Keeping Nothing Between, by Eugene Gendlin

In a restaurant a little girl in the next booth turns to look at you. It is an open look, direct from her â€“ to you. She doesnâ€™t know that strangers are not supposed to connect. She does not put this knowledge between herself and you. There is nothing in between. You look back. Her parents make her sit down and face forward. But then, when they all leave, she turns around at the door, to look again. After all, you and she have met therefore she wouldnâ€™t just leave.

In first grade the children look at the teacher searchingly, openly, reachingly. They put nothing between. The teacher is concerned with the eight levels of reading ability, and does not look back.

Do only little children keep nothing between? Or can adults do that too? We can, but for us it is a special case.

If you came to see me now, I would not look at you like that, nor would I notice if you looked. You would find me in a certain mood in my private struggles. I am also preoccupied with writing this paper. If you suddenly walked in, a third cluster would come: The social set for greeting someone properly. I would respond to you out of that set. Or if you are an old friend, I would respond from the familiar set of the two of us. If you then wanted to relate in some fresh, deep way, it would take me a minute to put our usual set aside, to put my concern about my chapter away, and to roll my mood over so that I am no longer inside it. Then I would be here without putting anything between. But it would be easier to remain behind all that, and depend on my automatic ways.

If I really want to be with you, I keep nothing in front of me. Of course I know I can fall back on the automatic ways. If need be, I can also defend myself. I have many resources. But I donâ€™t want all that between us.

If I keep nothing between, you can look into my eyes and find me. You might not look, of course. But if you do, I wonâ€™t hide. Then you may see a very insufficient person. But for contact, no special kind of human being is required. This fact makes a thick peacefulness.

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