Compassionate Listening: *Evolving Practice*

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Waikato DHB. (2011)
What is Caring?

- According to Simone Roach:
  - “Caring is a human mode of being”
What is compassion?

“The word compassion is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum* which together mean to suffer with.”


According to Nouwen (1980) “compassion means full immersion into the condition of being human.”
Compassion

What often comes to mind when contemplating compassion is suffering. It is natural to avoid suffering and to flee when encountering suffering of some kind. To be compassionate entails a shifting from one’s own space into the space of another. Being present for that person, to try and alleviate or share some of the burden of illness, anxiety and pain. To share in our common frail humanity.

Peter Kimble May 2008.
Through compassion we feel connection for another.

- We somehow feel suspended in time when this connectedness occurs.
- There is a feeling of safeness and gentleness in each others presence.
Taylor (as cited in Stickley & Freshwater, 2006) states that: though listening may only be achieved when the nurse creates the therapeutic space within the relationship to give him or herself the opportunity to experience the emotions and feelings in the here and now, to further facilitate relating to patient as person. The ability to listen to others entwined with the ability to listen to oneself. (p.14)
We get there through listening:

- Taylor (as cited in Stickley & Freshwater, 2006) states that:
  “though listening may only be achieved when the nurse creates the therapeutic space within the relationship to give him or herself the opportunity to experience the emotions and feelings in the here and now, to further facilitate relating to patient as person. The ability to listen to others entwined with the ability to listen to oneself.” (p.14)
“We are so busy we don’t even have time to listen to ourselves never mind stopping to hear another”

Ben Okri (Nigerian Writer)
To be present and available to discuss these issues with patients can lead to another place. A connectedness that is difficult to describe but an experience that opens up to human sharing, a special bonding where tears and laughter are shared, where the core of our oneness with humanity is experienced as embodiment and from which flows the creative presence of Spirit.


During those special times of sharing there is the realization that for a brief time suffering was shared, healing took place and something uniquely meaningful occurred.

“Guided reflection gave me the opportunity to allow myself time and space to ‘spring clean’ emotions long held on to, deep within emotional depths. The theme of these emotions has been ever present in my reflective work. Now my reflective practice feels like a new dawn, a new horizon of opportunity towards realising nursing’s therapeutic potential.”

Five basic modes of **being with another**
Hallsorsdottir, S (1996)

1. **Life- Destroying (bio-cidic)** A mode where one depersonalises the other, destroys life and increases the others vulnerability. It causes distress, despair & hurt. It is the transference of negative energy or darkness.

2. **Life-Restraining (bio-static)** A mode where one is insensitive or indifferent to the other. It causes discouragement and develops uneasiness in the other.

3. **Life-Neutral (bio-passive)** A mode where one does not affect the life in the other.
4. **Life-Sustaining (bio-active)** A mode where one acknowledges the personhood of the other, supports, encourages and reassures the other. It gives security and comfort. It positively affects life in the other.

5. **Life-Giving (bio-genic)** A mode where one affirms the personhood of the other by connecting with the true centre of the other in a life giving way. It relieves the vulnerability of the other and makes the other stronger. It enhances growth, restores, reforms and potentiates learning and healing.

Example Bio-cidic / bio-static

- CM Poem 9

• The less our patients get the less they expect
Aroha’s Story:
Bio-active / Bio-genic

“ My three angels are very special people, but it is their human touch that makes them angels. The others are mere technicians; they carry out the mechanical functions to keep my body alive. Maria, Joan, and Florence soothe my tortured soul.”

Lévinas prefers to think of philosophy as the "wisdom of love" rather than the love of wisdom.

This is a challenge to basing our care totally on the mechanistic Western Models.
Levinas's thesis "ethics as first philosophy", then, means that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is secondary to a basic ethical duty to the other.

Levinas
“Ethics of Face and Hand”: A Reminder:
We literally hold another person’s Life in our hands and are the source for sustaining our own and others humanity

Levinas, French & Logstrup, Danish Philosopher

Jean Watson © 2011
We have to move from the “Case” to the “Face”

From:

“The patient to the Spirit filled person behind the disease”

Jean Watson 2011
Practical Examples:

- Quiet time in Children’s Hospital in Denver, Colorado:

- Hand washing Ritual
Opportunities For Ritual “Handwashing”

- PROVIDES A PAUSE TO:
  - Quiet Busy Mind
  - Wash Away Old Experience
  - Center in Caring Intention
  - Honour Self and Other
  - Reconnect to Core Values
  - Bless and Release Last
  - Person/Situation
    Purify Sacred Space for Authentic Presence
  - Open to Ability to Give and Receive Next Person/Situation

The Children’s Hospital, Denver
Towards Realising Therapeutic Potential

- Poem: Reflect the actions.... Johns, C. (2010)
Conclusion

- Heart centred or mind centred practice??
- Caring/compassionate practice does not entail more dollars. It is a way of being.
- The choice is up to each individual.
- One individual, one ward, one area, one hospital, one region, one health care system, many country's health care systems.....healing for humanity?
References:


