

Being a friend to yourself

Beloved person,

A while ago, I saw a picture of two children in a kindergarten class. They had gone to the hairdresser together, with one clear wish: to have the same haircut, so the teacher would not be able to tell them apart. A disarming thought. But anyone who sees the photo can barely suppress a smile. The boys have different skin colours. What is so visible to us did not seem to matter to them at all. They were just two friends with a fun plan.

Imagine this: the boys grow up, and one of them makes other friends. Their friendship fizzles out. For one boy, the time is right to move on. The other is left behind, clutching the remains of what once was their friendship. Do you recognise this feeling?

Losing a friendship can trigger a grieving process. While we immediately understand the grief of losing a loved one, losing a friendship seems a bit harder to empathise with. Perhaps we pay less attention to this...

Aside from friendships with others, hopefully, you also have a friendship with yourself. Sometimes we set high standards for ourselves and are critical of our own behaviour. Am I good company for myself? Sometimes it can feel like you have lost touch with yourself. That you miss yourself. What do you need to reconnect with yourself?

In a friendship with someone, sometimes just *being* there can be enough. If someone is sad, you can be with them without having to fix it. Of course, that need exists, but the reality is that it is often impossible. You search helplessly for comforting words. All that is needed is to be present and attentive. How wonderful it would be if we could do the same for ourselves. That you can simply sit "beside" your own grief for a moment.

Such a moment of self-awareness, of compassion for what lives within you, can feel like healing. It allows you to be, as it were, swept up by a current. A current that carries you, a current that heals you, that touches your roots.

If I manage to connect with myself, to see my own grief; if I manage to accept this, then perhaps I can see it in others too. Then, like the two little boys, we appear not to be so different. You are just as much a child of the universe as I am, a fraction of the big bang! If I can renew myself with that feeling, then it strengthens me to choose, time and again, the love the world needs. The love the people around me need, the love I need myself.

This theme does not call for grand answers, but for honest attention. It requires courage: to stay with what presents itself, even when it's uncomfortable. To pay attention, to be close to ourselves. Those who practice this kind of friendship with themselves will notice that space is created: space to truly see the other and to move with what life demands. That is where connection can arise.

With a loving greeting,

Brother Paul Joor and Sister Maaïke Blomsma

