

How Can I Be Helpful When Accompanying Someone Experiencing Mental Health or Spiritual Crises?

Reflections and Practical Suggestions for Talking with One Another and Promoting Harmony

By Suzanne Renna for Subud members only

Introduction:

Bapak and Ibu Rahayu have often stressed the importance of being self-aware and of having the discipline to bring our awareness, particularly the awareness of the *budhi*, to how we are behaving in our lives.

They remind us that examining how we are behaving, and learning from the results of the choices we make, is what helps us all to progress as human beings.

(Ibu Rahayu 16 CDK 1)

I believe this is particularly important for those of us who are serving as Helpers or whenever we are in a helping role. We are given opportunities to change and develop through the gift of the latihan. And we are then challenged to demonstrate what we have received in how we choose to behave in our lives.

There are times when we find ourselves in the presence of strong forces and difficult circumstances when we try to converse with people who are going through crises of various kinds. We may be unsure of whether a crisis is a spiritual crisis or a sign of mental illness or a mental disorder. We want to be trusting in the power of Almighty God and we also want to be responsible for knowing when someone needs professional help. With God's guidance we may learn to discern.

I felt inspired to write down the following reflections and suggestions. They are intended to support our efforts in the moments that challenge us to respond in a humane way. Although the focus is on accompanying those who are in crisis, I hope that you will find these reflections and suggestions relevant to how we connect with one another in general. These are not meant to be lessons but rather an invitation to reflect on some chosen perspectives. They were written as much as reminders to myself as with the hope that others may find them helpful and encouraging.

To Begin....1. Stay calm and keep your cool!

We in Subud are fortunate to have been opened and to have our latihan. We know we can find a still quiet place inside when we are surrendered to the wisdom and power of the Great Life within us all.

When we are confronted with a difficult situation or when we are called upon to engage in a difficult conversation, we may gain a wider understanding from that quiet place within us.

We see outwardly that a transformative crisis can be quite unsettling for the person experiencing it, and uncomfortable for others nearby. However, inwardly we can also recognize that a crisis may be a way of moving towards resolving something of importance to the person's soul.

When we are in a position of caring for someone, it is not unusual to see a crisis, of any kind, as a problem to be solved or a difficulty to be transcended. And we may want to help the person get there quickly. Can we be aware of where our own reactions and responses are coming from? To what degree is it our own discomfort and fear we are trying to alleviate? When, and to what degree is our response appropriate in a given situation?

It may help to remember that crises may be something we all go through to varying degrees when moving towards greater wholeness. And a strong crisis may come as a result of suddenly being given the ability to see something we've been avoiding or were unaware of within ourselves. It may come from becoming aware of poor choices we've made in how we have been living our lives, or at times when we have been ruled by passions disconnected from inner guidance and a clash develops within us.

A spiritual crisis may be associated with a process of purification in which there is a breaking down of old familiar patterns. It can accompany movement into a wider sense of awareness or a higher level of understanding and functioning that we as helpers wouldn't want to interfere with.

On the other hand, a crisis associated with a mental illness usually expresses maladaptive ways of thinking about and addressing problems. And this may be accompanied by very frightening sensations and disorganized thoughts. These usually persist for longer periods of time and there may be a sense of profound disintegration rather than a sense of reorganization. We do not want, out of a misplaced sense of compassion and tolerance, to avoid addressing mental illness for what it is.

A person in either kind of crisis is trying to cope and may be trying to communicate in the face of confusion, shame, doubt, rage, loss, or feelings of inadequacy and

helplessness, or even hopelessness. Conversely, a person experiencing a strong spiritual crisis may experience a deep sense of certainty, faith and a feeling of being accompanied by the power of God even as mistakes are being purified. Depending upon how that gets expressed it might appear as problematic to others who may experience the person as interfering or being overly confident or even arrogant.

It's helpful if we can hold onto our own quiet and maintain a compassionate, empathic presence without being drawn into reaction or overly identifying. We have our own latihan to support us in this.

For a mental illness there may be no simple cause and no simple cure. Change may be slow and recovery typically includes lapses and relapses. For a mentally ill person, medical care and/or other professional help is usually necessary. The latihan of Subud should not be seen or suggested as a cure for mental illness.

However, the latihan of helpers and others may help to maintain an inner calm and guidance for the state to be in when being with someone who is suffering from either mental illness or from the results of a spiritual crisis.

