

# Courage To Love

by

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## Book Description

*Courage to Love* is a book about many different kinds of Love. It is a book of experiences from my childhood, my beliefs on Love, within the context of living, and experiencing life. There are several places in this book that will give you advice and guidance for relationships you may be having, or that you will experience in the future.

Several chapters speak on subjects and ideas that society has not been able to embrace because of fear – including social implications that could be derogatory if one accepted my point of view, and may cause some people to belittle my perspective of thinking and feeling. My perceptions on Love are mostly spiritual, and do not allow space for judging, criticism, or blaming.

*Courage to Love* will give you a different view on the meaning of Love. Hopefully, it will help you to embrace those special people in your life, in a more positive and healthy way. It takes courage to see the fallacy of some viewpoints society has embraced until now on the subject of Love. It also takes courage to change our own views to a more universal and holistic way of believing and feeling.

This book will be somewhat enjoyable, touching, and at times, humorous. You will have many ideas to ponder and wonder about, that you may not have thought of before you read my book, *Courage to Love*.

# Preface

This is my umpteenth attempt to write my book about Love. I have been reading books and essays from various different authors talking about the subject of Love over my entire life. It has been very helpful for me to see the overall viewpoints of other writers for my purpose of communicating my belief system about the relevance of Love.

It is a belief system that I have been searching to create and, at the same time, to understand seriously since my late teens. I am now older, and have come to the place in my existence where I feel I can share what I have come to know. I have been composing this book for the last four years.

My position on this matter will be very spiritually oriented, and have much reference to matters of the soul. This very important subject and concept, called Love, that every human being must feel each day, in one form or another – is really the reason for our meaningful existence on Earth.

My book will be a revealing of my personal perspective on the many kinds and forms of love as humans we experience, depending upon our personal set of parameters, and lives we find ourselves participating in daily.

To some degree, this is an educational and informative book. It is also a personal narrative of my life including events that have formed my own belief systems around the different meanings and expressions of Love.



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# A Man and a Woman

The love between a man and a woman is like the growing of a seed. The Love seed is not capable of living and sustaining its existence without a lot of attention from both parties. The couple can give each other healthy and positive attention – or it can go into a negative direction which will cause the couple to experience “twists and turns,” and that will lead to other directions in their relationship.

Sometimes when people of the opposite sex become attracted, it is because of needs from childhood that weren’t fulfilled, and consequently become attached to the man and woman relationship. This paradox is not obvious to the couple in the beginning of the relationship. It could be the woman is looking for a father figure, or a man is looking for a mother figure.

It could be that one is searching for a parent figure, while the other is looking for a mate. At any rate, this difference will cause “twists and turns” away from the track of reaching a healthy love, as long as those factors of searching for the missing pieces of a lost parent are in place.

A lot of times, people have poor communication skills that interfere with the growth of the seed of Love. This manifests itself in arguments, sometimes of a hateful nature; and various forms of power struggles appear as well. These disagreements also tend to come from immature emotional development during earlier years in childhood. Behaviors such as these often do not yield positive results, and will cause a lot of damage to the growing seed of Love.

Another example of detrimental behavior in a man-and-woman relationship is “mind games.” They range from lying, distortion of facts, embellishing of facts and maybe of situations, making promises that are not kept within a reasonable time (time line to be agreed upon by the couple), and excuses from here to the moon and back.

Remember, the seed is delicate – but it is also resilient. But it is delicate first. People see their lives on a continuum of time. Healthy couples will want, need, and ultimately expect to feel good about remaining in a relationship with their significant other. When they do not get reinforced over a period of time within the relationship, they tend to harbor doubts. People usually thrive when they feel appreciated and loved. Doubts are like anger. It shows itself, and is felt, when something is wrong. Doubts are very negative at their core, and should always be viewed as such.

This realization does not mean for you to ignore them. Just understand their potential to do irreparable damage to the relationship, or at least cause much pain and emotional suffering.

I recommend handling doubts with a prayer first. It can be done alone, or with your partner. Just recognize the doubt, and then announce your need for prayer. After you have done this, get right down to the meat of the doubt or problem, and maybe the fear, as quickly as possible.

Keep your anger in check and rephrase what your partner has said or implied to you, so you are pretty sure you both are clear on the nature of the doubt. Hopefully you will gain new insight in a positive and loving direction, so you can move on to a higher level of understanding for your partner's view on life.

If you feel you are going to become verbally or otherwise destructive, ask to take a five minute break, and go to a quiet place to regroup what you need to get resolved.

"Anger dwells only in the bosom of fools." (A. Einstein).

Another method I have used is to write down your feelings for your partner to read. They can write down their feelings back to you. This approach of opening up to your partner is less obtrusive and will yield results, but it takes longer to get to the heart of things when it is done this way. Whatever way you decide to clear the air is up to you; just do it.

In order to develop a healthy man and woman relationship one must include massive amounts of trust, respect, and listening skills (without interrupting), that will enable the partners enough wriggle room to figure out where the other one is coming from – and NOT jump to conclusions because it doesn't sound like something they want to hear.

This is real Love when you connect just to make connection with your mate. It also involves separating the need to fill in those missing pieces from childhood that the parent couldn't do for whatever reason. The man and woman relationship is usually one with two mature adults in age.

When children under the age of around 18 engage in love, it usually is not a mature and consequently healthy Love. That motivation is primarily coming from purely physical needs. Healthy Love is to know your partner, completely, before you experience sex. Of course it doesn't always work out that way, but it is the best way for a lasting emotional and spiritual union.

You wouldn't find a sexual relationship with your mother or father in a mature and healthy love. But it is so very common that partners try to put

that role onto their mates. A lot of times it involves low self esteem and comes out in the form of a distorted ego.

Many times a partner will allude to some kind of inadequacy in the other (possibly a guilt inducing comment), and that triggers memories from childhood where the child had no power to do any real changing of the situation; hence feelings of low self worth and true helplessness surface.

This scenario can bounce back and forth between partners without them realizing the negative hooks of the "missing parent syndrome" within their relationship. Conflict is a flower bed for growth. Man and woman relationships have other dynamics to balance as well.

Being of the opposite sex has areas that are difficult to fathom just from the sheer fact that the opposite sexes communicate in very different ways. It definitely takes patience from both partners to understand this fact of life. Then there are the questions arising from the dynamics of child-rearing, and the different opinions and perspectives of how both partners see the "rearing" needs to be done.

To love your partner to the fullest you must demonstrate those feelings through actions. I believe that the "Golden Rule" of treating others how you would like to be treated fits in beautifully at this time. Also, don't love your partner with expectations of a return favor. This is conditional love. It is not healthy Love, nor is it a mature Love or real Love.

Conditional love will yield disappointment and misunderstandings that get your relationship further away from the real thing. Couples with healthy Love will naturally return favors with no prompts or cues. It is the growing of the seed that makes this process develop. You both will see and feel your real Love bloom.

"Both partners must decide to resolutely make the marriage work by allowing Love to permeate their beings and their mental attitudes to the extent that they are open to each other for the sake of mutual assistance and growth. Honesty, communication and dialogue are imperative. Love is not merely a promise or entitlement. To bear fruit it must be created and recreated over and over." (John Galtung, *Choose Peace*).

Remember, if you experience a negative feeling from your partner, rather it be verbally implied or done through physical gestures. To truly love, you need to offer room for explanation before jumping to a negative conclusion that will cause a break in the harmony of your good feelings that the two of you have shared in your past. Give them the opportunity to explain to you

why they did or said what they did, that made you feel bad. Give them the opportunity to show you their true feelings of Love.

## Love and Emotional Maturity

One must have emotional maturity in order to experience real, true Love. Everything else comes within *four levels or branches of awareness*.

1) *The emotionally mature* human accepts responsibilities of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual realms – cause and effect, past implications about things, without getting caught up in their relevance, and future implications, as well. These individuals also assist others, always, and to the best of their ability. Level 1's have to learn how to shield themselves, to self-discipline themselves from some negative, hateful energies of 2's, 3's, and 4's in order to remain and sustain their spiritual, physical, mental and emotional strength of "Love".

2) *Emotional pretenders of maturity* are the next level. These humans pretend to themselves and others they are on level 1, at all times. Only they know the truth about themselves. Remember the song by Eric Clapton, "She said she was pretending"? Level 1's can slip into this state of existence if they are weakened too much and don't take care of their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional being. Level 2's use alcohol and sometimes drugs, a lot, to deal with their feelings of pain and inadequacy. They are not trying to improve their existence from level 2 to level 1. Only they really know this about themselves. The people in the level 2 branch play lots of mind games.

3) *Level 3's don't want to become emotionally mature. They are your Peter Pan types, and can be either male or female.* They go through their lives pretending to be 2's, and on a good day pretending to be 1's. They have all the characteristics of level 2's and harbor great fear of rejection from individuals and society in general. Their lesser ego's are always in control of them and a lot of personality disorders, alcoholism and drug addiction are on this level. They feel deeply and spiritually inadequate and operate their existence solely from a physical plane. Mental, emotional, and spiritual concepts are not something they want to "deal" with in their lives. They will and often do shut down. They do this by regressing into neurotic behaviors and if they are left alone either emotionally or physically, for any length of time, the neurotic behaviors will take over the human and the person gets trapped on level 3. The neurotic behaviors characterize the person's existence.

4) *Level 4's are not capable physically, mentally, and/or emotionally of fully exhibiting Level 1 behavior.* They are intellectually handicapped beyond their potential to express the full realm of level 1 love. Spiritually, however, they can pass level 1's. But, due to their physical restrictions, they cannot show this in a sustained, emotionally mature, and physical manner for any humanly length of time, such as a long term, give and take, relationship.

