

C O R D I S I N G :
A New Understanding of Caring

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CARING - A NEW DIMENSION

For four years, every month, six women met for two hours and with serious intent examined the dimensions of the phenomenon of care and caring in various relationships. The authors of this monograph spoke deliberately and gently about person to person relationships, groups to groups relationships, person to system relationships, and care in a professional sense where there is a recognition of a person making available to the public for a fee, a kind of care that required study over a period of time in order to have a channel through which the care could be offered. During the sessions, each person observed that which was the focus of the sessions, namely, thoughtful, gentle concern for each other's feelings as comments were offered, disagreements expressed, and opinions sought. There was a pervasive openness, frankness and trust. The trust and regard for the dignity of each other was the solid ground for all intellectual forays. There was also a wonderful sense of humor in everyone, which was sparked by several persons almost every session, even when very profound concepts were being explored. And this question came to the minds of the women in the group: How can something so profound be worked with? The intricacies of relationships, involving more than one person, are well-known. Where human beings are together, there are intricacies of response of one to another. A point of reference was needed. And so, the discussions were carried out within the framework of the theory of movement in esca. The definition of esca is that moving power in every person to take action in living on a day to day basis, to maintain control of themselves as they live. All of the women in the group had studied this theory so that frequent references were made to the manifestation of this theory as understandings of relationships and caring developed. We soon realized that the source of material for analysis had to come from our own relationships in our lives in regard to the people we are

concerned about, about whom we care and try to be caring at all times. There were leaps from one dimension of understanding to other dimensions as the work progressed, and it was recognized that the practicality of some of the thoughts needed to be explored. So we would give examples. We are very much aware of the individuality of the examples and urge that the readers of this monograph follow a similar format of openly discussing relationships with others. It is only through addressing the subject of relationships and caring from a personal perspective that general guidelines can be reached. There was a focus of having discussions and the application of insights be a positive experience, and points were brought up as a challenging aspect rather than as an burdensome problem. There is a consensus among the authors that benefit was derived from talking about a relationship in that the person felt different about the particular relationship which she brought up for discussion. The experience was described by one person as "fishing with a net in murky waters and catching those things that were helpful to bring positivity to a confusing relationship." And, "We all have dreams about getting involved in different relationships and then reality sets in as various situations present themselves. The reality was not included in the original dream. 'What did I do wrong?' is a question a person asks of self. The point to remember is that the dream was appropriate and alterations in the relationship lead to acceptance of that which was learned." Decisions made in regard to other persons' behavior at the outset of a relationship are generally good. But human beings change as they encounter a variety of situations, and sorting through the desires, and holding on to them, holding on to the thread may have the relationship work out for the better. Being prudent in regard to expectations of another in a relationship is a recommended characteristic. Trust in another person's word is justified until

the person proves untrustworthy through actions. In moving in esca, "I can do what I want in my dreams."

It is hoped that the following material will be helpful to those who want to use it as a point of departure for looking at the phenomenon of caring in relationships, each aspect of which is entirely unique as each person lives life.

Principles that were observed in the study of the nature of caring are:

1. Esca exists in every person.
2. Movement in esca is affected by the acceptance of the person.
3. Movement in esca is affected by the process of full listening without interruption.
4. Movement in esca is affected by the recognition of the dignity of every person.
5. Movement in esca is affected by the sense of responsibility and the sense of control.
6. Movement in esca is affected by the realization that a person can know self better than another can know that self.
7. Movement in esca is affected by the sense of respect for self and for others.

The process by which the monograph was written included the following points.

