

The Blessing of Receiving Compassion

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From Qualities of Sages in Service:

“COMPASSION: With a deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it, the Sage serves from a deep passion that includes caring and understanding, reciprocity and forgiveness. “

Most of us easily can understand how “sympathy-for-those-suffering” and “appropriate caregiving” are key aspects of Compassion. Kindness in response to another’s plight arises from living the Golden Rule: “Doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.” Mother Teresa was asked how she could pick up the dying in the streets of India and love them compassionately until they died. She explained that she saw in each one the suffering face of Jesus. Compassion for the misfortunate is also expressed by the saying: “There, but for the grace of God, go I.””

What about “forgiveness” as part of Compassion? When we been harmed, “forgiveness” comes when we choose to accept the other’s humanness and suffering which led to their hurtful act. Sages compassionately see the other’s needs and misguided behavior as being human and much like their own needs and poor choices. By compassionately forgiving, the sages also release themselves from holding grudges which would have weighed down their souls.

What about compassionate “reciprocity”? I recently had two hip replacement surgeries. For the first time in my adult life, I was rendered helpless and in pain for an extended time. I have typically waved off extra attention when hurt or down. Not this time. My advancing age has finally brought me some wisdom. This time, I allowed my family (including my 17 grandchildren) to smother me with care, attention, sympathy, and friendly distractions. Having been a “giver” all my life, I now chose to be a “taker.” I allowed compassion. I welcomed their attentions allowing myself comfort, relief, and companionship in my suffering. I experienced a joy of receiving that was richer than the joy of giving. I was no longer stoically alone in my

suffering. By graciously absorbing compassion from others I was deeply nourished and felt powerfully connected to my large loving family. This also created an important opportunity for my grandchildren to learn the wisdom of compassion. They discovered their personal power to bring love and relief to their suffering grandfather. If we allow pain, shame, guilt, pride, outrage, or blaming to rule our choices, we become isolated from one another.

Choosing to give and receive compassion connects our human souls and awakens us to care of the soul of the universe.