Level 2's, 3's, and 4's have to be exposed to and taught how to raise their life conditions through observing others who have more awareness of healthy and true ways of feeling and thinking, while living, and challenging life's difficulties in a positive, compassionate and ultimately victorious manner.

One way to do this is by reciting the Buddhist mantra *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* in order to replenish one's personal energy power of "Love". Many other forms of connecting with one's higher power are out there to be used. This is the one I use and have used for most of my adult life. The vibration of this mantra and spiritual form of meditation sets with my soul. I always feel uplifted after saying these words for a few minutes.

Level 1's must overcome their lesser, and selfish egos, and tap into their pure, altruistic selves, so they won't react negatively to level 2's, 3's, and 4's potentially impoverished awareness.

About marriage, Louis Anspacher wrote: "in America marriage is that relationship between man and woman in which the independence is equal, the dependence mutual, and the obligation reciprocal."

A key component to a happy, lifelong marriage is spiritual growth, a willingness to see beyond the horizon. Couples don't always grow in the same manner, but as long as they keep their eyes fixed on the fulfillment and happiness of the two, the marriage then becomes the one, the one found in pure Love.



# A Brother and a Sister

I will write this portion from the perspective of my relationship I have shared with my only brother, who happens to be eight years older than me. Since my brother was older than me, he always seemed to try and make me feel subordinate to him. It was almost like an unspoken competition that was inherent in our relationship for as long as I can remember.

Our mother was a very gentle and loving soul, and she always took sides with me when he would pick on me. And that's why I constantly would say to her, "Mom, he's picking on me!" His "picking" usually amounted to simple and minimally involved scenarios.

His favorite thing to do to me, was to turn me upside down and pretend to sweep the floor with my hair. Of course that would get me wailing for my mom, and she would come running to my rescue. His physical taunts of me were never violent or aggressive to the point of making me cry. However, he did hurt my feelings on numerous occasions.

I had a bad habit as a child of incorrectly pronouncing certain words and phrases. My brother was very nerdy (still is), and would love to correct my grammar every chance he got. My sister, who was ten years older than me, sometimes, would "chime in" on the unwanted and unwelcome English grammar session.

One of my tendencies was to skew words, such as "like this" to "like giss." He made sure that I knew (at my tender age of eight) that my phonetic pronunciation of like this was all wrong. I also pronounced "like that" as "like gat." Maybe that's one reason why I became a special educator...so I could help special needs children, ones with speech issues, to be able to hear how to correctly pronounce words.

Because I had difficulty expressing myself verbally, and to the level of intelligence I thought my brother had over me, I frequently had emotional outbursts while speaking with him. He loved it. It was his validation that his form of "torturing me" was working. Don't get me wrong, *he really did love me*, but apparently he believed this way of communicating his love for me was the best.

We still interact with verbal bouts of words of contention, from time to time, but it is not a malicious kind of interacting. He always ends up apologizing to me, and I always end up saying "OK".

Looking back on all of this has had me realize that his way of interacting with me was not only his way of his expressing his "adoration" for me,

although it didn't feel like that at the time, but also helped him to cope with my very dysfunctional family. He seemed to be amused by our interactions, and I remember him laughing, sometimes hysterically, at me – and me not really knowing what to do or say in response to our interactions.

He has turned into a full blown academic know it all. He is quite intelligent. He once told me he scored 157 on a Mensa IQ test. So, I was right about him being a nerd, even when I supposedly didn't know anything!

Fortunately for me, he didn't totally ruin my sense of a positive self concept. I had some personal issues in this area, but overall, he helped me to realize that in some ways "I was smarter than him!" So, being adults now, I have had to assert myself as NOT being his BABY SISTER any more.

I am glad I have these memories of our childhood, together. We now are much older, and we don't quite interact in the ways we used to interact. We show our love in more conventional ways, like pecks on the cheek. I am the one who always gives the kiss first. Sometimes he still says, "Ugh, a sister kiss!"

# A Sister and a Sister

I thought about what it would have been like if I didn't have my brother and my sister. I don't believe my life would have been as rich and interesting as it has been. My sister was ten years older than me. She had people in her life who were in mine as well, when we spent time together.

Life as a child with her was quite surrealistic. My mom seemed already tired of living at the age of 36, when I was born. Mom took care of me the best she could, given the fact that I was her third child. My sister must have intuitively known how much I longed for a "mother figure" in my life. Mom almost died when I was born. She stayed in the hospital from cesarean surgery for about two weeks, and then we went home. My sister was thereafter for the most part my mother. She treated me like a "dolly," and I ate up the attention. Mom was never mean to me, or neglected me on purpose, it's just that she needed to start working to help with the household expenses, when I turned 6, and I started to go to public school.

Being my sister's doll from day one was the surrealistic part. She did not have a true grasp of what it was like to have a real live baby. Mom must have always stepped in when it was time to change me or feed me or bathe me. At least I am sure that was how it was in the beginning.

Later on, as my sister grew older and less dependent, mom must have given my sister a lot more responsibilities, as far as taking care of me was concerned. I knew in my heart that my sister did not want to resent me and my existence; ultimately she did not resent me, because I always felt the connection of her love for me.

However, as she matured (and she did this quickly), she started hanging out with the boys, at around the age of 14. By 15 she had her own child to take care of. She later had a second child when she was 18. My sister did complete high school. She even went on to college to earn her Bachelor's Degree and her Master's Degree. Her physical energy seemed to be never-ending. Later on she worked at a Bethesda, Maryland Cancer Research Center. She is gone from this earth now. If I ever had a hero, she definitely would have been the one.

When I was around 16 (she would have been 26) I started experimenting sexually. One day, she was with me in the backyard of our childhood house. The family, as I recall, was having a picnic. I didn't feel comfortable speaking with my birth mom about boys and sex. I glibly brought up the subject. At that moment, it was just my sister and me in the backyard

together. She told me I needed to get on birth control pills, so I did. If it wasn't for her, who knows where my life would be today.

My sister had a very hard and difficult life as a teen. She loved me enough to care about me not following in her footsteps. I know she must have known I thought she could do no wrong. It's not that her having children was bad or wrong, it's just that her life became way more complicated and difficult to manage.

By that time in her life, she was with husband number two. They did not have any children, for he had children from his prior marriage. Their marriage did not last, because he was unfaithful to her and had an alcohol problem that interfered with their lives together.

She married a third time, also to a scientist, as was her second husband. They didn't have any children either, although my sister had about ten miscarriages while being married to this man. She loved children. They got into a business that became very financially lucrative. She had many material benefits from this marriage. She truly was living like a queen; you know, the diamonds, rubies, and emeralds totally adorned her body. Unfortunately my sister developed breast cancer, possibly from her previous work in the cancer research lab.

There were many operations and various different kinds of cancer treatment given to her. I think she discovered that her husband was having an affair at this time; at least that is what she told me – and if this were the case, I know in my heart she was devastated, and probably lost her will to live and carry on.

Her battle lasted over two years, and I was fortunate enough to be with her when she died. She told me the day before she died that the angels had visited her, and she must go with them very soon. Of course I didn't want to hear this, and told her she was just dreaming, and that she was going to get better! She just smiled at me and tightly held my hand.

The next day I had to leave for the east coast, from being with her in Mexico. to take care of one of my sick children. I had also developed a bladder infection and was sick when I left. I got to the Baltimore airport, awaiting a transfer flight, when her husband called me to tell me she slipped into a coma shortly after I left, and died.

I know we are just physically parted and someday we will be together again. Energy never dies. I do miss her so much, and sometimes I cry. I call that kind of crying, spiritual "sweat". She was my sister and my mother.

# A Person with Themselves, Or Self-Love

When you love yourself your worth is something beyond achievements or the lack of them. You stop equating your self worth with how you handle your daily existence. You realize your existence does not need anybody's approval. Wanting approval is not the same as needing it. A person with true self Love does not need anyone's approval to exist.

When you come to know that you will always get some disapproval for everything you feel, think, say or do – because that's the way of human interactions on this Earth – you won't set yourself up for self-defeating emotions. Seeking approval will stop you from making changes you may need to make in order for you to feel more self respect and love for your true self.

People have their own perceptions, and they are all individuals. When you say things that others don't necessarily agree with, wait until they are finished talking – and then tell them you really believe in what you have said, and they will just have to deal with that fact. Tell them how you feel appropriately, without being disrespectful, but make sure they understand your position.

Being respectful towards others when they offer you data is a kind gesture. Then you can thank them, and tell them it will help you with your personal growth, even though you privately found some of what they said to be distasteful. Contrariness and disagreements will happen. Once you accept this fact, by telling yourself that you expect this contrariness, and that it's OK – you can then allow them to be the way they are without personal repercussions to yourself.

Allowing yourself this stance will help you to be less emotionally involved with the disagreement and the consequent behaviors – thus allowing more space for the situation to be easily resolved. Try to remember: do not give people control over your feelings. You always have a choice to argue or not to argue.

Being able to allow yourself the emotional space to disengage from other people's opinions of you will give you the freedom to Love yourself. No longer will labels be able to break your spirit. However, sometimes people choose their own labels because it's easier than looking at a behavior they might have that might not be as loving.

Excuses are just personal roadblocks that keep you from experiencing your true core self, or true self Love. Self talk can help you to break bad

habits of thinking negative thoughts. I personally do this all the time. When I have "bad" thoughts, ones I don't like for whatever reason, I mentally envision myself pushing the words out of my head. Sometimes I have to repeat this mental vision, but it usually works for me. Thinking patterns can become habits too. Negative thoughts about oneself create negative and unproductive behaviors. Positive thoughts can potentially produce positive effects upon oneself, and ultimately one's life.