2. When we are surrendered to God we know that It simply doesn't work to try to take responsibility for things we really have no power over. On the other hand, we want to be aware of the choices we do have and when we should be held accountable—this is *Mawas Dirí*.

We do not have power over how the course of a spiritual crisis will go or how long it will last. That is between each person and God.

Ibu Rahayu has stressed the importance of "*Mawas Dirí*": taking responsibility for our own choices and behaviors. Whether a person we are trying to help becomes more aware; whether that person will have the discipline to carry through with what they have become aware of through their own latihan, or through their life struggles; whether they will ultimately become a better human being—these are not our responsibility. But we can learn to notice the difference between keeping respectful company and interfering. Even as parents, our children's paths are not fully ours to determine. What is our appropriate role in any given situation?

In the case of mental illness, we do not have control over whether a person will follow through on seeking professional help, will get well, or will stay well. We may wish with all our heart that a person will feel better and behave better. But ultimately we have no power over the choices that another person makes.

What we do have power over, and can take responsibility for, is our own choice to make ourselves available in an appropriate way, to listen and to be present in a compassionate way.

We can express our concern. We can be open and honest about our limited ability to make things change for the better. And we can be honest about our confusion and concerns about what is going on.

It's also ok to protect ourselves by letting people know what our limits and boundaries are around the amount of time and the kind of attention we are willing and able to offer.

When we sense that someone may be ill, we can recommend that a professional be consulted.

When someone's behavior is disturbing the group, we can recommend and offer separate latihans. In the case of mental illness we can recommend and insist upon taking a break from latihan until the person's state has quietened and become more balanced so that the person is actually able to take responsibility for themselves and their behavior.

3. When having a conversation with someone, particularly someone we're concerned about, we want to speak, with humility, from our own experience rather than assuming that we know what is true or best for another person.

Using "I" statements rather than "you" statements can express this. "I" statements and "you" statements communicate a different sense and feeling.

When we speak using "I" statements we are sharing and taking responsibility for our own perceptions and reactions or responses. When we speak in "you" statements we tend to be making judgements about the other person. Think of a time when you remember feeling that someone had summed you up and made assumptions about you wrongly. When we feel we are being judged it usually makes us want to defend ourselves. A battle of the wills is often the result, and such battles foster disharmony.

Examples of "you" statements:

"You're out of control." "You're trying to get the answers you want by testing the same things over and over." "You're being rude." "You're full of nafsu."

Examples of "you" statements disguised as "I" statements:

"I think your nafsu is controlling you." "I think you're just trying to get attention and get your own way." (These are not true "I" statements despite the use of the first person

pronoun because they refer to the speaker's judgement of the other person or an assessment of the other person's motivations rather than to the speaker's own experience of the person.)

By the way, "You" statements can be appropriate and useful when they express actual agreed upon facts such as "You've been having particularly loud and disturbing latihans for the past 2 weeks." Or, when they express basic rights such as "You have a right to register a complaint." And sometimes tentative "You" statements may be made when trying to check out if you correctly hear and understand what another person appears to be saying: "You're feeling confused and want help understanding what you've been experiencing?"

Examples of "I" Statements:

"I notice that you seem to be having difficulty stopping your latihan lately. I'm concerned." "I don't like it when we act as if nothing is wrong when I get the sense that something is very wrong." "I expect you may tell me to mind my own business but I want to let you know that I care about you." "I feel it's too much to handle alone. Let's get some outside help, or professional help." "I'm sorry but I'm not willing to test with you any further because I feel I'm not helping by testing and may even be doing harm." (These statements all refer to the speaker's experience—experience of the other person, of their relationship, and of the speaker's own fears, wishes and limits.)

4. We can be true to ourselves and authentic in politely expressing ourselves. But what does it mean to be true to one's Inner Self and also true to where we are in the reality of our outward circumstances? Perhaps being true to ourselves means knowing and admitting that we are not perfect beings.

We are here in this world to learn and we are limited in what we can offer another person. It's alright, perhaps even essential, to be honest about that.

It takes time and experience to know our limits. Sometimes we feel angry and impatient with someone who is having difficulties or who may be mentally ill. Their needs may be great, and their behaviors can be frustrating and disturbing to us and to others in our group.

