

Transcript of Video Report of European Men Liberation Workshop October 2020

Part 2

It's very hard to find a contradiction when everyone has similar distresses, so we get used to the isolation. In the last 8 months I've worked with many people on Zoom and at least half the men and many of the women are embarrassed to admit they like COVID isolation. (laughs) Yes it's horrible but it's a relief in some way. We all went into isolation to escape. We all went into isolation because we couldn't find a better solution. This seemed the best possible thing we could do to escape the disappointment of having no one to build a connection with. I think in one way it was a triumph.

We did this to preserve something that was being crushed. It isn't that we liked having to isolate ourselves at the beginning, but over and over I've heard people say it allowed them to stay themselves in some way they were losing. But a very expensive one for each of us. The cost of it shows very clearly now.

I think oppressive societies exist because of this culturally common distress. I think if we had had the chance to build relationships in our childhoods, to learn how to build relationships what we could do together now would be very different. We know there are big challenges that have to be faced very soon. There's both the collapse of our societies and the collapse of the environment. You can debate which one is more pressing at the moment, but both will have to be faced soon.

Finding good solutions will work best with minds that are connected to each other. Connected enough we can think together and hunt for good common solutions, rather than getting stuck in a particular solution and fighting with each other about which one will work best. So this is needed for very large reasons. Each of us also needs it.

I don't know anyone who has a clear idea about what life would be like without those distresses, if those distresses didn't occupy and block our minds so much. Without these distresses we would interact very differently. I think we'd be eager, eager to hear other minds fully, eager to show our minds fully to other people.

Though this seems to happen to every human, the way societies use this vulnerability in men is a little different. We are a little more isolated from each other, a little more hopeless, a little more resigned to keeping on going the way it is as long as we can.

The particular way this has been aimed at men, that's an added reason why it's important for us to do this work. Because this work is about isolation, it's hard for us to do this work simply in a session at home. The best places it can happen are at workshops, because we don't have to do the work alone. And we have a chance to see each other as examples. Seeing anyone fight against similar material is encouraging to us. So I want to work with another person or two and have you use them as a force in your liberation. We'll have a short mini after the demonstration. I want you to pick up their work in your session, it's easy to understand what we work on in this place together, and each of us can use each other's efforts. So I want to work with a person or two on where they went separate, on what makes them like being separate now and daring to think it could come to an end.

Okay I want to revisit our two topics and the first one and I think we underline one, is about connection versus isolation; because of this load of distress humans have carried up to know. Because of this load of distress, no child has managed to make a connection. When each of us arrived we tried to connect with another human mind; we needed them to be able to discharge our distresses. We wanted them, but we also wanted the interplay, our mind and another human mind. In the last of those nine months of our development, we probably all heard things. And some of them would have been hopeful sounds that made us look forward to contact and the possibility of connection. It doesn't happen yet. It didn't happen for us. It's different now when parents know RC well, those newborns have a different experience. But it's not yet different enough to keep this from happening. At some point we will get there. Maybe a couple more generations. If we last that long.

And then children won't have the battle I think we need to face. In the beginning, moving in that direction was clear, obvious, maybe instinctual. For us, it has a very different feel to it. I haven't found any of us eager to work through those difficulties, and build connection. At our beginning it was obvious and interesting and clearly the thing to try to do. Because we didn't get to, it looks very different now. It's confused with all these recorded feelings and so it seems too hard, too hopeless, too late, too alone and unchanging. It seems in mind after mind like the failures of the past are proof it cannot work in the future. And that's not true.

And it goes against one of the things we know well about humans. We know humans can change things. We know humans can think new thoughts and find new solutions. This is our task now. To begin solving this problem that apparently has plagued our species from the beginning. We know how to do it. But we haven't done it. We've begun the process. And we still can be confused by all those recordings, of isolation and defeat. We can be confused by them into thinking that's the description that life has to have. We know it's not true, theoretically.

In some ways you have two contradictory things living in your mind. You have the picture of us human beings and the desire to be fully human. And you have this collection of undischarged distress. And the two things don't fit together. They are in complete contradiction. And they're both there in your mind. We can think well enough in spite of that. The struggle is to think well enough to go back and discharge them no matter what the recordings are.

This basic piece about how alone you are in your head with your thoughts and now with Covid probably as alone as you've ever been; how can we challenge those, all those feelings, consistently enough that we steadily discharge on them. None of us have as much resource in counseling that we could use. But if you are here, I suspect you have enough resource to move forward. So we have decisions to make, to get this work done. Some of this work is for us as the counselor and ally deciding not to leave our cocounselor alone in that material. So in our sessions reminding them that you are willing to back and fight that aloneness with them.

Some of it is as an ally outside of session, remembering that as soon as you left the session with them, they are likely to have wandered off into a fog of isolation, not being able to remember that you were there even. Every one of us could use reminders about the reality of not needing to be alone. At the current level of development of communication, reminding someone isn't difficult. We do all need reminders.

Another part of this struggle is as client. It's about each of us deciding to take on this piece of the work. To challenge our mind to think against the feel of those old distresses. Challenging them in sessions. Going towards very unpleasant material. Knowing we can move it out of our lives. And outside of session, reminding ourselves that those feelings are old and not about the present.

That the present always has new possibilities for connection. So I want to give you a little practice in this. We're going to do 3-ways. I want you to decide that you are really with them. I'd like you to decide that you are going to be with them the rest of your lives; that an ongoing connection is possible with any of us. And that it's possible for you to have with any two of us, and so to look back and forth at the two of them and maybe just ask them: Us? Can we go forward together? Would you go forward with me? Would you not leave and forget? Will you be here the next time I get a chance to look?

I think it's difficult for any of us to try to believe in that direction. We're still waiting for someone to prove it to us. No one can. I think it's something we have to prove to ourselves. If you look at our screens, you know the resources here. We've built it. We've done this work together. This close. We have the resource now, to challenge the things that have kept us separate. I don't think we need more outside resource. I think it takes our understanding the conditions and our deciding to take this, what feels like a big chance with each other, to dare to leave what felt like the only safe place in the past of being alone. And trying to step forward and see what kind of connection and what kind of relationship is possible for us together. I don't think we've ever had the chance to know and I think we have to challenge ourselves to create the possibility.

So 3 ways, we'll 4 minutes each. END <https://www.rc.org/publication/irp/men2020>