The Connection Dyad
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"Tell me something you want me to know." "Thank you"
"Tell me how communicating that changed our relationship." "Thank you"

The first phase of Dogzen is what is documented in the booklet, Cultivating Naked Awareness. It's about the root practices that help you develop awareness of awareness and what comes with it, the capacity to reside at the base of pure awareness in daily life. It's letting go of things and being fully present in the moment. It's getting out of your mind. It's appreciating how our minds create our reality. It's cultivating pure awareness being aware of itself.

The second phase is about pure or direct contact between individuals. It is about pure awareness, here, connecting with pure awareness, there. It's about opening to the other; it's about naked listening; it's about speaking the truth; it's about tuning into love, compassion, understanding, and sharing. It's about developing relationships that are real all the way down to the essence of being. Ideally, it is about dissolving the sense of separation between us. The Connection Dyad is a very effective practice to help with this phase.

A Little History

The idea for this practice came to mind while I was driving on the freeway many years ago. I was thinking about communication, dyads, interpersonal contact, and things like that. I was reflecting on how often I dealt with people who weren't very aware of how/what they say affects others. I'm sure you've had the experience of listening to someone and feeling that they weren't really talking to you, but just spouting or, maybe, talking into their own mind. I realized that I probably did that a lot too, and that a dyad directed right at that blind spot would be useful in raising consciousness. The Connection Dyad popped into my head right then. (I called it the "Janus Process" at the time, but it is better to call it the Connection Dyad.)

A short time later I got a group together to give it a try. What resulted really took me by surprise. We did, as I recall, three 40-minute dyads, and the result was that nearly everyone was expressing their deepest heart-felt love to one another and vowing to honor and cherish each other forevermore, and to always be honest. Something profound had happened and we were all amazed. I ran a number of Connection Dyad evenings after that with similar results.

The Nuts and Bolts of It

There is enough information here for you to be able to do the Dyad, and even enough for you to be able to teach others how to do it. The discussion assumes you already know the basic techniques and format of the dyad as done in Enlightenment Intensives, Zoom Dyad Retreats (ZDRs) and other dyad-based activities.

There is a pair of Connection Dyad instructions. You start out with, “Tell me something you want me to know.” This simply gets you, the active partner, to communicate something to the receptive partner. Although exactly what you say is not of primary importance, it should be something that you really want the other to know. It should be fairly short, not your life story or anything like that. Note that it isn’t asking you to probe into the subconscious mind to root out deep unconscious messages. That can be done by other techniques. It just needs to be something you want the other to know. Keep the answer short enough so that you can spend some time with the second instruction. You should indicate when you are done and the receptive partner will say, “Thank you”.

The second instruction is, “Tell me how communicating that changed our relationship.” That’s quite a mouthful and the receptive partner may not be able to memorize it right away. Reading it from paper is OK until you memorize it. With this instruction, you notice what happened when you gave your response to the first instruction. What changed? What was the effect? How did they react? How did I react? Perhaps even, what was your motive in saying what you said and did saying it accomplish that? You turn your attention from your message to the state of relationship you have with your partner and communicate what occurred in the relationship from your communicating what you said to them.

After finishing that communication, you signal you are finished and the receptive partner says “thank you” and gives the second instruction again. “Tell me how communicating that changed our relationship.” The “that” in this instruction refers to what you said immediately before, not your response to the first instruction. When you are finished with that one, the receptive partner acknowledges and repeats the second instruction again. You go on like this until the 5-minute bell sounds. The number of times you do the second instruction will vary, depending on how long you talk for each cycle.

There is another version that does not use the 5-minute bell that seems to work as well. The dyad roles change after three iterations of the second instruction. So it is A - B - B- B - change over.

Some Advice About How To Do This Process

Everyone is free to say "I don't know" as an answer to the second instruction. Maybe you just don't know how what you said changed the relationship. Sometimes a participant will say "I don't know" several times and even start to get angry about it. They'll say, "I don't know!” "I don't know!” and then kind of yell at it. At that point they get a sense of how yelling that answer affected their listening partner. If you are leading a group, you can just let them know that it is OK to say "I don't know," but to not let that stop the process. Just keep at it. Eventually they will find that they actually do know some things.

Some people aren't used to being aware of another's state, so they are not comfortable with saying how another's state changed. They get caught in thinking that it is improper to say what another's state is, since they are not inside the other to see or feel it so they fear they will be “laying a trip” on them. They’ll say, “How can I know?” It helps to be clear that you are reporting your own state when you do this. You are reporting how it seems to you, not how it

actually is for the other. Unless you are clairvoyant, you really won't know how it is for them. You should just report how it actually is for you.

Some people have an aversion to"analyzing" the state of a relationship. They prefer to just let it happen naturally. Often, the feelings are the important things in the relationship and intellectualizing what is going on seems foreign to them. You should realize that intellectualizing isn't the intent of the process. We focus on how what we say affects the relationship, and in doing so, we put our attention on who we are talking to. We intend to be in real contact with them. That's the purpose of this dyad, to help us to get truly in contact with the other when we relate. It is about being real with them, respecting that you actually are connected to each other. In the process, you realize and understand that your own sense of what state the other is in is also a measure of your own state.

Finally, some people report that communicating something really isn't the initial cause of the change in the relationship as the instruction implies. Yes, true, but at this point, you should not let the wording of the instruction be a problem. The key is to be aware of, to notice, how the relationship with your partner is changing. That is the real focus of the process. That's about it. Do a couple of dyads like this and see what happens.