



Accessing Desire As Loving Motivation, by Miki Kashtan

When Yannai, my sister Inbal's son, was three and a half, his grandparents were visiting and were staying in the downstairs room. At about 8am the next morning Yannai started banging a pole on the floor upstairs. There ensued the following dialogue:

INBAL: "Seeing you banging on the floor, I am worried about our guests. I would like them to be able to rest as long as they wanted.

Would you be willing to stop banging or to bang on the couch?"

YANNAL: "I don't want to, but I'm willing."

I: "How come you don't want to?"

Y: "Because it's not waking me up!"

I: "So how come you're willing?"

Y: "Because I want to consider you."

He then put down the pole, without any of the sense of resentment and anger that people often exude when they are doing something against their will. Inbal expressed her gratitude to her son for meeting her need for cooperation, and they moved on with their morning.

When Inbal shared this story with a group of people at one of her workshops, one man said: "But of course, your son was clear that if he didn't do what you asked you would take the pole away!" "No," she replied. "I would not have taken the pole away. In fact, I believe that because my son knew that I would not physically take the pole away from him, he was willing to put it down even though it was not what he wanted."

As I see it, the ongoing absence of coercion and "should" thinking was the context within which Yannai could find and cultivate his organic and genuine desire to care for the well being of his mother.

Whenever I notice myself using "should" thinking, I pause to translate. Instead of "I should" I aim for "I want to" because "I" is simple. The linguistic turn is simple. The internal shift is not. It's easy to say "I want to eat fewer cookies because I want to care for my body" instead of saying "I should eat fewer cookies." It's not so easy to access our desire to care for our body sufficiently to make the difference, to access the desire so deeply that it can serve as a loving motivation to eat something else rather than a self-admonition.