**Our Safe Space and how to Access it**

We all have a safe space within us. That space is calm, composed and filled with love and kindness. It is often called 'our true nature'. It's the only constant we all have in a world of impermanence.

But often, it gets clouded by our irrational thoughts and beliefs, our negative thoughts and emotions, and our experiences, which also limit our potential to grow and, therefore, we cannot grow and thrive.

When I hear stories from my clients in my counselling/therapy sessions, we talk about how these irrational beliefs are formed and what can be done to reframe them to a more positive outlook and mindset. Some of these irrational beliefs are I am not good enough, I am not worthy enough, and I don't believe in myself, to name a few.

These beliefs get hardwired into our minds, translate into our day-to-day actions, and impact our decision-making.

**How does Counselling/Therapy help you find your safe space?**

I often ask my clients many questions to understand where and how these irrational beliefs were formed in the past. Was it in early childhood or later time of their life? How were these beliefs shaped and influenced, and what have they accepted to be true as a child?

Once the client shares these, we exercise positive reframing, where they reframe their beliefs to positive and healthier ones, making them grow and achieve more (CBT & REBT therapy).

The other part is considering the stories they can tell themselves to view the situation in a different and more positive light (Narrative therapy). As we become more and more within us, we access our real nature and safe space. Of course, the time taken for each is different as our experiences and issues are different.

Sometimes, clients may struggle to accept themselves fully due to childhood trauma or negative experiences; in that case, we do an exercise called accepting each part within us (Internal Family System Therapy).

One of my clients resisted accepting herself when I did a visualization exercise where she imagined and talked to her inner child and practised forgiving herself (Inner child therapy). This was extremely helpful to her in accepting herself fully and healing her inner wounds and emotional pain. Now, she is on the path of self-recovery and well-being.

Then, there could be some deep-seated emotions which can also cause you to be stuck. These emotions need to be understood and managed. Firstly, we need to know how our emotions can help us grow; this will only happen when you stop resisting them, find out what you are feeling, and know the triggers that cause that emotion.

Only when you fully accept yourself can you gain more access to your safe space. Carl Rogers says, “The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” Lastly, after you have accessed this safe space, how do you nurture it with kindness, love and compassion?

Without that, it will be a temporary home. Just as you decorate your house with your favourite articles and furnishings similarly, it is your home where you feel the happiest and safe. This is your space where you can always return when you feel hurt or sad or experience negative emotions. To continue this, you can say and hear positive affirmations and do more self-compassion meditations.

I feel counselling/therapy is one of the means to know yourself and your triggers and develop more insight into yourself. With a deep self-reflection, we can access the safe space within us. The tools once learned will always be with you, and when you find that safe space, there is no looking back….