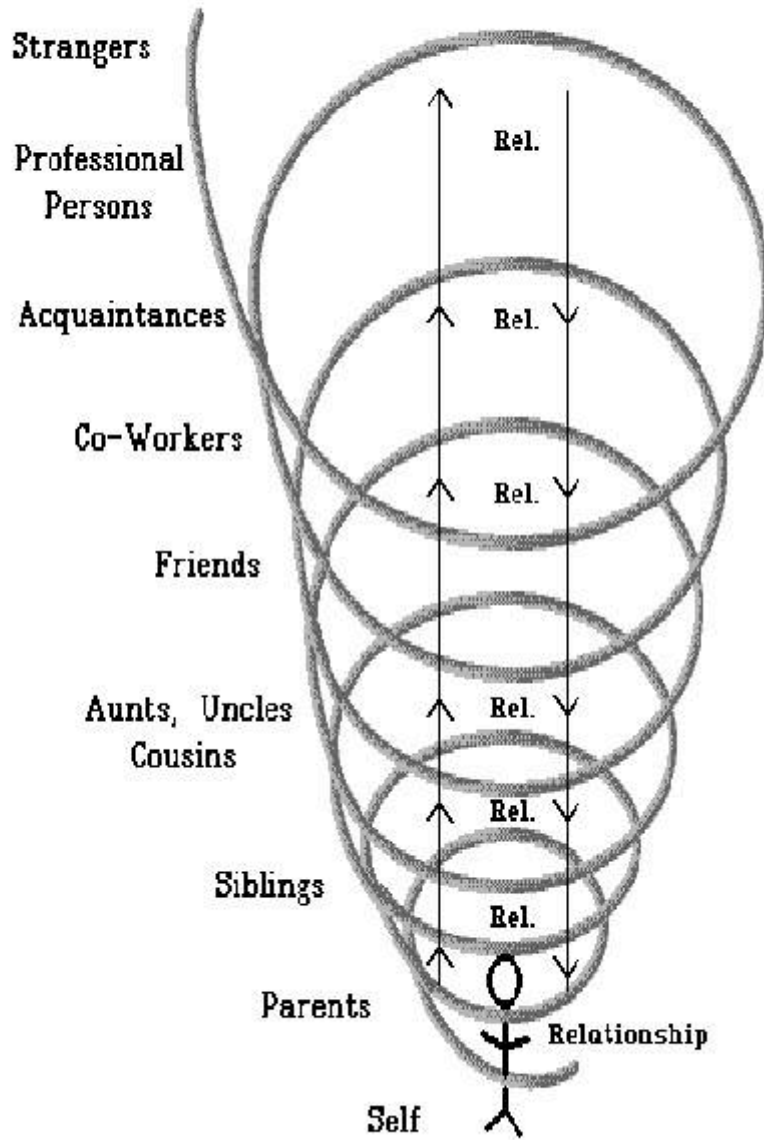
1. Everyone took the endeavor very seriously.
2. For three years, we started promptly and ended promptly. (Since August, 1985 we have indulged ourselves for varying lengths of time, admiring and cooing over Sam Trussell.)
3. Each one paid a fee to the Master Learner.

4. As each member of the group spoke, her words were written down by the Master Learner. Following each meeting she would work with the material, type it up, add to it, and use it as a stimulus for discussion at the following meeting. From time to time, one of us would remark on the specialness of analyzing something which we were living, something we were trying to improve in terms of understanding ourselves and others, and the fact that the work was original. There was no blueprint to follow, nor design to be altered.

The Spirogram

It is important to present the spirogram at the outset of the monograph. It developed as the discussion evolved about the difference in the way people feel toward each other, the commitments that are intrinsic to various relationships, and the boundaries that are set up by the persons involved in that particular relationship. When the subject of values was being looked at, the spirogram was a helpful point of reference in determining to what degree values would be observed in a particular relationship. As the blood-family relationships extended, and as concurrent friend, classmates etc. relationships developed, the descriptions of closeness and intimacy were applied. Thus, blood relationships are innate and unchangeable; the element of choice applies beyond that fact of life. The spirogram indicates the facts of relationship on which a person decides to engage in actions that have a caring aspect.