It's not pleasant to feel helpless in the face of such demanding challenges. We may find ourselves casting blame. We get worried that we will be pulled more deeply into an unpleasant situation or we'll hurt someone's feelings. And so we may be overly cautious or even avoid addressing something that is bothering us. Then, as feelings build up, we find ourselves getting reactive and we feel a growing sense of responsibility

for protecting the integrity of the group as a whole. If, at this point, we try to impose our expectations on someone who is unable to function well, it doesn't go well.

When we abandon ourselves by not being honest about our limitations, we don't do anyone any good. It's better if we can be up front about how complex our feelings are so we can respond in a humane way rather than simply reacting. We care, but we have our fears. We surrender to God and ask for guidance, but sometimes, if we are honest, we don't necessarily receive as clearly as we wish and get confused by our thoughts and feelings.

If our own personal past or present experiences are too close to what another person who is having difficulties is going through, we may not be able maintain our own equilibrium. It may be better in such a case for someone else to be in the helping role this time. Sometimes it helps to admit what we actually feel, without going into so much detail that we draw attention away from the person in need. And, we can ask for forgiveness.

The truth is that we do have our limits. For instance, we don't have all the time in the world to give. It's best to be honest about how much time we do actually have, and when, so that we can be fully present during that time.

We can also set limits on certain behaviors. It is not alright for a person to be physically aggressive toward others. And we can make it clear that stealing, or coming to latihan drunk on alcohol or high on drugs is unacceptable.

We can be honest about being out of our range of knowledge and experience regarding mental health and illness, or about the meaning of a spiritual crisis. We can express our own wish to ask for a professional consultation and/or for a consultation with other helpers.

5. Respecting a person's privacy, we want to be sensitive about what is appropriate to share and with whom. Can we recognize and know the difference between secrecy and confidentiality?

When someone shares their innermost feelings with us it is a sacred trust. We should not take that lightly nor talk indiscriminately about what someone has told us they are going through. No one likes to be the object of idle gossip.

On the other hand, helpers are part of a dewan that needs to work together harmoniously. It is important that we be able to consult with one another about our own reactions and fears and to be able to test for God's guidance in how to handle our own responses individually and collectively.

If a person suffering from mental illness has a professional caregiver, and they give us permission, we can let that professional know that we are concerned about recent changes we observe. But the caregiver will be bound by rules of confidentiality and will not be able to share with us any information about their patient without written permission from their patient. However, that professional caregiver may be able to give general helpful advice and advise steps to take in an emergency situation.

We ourselves should be wary of promising to keep things secret, as opposed to confidential. We can be drawn into feeling proud or special for being taken into someone's confidence. And those feelings can cause disharmony to develop in a group and can keep us from sharing or reporting things that need to be shared or reported for reasons of safety.

6. When in conversation with anyone but particularly with someone experiencing a crisis of any kind, we want to listen with compassion. We want to hear the other person's underlying feelings and what they are yearning for. We should try to avoid arguing or making suggestions about the particulars of what someone is talking about. When we feel like arguing or keep pressing our own points, it helps to pause and ask ourselves where our own strong need to be helpful is coming from.

Sometimes, in an effort to make things better, we pick up and respond to the details of something upsetting that someone is describing by giving suggestions or trying to set the person straight.

When we do that it can feel to the other person that we are more interested in their problem, or in checking out the truth of what they are saying about their experience, than in being with them as human beings.

It may demonstrate that we are paying more attention to the person's weaknesses than in trusting their inner strength. And, it can also feel that we are leading with our thinking and are not ourselves centered and quiet enough inside to really be with them.

Different responses come from different efforts we are trying to make. It helps if we can become aware of what our efforts are and to check ourselves, to see if what we are saying is really what would be most helpful.

Examples:

A Person having difficulty says with mounting desperation, "I feel like Cassandra. I'm trying to tell you something, but nobody listens to me."

Listener #1:(Trying to reassure the Person) “Don’t worry. It will be alright if you keep doing the latihan.”

Listener #2 (reacting to the particular words the person said, perhaps feeling under attack and trying to explain): “We **are** listening to you. Can’t you see how hard we’re trying?”

Listener #3 (asking for information and responding to the words the person said in an effort to fix things or make things better): “When did you say anything? People might listen to you if you weren’t always so quick to blame. Remember that Bapak said we need to have patience and acceptance.”