Everyone makes mistakes. That's a fact of life. Lamenting over mistakes is not going to change the past; it will only drain you of the energy you will need to move forward into your personal growth and self Love. Not allowing yourself to change is another roadblock to your healthy self Love.

When you feel guilty it is because someone has taught you to feel that way. People learn to be either victims or exploiters. Unfortunately, guilt cannot produce any healthy feelings of Love, because somebody always wins, and somebody always loses. People who Love and respect themselves will not play into this guilt game.

Do not allow others to exploit your feelings. I'm not saying it's OK to harm others or to harm yourself. For that matter, I'm not saying it's OK to break the law. The law is what it is. Allow your behavior to reflect your positive feelings for yourself. Learning how to be true to oneself takes time. It takes you paying attention to things you like and don't like, as well as your values and morals about life. When you truly know yourself, you won't fall victim to other's negative opinions of what you believe about you!

Once you respect your values, you will be the master of your life. No one can make you feel anything other than what you want to feel, and you have total responsibility for yourself at that point in time. People make causes (choose behaviors), and will receive effects from those causes. Sometimes we get our results fast, and sometimes those effects come later.

We have to learn how to self discipline ourselves to appreciate the fact that the past is gone, and the future hasn't happened yet. Learning to appreciate how we think can help us to stay more focused on the effects of current causes we may be making at any one moment in time.

Self fulfillment and self Love will never be discovered if you continue to look for external forces, for people's total approval, or by worshipping a hero. When one shifts their locus of control to an external nature, one is blaming others for their unhappiness and frustrations, and this is an example of being externally controlled. Believing in the "fairness concept" will only slow down your ability to be in charge of your life. Decide what you want,

start creating ways through your infinite soul, to reach goals from the situation – and then move forward in your self Love.

Understand that your behavior will make the difference. Focusing on others' behaviors will not make any positive changes for you. We can never predict how others will react to another's behaviors. Remember, that another's ideas or current feelings are their choice of feelings. We can choose to accept them or not. Things are not always going to seem fair. The sooner you can believe this, the sooner you will make choices of a positive nature, and improve your chances of being less manipulated by external forces.

Communication can be broken down and even temporarily destroyed by using anger, to stop the possibility of looking bad. Sometimes people use anger to avoid intimacy of Love, by becoming angry over something, and thereby avoiding the risky feelings of sharing oneself in a vulnerable, possibly affectionate way, or a constructive way.

Postponing angry feelings will help one to control angry outbursts. I used to tell myself when I felt like lashing out verbally to "stuff it" for a couple of hours, and if at the end of that time I was still angry, I figured I might need to talk about the matter with the people whom I had had angry feelings.

I've learned to transform my anger due to another's behavior into my own personal dialogue for self improvement. This is known as the Buddhist concept of "changing poison into medicine." Simply keeping in mind that many things you believe in and value will be met by disapproval from others, will help you not feel anger. Once you discipline yourself into believing most people won't agree with you, and to harden your personal "armor of endurance" (N. Daishonin), you actually expect them to disagree, and will not choose to feel angry feelings.

Getting rid of unfair expectations from others will help you to diminish your anger at the same time. This technique will put your life condition into a better place; into a better state of mind, and "heart."

I've created a list of 21 suggested ideas to validate yourself when you do truly Love yourself. They are as follows:

- 1) You will Love and appreciate nature.
- 2) You will be a truth seeker, and will choose not to act snobbish. Truth will definitely set you free.

- 3) You will not be looking for other's approval, nor will you be looking for honors for things you voluntarily chose to do to help others.
- 4) You will not be seen at parties or bars engaging in small talk just to be polite, or impressive. You know who you are.
- 5) You will be guilt free, and the fear that goes with present happenings by being locked into past events, will vanish.
- 6) You will, for the most part not feel worried, and will live in the present moment rather than past ones, or the ones that haven't happened yet.
- 7) You will accept others as they are, but change things when possible to help in dealing with things you find disagreeable to your values.
- 8) Self rejection, self hate, and self pity will not have a place in your heart when you believe in your self Love, when you believe in the higher power of Love.
- 9) You will know how not to argue, and say instead, "we don't have to see things the same way," without feeling guilty or inferior in any way.
- 10) You will produce positive emotions, naturally, like Love, to bring about good changes in your life. You will have faith in yourself to find the correct paths to be able to foster these positive, healthy feelings.
- 11) You will know society is important, but keep from becoming ruled by it, or a puppet on a string, to it.
- 12) You can laugh and create laughter without laughing at people.
- 13) You will find self reliance more inviting than dependence on others to feel for you, and will respect the rights of others to make their own paths.
- 14) You will strive to be your best friend and NOT your worst enemy.
- 15) Your personal energy levels to "do" daily life will improve.
- 16) You can live through pain without panicky feelings, and if you fail at doing something, you will not allow feelings of defeat to overtake you.
- 17) You will respect your abilities at remaining unemotional to many obstacles, and will have much more insight into situations.



18) Snobbish attitudes, as well as selfish “me-isms,” won’t be part of your Love for yourself.

19) Your desire to learn new things, about life, will go “off the scale.”

20) You will be able to understand there is no true right or wrong. Doing the “right thing” in certain situations should make one feel good inside.

21) When you have real self Love, you can recognize what needs to be done for the good of all, and you do it.

These suggested ideas about self Love do not have a specific order. They are merely suggested ideas to ask of yourself when you feel you are at a place where they feel healthy to you.

*Self Love is not selfish.* It is compassion and patience for all of the characteristics that make you a unique individual. Everyone has to change some ways or behaviors that are not going to help them become more complete human beings. Self Love is respect for what you already know and what you will learn in your future about yourself. It is humbling in that your self awareness knows that you don’t know everything, but have an open mind to do the best you can, by and for yourself.

# A Person and their Pet

Loving a pet is a very natural and easy thing to do for most people. It also takes many forms due to the many kinds of animals one can enjoy. I have been blessed with having the privilege of sharing most of my life with either a dog or a cat. Sometimes there were more of one species.

Having more than one pet at a time is kind of like how parents feel when they have more than one child. The only way it becomes less competitive is when one pet lives outside and the other lives inside. (Of course, that's not how to raise children!) That way they are less likely to feel slighted when you do give attention and Love to the other one.

Another factor that comes into play is whether you have for example two dogs, or two cats. The size of dogs can matter, too. Having two of one kind of animal, and one of another, can play into the dynamics of your Love relationship with your pets. How different species relate to each other and to humans is another piece in your Love relationship.

There are as many kinds of pets as there are kinds of love. The Love between you and your pet is a unique bond. At least that is what I have experienced over time. It will be one of trust, loyalty, expectations, health of your pet, other pets and their interactions with you, and the pet's life span.

My feelings of Love often revolve around cats, dogs, birds, rodents, and fish. So, I will write mostly about those creatures. My father was a postman, and one time he brought home a silver colored male tabby which we named Thomas. Since he wasn't neutered, he was affectionately nicknamed Tom.

Tom was a very sweet cat. He never scratched or bit anyone. Tom had seven toes on one foot, and I felt it gave him extraordinary powers at being the affectionate animal he was. He was only in my life for a couple of years. I was probably around ten years old myself.

He had a bad habit of climbing into people's cars. We never really knew where he went, but we are pretty sure he climbed into the backseat of someone's car one warm summer day, and was taken too far away to come back. He just disappeared. I think cats like to choose their owners, so maybe it was time for him to move on. My Love for him was a deep and spiritual one. He seemed very loyal to me, and I will never forget him. I think pets have spirits or souls. That is my personal belief. They do not

show them the way humans do, but then in some ways they show their souls better than humans.

Take the dog that licks his owner's hand when fire is starting to take over the house, and wakes them up just in time. You might say the dog could have just taken care of itself, especially if it was a big dog. I dare say they could probably have broken through a window if they felt their lives were being threatened. But they chose to wake up their owners, and most likely save them first. There are many police accounts of dogs attacking the "bad guys" in order to protect their owners. There are also many accounts of dogs that have jumped into waters to save drowning individuals. How many times have you heard of a dog who corralled a young child to keep that child away from the road, while unsuspecting motorists zoomed by?

When I was two years old we bought my brother a Dachshund. My brother was ten, and I guess my parents felt he could handle the responsibilities of caring for a dog. Little did my brother know at the time that Rocket was just as much my dog as he was my brother's dog. I just couldn't really tell anybody at the time, since I was only two years old when we got Rocket.

One time when I was four years old I decided to run away from home. We lived next to a river, and it was in the middle of winter when I decided to take on this adventure. I packed up cereal in my brother's red wagon, and a few dolls and toys I was fond of – and headed off down the sidewalk on my own, with little Rocket by my side. My mom didn't know I was running away, so she didn't pay too much attention to my packing of the wagon.

I had never been out of the first block of our neighborhood by myself, so when I got to the second block I thought I had gone far enough. We went into the backyard of the second house of the second block, where you could see the river really well, all frozen. There was an island in the middle of the river behind these houses in the second block. Rocket and I just walked right over the ice to the middle of the island, wagon and all. I remember I was quite proud of myself that I had found "us" a new home.

We were not there too long before the police and my mother showed up. It had probably been maybe 20 minutes tops from the time I left the house until I looked across the river to the bank, and there I saw about ten people, screaming and hollering at me, all at once. I was very confused by the racket that they all were making. The only one I zeroed in on was my frantic mother.

