

## **DIFFERENCES AND THE PYGMALION APPROACH:**

**If I do not want what you want, please try not to tell me that my want is wrong.  
Or if I believe other than you, at least pause before you correct my view.  
Or if my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same circumstances, try not to ask me to feel more strongly or weakly.  
Or yet if I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for action, let me be.  
I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me. That will come only when you are willing to give up changing me into a copy of you.**

**I may be your spouse, your parent, your offspring, your friend, or your colleague. If you will allow me any of my own wants or emotions, or beliefs, or actions, then you open yourself, so that someday these ways of mine might not seem so wrong, and might finally appear to you as right- for me. Not that you embrace my ways as right for you, but that you are no longer irritated, or disappointed with me for my seeming waywardness. And in understanding me you might come to prize my differences from you, and far from seeking to change me, preserve and even nurture those differences.**

**The point is that people are different from one another, and no amount of getting after them is going to change them. Nor is there any reason to change them, because the differences are probably good, not bad.**

**People are different in fundamental ways. They want different things; they have different motives, purposes, aims, values, needs, drives, impulses, urges. Nothing is more fundamental than that. They believe differently: they think, cognize, conceptualize, perceive, understand, comprehend, and cogitate differently. And of course, manners of acting and emoting governed as they are by wants and beliefs, follow suit and differ radically among people.**

**Differences abound, and are not at all difficult to see, if one looks. And it is precisely these variations in behavior and attitude that trigger in each of us a common response. Seeing others around us differing from us, we conclude that these differences in individual behavior are but temporary manifestations of madness, badness, stupidity, or sickness. In others, we rather naturally account for variations in the behavior of others in terms of flaw and affliction. Our job, at least for those near us, would seem to be to correct these flaws. Our Pygmalion project, then, is to make all those near us just like us. Fortunately, this project is impossible. To sculpt the other into our own likeness fails before it begins.....Our attempts to change spouse, offspring, or others can result in change, but the result is a scar and not a transformation.**

**David Keirse and Marilyn Bates from Please Understand Me, 1984.**