Listener #4: (wanting to show genuine interest) “Well, maybe you’re on to something! Tell me again, what is it that’s worrying you?”

Listener #5: (paying attention to the person’s feelings and responding with empathy): “It’s very frustrating and isolating when we don’t seem to get what you’re saying.”

Listener #6 (paying attention to what the person seems to be yearning for and responding with compassion): “I think I understand that you are trying to share something and it’s very important to feel you are being taken seriously.”

Listener #7 (wanting to check if she understands and can feel what the person is saying, responds by sharing what she has understood): “You say you feel just like Casandra--you’re trying to let us know that something bad is going to happen?... but you’re getting no response? ... Or, nobody believes you?... And that’s making you angry?”

Listener #8 (wanting to be honest and perhaps end the conversation) “I find it difficult to understand what you are saying. I’m sorry, it just doesn’t correspond with my own experience.”

It would be interesting to imagine, if you were the person having difficulty, how you would feel and what your reaction might be to each of the 8 Listener’s attempts above.

Also, if you were to look at each of the above listener’s responses, it would be interesting to see if you have a sense of where each effort might be coming from. No response is exactly right or wrong. Each is motivated by a different intention or perhaps comes from a different place within. Each will have a different effect.

When we are surrendered to God and in touch with our innermost self, we may become conscious in a different way. We may come to know when we are being motivated by a wish or strong feeling or our own possibly misguided belief. And we can be in charge of our actions and responses by choice, directing them in accordance with our *buddhi*.

Hopefully, as we become aware of what is motivating our own responses, and we are patient and open to looking at what results from our efforts, we can come to understand and sense when we are making a true connection with another person. We may come to know in the moment what comes from inner guidance and what comes from which desire. And hopefully we will learn how to be most helpful in ways appropriate to each person in any given moment.

7. As someone trying to be helpful, are feelings of helplessness a sign that we ourselves should be doing something more for the person we care about?

It could be a sign that there is a real limit to what we can do. Is it really possible for us to make a person be different from what they are? Should we try to make a person feel something different from what they are feeling?

We should be kind to ourselves when we are feeling helpless. There is a limit to what any person can do to change how someone else feels or to help them be something different from what is true for them in the moment. Isn't this what Bapak meant when he advised us that each person must be loved and respected for where they are on their own path according to their own capacity in the present moment?

We are each unique beings with our own challenges in life, moving at our own pace in accordance with many forces and what God wills for us. We know that pulling on a plant's leaves won't make it grow. It's the same for people.

And, when we feel our helplessness we may also be picking up empathically on what the person we are accompanying is feeling. Our feelings of helplessness and frustration or even anger may be clues that the person we are talking with is feeling helpless and frustrated and angry. When we become aware of this we can be more in tune with the person we are with while recognizing that we are not exactly the same as that person.

8. Patiently listening with love and respect is just as important, and maybe more so, than what we say. Real human company and empathy are valuable, and unfortunately can be difficult to find.

Human company and empathy do matter. We feel grateful when someone takes the time to truly join with us in conversation by tuning in and responding before jumping to another topic or moving on to sharing their own experiences.

In times when we are out of balance and feel confusion and pain it's more bearable when we have the company of another human being. Going through changes, whether benign or catastrophic, always involves loss, even if in the end it leads to something beneficial.

To be able to share our perspectives without being judged can be healing and comforting. Sometimes we just need to talk and be heard with a compassion that is unspoken. We need to hear our own voices and aren't looking for sympathy or suggestions. When another human engages in trying to understand and appreciate our experience it is a precious gift.

The willingness to join someone and to try to see things as if we could see through their eyes, sense what they are sensing, and feel what they are feeling, requires that we not be invested in changing them or getting them to change their perspective.

It sometimes happens that we want someone to change or to feel better mainly so that we ourselves will feel confirmed in our sense of ourselves as helpers. If we become aware that we are coming from that place we can make different choices. We can remember to tune in to our *budhi*.

When we listen *budhi to budhi* it gives us a better sense of at least some part of what another person may be experiencing. We can then convey the image or sense we are getting and be open to hearing back from the person as to whether we are touching on what feels true for them, or not. If not, we should be open to hearing the person's revision.