She was standing there, saying something. I couldn't hear what she said for all of the noise, and she was holding her head with both hands. Might I

add she looked very worried and upset. Of course they got us back safely, but I never really could understand why they were so excited about me and my dog being on the island. After all, I had my very best friend with me!

Then there was Holly. My sister was moving across the country to the West coast. She asked me to take care of her cat. I figured she was going to come back for her someday, but I knew myself and how strongly I got attached to cats and pets in general, and told her that if I took care of Holly, she would have to become mine. She reluctantly agreed for me to become Holly's new owner.

Holly was a young lilac pointed Siamese and we had many years together. Later when my children (the daughter and my middle son) were older, Holly became ill. It wasn't very apparent that she was sick, in the beginning. She just became more and more of a finicky eater. That was nothing unusual for a cat, especially when they start to put on a few years.

Finally after about six months I noticed she was looking a bit skinnier, even for a Siamese cat, so I took her to the vets. The vet confirmed that Holly had a tumor in her stomach and that Holly would need an operation to remove the tumor. I prepared the kids for the upcoming operation, as best as I could, for we had come to realize without saying that we knew she must be very sick.

When I took her to the hospital the Dr. said she would call me if there were any problems. Well she called me while Holly was sedated and asleep and said Holly had all of her main organs consumed with cancer, except for three: her heart, one kidney, and her spleen. Everything else was destroyed by the cancer.

Needless to say, I was devastated, and I knew that it would be only a matter of days before she would die – that is if she recovered from the serious operation in the first place. Then there was the problem of telling my twelve-year-old daughter, and my five-year-old son my true reason for not allowing her to wake up. I chose the humane course and allowed her to "stay asleep."

Initially, both of my kids hated me. They would not speak to me for almost two weeks. As the Universal Law is kind to those who uphold it, my daughter was asked to do a school report on euthanasia. After it was over, she came to me and apologized. She told her brother not to be mad at me, and to forgive me because Holly was in serious pain. We all cried.

Holly had not acted like she was in pain before the operation. I know now that she was truly being sustained by our Love, and held on for as long as

she could. That is the nature of Love when one's pet knows you will miss them so much, and they will miss you so much, that they hang on "just for you." Many years later she is still sorely missed.

Sometimes I think Skippy, the little male dog I have now, has the spirit or soul of my pet dog Rocket. I think that Love is an energy source, and it never really goes away from the people and pet animals it is attached to; it only changes forms. I loved my dog Rocket, even though technically and in theory he was my brother's dog.

My daughter has two big dogs, and she lives a couple of hours from me. Since Skippy is very possessive of me around other dogs, and he would most definitely start a fight with the other two dogs, I can't feasibly take him to visit with her because I don't want Skippy to be annihilated. Plus he might even nip one of her dogs with his "insane aggression" before they would quickly get the best of him.

Therefore when I go to visit her, I take my beloved Skippy to my brother's house for a weekend visit. Skippy adores my brother almost as much as he Loves me. Now remember I believe Skippy has my brother's dog's spirit. I hope Skippy lives to be as old as Rocket was when he died, at the ripe old age of 17 years. True Love never dies.

# A Person and their Religion

The Love a person has for their religion is a very personal relationship. Who is the relationship with? That question is where everything goes forward. I am an SGI/USA True Buddhist. I was born into a Christian family and was introduced to the ways of Christianity. When I was around 12-14 years old, I came to the realization that GOD was inside of me. More precisely, I was the daughter of GOD. This did not make any real impact into my life until I was 19 years old and in college at VCU in Richmond, Va. I was in a local restaurant in the fan area of Richmond, when a waitress who had also been someone I lived with in my hometown of Roanoke, Va., and had moved to the Richmond area, told me about a mantra that would change my life forever.

She explained to me that *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* was the Universal Law, and saying those words on a regular basis was all I really needed to do in order to reach any kind of "thing" I felt I needed to become happy. This was a real eye opener for me, and I thought it had to be too good to be true. I, being a Thomas by birth, was your original "doubting Thomas," and basically set out to prove her wrong.

My dad had died a tragic death when I was 16, and it put me into a real tailspin as far as believing in GOD was concerned. I became an atheist/agnostic for three years before I was introduced to True Buddhism and *Nam-Myo-HO-Renge-Kyo*. It was a very sad period of my life, not really believing in a higher power. I don't know if it was what created my depression, or if it was the result of my father's death that had me so down. At any rate, my depression was so bad that I was working out a plan as to how I was going to kill myself. No one knew about this but me.

I think, and now know, that the Universal Law had other things in store for me to accomplish before I died – and so I became acquainted with this beautiful practice of the SGI and the knowledge of the power of *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo*. Like I said, I was a true skeptic at the beginning, and it was three long years of saying this prayer or chant every single day, 15 minutes straight in the morning and 15 minutes straight in the evening, before I realized that I am happier, and I am receiving changes or benefits in my life that must be attributed to my attitude and change of mind that encouraged me to see life more positively, and with a healthier belief in my own life. I discovered that when I said *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* my life was making a vibration of sorts, a connection with the Universe, and I was becoming more pure and correctly aligned with the power of the Universe, which is supremely positive and pretty much a manifestation of the nature of Love.

When I became a True Buddhist of the Nichiren Daishonin sect, I did not know what wonderful things would blossom into my life. My altruistic nature instantly had a ground to grow its values of the sanctity of life, and I realized there was a world of believers who were in the same state of mind and heart that wanted to devote themselves, to the values and essence of enhancement of life on our Earth – rather than exploiting it, for selfish gain. It was my personal benefit to be able to change the negativity in my life into being a positive impetus that has made me continue this practice until now.

Since the practice is for reaching one's personal enlightenment in this lifetime, leading to unshakeable happiness, my depression could not keep its hold on me forever. This prayer is incredibly powerful, and will not let anyone down who continues to say its name on a regular basis. The concept of Karma says that all good causes in our life will come to fruition eventually. One has good Karma and bad Karma, based upon the causes we have made in our eternal past lives. These effects will come about. Bad effects show themselves as bad feelings and surroundings, according to True Buddhism. With the power of connecting to the rhythm of the Universe, and reciting the law of *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo*, one can change one's bad Karma and begin to be able to experience the power of goodness and Love that was meant to be experienced on this Earth.

I experienced the freedom I needed to release ties with my past that held me down and made me sad and depressed. My heart and soul came to connect with the power of inner peace and strength that I needed to break my bad, negative Karma, and find my true self. Not only did I find my true self, I was able to liberate my true self through this practice. What does that mean? Well in simple terms it means I can put my true being into motion and manifest my reason for being born onto this Earth. In my religion this process is called "Human Revolution." President Daisaku Ikeda, my sensei, has devoted his life to teaching the world about this humanistic and compassionate practice of True Buddhism. "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind." (Albert Einstein).

Because I was introduced to True Buddhism, I vowed to write a book about Love. This all happened in the year when I was 19. It has taken me a lifetime to get to where I could be able to express what I knew I could do. My personal wisdom and capacity had to grow and break the shackles of the lesser ego, an egotistical selfish self, that was not capable of expression in terms of manifesting this book. By connecting to the power of this chant/prayer, I was able to ultimately be who I was meant to be, and to live out one of my dreams to write a book about Love.

In order to be oneself and to Love yourself one has to trust and have the courage to tap into the power of faith. Faith can get you through your times of doubt, worry, sadness, anger, and even inertia – if you trust in your higher power, and have the courage to sustain your position, and not give into the negative influences that all human beings are constantly bombarded with on a daily basis.

The power of the mantra, *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo*, can also help one to overcome the condition of sickness. Once again, faith is the key factor in accessing this pure energy force that is also directly matched with the power of Love, and to be able to experience good health. I am not saying one does not need good medicine and good doctors. I am saying if one includes the power of the recitation of *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo*, one will be more likely to enhance the effectiveness of the medicine being used, to combat the effects of the illness, and more likely overcome the illness.

The individual cells of the human body all align themselves with the energy of the Universe when one is in a condition of being well. When one experiences the power of Love, one is experiencing the energy of the Universe, which is infinite.

The concept of Karma enters the picture of one's individual health. Karma is a culmination of all causes made by a person over many lifetimes. Since making bad causes brings about bad effects, making good causes brings about good effects. Saying *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* is the highest, most positive cause and vibration one can make for their present condition and for their future existences.

One cannot predict when one might die; everyone must die. However, one can improve the chances of "increasing the lifespan of one's current life," (N. Daishonin), by manifesting this pure energy form on a regular basis.

"A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself/herself, thoughts, and feelings as something separate from the rest." (Albert Einstein). In True Buddhism, this is an illusion. There is a concept called *Esho Funi*, or oneness of person and the environment. We are not separate from each other and our world. We are all connected in a consciousness called the *9<sup>th</sup> Consciousness* in True Buddhism. Albert Einstein also said, "a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us." We are all connected.

Saying *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* will break these internal prison walls. It will connect us to the highest level of consciousness and will expand our personal consciousness too, as far as we are willing to take it. "Our task



must be for us to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion, to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.” (Albert Einstein). We must develop a healthy perspective on life to realize we are exactly where we are supposed to be in order to reach our highest potential as the person we are, in this moment, and for our future.

People have difficulty accepting supreme good and evil, or fundamental darkness, as Nichiren Daishonin and President Daisaku Ikeda have called it, as being an innate resident in our own lives. Humans have free will and can always choose to create value rather than to destroy the goodness and Love in our world.

