Collective Trauma Online Summit, with William Ury

[Collective Trauma Online Summit](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1474&v=sKlF0djqnZY)

Notes compiled by Cornelia Parkes, April 23, 2022.

Hubl: Why is it important to be trauma informed?

Ury: Understanding trauma is essential to anyone who is concerned with peace in the world. People come with their different positions. I ask why are you concerned? What do you really want here? Trauma is at the root. People have suffered deeply.

How do you see the correlation between old trauma and the rising of new conflicts? What kind of symptoms do you see that show that you are now in a trauma response?

I see the repeating of old patterns, defensiveness, and rigidity in behavior. How do you deal with people who are in that psychological state both individually and collectively? By distraction and the introduction of positive energy. This provided a release within which some kind of breakthrough started to happen. When the situation is understood as a trauma, you can deal with is accordingly.

How do you come to an internal state that is able to listen to conflicted parties? How do we calm down enough in order to be able to communicate again? How do we reestablish relation?

The first step is to set the psychological conditions so that people can engage in a rational conversation. You need to step back from the situation to a place of calm and clarity. I need to be able to get to this place myself. Then I can serve to help the parties calm down. Then they can find their best selves in order to deal with the conflict.

Why would anyone want to do this this work?

There’s the curiosity. When you go into conflict you go into the heart of things. In the heart of things there is an aliveness. People are human and you’re just having human conversations and there’s beauty. There is joy in being able to assist. When there is a relaxation of the tension, there is a moment, it’s almost as if the light shines through. The Divine shows up. The Divine loves the places where peace is made between enemies. There is something sacred happening.

Life wants to heal itself. When it happens there is a tremendous power.

A mediator does not come in with a solution but creates an environment in which the solution emerges. Humanity has this capacity to heal itself. Our job as healers or global social witnesses is to serve as activators of the inherent healing response.

What is the third side?

The second side is building bridges between the sides to reach agreement. The essential third side is the role of the surrounding community that can create a container, a space, within which the conflict can be transformed. The conflict is transformed from a destructive form to a constructive form. Democracy is constructive conflict. We can learn how some Indigenous people deal with conflict. Conflict is not between individuals. Conflict belongs to the community. The third side is the circle of the community to contain the conversation. The community calls in the wisdom of the ancestors and does not rest for as long as it takes to get to the bottom of it. Then the elders pronounce the resolution. The wound in relationships in not left to fester. We today need to reinvent the third side.

Is there something like a global third side?

The third side is like the immune system. Global conflicts are like wounds on the human body. The immune system has sleeper cells. We are like sleeper cells in the global body. We need to awake and to realize that we are part of the whole and activate the inherent healing response of humanity. How do we awaken? That requires our own inner trauma work. Our inner trauma is intimately related to the collective trauma. We need a third side response to the trauma we are inflicting on the earth.

At the moment we are sitting in the middle of a climate crises because of a lot of unintegrated stuff which is likely to create another wave of traumatization. How does the third side relate to the climate crises?

The problems seem enormous and almost impossible. Going to the balcony for this means going a thousand years into the future to look back at this moment. You would see that every major problem we are facing whether it is war, hunger, climate change we actually know how to deal with the problem. The only thing we have to figure out is how to collaborate, how to get to Yes. We have examples of how we collaborated before. What trauma does is to make us fall asleep. We are sleep walking about climate. Again, we have to wake up. Extreme weather events are trying to wake us up.

What is the function of on-collaboration? We know how, but to walk our talk is not simple.

I need to protect what’s mine. There’s fear behind it that traces back to trauma. The work is to start to relax that fear a little bit. There is so much distrust that comes from the past. In my work I need to take little steps that can start to build the trust. Two sides that are engaged in conflict can’t disengage, but all have friends and allies that can form the third side that is a loving embrace and can calm those engaged. Ironically, we need more conflicts in the world because there are injustices and inequities, but we also need a strong pot to hold the conflicts so that the conflicts more life forward instead of destroying it.

We feel that the resolution of conflict is too slow, but actually we need to slow down and take smaller steps.

Instead of judging, ask why? What’s underneath it? The faster you want to go, the slower you need to start. We have to slow down to listen to the other side. Empathy is the key.

Anything you want to share in closing?

There are three pieces of work. The first person work of going deep within. The second person work of deep listening. The third person work, the embrace of the third side. I’ve never seen a situation where it wasn’t *possible* to transform it. I’m not a pessimist or an optimist, I’m a possibilist. Let’s give it a chance.

To look for the possible in a situation is a very spiritual, mystical viewpoint. In the difficulty there is a light.