Example of an empathic exchange:

Listener: "It's as though you can never do enough, or do things right?" "And it feels as if God is asking too much of you? ... or God has abandoned you?"

Person: "Actually, I feel that God is asking me to do something that feels wrong and I don't know what to trust."

Listener: "You're wondering if it is God or some other force at work?"

Person: "Yes!" "What if this is actually coming from some lower force?" "But it touches me deeply and feels right."

Listener: “It feels like the guidance comes from God but how do we know? “ “And what if others, including Subud members, won’t believe you or can’t understand your experience?”

(Notice that in the first Listener statement, the Listener has tried, tentatively, to put into words an attempt to understanding the Person’s dilemma. But the Person says that this isn’t quite right and shares their own sense of things. To this the Listener continues trying to feel what the other person may be feeling and responds with a different empathic guess at what the Person means. The Listener stays present, is open to learning from the Person and is trying on what the Person is experiencing.)

Joining, sensing, and sharing respectfully and tentatively is the basis of empathy. Empathy is an effort to understand someone else’s experience in the way that they experience it. We’ve all heard the phrase “Empathy is like standing in the other person’s shoes.” It comes from our willingness to listen openly, being aware and accepting of where a person may be hurting and feeling vulnerable; what they may be fearing; what they may be hoping and yearning for, and what they feel they need.

We can empathize not only with what someone is talking about but also, at the same time, with what it is like to be talking about it with us in the moment.

A person may not know fully how to put these things into words or what to ask for. Our listening, our genuine attempts to understand and our company are important. And it’s most helpful when we accept sharing as part of a process, rather than responding with an effort to pin things down or make a point.

Warning: Sometimes we may find ourselves using empathy instrumentally as a way of getting a person to take our own perspective. This would actually be interfering and may be a way of trying to change what a person is going through. Even with the best of intentions, manipulating someone in this way usually causes more harm than good.

However, empathy can be transforming. When we are quietly open, we may be guided by the grace of God to truly keep someone company as they go through difficult times. And we may be allowed to be an instrument of change. But ultimately that is not through our own will and design.

Empathy asks us to trust that pain has legitimacy and purpose. It also asks us to have faith in each person’s inner being and timing in a very fundamental sense.

Can we believe in a person’s capacity to heal and to grow in accordance with what they are able to do, in accordance with their own timing, and according to God’s larger plan?

In the case of mental illness, we may, through empathy, be given a window into how stuck, disorganized, paranoid or disintegrated a person’s thought processes have

become, and how disconnected this is with matters of the soul. This can be very frightening. And, we rightfully hesitate to intensify feelings that are symptomatic of illness.

When we empathize, it's important to remember that it doesn't mean we necessarily agree with the person's perceptions or stance or actions.

Isn't there a place for reassurance, for distracting someone from something they are obsessively caught up in, or confronting what isn't real and giving advice, information, referrals and recommendations?

Yes! When there is true compassion for someone's experience our advice and suggestions can better be trusted. There's a place for challenging, giving advice, imparting information, joking, reassuring, giving pep talks, making recommendations, quoting Bapak, or confronting someone. But that generally takes place after a person feels that their own experience has been heard, is taken seriously, and that we are doing our best to understand and accept what having that experience is like.

9. People going through strongly transforming spiritual crises, and people recovering from mental illness, say how important it is to find safe places where they can be respected and accepted despite how they may appear to be outwardly. Yet providing a safe space is not the same as embracing or condoning poor decisions and harmful behavior.

Truly respecting someone entails trusting that if we are coming from the right place, people will be able to tolerate limits we set on poor behavior. But what does it mean to come from the right place? This is something we can test.

Those who have gone through a strong spiritual crisis, and those who are recovering from a mental breakdown may speak of how frightening it can be to face such things alone. A spiritual crisis can be a real test of faith, in which faith may be lost, comprehended differently and hopefully recovered.

We all yearn to know that someone might know the worst about our mistakes, weaknesses and struggles and yet still, surrendering to the power of God, respect us and care about us no matter what. We yearn to have someone who is willing to trust in the validity of our experience and who will make an effort to be open to sensing what we are experiencing, without judging us as people.

For us this means that it is important to acknowledge the power of God and the “*Budhi*” within each person, while at the same time recognizing that maladaptive choices and bad behaviors are not something that we are meant to accept, tolerate or encourage. Loving and respecting the *budhi* of a person is different from accepting or condoning inappropriate behavior. We need to become aware of when we confuse these and where that comes from within ourselves.