We all have the Universal Life Force within us; therefore it is a matter of becoming closer, by each individual calling forth the eternal wisdom and laws of the Universe/GOD. Reciting *Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo* also allows oneself to be more compassionate to oneself because of the developing wisdom one gains.

With regular practice, one can learn to have more self control over situations and respond to apparent mistakes others may have made with more compassion and Love. This eventually will cut out the judging, blaming, and criticizing aspect of responding. One can therefore respond with a more spiritual and loving manner to the mistake.

Once a person has accepted they are the paddle to the ping pong ball of life, then the reality that one CAN choose, to have emotional control, over themselves, instead of feeling controlled by others, takes hold. This will stop the state of anger, one of the three lower worlds a human possesses, in True Buddhism, from more easily manifesting its dark effect.

Albert Einstein said, “It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder. Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding”.

An SGI-USA True Buddhist practice is about developing one’s core and character. The groundwork belongs to successful interactions and enhancement of ongoing relationships that we have established and will establish later on, in time. Our personal development will bring about our total awareness of the different faces of Love.

For more information about SGI-USA, go to this link: [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org)

# A Person and their Job

Many people might say, "what's to Love about a job?" I would say they are missing the point of the opportunity that's been given to them to learn to love the situation where they have been located. The possibilities they have been given to bring in a feeling of peace in their respective locations yields a feeling of their own personal peace.

People have many insights into situations that they sometimes discount or slight, because they don't feel like they can express what is going on with their insights into a situation at a given time. "The voice does the Buddha's work." (*True Buddhism*, Daisaku Ikeda). My experience has been to honor one's feelings of reservation, or be tactful and wait until the time feels "right" to speak one's piece/peace.

For most of my life, I have been a Special Educator. I have worked with all kinds, sizes, and shapes of children from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as taught material from the GED programs and the ASVAB programs. I was also a drug abuse counselor for a couple of years before I settled on becoming a teacher. The "disabilities" I have professionally encountered have been very far reaching, and I am grateful for the time I was able to teach those children. In all honesty, they have taught me much about Love.

My energy and determination to help each child never stopped. I knew my responsibility as their teacher to give them knowledge they were unable to get from other places or people. I respected that challenge, and that challenge was my path for the most part in this chosen profession. Just because I was their teacher didn't give me the automatic right to walk into their lives, and assume they would eat up everything I had to say to them as being a truth and something they should cherish.

However, as time went by for the most part I was able to convince them that I was not the "bad guy," and they should at least trust me enough to impart some wisdom their way. This is where Love of one's job comes in. There was no way I could ever have been a "good" teacher if I did not Love what I did and who I "did" it with. My years as a formal teacher add up to 25+, therefore I must have been doing something right to have lasted for so long.

Children in general have a way of causing adults to see things in a different light – that is, if the adults are open to the fact that they are not so full of information themselves that they can't learn from the kids. The children I worked with had very different ways of seeing the world, from the point of the "normal" curve perspective.

I believe the most rewarding times I ever had as a Special Educator were the times when a particular child would make a major learning discovery about themselves – and it thereby liberated them from some misperception they held about themselves, and had consequently made them sad. Their liberation and release from their feelings of insecurity and inadequacy were dissolved like a bad dream, due to their own major learning discovery.

Once I worked with a boy whose mother had given him up for adoption at birth. Eventually he came to me in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The Director of Special Education, along with a whole host of other important individuals, around a big long table, explained to me how “difficult” and emotionally disturbed this boy was, and how difficult it was going to be for me to teach him, because of his ways. Well, to put it simply, we got along just fine. I believe I gave him the right amount of respect, boundaries, and room to ask questions that kept him interested in his own learning. He seemed to intuitively know that I only wanted the best for him, and I kind of felt like I became his friend/mother, too. He had no friends and obviously no caring birth mother. He always respected my position as his teacher, and he always gave me the impression that I meant more to him than only a teacher. It was a challenging balance, to be professionally involved with him. There are many other excellent teachers who know how difficult it is to carry out this balance with their students.

Anyway, whatever he thought, we were successful. He learned many of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade skills I was expected to teach him, and he also learned many social skills that he needed to have to become successful in life as an adult. The last I heard of him was that he was going to be graduating from high school. This is what I live for. He is one of the many students/people I have been blessed to “work” with over the years.

Yes, I have loved my job, and I would do it all over again if that were my path to do. There have been many students who were deemed unteachable (amazingly close to the word untouchable) – but I could reach them in ways no one else could, and turn them around just enough to see that the world was not a totally bad and undesirable place; just enough for them to embrace life and learning.

A little bit more... I was always careful as to not allow or cause them to become too emotionally dependent upon me. I knew that my role as teacher had to be tempered with a certain amount of distance, so as to keep their own emerging feelings of self-worth and individuality ever intact. A lot of what I had to do was to create a feeling of trust between us for things like education to move somewhat forward.

There were days and times when I could feel we were not moving forward, but those were the times I was given the chance to learn how to "fix" the situation, and get us back on a learning track. I had to stay close to my feelings and accurate perceptions and I prayed often, privately, to be able to understand what the real problem/stumbling blocks were, so we could get back in line.

Trust was a very huge part in my success and their success in being able to learn. *Trust and Love go hand in hand.* I cannot emphasize how important a feeling of trust is in a teacher-pupil relationship; that is if you want a desirable outcome from your "mentor-actions."

Loving one's job involves embodying the nature of trust within oneself, and projecting that feeling onto one's environment and onto those coworkers you are around, everyday. When one feels useful in one's work, one will ultimately feel happiness. A career path is only as valuable as the feeling of happiness we gain from our career on a daily basis. Remember, our jobs do not define our self worth. Money can only sustain that feeling of happiness for so long.

Working in a job will either bring out the best in you or the worst. When you are well matched, things will be less of a problem on a daily basis. Loving what you do, either on a conscious or unconscious level, almost always will guarantee you a successful journey in life.

Sometimes people "trip" into a job and don't really know that is where they were meant to be. This kind of situation usually grows and develops a more positive "flavor" over time. Actually, this kind of evolvement lends itself to more personal development than one where the person sought out a profession in the first place.

One might ask, "how can that be?" It happens that way because you don't know what all is involved and what all will be happening in your future. This kind of "job" experience lends itself to true discovery; discovery in a profession that you may ultimately find more inviting.

And if things keep rolling in the direction of a positive experience, money usually tends to increase. It increases over time because you intuitively and in reality become a more experienced worker. Your Love of the job puts you in a position to be more of an asset, and one who can enhance the whole job situation and the productive out come of your job.

Working is one way to interact with the world and ultimately give back to the world. "The life of an individual has meaning only insofar as it aids in making the life of every living thing nobler and more beautiful. Life is

sacred, that is to say, it is the supreme value to which all other values are subordinate.” (Albert Einstein). Most jobs are of a positive nature and the ones that aren’t, for the most part, fortunately, are still illegal. Sometimes people partake of jobs that are illegal and they might think they are jobs they Love.

There is a Universal force that is in charge of everything and has a positive and dynamic energy propelling life to move in a productive manner. Love is in everything and everyone; some people prefer not to recognize it for what it’s worth. Some people think that to validate the power of Love is to show weakness. Love is pure strength of the soul. And, when one shows their Love of their job, they are so dynamic, feeling that 99.9% of the time they will do no wrong.

On the job, Love can manifest itself to make powerful and unearthing decisions for the betterment of the whole. Sometimes mundane chores are the purest form of one’s Love emerging and completing a task. Oftentimes, doing a mundane chore, day in and day out, and doing it to the best of your ability, is the purest expression of your Love for your job. Albert Einstein said, “The tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives.”

Learn to Love what you do, even if you know while you’re engaged in that profession it is not something you will do all of your life. Getting the most out of your daily existence will help you with your journey toward loving yourself better, and toward loving others and the world around you.

# A Person and their Material Possessions

People may find themselves attached to different kinds of physical “things.” I mostly will be talking about the man-made ones, and not the attachments to things that are living, such as one’s pets and “Mother Earth.” I have a section about one’s Love for pets that share your life with you.

Things in and of themselves cannot give wholesome Love. I wrote about this because there is some value in loving inanimate objects. The list is endless, but a brief few items that come to my mind are: computers, cars, houses, boats, jewelry, books, audio-visual equipment, music things, special “spots” such as vacation or alone-time places, land property, furniture in houses, and sentimental items.

The value these things give to us are relevant to how we love them at a particular time in our lives. We need things in our lives to feel complete with our physical world, and to satisfy certain desires we may experience over the course of our lifetimes.

There is also a True Buddhist belief “that Earthly desires are Enlightenment.” Things that people have created do not have the kind of energy that comes from the Universal Law or “GOD energy” as some people like to call it. The so-called energy we feel from our cherished things is quantum physics and the workings of superior electronics and machinery of one sort or another. We interact with these things at levels that give to us a feeling of happiness and joy that is controlled mostly by ourselves. This control is a manifestation of egotism. It is not a kind of Love that is enduring by its very nature of its impermanence within the thing.

There is value in having controlled feelings of Love, and to some it amounts to a kind of self love. This kind of Love is usually predictable, as it is mostly controlled by the person embracing the “thing.” But there will always be a certain level of unpredictability when involved with things like machines, cars, and boats.

I do not intend to judge the Love one has for their things. I too have had many attachments to things in my lifetime. Their value was directly proportionate to the level in which they served and satisfied my needs at the time. I saw those things as a means to an end, not as an end in and of themselves. Many people forget when they are consumed by their Love for things, that it is an impermanent kind of Love. It can also lead to overindulgence of different kinds that end up being a form of greed.

