

## **The dis-comfort zone: why seekers never find**

Many times a day we hear phrases such as: he or she is still “within their comfort zone” or “needs to break out of their comfort zone”, or he or she “needs to bite the bullet”, or “needs to snap out of it and get real”, or needs to “get into the real world”. These are all expressions people will bandy around which have a powerful pop psychology and all have an ideology about a no-pain, no-gain approach to therapy or healing. Essentially there is a perceived situation of so-called “comfort”, but it’s the nature of this “comfort” I want to talk about here because the “comfort” is actually a point of stagnation and also a point of hell. In fact there is absolutely no comfort within the “comfort zone”, it’s a point of depression and stuckness, where a person has no real sense of how to change their situation or whether it’s even possible to do so. They have a contracted sense of “self”, they feel paralysed and unable to express as they would wish to in the world and have great difficulty channelling that process. So really the comfort zone is a dis-comfort zone, but it is *known* dis-comfort, not unknown dis-comfort. It is that very known-ness which makes a person cling to it for safety, even though in fact it’s deeply difficult or depressing, they adhere to it in order to allay the fear of needing to push beyond it.

The main thing associated with the comfort zone is that people really attach importance to breaking out of it, pushing somebody to the edge of the comfort zone, making them move and “face their fear” or difficulty, believing that in so doing they supposedly transform into a different/ “better” person. An expression of this is seen in things like The Forum and various other group-based psychotherapy; Gestalt therapy is also associated with this kind of approach, where there is a situation of confronting one’s fear, seeing things in a “real way”, in a sense feeling the dis-comfort and the challenge of a situation. There are famous books such as “Feel The Fear and Do It Anyway” which exhort people to push themselves to conquer fears, such as arachnophobics meeting the tarantula, or those with a fear of heights jumping out of aeroplanes, all peddling the belief that the person will feel great when they’ve “achieved” or “beaten” it. This is a belief that suggests that the “self” needs to be blasted open or exposed, but the fundamental premise is that “I” can “do” something about “me” which is clearly impossible!

Our basic understanding of this so-called “comfort zone”, is the parameter and limitation of the idea of “me”. As we know, this “me” is an expression of being a separate being, it is the human condition and is also described as “self”. This is really everybody’s “comfort zone”, for most human beings the main parameters of their lives are defined by the presence of ego or “self”, which prevents them having a true understanding of the world. This egoic expression can take many different forms, it can be highly contracted and detached or highly personal and inflammatory, but the “comfort zone” literally is the “self”, there’s no difference. So with the nature of “self”, anything “I” can do or try to do, anything “I” see as a problem, any phobia or issue which “I believe “I” want to change”, produces this notion that one needs therapy of one kind or another where there’s an aggressive response to help “me” try and challenge “myself”. This usually entails going through a process that is about trying to break open that sense of “self”, the “self” is constantly attempting to break it-“self”!

What we notice is that a person will undergo one form of therapy or another and will feel rejuvenated, experientially “opened” in that situation. This will last for a relatively short period of time and then inevitably the “self” comes back in, because having expressed these things usually from a situation of contraction, the energetics of being in that different situation changes the parameters of the “self”. It created a new belief system and often the one that’s offered to the “self” in these particular situations is of an “unlimited energy” ideology. So first of all there’s a belief that the “self” is limited and then teachers will attempt to open this up by moving to the opposite of that, which is the belief in unlimited “self”. So we go from the victimized “self” which feels very small, contracted, narrow, internal, to the inflated idea of “me” as a god or as a powerful expression, thereby seeing the unlimited potential or idea of what “I” am which is a very dominant expression of the ego. So it’s essentially a movement from an inferiority complex to a superiority complex and for the person in the contracted state this massive shift seems to be amazingly uplifting, inflating, assertive and there’s a seeming clarity about the power of what “I” can be and a feeling of freedom having gone through that experiential situation. Of course those who have gone down that path will invite others to be involved in this approach, because it’s made them feel better, freer, inflated.