In some instances, people experiencing a spiritual crisis have an enhanced perception and they may be able to “see into” the person who is trying to relate to them. Their observations may be insightfully accurate and helpful. It’s important that we be in an open and surrendered state rather than being attached to and identified with our role as “Helper”.

With mental illness, due to changes in such things as brain chemistry, it may be particularly difficult for our respectfully loving voices to be heard. Our compassionate voices may be drowned out by internal “voices” that are full of blame and contempt. Or, as in the case of major depression, numbness may block an ability to hear and respond.

A person suffering from symptoms of mental illness may be filled with harsh judgmental thoughts about themselves and about others. Guilt and shame, feelings of being “rotten to the core”, can make a person particularly vulnerable to fears of being stigmatized.

At the same time hyper-elated feelings, grandiose ideas, and heightened creativity due to an imbalance in brain chemistry can make a mentally ill person, or one with a mental disorder, feel superior and above any observations or advice one might offer. This generally has a different feel to it than the enhanced perception of a spiritual crisis.

Looking back after recovery from mental illness, people often mention that having someone nearby with a quiet inner faith can be very important. There is need for the company of another who is unafraid to see and respond to whatever health is still there while at the same time being realistic and straightforward about the ways that things are amiss.

People benefit when we see their essential being and respect their timing. By offering that kind of presence we can support a person who is ill in accepting professional help and beginning a path toward recovery and reconnection with their own true selves in a healthier way.

After years of pushing away any advice to seek professional help, people with mental health issues may finally get the message. It’s important that friends and family not give up completely. You can say over and over in a caring way that your loved one should take their own pain seriously.

However, part of what it means to be mentally unbalanced can be an inability or an unwillingness to recognize when one's own state is seriously "off." That can be part of how an illness expresses itself. Eventually, as we continue to show our concern, something may touch the person we care about.

Yet it may be also be important to accept that you yourselves may not be the ones who will make the difference no matter what you do. Forgive yourself. One day a person struggling may be ready to hear, and it may come from someone who is perceived to be more neutral.

Subud groups and local helpers can make sincere efforts to be in touch and include, in some appropriate way, a person suffering from a mental illness, even if they cannot do latihan. We can do our best to lend support to family members and friends who may be bearing the burden of continuing to care for a person whose behaviors are difficult to live with. We should be aware that families can be thrown into crisis too. It isn't always easy to find appropriate professional care for someone who is mentally ill, mentally disordered, or addicted to drugs or alcohol. Families wrestle with a sense of responsibility and may feel blamed, shamed and frightened themselves. Knowing that in one's Subud group someone cares enough to check in now and then can be a comfort.

10. Getting support for ourselves

It helps to become aware of what gets touched within ourselves in the face of someone else's pain, or when trying to deal with an ill person's maladaptive choices and ways of behaving.

We are blessed to have our own latihan and can ask through prayer and testing for God's help and guidance in how to be when facing difficulties.

Helpers dewans on the local level are there to support members and one another. Regional, National and International Helpers are there to support groups when they are facing difficulties.

Reading about crises and about mental illnesses can be informing and comforting, helping to put things into perspective. For mental illnesses and disorders the DSM V contains professional definitions. For spiritual crises you can read, among other things, the end of Ibu Rahayu's talk, 02 SHF 4 in Sheffield, England, August 16, 2002. She gives a very good description of what a Subud crisis is about, the different kinds of crises and how we should be with someone in crisis.

Check the World Subud Association website and click the section on resources for helpers to see what is offered by the Subud Resource Planning Group on Mental

Illness and Crises. As that site gets developed there will be more suggested references -- talks and letters by Bapak and by Ibu Rahayu, and sources describing the experience of having mental illnesses and spiritual crises as well as various approaches for being helpful. Eventually it is hoped that there may be a referral list of Subud professionals who are also helpers.

It can help to consult a professional counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist about how to make a referral or about how to manage your own feelings and boundaries. Having an experience of your own consulting a professional will help you know what a person you wish to refer may experience.

It's challenging to be with someone in pain, and to be with the pain and frustration that it may bring out in ourselves. You don't have to bear it alone!