"The most precious things in life are not those one gets for money" (A. Einstein). The Love for another human being is where most people have difficulty giving up their selfish side and bonding with that Love for another human being. This is not particularly true of parent-child Love. I have a whole section on that kind of Love, later.

It takes courage to Love. It takes courage to give up the cocoons we have created to protect the very fragile ego of the human. Giving away the shield of the controlled relationship that things have to offer is the only way to experience true peace of mind and real Love. The same Love that "Mother Earth" offers is the Love that ultimately the Universe has to give.

I have a poem I wrote called *Space of Time* that fits in with the topic of materialistic Love:

Time keeps on rollin',  
Just like the beat  
Of my heart;  
It never stops.  
Death is just,  
A temporary interruption;  
Just a blink of one's eye.  
Time keeps on rollin',  
Just a step away,  
from my sky.  
Forever;  
My heart keeps on poundin',  
In some other space,  
Of time, and  
Of my Love.

# A Person and Music

A person can develop a Love for music over a period of time. That is how I have learned to develop my own way of listening to sounds of musical intention. Several things should be considered when developing one's own Love of music:

The purpose for listening in the first place is an expression of one's true self – an emotion one is feeling, but can't seem to express, an expression of a temporary self; and an avenue of specific vibrations one feels one must partake, for a deeper expression of one's innate abilities. I am sure there are other reasons for listening to various kinds of music, but these are the ones I am most familiar with.

I have been listening to music for a long time. When I want to hear music it usually serves me in a manner that soothes my nerves. Because I see myself as a high-strung type person (but rarely do I manifest that side of myself on the outside), I like to listen to music that is of a calming nature. Sometimes however, it affects me adversely– such as when I have some emotional pain I am dealing with, but can't really solve as quickly as I would like. Then it puts me in a mood of depression. Usually, when I find I am in the mood to listen to music, I like to do so privately. That way, I can do so with the freedom to express my inner soul. It frees me to selfishly indulge my senses to manifest "me" in a way that is a loving expression to and of myself.

An expression of one's true self would most likely be a harmony or vibration where one finds a sense of peace and completeness. I believe it is difficult to Love only one kind of music. People will always have more preferences in listening to one kind of music over another, but the general path I have found is music that goes over a wide variety of sounds. Music with human voices, nature sounds, mechanical sounds like a synthesizer, and music with only the sounds of instruments of different kinds, all tap an individual's soul.

Humans have many different sides to themselves, and having only one kind of music to Love would seem to me to limit an expression of one's true self. However, music should be appreciated solely from the perspective of one's true self to connect to one's Love for music.



Music Therapy has been in place for a long time. People sometimes have difficulties managing their emotions and may not have total control over their minds. Essentially their moods have control over them. When emotions rule a person, instead of their mind ruling them, connecting to a type of music, with a certain vibration or pitch, can help a person release some of their pent up emotional energy, and thereby help the person to be able to move on with their lives.

As I mentioned before, sometimes certain kinds of music will cause me to feel things I do not want to feel at the time I hear that music. It's not that I don't particularly like that kind of music, it's just that the mood it evokes from me at the specific time might not be a mood I am willing to deal with at that time. I used to be plagued with depressive thoughts, and one of the ways I learned to cope with those thoughts/feelings was NOT to listen to sad or woeful music in general.

From what I have discovered about depression, music definitely influences my moods. High energy, fast music, sometimes with people's voices, and sometimes without, will cause me to be "up" feeling. Overall, I like the music one can hear on the "Spa" channel on Sirius XM radio.

Music can also be a type of celebration. People choose different kinds of music to represent emotions for different ceremonies. Usually the choices of music reflect values or implied images when heard, and can depict feelings that the hosts of the ceremony want to be felt and enjoyed, if possible. Sometimes, the implied images are all that can occur due to the host being physically gone, as in a funeral ceremony:

I personally want my funeral to be as uplifting as possible for the people who are going to miss me, when I am no longer physically around. I want several kinds of music played continuously for my funeral. I like the music by the groups Boston, Focus (I Love the song called "Hocus Pocus"), and music by Enya. Some of her songs I Love are "Watermark" and "Orinoco." I like almost all of her music, as it connects with my life energy, and will be able to express my "physicalness" when I am not in a physical form anymore. I also Love the music by jazz musician Herbie Hancock, as his personal vibration is very much in rhythm with the rhythm of Love.

## A Person and Art

The Love between a person and their creation of art is very personal. It is almost a type of narcissism. I have experienced this type of Love because I have been in the throes of being consumed by it. And it was not like I didn't like it or want to be in that state of mind.

When I was around 12 years old I had a teacher whose sister was a private art teacher on the weekends and on Wednesday nights. Since I was a sixth grader, that suited my life style very well and got me out of the house!

My art teacher, Ms. H., was primarily interested in different forms of drawings; we dabbled in much different kind of mediums. My favorite medium was tempera. It is a kind of thick water-color type paint and could be likened to an acrylic type paint.

This tempera could dry relatively quickly after applying it to your paper and that suited my impulsive, young nature. If I made a mistake while painting, I could easily paint over it as if it were never even there, in the first place.

My attitude was very open and receptive to my teacher who seemed rather flamboyant to me at the time. Looking back upon that time in my life, and Ms. H.'s attitude, I now see how her own zeal and Love of art was perfectly blended into her teaching techniques. I think I subconsciously adopted her feelings of Love for art, over time.

I shifted into painting with oils after becoming more comfortable with my own personal style. I had evolved into a person who loved trying to do copies of realistic scenes. This copying of realistic type drawing became a type of escape elixir for me. My pride was very much wrapped up in other people's critiques of my drawings. Their opinions (although most all of them were my friends) helped me to validate my own very weak and scattered self opinion. I also became relatively immersed in the art of portrait drawing.

My drawings were good, although not good enough to sell and make a living. I went through the whole gamut of drawing and painting mediums, never really liking any of those mediums more than I did the tempera paint. As time progressed, I became more and more diverse in my abilities and in other different forms of artistic expression. Ms. H. was a middle school art teacher, so it was only a course of events that I would continue on as one of her finest students. That was how I perceived she saw me and my artistic abilities.

Everyone else seemed to believe I had a future as an artist doing some kind of creative type work. I personally did not feel as inclined to be this prodigal art student for the future. I didn't really announce my feelings about my skills or lack of them at the time – I floated along on the premise that I could enjoy the attention and ego boosting I was getting from my peers and from so many other adults.

The truth was, I didn't really like any of the works of art I created until the 12<sup>th</sup> year of my schooling. I made a water color picture of an oriental woman in black and white. She was quite beautiful in my mind; she had long straight black hair, white skin, and beautiful black eyes. I can't remember if I dreamed her up, or looked at a picture from a magazine or something.

The second picture I made that I really liked was of an Iguana. It was done with tempera and was on a black background. I created the picture with different colored dots and of different sizes; this kind of art is now called pointillism. I didn't know I was creating a type of pointillism at the time. I only remember how much I loved all the little different colored dots that I had used to make this picture.

During my high school years I became very skilled at making people's portraits. I fed their egos, and they fed mine. My Love of art was fueled by this attention and interaction. Later in my 12<sup>th</sup> grade year I was voted most artistic from my graduating class. I applied to VCU, in Richmond, Va., and was accepted into their prestigious art program.

I went, stayed two weeks in that program, and changed my major into Occupational Therapy. I told everyone that art was too easy for me, and I wanted to give something back to the world in other ways. Thus I felt a major in Occupational Therapy would help me use my art skills and my people skills together.

It was a turning point in my attitude about art and my own attitudes and abilities as an artist. Up until that point, I did not see myself in that light of an artist. When I look back on that time of my life, I realize how long it took me to appreciate my skills as an artist.

During college my art creating was in a very moot stage of existence and has been undercover ever since. I learned about using clay with a potter's wheel, and learned how to create with wood. The clay projects were only minimally creative due to the texture and feel of the clay that did not appeal to my senses at the time.

As far as the wood-working projects went, I learned how to use many different kinds of cutting tools. I learned many different kinds of "cuts" you could make with wood, with the different kinds of saws. I made a foot stool out of wood that looked like an apple. It had a knot in it, at a very strategic point, and I used a special tool that made an indentation in a circle, around the knot in the wood. I then put a round wooden cap on top of the indentation and painted it green. I had made my prodigal "worm" in the apple. The teacher liked it, so I earned a "B" in the class. Not bad for a girl who knew virtually nothing about wood-working before I took the class!

Since then, I have tried my skill at jewelry making, macramé, stained glass, sewing, knitting, and crocheting. I have combined some of the mediums into projects where two or three mediums created a final idea. I have also used colored pencils, felt tipped markers, and charcoal to make different art projects.

When I was a teenager, I was fascinated with floral arranging. Little did I know that someday I would be able to use that hidden talent for my mom. It was the ultimate and final tribute to her. She had passed away, and I asked around until I found a florist who would allow me to use their facilities and make my mom's flower casket cover for her funeral. That was my first time for using flowers to make that sort of creation. It looked really good and professional. I wanted to give a little something to my mom that she would have after she was gone of my Love for her, that was a part of me; and that came straight from my heart.

When I was in my thirties, I made a scene from Africa with a pack of lions as the subject. There were a few trees, mountains, and a gorgeous sunset. I painted the acrylic picture without the use of brushes. I used my finger tips for the whole creation. It was huge! The dimensions were 3 by 4½ feet. The outcome was awesome, and I felt like it was a creation Vincent Van Gogh might make.

