

The Spirit of Compassionate Communication

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*Be – and yet know the great void where all things begin,
The infinite source of your most intense vibration
So that, this once, you may give it your most perfect assent.*

RAINER MARIA RILKE, SONNET XIII

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Foreword

This short volume is a companion to *Choosing Life: The Practice of Compassionate Communication*. It is an exploration of the spiritual dimension of compassionate communication. This is the dimension that underlies its power in everyday life, and points to its deeper possibilities.

The individual chapters are quite short. My suggestion is that you pause and reflect after each one and be willing to read each chapter more than once.

The companion volume, *Choosing Life, The Practice of Compassionate Communication*, provides step-by-step guidance with exercises for those who wish to explore in practice what is outlined here.

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If you are interested in exploring compassionate communication in the company of others with similar aims, the Centre for Compassionate Communication offers regular workshops and practice groups. Further details can be found on the Centre's website, where its publications are also available, at:

www.compassionatecommunication.co.uk

RICHARD BROADBENT

September 2017

FOREWORD 7

INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of a personal exploration. It makes no claim to offer definitive answers or paths to fulfilment. It shares a personal understanding of the dynamic of human life, in the belief that by sharing our own sincere enquiries and efforts we all travel more quickly along our chosen paths.

What is explored in the following pages in one sense can be expressed quite briefly. What we experience as our life is in fact the creative interaction between qualities of life that live within us and the events of the external world. Our role in this interaction is to bring the two into relationship, a creative act that both fulfils us and provides something important to the world.

Sadly, we live our lives overwhelmingly by reference to the outer world rather than to

the life within us. This imbalance vitiates the creative possibility of living in a balanced relationship between inner and outer and this in turn has consequences for our experience of life.

Life seeks expression through us. We have a responsibility to ourselves, as well as a creative opportunity, to facilitate the full expression of what is uniquely ours in our interaction with the phenomena of the external world.

What is on offer for us is fulfilment in a sense far more complete and lasting than the satisfaction we take in external accomplishment. The external world and our accomplishments in it matter, but they are only part of the story. This is just as well, since the events of the external world are, in more than the short term, largely uncontrollable. If they were all we had we would be vulnerable to repeated disappointment or shock.

To the degree that we are able to become more familiar with our inner qualities of life and

consciously manifest them in the outer world, we are liberated from dependence on external events to determine our state. The quality of our experience of life begins to balance the content of life. We are better able to choose how we enter the experience of life, rather than simply reacting to it. This both nurtures our inner life and is empowering in external life.

To bring our inner life into relationship with the world in this way begins by seeing how we actually are in life and the degree to which our lives are a function of our habituated reactive interpretation of events. We create stories about life that define what is and what is not desirable, and we believe our stories are true.

The most important step towards releasing ourselves from our habituated thoughts about life is to turn within. There is another dimension of life within us, and it is these inner qualities of our life that we wish to explore and nurture.

When we can begin to manifest the qualities of life that truly matter to us, rather than vicariously seeking to create circumstances that stimulate those qualities within us, then we can begin to live. This is choosing life, and it leads us to a world of possibilities far removed from the one-dimensional experience of everyday life that over time we become accustomed to.

The realisation that both peace and fulfilment in external life derive from, and must be balanced by, attention to and nurture of our inner life brings a completely new perspective on life. On the one hand, it underlines what in our hearts we already know – that there are no quick fixes in life. But it also underlines the fact that our lives are in our own hands. We are not dependent on circumstances or on others to create change, even if the road to and the form of that change may lack the certainty and timescale our minds crave.

Moreover, we may also begin to see that the experiences we label as painful are not necessarily what we think, but are much more closely bound up with our learning, growth and development. It is through learning rather than evasion that we avoid repetition.

The book begins by exploring the nature of everyday relationship and experience. It moves step by step through the way our experience is related to the dynamic of our inner lives, and how the two can be brought into a harmonious and creative relationship for our benefit and for the benefit of all.

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CHAPTER 1

Relationship