Post script: I hope that God blesses us in our attempts to be helpful and forgives us for our mistakes. Please forgive me if any of these reflections and suggestions offend you in any way. I am reminded in writing this that there is always a tension between those things that call for our faith. We have a choice to surrender and trust in God --a greater wisdom than our own. When we remember that the power of God illuminates and enlivens all beings and all creation, we have faith in that Greater Wisdom which brings an inner patience and calm. And, we can welcome the learning that comes from making outer mistakes, noticing the consequences unfolding as a result of our actions or inaction. I hope we will remember to forgive ourselves for the moments in which we actually have more faith in our thinking, feelings and nafsus. We make different choices when we have more faith in those than in the *Budhi*. Yet often it is in the moments of forgetting our faith in God that we receive guidance. May we be open to inner guidance, learn to distinguish it from what comes from our fears and passions, and have the courage to bring God's guidance into our lives and our work and our relationships. We learn as we go! God bless you!

Suzanne

References to talks by Bapak and Ibu Rahyu

Bapak's Talk to Men and Women, Christchurch, NZ, 1963 (regarding crises).

Ibu Rahayu's Talk to men and women, Sheffield, England, August 16, 2002: 02 SHF 4 (regarding crises)

Ibu Rahayu, 16 CDK 1; and a letter dated August 14, 2017 (regarding Mawas Diri)

Ibu Rahayu's Talk in Freiburg, Germany: 18 QFB 1 (regarding dhat, sifat, asma, and af'al)

Bapak's Talk to Members, Auckland, NZ, March 29, 1963: 63 AKL 2 (regarding how God's power changes something so that it develops itself without being worked on)

Ibu Rahayu, 13 CDK 3 ("sickness of the soul" has nothing to do with mental illness)

Bapak's Talk to Men and Women Detroit, MI, USA: 63 DTT 2 (regarding suicide)

Ibu Rahayu's Talk to Delegates Zone 1&2, Rangan Sari, 2012, 12 TLK 1 (regarding opening people too soon so they have a crisis, and regarding those who have the seeds of a mental disorder)

Ibu Rahayu, 12 TLK 02 (Regarding Helpers not having all the answers)

Bapak, 63 BCL 6 (Bapak answers a question regarding illness and purification)

Other Suggested Subud References:

"Mental Illness, Crises, and the Latihan" by Matthew Moir, 2018

Advice and Guidance for Bapak's Helpers,

Suggested Non-Subud References

DSM-5 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders;

DSM-5 Overview (Quick Study Academic)

The Inner World of Mental Illness: A Series of First-Person Accounts of What it Was Like, by Bert Kaplan, Harper and Row Publishers, 1964

Breaking Open: Finding a Way Through Spiritual Emergency, edited by Jules Evans and Tim Read, published by Aeon Books, London, England, 2020, (This book contains first person accounts of non-Subud experiences of spiritual crises or emergencies.)_

Note about the author and acknowledgements:

Suzanne Renna lives in Massachusetts, USA, where she serves as a local helper in the Boston and Central Massachusetts Subud groups. She was opened in Cilandak, Indonesia, in 1972. She has served as a regional helper, a national helper, and as an international helper. She actively worked with her IH team on producing Advice and Guidance for Bapak's Helpers. Presently she is serving on the Resource Planning Group for Addressing Mental Illness and Spiritual Crises in Subud.

The many drafts that led to the paper as it is in this moment, (it will undoubtedly continue to change) came from inspiration from the latihan, Bapak's and Ibu Rahayu's talks and from the learning that came from traveling to many Subud groups and being with brothers and sisters from all over the world when serving as an International Helper.

Suzanne is grateful for all these experiences and for 32 years of counseling young people at Harvard University's Bureau of Study Counsel. She learned so much from all those who were generous enough to share their life experiences with her. The staff of the BSC shared many "Sacred Hours" learning to listen together. The original catalyst for writing a paper in this form came from reflecting on a paper co-authored by Sheila Reindl and Suzanne that sought to support friends, roommates, parents and others who had someone they loved with an eating disorder.

Suzanne lived for a time as a child in Taipai, Taiwan, and as a very young adult in India, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and, finally, Indonesia where she encountered Subud. She is grateful for the lived experience that we are all part of the One. Yet, she became aware of and curious about the way our languages and the ways we speak affect us and affect our interactions with one another and the world we live in.

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