiness of our true self, it is natural to want to share our understanding with our family, our friends and even casual acquaintances. This paper gives examples of Rupert's advice on how to do this in different types of relationship.

First, here's what he says about sharing our understanding with our children:

Let your children become fully autonomous, independent people. However, it's important as a parent to communicate this love and understanding to them, so that underneath the layers of conditioning that they will acquire from their culture, this understanding remains alive. So what is the best way to do that with a child? Not, obviously, through talking to them. You cannot speak to a child like this.

There are two ways. The most effective way is the silent transmission of your own being. If you are at peace in yourself, if you are not always engaging with the world – including in your relationship with your children – in order to get happiness and peace for yourself, this will be communicated to your children. They may not formulate it for years to come, but when they look back at their relationship with you as a child, they will say 'well now I think about it, whatever was going on, Mum was at peace, nothing disturbed her, she dealt with everything'.

That peace will communicate itself to them. And as a mother, after you've taken care of the physical needs of your child, that's the greatest thing you can communicate to your child – this undisturbable peace and this unconditional happiness, this sense of the absence of lack that you feel, so your child will notice that you are not always trying to fill yourself up with objects, substances, activities etc. This will communicate itself to your child, and you will be modelling for your child the correct relationship to itself. That's the most precious thing you can give to your child.

Then in terms of what you say to your child, you relate with your child in an age-appropriate way, answering their questions on the level on which they are asked. ... That's something you can do all through your child's growing up, just tailor your understanding to their understanding, whatever that might be. And it varies in different children. Some children are more verbal, some children want to explore these matters more verbally: others not at all. So that's the sensitivity that is required as a parent.

[3rd March 2019 [Expressing the Non Dual Perspective to Children](#)]

The two methods of sharing our understanding that Rupert mentions, are relevant to all types of relationship: communicating our undisturbable peace and happiness through the way we live our lives; and answering questions on the level on which they are asked. But in our relationships with adults, he suggests applying an additional principle: maintaining the feeling 'I don't want anything from you, I don't need you for my happiness'. This is what Rupert has said about the ideal relationship between intimate partners, and the relationship we have with our friends:

RS: I think the Church of England should rewrite their wedding vows. And instead of vowing to obey and all that, we should take a vow to love each other unconditionally, which is simply another way of stating the prior nature of our shared being. We don't actually have to vow, it is an acknowledgement of what is already the case, an acknowledgement of the fact that behind our differing thoughts and feelings, and our sometimes-conflictual activities and ways of relating, our being is shared. That would be the first thing to acknowledge when getting married.

And then the second statement I would have the two people make to each other as they get married, is that looking each other in the eye, they would say to one another 'I don't need you'.

Those two recognitions, the recognition that we share our being, irrespective of the content of our thoughts and feelings and our behaviour – that is the essence of a loving relationship, and then at a more relative level, if we have to have a single idea that would give the relationship the best possible chance of being an expression of that shared being, in all realms of our experience, it would be this understanding that 'I don't need you, I don't need you for my happiness'. 'My happiness is prior to this relationship and independent of it. I'm entering into this relationship, because I want to celebrate this happiness and this love intellectually, physically, emotionally. I don't enter into this relationship in order to get happiness or love.' In other words, 'I don't need you'. So much conflict in relationships would be cleared up if just these two principles were remembered. ...

I'm not just talking about intimate relationships, but friendship in general – entering into a friendship where you keep this feeling 'I don't need you, I don't need anything from you'. It's so beautiful. I'm sure you've felt it, when somebody approaches you in friendship without wanting anything from you. You know what it is like to be approached when someone *does* want something from you, but I'm sure you also know what it's like when someone approaches you genuinely with genuine friendship, but not wanting anything from you. It's such a relief. And immediately there can be so much closeness, so much intimacy between you, but it's not sticky. You can't dictate how people will relate to you, but if you relate to them in this way, you will send them such a powerful message, and they will pick that message up.

