

Compassionate Inquiry

with Dr. Gabor Maté

Outline

The Purpose of Therapy

To help people connect with their in-the-present authentic selves

With Our Minds We Create the World

And first, the world creates our minds

Interpersonal Neurobiology

The Question of Safety

Not the same as the absence of threat

The Power of the Group

What is Trauma?

1. disconnection from the self
2. disconnection from the present moment

The Impact of Trauma

1. on relationship with self (shame and its defenses)
2. on relationship with others (mistrust, over-reliance, fusion)
3. on our world view (mistrust, denial)
4. on our physiology (Inflammation, hormonal)
5. on our nervous system and its perceptions of safety (autonomic nervous system dysregulation)

The Myth of Normal

1. a diagnosis is not an explanation, only a description
2. "pathology" as adaptive dynamics
3. Why there is no such thing as PTSD or ADHD as medical entities

Coping Mechanisms as Wounds to the Self

In the way of the Self are coping mechanisms, personality patterns, habits and self judgements. Many of you have only one problem - you are judging yourselves harshly. The self-judgement served a purpose because it kept you in line as a child.

This is Gordon Neufeld's list of personality patterns:

1. when you don't get the attention that you needed you become consumed with attracting attention.
2. If you didn't get the approval you needed you'll be consumed with winning approval and have a winning personality.
3. If you were not valued you'll be craving to measure up to people's expectations so they can value you.
4. If you weren't made to feel special you might become very demanding.
5. If you weren't esteemed for just who you were you'll want to impress people.
6. If your importance as an individual wasn't valued you might end up in the helping professions, be helping people all the time. That'll give you a sense of importance.
7. If you weren't liked for who you were, you'll be very, very nice. You will be liked by being nice, and suppress some of your authentic features.
8. If you weren't loved you might become very charming.
9. If you weren't recognized for who you were you might be concerned with seeking status. You might become a very successful person and empty inside because this movement to get validated from the outside actually hurts you.

Perceptions vs Feelings

We work with and accept feelings

We question and seek to understand perceptions and their source

Implicit Memory

"...when people are influenced by past experience without any awareness that they are remembering."

"[The] implicit effects of past experiences shape our emotional reactions, preferences, and dispositions—key elements of what we call personality..."

(Dr. Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, The Mind and The Past*)

The Tragic Conflict Between Authenticity and Attachment

What Is The Personality?

We are NOT our personality

Will and Counterwill

The Super Ego

The Meaning of Healing

We are 100% Responsible

--reaction or response?

The Five Levels of Compassion

As a working definition, there are five levels of compassion. I'm not saying this is a Universal definition, but it's mine. They are:

- 1) Ordinary Compassion
- 2) Compassion of Understanding
- 3) Compassion of Recognition
- 4) Compassion of Truth
- 5) Compassion of Possibility

The Behavioural Approach to Therapy

The Relational-Developmental Approach to Therapy

The Client-Therapist Relationship is Like a Marriage

Who Are You as a Therapist?

And, question for both client and therapist: who do you think you are?

Empathetic Abiding Presence

Components of *empathetic abiding presence* range from composure, evenly suspended attention, mindfulness, empathetic listening, "doing by non-doing", responding to distress with calmness, and equanimity. Buckman (1967) reports that the quality of empathy with presence and demeanor is crucial in this work because "the patient is very susceptible to mood and voice tone of therapist, nurse and other people in the treatment unit" (p. 89).

--Above and below from an article (Phelps) on psychedelic therapy, but it applies ideally to all therapeutic work

"A good therapeutic relationship helps the patient to let go of psychological defenses, surrender to the experience, and endure the difficult periods of sessions characterized by intense physical and emotional suffering or confusion. The quality of the therapeutic relationship is essential for working through on of the most crucial situations in psychedelic therapy, the crisis of trust."

Relevant Quotes:

"The fundamental thing that happened and the greatest calamity is not that there was no love or support. The greater calamity which was caused by that first calamity is that you lost the connection to your Essence. That is much more important than whether your mother or father loved you or not."

~ A.H. Almaas

That loss of self is much more important than what your parents did.

"Your conflicts, all the difficult things, the problematic situations in your life are not chance or haphazard. They are actually yours. They are specifically yours, designed specifically for you by a part of you that loves you more than anything else. The part of you that loves you more than anything else has created roadblocks"

to lead you to yourself. You are not going to go in the right direction unless there is something pricking you in the side, you, "Look here! This way!" That part of you loves you so much that it doesn't want you to lose the chance. It will go to extreme measures to wake you up, it will make you suffer greatly if you don't listen. What else can it do? That is its purpose."

~ A.H. Almaas

Here is an excerpt from an article that appeared in the medical journal "Pediatrics", the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The article is from the Harvard Center of the Developing Child and appeared in February of 2012.

"The architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth, continues into adulthood, and establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation, for all the health, learning, and behavior that follows."

The interaction of genes and experiences literally shapes the circuits of the developing brain. It is critically influenced by the mutual responsiveness of adult - child relationships, particularly in the early childhood years."

The Process of Compassionate Inquiry:

There are no steps, just stepping stones.

- In my mind at least, there are no steps. It's not like I say, "Here's Step One and here's Step Two". It is like a cycle and it keeps moving around. There is not a to-be-prescribed succession of steps, but a cycle of steps that we move through, as appropriate, hoping to get to a higher level.
- Here's an analogy. If I'm walking along the path, and the path is straight and firm, then you know, just first step, second step, third step, fourth step. But it's not like that. It's more like we're going through a marshy field with some stones over here that you can step on. I can't just tell you to take one step after another because you're going to walk into the marsh. You want to find the stones. And so whichever is appropriate, that's what you're going to step on.
- It has to be a flow, and it can't be prescribed.

Further Training:

For further training in Compassionate Inquiry, please visit www.compassionateinquiry.com

There is a Self-Study Short Course as well as a year-long, intensive Professional Online Training, which will begin Sept 21, 2020. Register before July 20, 2020.

Selected Resources:

A.H. Almaas. The Diamond Heart Series, Volume One. Elements of the Real in Man

- best book on development of the personality. Recognize the ego and connect with the real person underneath the ego. Very deep spiritual guide.

Michael Brown. The Presence Process.

- we don't react to what happens but to our projection of what happens
- 10 weeks of conscious breathing and daily affirmations

Daniel Siegel. Parenting from the Inside Out; The Developing Brain

- psychiatrist, seminal thinker

Byron Katie. Loving What Is

- when you have a judgment about somebody else, it's always about yourself

Eckhart Tolle. The Power of Now.

- modern expression of Buddhist thinking

Bessel van Der Kolk. The Body Keeps the Score

- international expert on trauma

Peter Levine. Waking the Tiger; In an Unspoken Voice

Allan Schore. Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self

- brain development

Ann Johnston. Drink.

- about women and alcohol.

Helpful Techniques: EMDR, Compassionate Inquiry, Pat Ogden's Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing, Yoga, Mindfulness, EFT

Books by Gabor Maté

Scattered Minds: A New Look at the Origins and Healing of Attention Deficit Disorder, Vintage Canada, 2000.

When The Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress, Vintage Canada, 2004.

Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers, Vintage Canada, 2005.

In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction, Vintage Canada, 2009.