

We Are All Worthy of Love

*The myth of inadequacy has nothing to do with our soul nature. It is learned unworthiness. .. We outgrow the myth of inadequacy when we are willing to embrace again the basic truth, **I am loveable.** (Louise Hay and Robert Holden *Life Loves You*)*

Gloria and I have just returned from a wonderful spiritual retreat in Assisi –the birthplace of St Francis of Assisi.

During this retreat, I experienced a deep healing whilst I was meditating at St Francis' Hermitage on the mountain side near Assisi. Our group were dispersed around the grounds of the hermitage meditating, when I started crying my eyes out. I just felt so unworthy to be in such a divine place. After I had sobbed quietly for a few minutes, I felt bathed in an out-of-this-world light that filled me with unconditional love and compassion. After I came out of this meditation, I felt a little shaky, but I also felt blissful and incredibly grateful for the blessing I had received.

Why am I telling you this story? Because I can bet that on some level or other, you too feel unworthy of receiving infinite, unconditional love at all times. As we go through this life, we all pick up the message that there is something wrong with us. Maybe as a child you picked up the message that you were too fat, too stupid, too shy, too unattractive or too 'bad' in some other way to deserve nothing but love and happiness at all times. Even those of us who had loving, kind parents and a really safe and secure childhood still inadvertently picked up some of these 'you are unworthy' messages along the way.

For example, I was rather overweight when I was around 10 years old and we were playing a game of 'chase and kiss' in the playground at school one day, when an attractive boy caught me. Instead of kissing me on the cheek as he was supposed to do, he ran away shouting 'Yuck!' This story may sound funny now, but at the time I was mortified, and from then on, I was convinced that I was really unattractive to the opposite sex. This belief then had a toxic effect on my relationships with men for decades because if a man fancied me, I assumed there must be something wrong with him, and so I only felt attracted to men who did not fancy me. The result was long-term heartbreak!

Everyone suffers so much emotionally, mentally and physically in this world, but most of us have absolutely no idea that our deep sense of unworthiness or existential guilt is at the core of our suffering. In fact, when I first read in *A Course in Miracles* that guilt was the deepest cause of all sickness, I just could not believe it. But nearly 20 years later, I am finally coming round to the idea that the deepest cause of all our suffering is guilt.

In fact, I now really like this explanation for all the terrible suffering in our world. Even as a child, I just could not get my head around the idea that a loving God could allow something as terrible as The Holocaust to happen to His children. Nor could I believe that such terrible suffering was a punishment for our sins, because even at a young age, my logical brain told

me that very young children could not yet have committed a terrible sin and yet many of them were murdered in the Holocaust. So basically, I became an atheist in my early teens and stayed that way until studying and practising *A Course in Miracles* finally gave me a totally different way of looking at all human suffering and at God.

Now, you certainly do not have to believe that our existential guilt causes all of our suffering. But I would ask you to at least entertain the idea that if you actually loved and forgave yourself more, your life would start to be a *lot* easier.

Many forgiveness practices focus on forgiving others for hurting us. But whilst we all know that we are holding some grievances against others, many of us are much less aware of how much we blame ourselves – often on a subconscious level - for not being perfect, or for not behaving perfectly in the past.

The irony is that there is no such thing as perfection in this world. Even Saints and Bodhisattvas who walk this earth are still ‘work in progress’. So we really do not have to blame ourselves for making mistakes in life, even mistakes that hurt those we love. But of course we do! For example, when I was a young woman, I was sometimes really mean to my adoptive father. Then for decades, I gave myself a hard time about this. But when we were in Assisi, I suddenly realised that because of my deep down guilt, my memory of those times with my father was highly selective. I had actually been a lot kinder to my father a lot more of the time than I had remembered!

So please this month, mindfully notice when you are being even a little bit hard on yourself, and then pause and hold nothing but love and compassion in your heart for yourself – particularly that part of you who is feeling unworthy in some way or another. Keep doing this until forgiving yourself for any unskilled behaviour or mean thoughts becomes a truly engrained habit. Keep doing this until you know without a shadow of a doubt that you are worthy of receiving infinite love 24/7.

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