

Accepting the Gift of Love

This month, April Fool's Day and Easter Sunday fell on the same date, so I do hope no one played an April Fool's trick on you instead of getting you a scrumptious chocolate egg. When I was a child, I used to hoard all my Easter eggs and then taunt my friends with the fact that I still had some chocolate left when theirs was all long gone. What a lovely child I was! But seriously, looking back, I think that I hoarded chocolate as a substitute for love, because for some reason or other, even as a child, I was wary of letting others' love for me into my heart.

Sadly, many of us like to believe that we are pretty good at being loving and kind towards others, but we are often pretty bad at receiving loving kindness *from* others. We may make a big fuss for example, if a friend insists on paying for our lunch, or we may refuse an offer of help from a kind neighbour when we are ill or bereaved.

Not being able to receive loving kindness from others is actually tragic, In fact, I am going to stick my neck out here and argue that if we cannot receive love from others, the love that we think we extend to others is pretty fake. Why? because everything that manifests in this world begins in our own hearts and minds first, before it manifests in the world around us. If we cannot receive love, our minds and hearts cannot fill up with a loving energy that we can then naturally extend out into the world around us.

So, as part of our long soul journey from fear to love, we need to practise receiving love, as much as we practise giving love unconditionally to others. There are a number of ways to do this. One that I really enjoy is to sit in meditation and then to use the power of my own mind to imagine an out-of-this-world, divine energy descending on me from the beyond and bathing my whole being in incandescent, unconditional love and light.

I actually find it easier to connect to a pure, loving energy from the beyond than I do to accept love from another human being. For example, when I first went to a therapy group in my mid-twenties, I was actually horrified to discover that we were all supposed to hug each other at the beginning and end of every session. I vividly remember telling the therapist that I found this practice most disturbing and uncomfortable and then insisting on exercising my human right to opt out of it!

However, after many, many years of slowly healing my aversion to hugging, I have finally discovered the joy of receiving a warm hug from a dear friend. I am also much better at receiving compliments, although only up to a point.

It seems crazy that someone would have to push through a load of anxiety and aversion to receive love from others, because of course we all desperately long to be loved. Tragically however, if a child does not receive safe loving touch from a parent or primary caregiver in early childhood, they can grow up unable to open up to a loving touch in later life. In fact,

the damage of not receiving loving physical content as a baby can be so severe that some children raised in harsh orphanages can end up with permanent brain damage.

Thankfully, most of us were not brought up in a Romanian orphanage in the late 20th century, but many of us may have experienced rather harsh parenting or parental indifference, abandonment, or abuse of some kind as we were growing up. This in itself is enough for us to come to believe that we do not deserve unconditional love from Life Itself. We then subconsciously, or even consciously, block others attempts to love and care for us. For example, when I was a young woman looking for love if any young man declared his undying love for me, I ran away from him immediately. Subconsciously, I was afraid of love.

So this month, I want to suggest that you might like to gently focus on ways in which you can open up to receive more love into your life. I can assure you that you do not need to have a partner to do this. You can just open up to receiving loving energy as you meditate, or you can be brave and experiment with asking a good friend to give you a hug next time you are feeling a little down. If you find this a bit too challenging, simply notice when someone pays you any kind of compliment and vow to accept it gratefully, without quibbling about it.

I am sure you can think up several more ways to practise accepting more love this month. The key is to do something each day and then to keep doing it day in and day out until you feel really comfortable receiving love from all kind of sources. What we practise, we become. So I know without a shadow of a doubt that if you practise opening to receive love in some way or another this month, you will definitely feel more loved, and at the same time, feel more loving. As you open up to receiving love in all its many guises, you will quite naturally become a more radiant, loving presence in our world. Then, everyone around you will benefit from your loving presence, without any effort whatsoever on your part to become a goody two shoes.

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