I've created some paintings for my two older children from their requests since then. My son loves the drums, so I made a psychedelic picture of a drummer playing the drums for him. I used acrylics. My daughter wanted a picture of the ocean, with its very stormy sky and all of the reflections of either a rising or setting sun. I also used acrylics for this creation. I will continue to create different projects of art for the rest of my life. It is a major part of my psyche, and a very deep Love of my life.

# A Person with the World, Nature, and Society

"The oneness of the person and the environment – both are inseparable." these are beliefs of Nichiren Daishonin. Love from this perspective and concept is very much based upon respect and trust; respect for the present time and for the future. The future is when the next generations will have what we have not destroyed in the short time of our lives.

When we have embraced the idea of inseparability, we feel connected to everything in a very deep and personal way. We are all connected in one way or another across the whole world. Everything that one person does or does not do, whether negative or positive, healthy or unhealthy, effects everyone else.

This is hard concept for a lot of people to grasp. The main reason we can't believe this completely is the apparent lapse of time before we reap the effects of the causes made by someone on the other side of the world.

When a person lives with the idea that what they do or don't do, think or refuse to think, will alter the future of the world's wellbeing and all of the future people to come into the world, one begins to develop a concept of global awareness. At this time Love for the world, and all that is in the world, both living and nonliving, will be complete. One's choices will be weighed in the way that the choice will impact first our immediate loved ones, and then other important individuals in our immediate existence. The positive feelings of Love and compassion will then go to others that we don't know on a first name basis. That is the power of, and energy of Love.

After that, if one continues in this way of thinking and feeling, one will start to embrace the spiritual and soul connections on a real and physical basis. That kind of Love is the kind that embraces the positive aspects of human nature. When the positive aspects are imbued with nurturing from persons of another land and nationality, the meaning of oneness of person and environment takes on a different meaning. All of a sudden, we have the power and the wisdom of the masses. Some would say this state of mind/heart/soul is a kind of enlightenment.

When a person experiences this kind of awareness, they usually will want to help another to embrace the oneness of person and the environment. This kind of thinking and feeling will lead to other's wanting to help others around the world, and so on.

Love does not see others in different nationalities or colors. Love sees humans for what they are: people are all basically the same, as far as needs

are concerned. Love embraces the good in the world and tries to neutralize the bad – by each individual checking their own broken, negative and destructive sides, so they can move forward to create a more positive and happy world. The controlling of one's own negative impulses happens over time, and one needs to be patient with themselves and what the power Love can offer them, while making these life altering changes.

What are some negative impulses when speaking about Love for the world and the environment? There are many negative behaviors one can consciously change, like throwing down litter instead of disposing of it properly, and possibly recycling the "litter" into something useable again. Recycling things will help the future generations, to enjoy the natural resources our Earth possess, for many generations to come.

Lobbying for different places to find fuel sources is a way to change people from exhausting places of fuel reserve. I am speaking, first of the fact that Canada and South America both have vast and abundant levels of natural gas and oil. The U.S.A. has vast amounts of oil and gas. We do not need to feel we are only able to get our fuel supply from a few places on the Earth. This shows people we are not controlled by selfish and greedy individuals who do not care about our well being, and security, as far as fuel issues are concerned for now, and in the future.

Using other forms of energy will also help to spread out the depletion of non-renewable resources. Wind and solar power are just two examples of alternative forms of energy. When people spend their hard earned dollars to purchase products like alternative supply fuel vehicles, and solar panels to heat their houses, and wind mills to generate electricity for their homes, they are showing their Love for the world.

Loving oneself is a form of loving the Earth. We can help the Earth when we take care of our own bodies. People have issues, and often turn to bad habits to take away their pains. An example of this avoidance is drunk and drug influenced driving. When persons take unnecessary risks on their lives, and thereby jeopardize the lives of others, because they don't feel able to solve their issues in any other way, they are limiting their own abilities to Love themselves with personal respect and honor. They are choosing to think in a negative, unhealthy, and potentially detrimental way.

There are people who can help you with your negative thinking patterns, who can help you to alter or change your way of thinking into a positive direction, and ultimately change your negative behaviors. Therefore, your negative thinking won't be able to cause you to make a bad choice that might cause you to be more unhappy and incur possibly even more personal

pain. Ultimately, people have the answers to their own problems, if they are willing to delve deep enough to find those answers. If they persist in denial, their deep problems will persist.

Negative thinking cannot result in positive results. They do not coexist in harmony. If by trying to keep your body healthy by eating a balanced diet, and by doing some form of exercise on a fairly regular schedule, it will enhance one's ability to contribute to the active process of loving the world. Keeping up with dental issues, trying to get a regular amount of sleep, keeping hydrated with plenty of liquids (preferably purified water), will help one be able to appreciate the challenges one is afforded in everyday life.

This time in the history of mankind has many conveniences and luxuries that were not available to citizens even 100 years ago. Ironically, this exponential growth has given rise to many distorted viewpoints of what is positive and healthy and of value in regards to the well-being of our Earth.

Many of our young people feel it is a "right" to have certain things in their lives. Unfortunately, personal abundance does not happen for all people. Discrepancies in the needs and wants of individuals lead to situations where there may not be sufficient financial funds to supply the person's needs or wants. People are the number one commodity of the world. The people can change situations from being negative and destructive, to positive and constructive. This can be done without a lot of effort if the people will recognize their potential to make a difference in the health of our Earth, and to work together for the common good of all.

We all deserve to have a chance to feel the blessings of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Thomas Jefferson). Big business companies, such as Walmart might one day help the small store owners they have displaced due to their coming into a new community, by setting up financial assistance to keep the smaller companies from going under. It may become a frequent happening, that a company like Walmart ensues in order to share the wealth. This kind of sharing of resources is a way to show others we care. Caring at this kind of level inspires others to show their feelings of Love and support; it has a snowball effect. Caring for others is a way to show active Love for the world.

The time has come for people to voice their opinions on things that have been overlooked in the past. Many organizations have been established for many "good causes" around our world. A lot of people don't feel like they can contribute to these causes because times seem to be so financially strapped for just about everyone. Giving money to these causes is not the only way to help. Volunteering your time for these causes is as valuable to

the world, and the cause, as giving money. Every little bit of time and effort one gives for a good cause is a form of active Love for the world. I believe no kindness or act of compassion ever goes unnoticed or is of insignificance, because we are all connected. Positive actions will yield positive results. This is a law of nature.

People have to believe in their own creative energies now more than ever. Computers are not the answer for everything on our Earth. Computers are a source of information that can and does, for the most part, enhance our journey on the path to making our world a better place to live.

Energies like anger, hatred, jealousy, deception, greed, selfishness and general feelings of apathy toward the places where we live, must become energies we personally channel into the positive actions for making our planet a healthier and more sustainable one for our children and grandchildren. When we control our negative impulses, thoughts, and feelings, and recognize there can be no positive and productive good coming from them, we will allow our Love for the Earth and for nature to evolve into a natural progression of constructive energies.

All people in the whole world desire peace. Making sincere and heartfelt commitments to transforming our negative causes into positive ones will be the purest form of Love a person can manifest.



# A Person and Their Friends

The relationship between two friends is going to have a lot to do with several factors. How long the friends have known each other; what is the sex of the friends; under what circumstances did they meet; the age of the friends when they first met; networking of other friends they share in common; and casual vs. professional. I am sure there are other factors that I have not mentioned, but these are the ones I see as most often happening.

Friends who have known each other over periods of years tend to be more trusting and loving of each other. They know how to read their friends feelings when they show them or not. As with all true friendships, sharing of private and personal "stuff" in each other's lives is a given.

When there is a difference in gender, it gets to be a little more interesting. Depending upon the two friends' ages, things can be dramatically influenced by age alone. For example, toddler-aged friends have to depend upon their parents or a caretaker to help them be able to just interact, unless they live right next door to each other. Still, their interaction will be less due to how young the two friends are. Older friends can be more independent of their parents involvement, providing the gender issue is not in its full-blown debut. Sexual feelings can often times become confused for feelings of "true" Love.

Older friends of the opposite sex often will become marriage partners. The marriage partners that started out as "just friends" tend to have a better chance of making the marriage union last. One of the really good things about friends who get married to each other is they already have a pretty good idea about what makes the other person happy. True friends will try their best to satisfy their friend's wants and desires. If the timing is right, they probably both will get to have some satisfaction from trying to make each other happy.

I had a female friend who moved into my neighborhood when I was a child. We still visit with each other from time to time. We were four years old when we met, and the world was a lot more trusting of people when I was younger than it is now. We used to go out into the neighborhood randomly, without any feelings of fear from strangers. It was a very innocent time of my life.

We went to school together, and basically grew up together. We even went to college together for a couple of years. I cherish those memories with my girlfriend. Our paths have somewhat parted when she went back to

our hometown, after a couple of years in VCU. She got married and so did I. Neither of our marriages lasted, however.

One thing I remember she used to do, was to make me wait for her, to do things together. I mean it was a very common occurrence. I knew I loved her as a friend, not in a sexual way, but I could not understand why I always had to wait on her. Looking back, I now realize that this was my lesson on becoming more patient with people whom I cared to be with and in their company. Patience was not one of my virtues as a young person. In order to truly Love anyone, one must learn how to handle the frustrations of the relationship.

I feel fairly certain that boys have similar experiences as girls when it comes to the basics of interacting as friends. They like to do things that girls don't usually have much interest in doing, unless the girl is a "tomboy"; then worms and getting dirty become a thing, together, that is part of their growing up.

My two sons had friends growing up. The older son has moved away from his childhood town, but he still keeps in touch with the ones he cared the most about, and the ones who he considered to be close to him. He has a network of "old" friends, and they mostly keep in touch via the Internet. Occasionally, they either drive to his new location, or he comes back to the neighborhood and they hang out together.