[8th December 2018: [Romantic Relationships Coming from Freedom and Love](#)]

Sometimes friends ask questions about the teaching, just from curiosity – they've heard you are going on a retreat and want to know all about it. It's usually best to say just a little and see if they are interested. If they are, they will ask more questions, and it will be obvious whether these are from genuine interest or just politeness. As with children, Rupert's advice is to answer directly from your own experience, rather than from theory or from 'what Rupert says', tailoring what you say to the question and the conditioning of the questioner. Most importantly, be sensitive to their reactions and stop if they seem to lose interest.

This is how Rupert describes the way he answers questions:

A question is like a bucket that is dipped into this ocean of pure, unclouded Awareness. What comes out is intimately and uniquely fit to the shape of the bucket. When the answer is heard it resonates with the same pure, unclouded Awareness in the apparent hearer. That is, aware Presence recognises itself.

At this stage the bucket dissolves and only pure, unclouded Awareness remains. There is no teacher who answers and no student who hears. Nor is there any formulated teaching or fixed point of view or attitude from which the responses come.

[Rupert Spira: *Presence Vol II, The Intimacy of All Experience: Pure Unclouded Awareness*]

Our friends may sometimes invite us to collude with their suffering. It can be interesting to notice how often we are tempted by convention into collusion. They might say, for example, 'don't you *hate* this dreadful weather?' or 'the staff at the post office were so *rude* to me'. Social conventions encourage a response such as 'yes, this rain is really terrible' or 'Oh, how dreadful'. But to respond in that way when our happiness remains unaffected by the weather and when we know it can't be touched by any rudeness we might encounter, would be collusion. We can just listen without

colluding, or perhaps, after a pause, we might point our friend's attention in a different direction by sharing the way we are perceiving the world right there and then – the beauty of the landscape in the rain, the delicious smell of damp leaves, the friendliness of supermarket staff. Just gently inviting the friend to share our enjoyment of life, rather than taking an opposing, contradictory or superior position. The appropriate response will arise naturally from stillness and silence, if we allow it to.

How can we help a friend who is experiencing more extreme suffering? We know and understand that all suffering revolves around an illusory but believed-in separate self. But in most cases, trying to explain that to our friend who is in the midst of a crisis would not only not help, it would be counter-productive. Self-enquiry works best when undertaken from calmness rather than in the midst of agitation and distress. Our response will depend on the circumstance, but should come from truth and understanding – not from collusion. There may be some practical help we can offer, but more often, the best help we can give is to remain firmly rooted in the peace of our true nature, and just listen.

This raises the question of how therapists who are established in the non-dual understanding, can best make use of this understanding in helping their clients. This was Rupert's response to a clinical psychologist who was doubtful about whether those with serious mental disorders would find it possible to understand this teaching:

RS: You have to be a good, strong, well-adapted ego to hear this teaching. And there are some people whose minds are too distorted, too far out of the norm – and by the norm, I mean just the conventional ego – that something like this could actually push them in the opposite direction. ... So it's not always appropriate to share it with them.

And even in less extreme times. Let's take an example where someone is a regular, healthy, functional ego in life, and let's say they have never heard of non-duality, they have a materialist outlook on life, and they have no interest in spiritual matters, and let's say you are a therapist rather than a clinical psychologist – a therapist with a non-dual understanding. They come to you and they are suffering terribly in their relationship, because their partner is doing such and such. You don't start off by saying 'you are the empty space of awareness in which all your thoughts and feelings ...'. So even in that case, it's not appropriate to say what I'm saying here. ... Because of their involvement in their suffering – in fact they are suffering precisely because of the involvement of attention in thoughts and feelings – the habit of going towards objects would be too strong.

So in that case, I would talk about what was going on in their relationship. 'What does he do to you? What does she do to you? How does that make you feel?'. You begin, and maybe in the first session you take one tiny step, just listening to them, just that. It would be something huge in their life because they would not be used to being listened to by their partner. Just having a safe space to speak. Maybe that's all that would happen for the first six sessions. Then, presuming that they stay, you might just take a small step, and a small step ... And then maybe 18 months later, you would intuitively feel the moment: 'What is it that knows your experience?' And because you had been skilful and sensitive and hadn't pushed it, you'd said it at just the right time. And if it was just the right time, they'd go 'Ah yes, whatever it is that is aware of my experience is empty of experience'. So again, everything you did with that person for those 18 months would be an expression of non-duality. If that's where you were coming from, that would be teaching non-duality even if you spent six months talking about their family life. Everything you said would be informed by your deep understanding.

