

Inclusive Attention

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The typical notion of 'paying attention', or 'attending to', involves a narrowing of the mind to a point, while excluding everything else. When you concentrate on a subject, on a talk, on a conversation, consciously or unconsciously you build a wall of resistance against the intrusion of other things. Therefore your mind is not wholly there. It is only partially there, because part of your mind is saying, "I must not look out the window, I must not watch the people coming in, I must pay attention." Your mind is resisting something and part of your energy has gone into that resistance. When you discipline your mind, it creates a division which dissipates the energy of the mind. We are either trying to discipline the mind so tightly that it cannot deviate, or we just let it wander from one thing to another. These two states of attention are all we know.

But there is a different kind of attention; a state of mind which is not exclusive, which does not shut anything out, yet is focused and does not restlessly wander all over the place. It is being totally aware so that your mind is inclusively attentive without being caught in the process of exclusion. If you listen comprehensively so that there is no division and therefore no form of resistance then you will find the mind can pay complete attention to anything without effort.

If you are aware of every movement of the mind from moment to moment, there is no distraction, and the energy of the mind is not wasted in resisting something. When someone is speaking, being inclusively attentive is giving your mind not only to the words, but also to the silence between the words. The whole of that listening is attention. You can hear a song or a sound and let the mind be so completely full of it that there is not the effort of learning. You can listen without any resistance because *your mind has space* and silence and is therefore not distracted. If your mind has space, then in that space there is silence, and from that silence everything else comes and then you can listen – you can pay attention without resistance. If the mind is not overcrowded, not ceaselessly occupied, then it can listen and be fully aware.

When we quiet all the interfering noises in our system, we then maximize the information in the messages we pick up and transmit. Total, uncluttered readiness for the unexpected is what we need. If we think we've got it at one moment, we may lose it in the next. Quieting the busy surface of our minds, we can free our inner eye to find that little point which penetrates right to the heart of things. We can face each moment naked of identity, open to whatever comes.

Absolute attentiveness is vital to self-awareness. It is the state of mind that allows us to perceive what has to be. It often entails having to be attentive to multiple dimensions of being. I only see you if I pay attention. I only exist, in my own eyes, if I pay attention to myself. Attention is reality and reality attention. Every moment lived in absorbed attention is simultaneously a beginning and an end. In such attention we are radically open to the unexpected, to letting life live us. Any event, however small, opens the door to infinity.

In short, inclusive attention is when *you become* what you see-hear-sense. It is a total sense of *interbeing*, or *being with* that which you are with. The how's and why's disappear, clear of any preoccupations that might blur a direct seeing. Having brought your whole unimpeded self to the moment, you can then carry your perception of it beyond the moment, and beyond the self.

Excerpts from:

"Listening to Silence", by J. Krishnamurti

"Crystalline Moments", by Nadia Boulanger

"The Door to Infinity", by Flora Courtois

"Dhyana: The Long, Pure Look", by Padma Hejmadi

"The Attending Physician", by Richard S. Sandor

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Jonathan Goldman asserts that “frequency + intention = healing”. He emphasizes strongly that it is not enough to hone in on a frequency that may be beneficial. The practitioner’s positive, healing intention is also essential for the sound therapy to work in healing. This concept reminds us that in addition to playing beautiful music, we must be present in the moment and focus on adding to the music our positive intention for healing, harmony, peace or whatever is needed.

Music is a force that can be used for good or harm and therefore, again, intention is key.

Our greatest tool is our intention. CRT

The purpose of practicing Inclusive Attention is to create an experience of peace and comfort for those we attend, allowing them simply to “be,” while being held in a cradle of awareness. The use of therapeutic harp has no agenda—it is about resonating with and matching the vibrations of another person, to increase the flow of energy and open up more possibilities. The practice of Inclusive Attention provides a foundation for this process.

Inclusive Attention is a meditative state in which we are aware of our own somatic (affecting the body), emotional and cognitive experience and expand this awareness to include another person. This term was devised and articulated by Susan Gallagher Borg, founder of the Resonant Kinesiology Program, to describe a form of deep listening and the act of relating between two bodies or states of being. It is a powerful form of energy. Borg explored ways of applying age-old healing practices to patients who were without hope for significant relief through the prevailing scientific, western medical treatments.

When assessing a patient’s needs, we must hold one question in mind: **“What is willing to meet me?”** In the Module 2 workshop, we practice Inclusive Attention with touch, movement and sound to help us realize the power of our thoughts! We must learn to develop awareness of our energetic habits and tendencies and move beyond them to create and cultivate the “don’t know” space, a place of having no agenda.

Harp practitioners use the harp to reflect back the energetic states of patients that they discern through their major sensory systems. They learn to follow what they find intuitively rather than only intellectually, thus avoiding the temptation to interpret the patient’s needs through their own emotional filters.

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As harp practitioners, we are encouraged to develop the ability to apply Inclusive Attention to better “let life live us,” when we work with clients. We practice leaving our minds spacious and open, devoid of judgment, resisting nothing while maintaining an attitude of curiosity. We enter a “beginner’s mind,” eager and curious, and withholding judgment and fear. It is for this reason that we as harp practitioners need to be in touch with our own dynamics, our own personal biases or prejudices, our strengths and weaknesses, our own issues and agendas—in short, we need to know ourselves very well. Only by knowing ourselves, can we then we set ‘ourselves aside’, ‘empty’ ourselves in order to make room for the Holy ‘Other’. Then, we can be totally involved with the present moment, with the Universal Energy we are tapping and with our patient and their needs. (Please see the Vital Self-Knowledge chapter in this regard.)

Applying Inclusive Attention helps us to separate our emotional reactions to the condition of a client or patient from our healing work. If we allow our emotional reactions to become the center of attention, we risk projecting negative healing energy that will burden both client and practitioner.

Tools for utilizing Inclusive Attention

As harp practitioners, we develop a practice of “deep listening” to our self in the presence of patients, a practice that includes four components:

- noticing the sensation of our own *breath*
- noticing our relationship to the earth—*grounding*
- noticing the impulse to *move* and following it
- noticing the *sound* and vibration of our own voice.

In a sense, we are seeking to develop a kind of ‘meditation in action’, where we are *aware* of ourselves objectively but also *immersed* in the moment at the same time.

In this respect, we also need to attend to our “sense of separation,” the awareness we may have that the external situation or our own internal concerns are drawing us away from our deep listening. We may be investing energy in the past, which leaves us with less energy for the present. We may be talking too much or perhaps we are being too active, which can cause loss of chi, or life force.

We need to keep returning to ourselves, to reclaim our focus on the four components of deep listening and to take back any energy that may be drawing us away from Inclusive Attention toward other concerns. We can start by practicing “energetic” habits of mind, trying to be aware of our mental states, attitudes and emotions and paying attention to where our thoughts are. Our motto (mantra) could be “don’t judge it; attend to it.”

We can:

1. use breathing to bring ourselves back
2. ground ourselves
3. sound or hum to calm ourselves when we are anxious or angry.

When we work with patients, we can practice separating our perceptions from our judgments. We can see, recognize and work with situations and behaviors without passing judgment on them, by cultivating an open mind and continuously asking, “What is willing to meet me?” Curiosity has no judgment and is a very therapeutic attitude. If we feel ourselves slipping into judgment or criticism, we can use humor and self-awareness to move back into a more open perspective.