

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUS CONNECTION

Part of chapter 14 in Stephen and Ondrea Levine's Book entitled, *Embracing the Beloved. Relationship as a path of awakening*, p70-75.

"The first level of connection is physical . . . Most exchanges are on the level of sensation . . . As a level of consciousness, this is the exploration of sensation: body awareness, mindfulness of sensation, posture and movement. At this dense level it is not difficult to see how consciousness becomes identified with its sensory objects – and how it tends to relate *from* its pleasure.

As a stage of growth, this is a primal, Survival stage. It is of prime importance to be familiar with the gross and subtle energies of this level, for it is on this level that a merging joyousness as well as much confusion can be enacted . . . Although this level can be great "fun," it can be very seductive, drawing consciousness into identification with sensation "as the realest thing happening." . . . It is often driven by much by loneliness as lust. On this sensual level, as you discover there is more to you (and other) than the body, you open into deeper levels of mind. . .

The second level of connection is mental. It is the psychological level; it is an expression of the mental/emotional body. Much of the satisfaction on this level comes from the bargained reinforcement of self-image. It suffers from the mistaken identity of broken dreams and guarded disappointments . . . It is the interaction of minds very much involved in feelings of being loved and being a lover . . . it is still very much filled with isolation and individual agendas. There is mental entanglement. Sometimes it is difficult to dance. Emotional highs and lows are frequent. It is on this level that "I and other" predominates. Boundaries are drawn and minor border skirmishes occur. On this level if we are not mindful, we get lost in models and expectations. It is as far as most relationships go.

As a level of consciousness this is the investigation of the conditioned mind. Mindfulness of thought and feeling, desires, memory, intention. The content of the body and mind observed in a merciful awareness. Investigated. On the mental level, where we live most of our lives so small, what we call the subconscious is just subtler and subtler levels of mind – it's only the "subconscious" because we are subattentive.

As a level of growth, this is what might be called the Human Stage, at which psychological beings discover each other. This is the level at which previous injury and grief are healed into deeper stages of consciousness. This is the level of healing on which we integrate our disparate parts into wholeness, a fullness of being we begin offering wholeheartedly into relationship. This is where small mind closures begin opening into the heart of big mind process.

It is said of this mental level, "If you can make it here you can make it anywhere!" On the mental level, as you discover there is more to you than the mind, you open into the heart. Progressing to the next level of loving individuation.

The third level of connection is the heart. This is the bonding level. It is here that *romantic* love transmutes into *harmonic* love. More than the romantic attachments of the physical and emotional attractions of the first two levels, this love is a state of being, not only a state of mind. This harmonic intermingling is the natural expression of the level of consciousness we call heart. Indeed the phrase "to open your heart" means for consciousness to deepen to this level. In this open space the body and mind are experienced more as process than as content. It is here that the work on the first two levels of reinhabiting the body and clearing the mind opens into the effortless love of a bonded, conscious relationship. The warm attachment of the earlier stages, the growing sense of connectedness, taking a leap of faith into the commitment that bonds hearts while unbinding minds".

The love on this level turns your lover into your beloved – and eventually your beloved into the Beloved. This is the level where the mind and body, like you and your beloved, become spiritual collaborators. On this level where bonding occurs, commitment is wholehearted and without interruption. It is here that the romantic notion of the “magic of love” may actually be experienced. When two minds merge in the heart, thought and feeling comeingle . . . And somewhere near the heart, thought surrenders to intuition as levels of connectedness and interconnectedness present themselves spontaneously . . .

Love turns the chemical to the alchemical. It draws all previous levels up to the heart. At this level bonding occurs quite naturally and spontaneously, as the healing on the lower levels propels our combined energies forward . . . “I and other” on this level is recognised as a workable quality in the mind, no longer the cause of isolation in the world. In this alchemy of hearts, minds converge to produce a greater whole than the summation of its parts. It produces a commitment to discovery and liberation so unexpectedly intense that it is capable of turning awareness back onto consciousness, exposing the nature of consciousness itself. Unlocking the mind’s secrets and experiencing directly the simple essence of its seemingly complicated workings. Awareness and mercy bonding like the halves of a broken heart. Mindfulness and heartfulness keeping the connection alive. The Mystery coming a bit more clearly into view. It is at this level, if not before, that the partners may well join into a working team in service to others – in business, in healing, in teaching, in living.

As we surrender small mind into big mind, our little affections into our great love, we explore this level of consciousness by entering directly its process. Not grasping at thought after thought but allowing it all to dissolve naturally into the flow of consciousness. Discovering realms of loving kindness, mercy and forgiveness, illuminated by the light of our great nature.

As a level of growth this is the Angelic Stage, a manifestation of the heart body, the body of compassion marked by a sense of spacious ease and well-exposed openness. It brings relationship solidly into the spirit and leads to the next transformation. When you discover there is more to you than even the heart, you merge into the mystery.

The fourth level of connection, of consciousness, is the mystery . . . As a level of relationship, this is as far as “two” can go. Only *oneness* can take the next step. This is the edge of duality where awareness and compassion are indistinguishable. This is the spaciousness of our own great being.

. . . before one can enter each developmental stage, whatever unfinished business remains on the previous level needs to be offered healing before we can go further. This process of integration takes its own time, and only mindfulness and heartfulness will make it smoother. It reminds us that we can’t get away with anything, that nothing can be left undone or incomplete . . .

. . . [These levels are not] a linear progression, but a process of expansion that does not so much change levels as include greater depths . . .

. . . Each of these levels, like stages of getting born or dying, is a progression from the separate to the universal, from isolation to interconnectedness. Each stage of consciousness or growth or healing can become a level of conscious commitment. These are the levels of relationship to ourselves as well as another. These are the levels of experience available to our deepening humanness. The enormous possibilities of what we once imagined to be such a small life . . .