A Spirogram Depicting the Degree of Diffusion
in the Caring Process



Setting the Focus

Parents and children, and aunts, and uncles and cousins..... Two people. Two friends.....caring because they are friends..... How does this happen? How do we know when we can call someone a friend? And what does this imply? Does each person have an idea of what being a friend means? Or is it that each person has a sense of degrees of closeness in a friendship, and to say "He or she is my friend" has implicit in that statement an awareness of what the degree of friendship involves in terms of trusting, loving, giving, forgiving, being honest, being open to hear what the other says without impugning motives? Is this awareness a mutual one? When does understanding the personality of the other result in acceptance of certain behaviors, certain idiosyncrasies? When is one being too picky, being too sensitive? When does a feeling of being needed result in fostering neediness in the other person who is a friend and for whom there is caring? How does one know someone can be counted on when needed? And how does one convey the sense of being able to be counted on when needed? Time and again persons have said to one another, "Call me if you need me." When can that be asked for? Without moving in the direction of establishing a formula for conditions of friendship, it does seem that it would be helpful to have some perspective on the subtleties of a caring relationship. What are feelings of caring? Is the sequence this: caring, the liking, then loving? Or is it: liking, loving, then caring? Is it loving, then caring? Is it caring, then loving? When it comes to needs each person has, how are they met in a relationship? What is a "caring person"? There is a spiritual dimension to caring in every relationship, proceeding from being centered through connection with one's universal source of life and knowledge. This feature makes any overt actions neutral in terms of caring.

Boundaries

Some of the thoughts that can help persons to fashion their own tools for trusting their own way of being in a relationship are in terms of the boundary that exists in every relationship. It is an imaginary line between two people, illustrated as



The line is fluid, sometimes indented for receiving and sometimes extended for giving, adaptable to the movings in a relationship. But an important feature of the boundary is that each person should have an understanding of the position of the boundary, and any changes should be deliberate by the one changing the boundary. The changes should be communicated to the other person. It is caring to accept someone else's boundary and not try to change it, while maintaining one's own boundary. The creative edge of a boundary is finding the balance between limits, the starting place, and the possibilities of extension in a caring relationship. This notion of boundaries makes possible the exploration of how one can move within a caring relationship. For example, if the person puts up a wall, which is neither an indented boundary or an extended one, the other person may decide to lean against the wall but not go through it. The decision about the extent of the caring, evident through accepting what the other person wants to do within the boundary, e.g. drinking, is a highly individual one.

Expectations

"Don't have any expectation" is a commonly given bit of advice. Yet our expectations are our hopes and fears, our dreams which often reflect how we perceive our most deeply held values and priorities. They are the very threads by which we weave our lives and so not to have any expectations is to deny the importance of life itself.

What people are doing who advise not to have expectations is perhaps trying to shield a person from disappointment in a relationship. For many people do get caught up in trying to mold others to conform to their expectations. We may want very badly for another person to help us live out our dream. It is not a good idea to try to control another person's movement to help us accomplish our dream for the obvious reason that, if such attempts at control are necessary, it is likely that the dream will not be realized. In addition, it is a violation of the theory of moving in esca for one person to try to control another person through overt and covert means. Holding on to one's expectations, a person might expend energy and attention in the following ways:

1. Working on the level of that which the individual can change within himself or herself.
2. Using the knowledge of one's dreams or expectations as a measure of one's observation of values and life goals.
3. Using that as a criterion to measure one's own boundaries.
4. Growing in self knowledge which would help a person to decide whether another's presence in his/her life would be enhancing to his/her own life goals.

Universal Values and the Uniqueness of Each Person

There is a uniqueness about the person who is a caring individual, and the ways that one moves in a caring relationship could never be categorized or classified as being THE way to be caring. In regard to some basic beliefs that could be said to be universal to all who want to be in caring relationships with others, it seems safe to say that values have to be observed by everyone to some degree. The value of truth is observed when a person is honest with oneself and hence will find it easier to be honest with others. Another value is that of kindness, which requires that a person agree to an action that demands giving on oneself, to doing something that one would rather not do, to saying something that takes careful thought rather than speaking hastily or holding out in silence. The value of patience is one that is hard to observe in relationships; in many instances, a skewed perspective of the importance of time and pursuit of goals in life situations causes a less than understanding response to someone's slow pace in growing in a relationship. If those basic values are observed, it becomes somewhat easier to look at a situation in terms of fairness, or recognizing idiosyncrasies in people, also in terms of trusting in a relationship, and to be justified in bringing to an end a relationship that is more destructive than fruitful. Trust is something that develops in a relationship and it builds on demonstrations of observance of the basic values plus an indefinable ingredient(s) that is felt in the heart and is described in various ways, "just like being with", "is so much fun", "feel I'm a better person from talking with and being with", etc.

