Being with – Information Sheet

"Curiosity is the cure for trauma"

Peter Levine

Why?

When we, or someone else, has feeling or thought that seems unnecessary or not true, we often try and reassure, tell them or ourselves that we/they do not need to feel that way. Sometimes this is helpful. We bring in a different view on the situation. If it makes sense then it can be taken up and things can feel or be seen differently. Often, however, this is invalidating and does not help; often what is being felt just needs to be known with kindness and attentiveness.

To *be with* an experience – our own or that of another – with curiosity and interest and a kind of calm we are sending the message that whatever is being felt is okay, that we are okay, and that this is just part of the human experience. And when we can stay with something in this way we support our and others' bodies and psyches to move through, to digest; we let the feeling do its work and something new can emerge.

How?

1. Stay as calm and curious as you can.
2. Validate what is being felt: Eg. *That is really hard to feel that way; that sounds scary or awful to have those thoughts; it sounds a really lonely feeling.*
3. Reassure with presence (not refuting the experience*): I am here with you, I am here with this.*
4. Ask questions. Ideally draw on any sense you get from what is being described, how you feel or what you see when you hear about it: Eg. *When you feel this what is it like? A dark cloud, a lonely night with no stars, a desert?* These kinds of questions help us get to know something and help us look at it, not just be stuck in it.
5. See what changes, how the experience becomes richer in description, maybe it starts to dissolve, or memories and associations start to come up. Sometimes these pop up as seemingly unrelated things but know they rarely are, usually some link between what is being felt inside and what is being thought about in the world outside is linked. It can be useful to explore this.
6. Stay with what is happening until feels different or a bit better. If becomes overwhelming or too unsettling just note that and go do something settling.

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