

We are all healers

who can reach out to offer health, and
we all are patients in constant need of help.

Only this realization can keep professionals from
becoming distant technicians and those in need of care
from feeling used or manipulated.

But when we look at healing as creating space for the
stranger, it is clear that we should be willing and able to
offer this so much needed form of hospitality.

Therefore, healing means, first of all, the creation of an
empty but friendly space where those who suffer can
tell their story to someone who can listen with real attention.

Our most important question as healers is not “What to
say or to do?” but, “How to develop enough inner
space where the story can be received?”

Healing is the humble but also very demanding task of
creating and offering a friendly empty space where
strangers can reflect on their pain and suffering without
fear; and find the confidence that makes them look for
new ways right in the center of their confusion.

Excerpted from
Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life
by Henri J. M. Nouwen, pp. 65-68.