But in a lot of ways it doesn’t actually make you feel better, it simply transforms the belief system, which is very, very different as you are simply giving up one idea for another. The occurrence of someone completely dropping the previous idea of themselves in one or two processes is very rare, mostly people will be stimulated and then after a while, completely revert to what they were previously, because the previous pattern is far more heavily-ingrained than the pattern that they’ve just added on. Even if they did become the new pattern/expression, the superiority complex forms other problems that are similar to the previous ones, just manifesting in a different way. This is the difficulty of attempting to dissolve the “self” one-“self”, or through some teacher or guru or some other person, in order to alleviate a problem. The notion that one can be “helped” into a situation, that the therapeutic situation is “of help” to the “me” is a major error in understanding. It is in fact the opposite, if therapeutics has any effect it is despite the therapy or therapist and it is a situation where the “me” actually dissolves away, it is no longer in the contraction of inferiority or the contracted-but inflated ego of superiority, it actually dies.

Wilhelm Reich and his expression is very interesting, as to some extent is the nature of tantra, expressing the process of there being somebody called a patient and somebody called a therapist and that these are simply people. These people are essentially both diseased, but their connection can sometimes create a healing process. So there is no teacher, only an energetic connection, which is a situation where something happens despite the ideas of role involved. Any healing occurs despite the healer, any un-learning or letting-go processes occur despite the process of attempting to heal.

When it comes to the “self”, something other than a process that is controlled by the will or wilfulness, which *is* the “self”, has to happen in order to do something about the situation. Pop psychology dictates from supreme judgement, that when a person is reacting as a “victim” or is being “overly demanding” or “aggressive”, that it is through personal effort and “work done” and drive to uncover the historical “damage” has been done, and this process is said to “yields results” therapeutically! This is an

economic model of health and it has nothing to do with health. It is a ridiculous notion and has never worked in the history of therapy, although many people believe that it has. It is impossible for the “self” to correct it-“self”. In Tony Parsons (<http://www.theopensecret.com>) constantly expresses that there is nothing one can do, it is a completely hopeless situation for the “self”, but hopelessness for the “self” is joyous even as a concept because then the parameters of “self” don’t need to be dealt with by “me”. The nature of the “self” falling away simply happens when there is an openness for it to occur, which will happen despite anything the “self” may try to do. As Tony says, one can be lying in the gutter drinking gin and smoking pot or high on a mountain-top meditating for twenty years, it makes no difference to the nature of ripeness or to liberation occurring. It is simply the end of the seeking process.

Fundamentally when we talk about the idea of needing to “break out of the comfort zone”, one is therefore seeking something different, trying to move away from that which is going on and into a different parameter, other than that which is literally as it is. The “self” *is* what is happening, the expression of the “self” is truly what is actually occurring and yet that “self” is simply a hallucinogenic experience. It’s very much like a dog trying to settle in its basket, trying to get comfortable, and we could consider each spin around its basket as being another therapeutic situation we embark upon in order to try to find what we’re looking for, or to try to work out what “I” am, or to find the edges of “my comfort zone” and break through them. But in the end the dog gives an enormous sigh and then rests and at that point there is relaxation, a letting-go process, and there is peace. The same thing occurs in the human being.

There’s a famous Zen phrase:

*“Every Snowflake falls in its perfect place”*

This is very important because it illustrates that everything we do, every action we’re taking is completely impersonal and not driven by “me”, it is something nature is unravelling and unwinding of its own accord. Every time “I” try to take control of a situation, that process of me believing “I” am taking control of it, is actually a process happening through nature in exactly the way it needs to occur. Nature is governing the whole process, therefore unravelling to a specific point of openness occurs because of everything in the Universe, not just because of a particular action taken by one seeming “individual”. In fact one particular “individual” doesn’t exist, it’s the whole universal movement that allows for this process of ripening to occur, in the same way a fruit is ripened on a tree.

So the limited viewpoint of the “self” believes it has free will and choice and that all the directions it is taking are moving it some place. In fact the process of moving oneself towards a particular teaching or way of doing something, or a specific way of practising something is no better or worse than any other expression, but it is all divine, all an expression of boundless energy and therefore because every action is contained within that, the process derives from nature, we are all fingers of the hand of nature. When it is the due date for the ripeness to occur, then it will do so due to every phenomena in existence, not due to the ideology of a specific person making a choice. Everything we do is completely impersonal and utterly intimate, however the “self” cannot see that from the perspective it’s in, and therefore is always about adjustment, contraction and containment of “itself”.

In fact none of us wants to inhabit the “comfort zone”, it is deeply disquieting, a zone is always separate from something else, it has borders and edges, and that is fundamentally why it is uncomfortable.

David Nassim  
07/03/2012