

Introduction To Sacred Attention

By Richard Harvey

Sacred attention is the means to divine peace and it starts basically at the first chakra level, in the lower centers of the human energy system. It starts as we started out in this present lifetime, this present world and place. It starts with a fundamental need, the need to be seen, the need to be recognized, known, understood, and acknowledged. To have our reflection experienced by another, and to have that reflection given back to us, gives us a sense of self. It is both psychologically desirable, as much as it is, much later, spiritually redundant. But to begin with, we must be seen, we must be known ... to be at all. Later, this will give us the means to become, the means to realize, the vehicle in which to cross to the other side, to blend in Reality, to be one with Consciousness.

I was brought up in a family that didn't think much or feel much, that did not look at each other, that didn't listen to each other (or themselves), that wasn't aware, that wasn't sensitive or considerate, wise or mature. I was brought up in a typical twentieth century western environment. Fast forward some twenty-odd years later, I had survived somehow. I had absolutely no idea of my needs, couldn't begin to feel that I deserved what I desired, and I had long ago buried my essence, my soul, and thrown away the map to retrieve it.

When I stumbled into therapy, the major element was attention. I can remember even now the feeling I had when I met my very first therapist-to-be. He was called Simon. I met him in a health-food shop. He was a little taller than I was and when he turned his gaze to me, his eyes were so present, he was so there, I wilted. I had hardly ever encountered such presence, such intensity, such interest before. I shrunk. I didn't know how to handle a long-ago buried desire in me to be seen. Meeting Simon was like food to the starving, healing to the lepers, ointment to the wounds. He instilled such trust in me from that gaze alone that over two or three months I re-visited the dark rooms of my childhood, the long hours of wailing with no one coming, the eternity of longing, crying, crying, and crying endlessly for something that I eventually forgot I wanted.

With Simon, under his attentive gaze, I was introduced to the amazing power of regression, of unearthing body memories of childhood events that were central in the formation of my character. The awakening of need and desire led me to Simon's teacher and mentor. He became my principal therapist and spiritual teacher. His name was Richard. He practiced a form of attention that was so authentic, responsive, and real that he terrified me. Fear however had always been my guide, my attraction, and my dread. I gravitated toward Richard like a moth to the flame. Over four years he took every vestige of defense, aggression, emotional armoring, reaction, and deep-seated, secret shame that I harbored. He – or we – enveloped it all in sacred attention and destroyed it utterly.

He did this through a concentrated, intense, compassionate attention – it was a sacred practice. Always sacred, never did I catch him out, though always he would catch me! His service in the ways of the heart was impeccable.

This was my introduction to sacred attention. You cannot learn this practice from a book. You have to encounter it and see it with your own eyes. Even then I hardly dared to believe it. I couldn't understand

it. I certainly couldn't analyze it. I hardly knew how to be with it, but my belief and deep trust and faith in it never wavered. It was a great blessing and gift of grace in my inner work that I never doubted – not once.

This article is an excerpt from Richard Harvey's book [Your Divine Opportunity](#).