Features

The features that are spoken of in this monograph are ones that are generally agreed upon as being applicable, as being true, as being compatible with the idea of individuality of each person. Relationships have a kaleidoscopic-like dimension because if these features are observed, they are observed in varying degrees by individuals. It is hoped that the suggestions that are discussed will be of help in determining the course that a relationship might take.

If something about the relationship has a spiritual dimension that each could say rings true in regard to living out values that each observes to have a certain weight of importance in life, then the prospects for building a more enduring relationship are brighter. In order to live out values, there has to be a spiritual source for giving the resources necessary to remain committed, and there has to be an openness to receiving those resources. One cannot give something one has not received.

Where do irritations fit in a relationship? Irritations can stimulate growth or they can stunt growth depending on the recognition of them as such, and not concluding that the relationship is ending. Isolating the cause of the irritation is very important. For example, if the mother of one in a relationship dies, she might start looking for the other to be more maternal, without being aware of what she is doing. It may be all right for a while, but then it should be talked about. Or the loss may make the person become angry, testy, and abrupt in replying to the other. How long should it go on without discussing it? Probably a good rule of thumb is to "wait a little bit longer," because of the attributes of a person which enable them to come to understand that they might be responding in a way that is annoying and irritating and either stop it or

introduce the suggestion that a discussion would help the relationship. Another kind of irritation is if one alters the direction that had been more or less identifiable to the other person, to the extent that it interferes with an accepted change in schedule of the other. For example, it has been agreed upon that one would return to school with hours of studying at home. Then, it is an irritation if the other starts listening to the television more continuously than before, or having parties more frequently than before. Irritation is a signal, then, and trust in each other can follow or not follow. If a commitment is there, taking responsibility to build on trust keeps each from feeling like a victim. To be able to say "I am afraid of hurting another" to oneself, indicates trust of oneself, and to be able to say "You hurt me" indicates trust that the other person will eliminate the irritation he/she is causing and express regret for having hurt you.

It becomes apparent that a relationship has a basis from a spiritual source on the part of those entering the relationship, that the persons are committed to the growth of the relationship through self-honesty and self-trust in regard to the values that each holds as very important and observes in living.

Proceeding from the spiritual aspect of caring in a relationship, a person is aware of an openness that enables a "giving freely." The expectation of a response commensurate with that which has been given is absent. It also enables the person who is giving to endure the sting of being rebuffed, and of processing the devastation of rejection. A state of openness is a state of waiting for the other person to receive and to respond. There is a marked subtlety in the caring aspect when a person is limited for whatever reason in meeting his/her own needs or wants. It is likely that the limitation produces a vulnerability to one's pride, a sense of being " beholden " to another, proportionate to the time and effort expended by the giver; the sensitivity to the tone of voice,

to the phrasing of words, the length of time it takes for an answer to be given, is very high in someone who is asking for help, needs help, or wants help. The scale of vulnerability is very delicately balanced in every human being at the time help is being offered or given, whether it has been asked for and/or wanted. The presence of a person affects another in terms of intimacy, – when tasks are done, the level of intimacy is interrupted; when visiting is all that is done, the level of intimacy is maintained. There is a difference in the presence of a person who is asked to be there versus the presence of the person who wants to be there and asks to be of help. "Giving" because of being asked and wanting to do, versus "giving" because of wanting to do and asking what can be done for another represents a fine distinction, both of which conditions of giving and receiving are acceptable, but which sometimes are made "heavy" because of the vulnerability of the receiver. When someone overtly needs assistance, it is well to move slowly in waiting for the person to ask, or to get to the point of accepting an offer of help. The acceptance of a "No" will be relative to the degree of openness in giving and wanting to care. There is a certain degree of fear in persons of receiving without being in the position of giving.