[7th November 2014: [Therapy and Non-Dual Understanding](#)]

There are opportunities for sharing the understanding that our true nature is inherently happy, in many chance, brief encounters with people who are relative strangers to us. The checkout person at the supermarket, the customer we stand next to in the queue to board the train, the people who ask us for directions when we are walking down the street. In all those cases, and countless others, if we are abiding as our true nature, its inherent happiness will shine through and will be infectious.

But how should we respond when someone – either accidentally or deliberately – behaves badly towards us? Rupert makes it clear that in those circumstances, he doesn't feel that smiling sweetly would be an appropriate response. Here is an extract from his dialogue with a questioner who had been knocked down at a crossing by an inattentive driver who it seems had gone through a red light:

Q: But the heartbreak was, on behalf of love and connection, I wished that I'd had the capacity in that moment to say something like 'I'm imagining you're upset right now', which would have turned the whole scene differently.

RS: I'm not sure that's the appropriate thing to do, to say to someone who has just knocked you over. It's certainly not what I would say to someone who had just knocked me over. And you think that's the loving thing to say, you think that's the non-dual thing to say. You're just colluding with whatever syndrome it was that caused him to knock you down in the first place. 'There, there, sweetheart. It's OK. You didn't really mean it. You happened to be drunk, but don't worry.' No, it's not OK. It's not loving to collude with that kind of behaviour. It would be much more loving to say: 'no, this is not acceptable'.

Q: It doesn't feel like colluding from my perspective, though, to empathise with him. Because I could tell in his face he was really crest-fallen.

RS: That's not the issue. The issue is you now have a cracked hip and you can't work for the rest of your life – I'm imagining a possible outcome. OK, it wasn't. But you're not there to take care of whatever suffering he's experiencing. In fact, if you were less personal in your response, if you met the situation with an impersonal response, *that* would be the compassionate response. Compassion doesn't mean feeling sorry for someone. It means not colluding with their suffering. That is the truly loving response. Your response was personal. The impersonal response may have seemed on the face of it, to have been a little harder, a little tougher. But it would have been the loving response, the truly compassionate response.

Q: I long in situations of separation, to find a bridge. I didn't want to sap his feelings. What I wanted to do was reach out to him – in the imaginary scenario too. Saying something like I recognised he was hurting and that was me in the car, right. ...

RS: You are colluding with his suffering. You are presuming that he is a separate self in the body that is hurt. And you are trying to make that separate self in the body better. And by doing so, you are reinforcing his belief that he is a separate self. That is not compassion. It is collusion.

[23rd March 2019 Burlingame: *Know Your Own Being As It Is*]

In this teaching, sharing our understanding is not about trying to persuade others, or speaking in kosher non-dual language, or donning a cloak of overt 'spirituality'. It's about leading a normal, ordinary life in a way that is consistent with our understanding, while remaining rooted in openness, emptiness and availability. Here is Rupert's description:

Whatever is needed in each moment is provided, no more, no less. For instance, ideas that contain the past and future may be provisionally adopted if required by the situation, but they are never mistaken for reality. ...

For instance, when a friend asks us how long our flight took, we may be puzzled for a moment. The journey didn't take time. It is now all the way. "Nine hours," we reply with a smile. The "nine hours" were for the mind; the smile was for the friend.

[Rupert Spira, *Presence: The Art of Peace and Happiness*, The Eternal Now]

Contemplation

Relieved of the dictates of the tyrant self, the body and mind are now experienced as open, empty, transparent and sensitive, and are available to express, communicate, share and celebrate our being's essential qualities of happiness, peace and love.

[Rupert Spira]