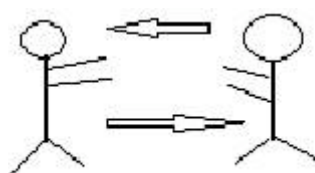
Cordising – Initiating and Responding

New words are often needed to convey new concepts.¹ More than that, a new word helps us to actually think in a new paradigm. Cordising is a word that we in the study session selected to convey our new ideas about caring. It comes from the Latin word, cordis, which means "of the heart". Cordising

¹ It seems as though the over-use and abuse of the words "care" and "caring" demand a different word in order to convey the heartfelt nature of human relationships.

denotes the whole movement that occurs as one or more people share caring and love. It encompasses both giving and receiving from the heart.

C O R D I S I N G



Giving and Receiving

In the old paradigm, one who "receives caring" is seen as lacking something, and one who "gives caring" is seen as being more able, or slightly superior to the person receiving. In the new paradigm, any movement by a person to engage in cordising is seen as positive. We speak of "initiating cordising" and "responding to" cordising. An initiator could either ask for help or offer help. A responder might agree to help or accept an offer of help.

When a person is considering asking for assistance of some kind, it can produce a very positive feeling state to think "I am initiating cordising" rather than, "I am asking for help."

Since it is not possible to analyze what the other person's reaction is to having to ask for assistance or respond to offers of assistance, it is advisable to measure one's own self in terms of giving. The limits of giving and receiving will become apparent if one moves from the heart in regard to a "Yes" or "No"; if one moves from "cordising" which facilitates this comfortable position. "I'm asking for help. I'm initiating cordising, – giving both of us the opportunity to take action from the heart." If there is clarity in terms of tasks to be performed, "I would like you to fix my lunch," "I need somebody between the hours of two and four," it is likely that the response to the request will be more immediate and positive.

Reflections by the authors in regard to the work accomplished over the four year period

- 1) This is only the beginning.
- 2) The process was so different. Usually, in meetings or discussion in groups, the intellectual component is isolated from the rest of the person. I get starved in a conversation where only the intellectual component is expressed, as in talking about quarks or the universe. In our sessions, the familiar was seen as a wholeness from the perspective of the wholeness of each of us and we spoke in that way.

3) I am looking at myself differently, looking at what I'm doing and what I intended to do and seeing they are two different things. I look at myself in all my components – intellectual, physiological, excitational, and spiritual. I get a perspective on myself; now it's very easy to flip into other aspects of myself. The process is really the essence.

4) Having the words written down as they are being said helps me to move into my inspirational process. I work with inspiration in this group in my insvithoding process. Helps me move into that rather than debating points, analyzing. The process of having it written and at some point writing an article gave me a focus. Rather than talking endlessly about relationship problems, my focus became discovering the true nature of my caring, and then seeing what parts of our discoveries might be useful to others. It was a unique happening.

5) The idea of boundaries is very helpful although it is difficult. Sometimes I'm able to see boundaries as meeting points. I've had glimpses that it could be a beginning point and a place where you touch. The idea of cordising is so helpful. I really try to leap into that new paradigm with my heart, feeling proud and good about initiating cordising. Both are still points of struggle and challenge; – seeing boundaries and working with cordising.

6) It's like scientists conducting experiments on themselves in looking at their own work. We examined ourselves and experimented in relation to these ideas. I think it is a scientific methodology.

7) We had the strength of our convictions and took action in light of our convictions.

8) The notion of focusing on awareness of values, threads of life, fiber of being, seeing myself clearly..... The idea of boundaries is a useful tool in relationships with others; having an open mind, seeing others using boundaries, letting go of trying to mold others to meet my expectations. The strongest sense is one of liberation.

9) Having studied at Learnerships and at the Assembly, I found the practical application of the theory in these sessions, in that the theory was observed as the subject of caring was being analyzed.

10) A kinleiner should be the leader of study sessions such as these.