The younger son has had various different levels of friendship based upon where he was living and going to school at the time. I've watched him and listened to him and how he has interpreted his relationships with friends over time. I have noticed that he too handles his friendships with a lot of patience and compassion.

The close friends I had while in high school were few and far between. I had many acquaintances, however. There were a lot of cliques, and I really didn't enjoy gossiping behind other people's backs, even if the other people were not considered my friends. The people that were my real friends usually liked the same kinds of things, music, and past times that I was comfortable with doing. When I think back to those years, I realize we had the same kinds of perspectives, and even shared very similar temperaments.

Friends that experience natural disasters share a crisis-oriented type of friendship. It is a bond of holding onto reality just by "the skin of their teeth." Very often, the crisis is not a thing that is discussed very much or sometimes not even discussed at all. It is an unspoken kind of memory that is not brought to consciousness because of the nature of the memory. It was an experience. It usually is not held in a positive light, but one that can

be considered a bond that keeps them connected for a lifetime. Sometimes people reconnect to relive their memories in order to re-establish their own central locus of control.

People who developed close friendships from a club or group association can keep their relationships alive for a lifetime, if they choose. Take the high school reunion parties that happen ever so often. These events can give people an opportunity to step back in time with those they loved, and re-experience feelings they may have forgotten they had felt.

Friends may influence people to get involved into forms of negativity, just because they want company "doing" their negativity. It's not that the friend who pulls the other friend into the negative behavior is aware that they are doing something counter productive to their lives. They usually are just looking for a new experience in life. Unfortunately, a lot of people get stuck in this state of mind for a lifetime. Perspective and reflection are usually behaviors that maturity can offer. Critical insights into the long term effects of a negative behavior aren't the mindset of most teenagers.

Casual and professional friendships are typically ones that are found through the church/worship setting, and/or through a work place. The feelings that one experiences are usually determined by the amount of personal divulging one shares with friends.

I have varying levels of emotional commitment with my friends, based upon the kinds of information I have given concerning my values and opinions about life. I have found myself more attached to those friends I have given a lot of my own personal feelings to, and consequently have a deeper level of commitment to our relationship.

Friends can be and also can become very needy. When this happens, in order to keep your feelings of Love for that friend alive, it is important to acknowledge your feelings of being overwhelmed by their life condition, if you are, when you recognize its presence. It is a compassionate act and an act of Love to emotionally detach, in order to have a positive relationship after their crisis.

Some might say this is not Love. I say, when I feel overwhelmed by a situation that I am experiencing, I am not in a position to give Love to someone else. Emotionally detaching is not something that should be done for trivial reasons, if at all possible. I have to be able to process effectively and emotionally, in order to respond correctly. This is respect for the Love of my friend and our relationship.

By doing something together that you used to do together, and probably enjoyed, is one way to reconnect. Going to your favorite coffee house or getting a bite to eat might melt the edges of the experience. There's something positive about sharing "food" together that humbles one's soul. Regrouping, after removing oneself from an interaction that was a "test" within the relationship, will only enhance the future relations and experiences.

# A Person of the Same Sex

My feelings about this subject are my own perspective. There are several beliefs that I hold that are very spiritual and somewhat radical. They have given me the peace of mind I have needed to embrace this very human condition called homosexuality.

Having a label makes it easy to pigeonhole human beings living this lifestyle. Same sex Love is open for worldwide discrimination and judgment because it is not the majority.

First of all, being homosexual does not infer a malady of some sort. It does not infer that the person is morally wrong. God Loves everybody: "He"/the Universal Law created everybody, so how can this energy condemn a creation created as being inferior, or morally wrong? The "maker" makes no mistakes, and morally inferior implies that the Universal Law, or GOD as some people prefer to call "it", has made a wrong creation. Some would call this way of living a simple fact of life.

When people are waiting to be "reborn" there are issues that they must reckon with to continue on their path toward becoming capable, and to sustain their mission of being at one with the Universal or GOD.

People choose to come back in the bodies they are born into, and the sex they choose to emulate. They do this before they reincarnate. Souls/spirits don't die; they just take on different forms over lifetimes. These forms can be physically afflicted, emotionally and or mentally disturbed, extremely intelligent, or intellectually dull-minded, beautiful or hideous, and the list goes on. They can choose to be male or female, as well.

The people of our world have a very narrow and often selfish way of looking at the human condition by which people are born into. They criticize what they don't understand, rather than asking for help to understand from a higher power, of Love. In the past, some of these perspectives were maybe necessary for physically healthy offspring to take on the challenges of the future. But, haven't you ever wondered about the baby that died before it was full term? Haven't you ever thought that maybe the "maker" knew what "he" was doing in order to ultimately help if the fetus/child was going to have to suffer so unmercifully in this world? I'm not speaking of the mother who consciously aborts her child; I'm speaking of the child who dies in her womb, and the mother, who wanted that baby, with "all her heart." People live for a reason and people die for a reason too.

We all have a mission on this Earth. It is not some random occurrence that we are born like we are. Some people try to reduce the value of life into a random happening, so they can justify their wrong thinking and disrespectful thoughts. So they can continue to justify their hate towards certain individuals that have just as much reason/right to be here as the next person. So they can justify their unwillingness to understand and have little to no compassion for their fellow human beings, who have almost identical needs, wants, and desires – wanting to love and be loved, being at the top of the list.

Hateful energy directed towards others, thoughts, words, and/or actions cannot bring about positive changes. Nothing good and of value can come from this kind of personal interaction.

The human personality is fraught with character flaws and imperfections. These are not imperfections of the soul/spirit. They are two different things. Souls are perfect and they are a reflection of the Universal Law or GOD, created from the purest form of Love. The energy of the soul is timeless and infinite.

Same sex partners all want the same kind of Love as opposite sex partners. They are all searching for the kind of soul connection that any two people who truly Love each other, want. Partners who have committed to go to the depths of hell and back, in order to feel pure Love the “maker” gave all of us, in our hearts, from the depths of our souls. This is the desire all humans crave, without exception. This ultimately transcends sex, and to a certain point transcends age and time.

Originally, I was going to try to separate female same-sex partners from male same-sex partners – but I found there were no true differences, at least not from the perspective of true Love. To do this kind of separate delineation would not be true to my thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and values on this kind of Love.

# A Parent and a Child

First let me say I am a mother of three. There are two boys and a daughter. I am also a proud grandmother as well. A lot of what it means to be a grandmother, mother, and parent lies in the continuance of feelings of love, commitment, and determination for their ultimate success, in their lives, and life in general.

Having my daughter as my firstborn, gave me a sense of personal identity. She being the same sex as myself validated me in a strange kind of way, one that was able to connect me to the female side of society. This being the case, loving her was kind of like loving myself – only I don't think I had a true sense of who I was, when she was born.

I have always valued and respected my children as unique individuals who possessed their own personality/soul, and I have always seen their potential creations for their future. However, I would be a liar if I did not say I influenced my daughter into becoming a doctor. My own identity as a child was not fulfilled. I wanted very much to be a doctor and help sick people myself. Yes, I can say with all good fortune and karma that she is a Doctor of Pharmacy now, and she works with patients in a veterans hospital. We as parents do this to/for our children. When we Love our kids, we naturally want to influence them positively.

Some people would say it was not fair for me to do this to her. I say, she was and is my flesh, blood, spirit, as well as her father's, and I knew instinctively that she was intellectually capable of reaching this goal when she was only a young child. Parents have this ability when they are in rhythm with the Love for their children.

What does being in rhythm with your child mean? It means being able to recognize and foster their interests in life, at first. It does not happen overnight. It takes many years to manifest the Love a child needs in order for them to cultivate, from the wellspring of your Love, the outcome of being a well-rounded person that's mentally, physically, and emotionally whole.

Is life fair? I think not. Your own emotional, physical, and mental stability, as well as that of the other parents attributes, in these areas, factor into the outcome of the manifestation of your contributing Love. We do not live in a perfect world. The "maker" made a perfect world, but our world is a world where people shape and form its very essence. This is where spirituality comes into being. Knowing that I was lacking in areas where maybe I should not be in order to raise a healthy child, I practiced my form

of religion that helped me see and overcome those weaknesses, while trying to be the best parent I could along the way.

The key here is to always, as much as is humanly possibly, be the best parent you can be, and never give up or think there's no hope. It's not going to always come about ideally. Things happen to get you off track: like divorce, sickness, financial calamities, sibling rivalry, death, natural disasters, and the list goes on and on. When a parent has made the ultimate commitment to do their best by their child, they are in rhythm with that child and manifesting their pinnacle of Love for them.

My middle child was very much a delicate balance of masculine and feminine qualities, if they are to be well balanced when they are adults. Males usually have more masculine attributes, as do females usually have more feminine qualities. I recognized his delicacy and intuitively nurtured this balance in him through allowing him to express any and all emotions to his fullest content.

Our society has not understood the nature of a man-child's emotions up till now. This evolution of acceptance of healthy emotional expression from males is still evolving. Sexuality and consequently aggressiveness and excessive assertiveness have been nurtured at the expense of developing the critical ingredients of well-balanced males. The well balanced male child needs permission from his parents to be able to express the more classic feminine emotions to grow and to understand the nature of life's yin and yang.

This non-judgmental attitude on my part, as his mother, allowed him to grow up and be a very balanced and sensitive male to the world's needs. By my allowing him to feel more sensitive and consequently experience more compassionate feelings while he was developing, he would be able to draw on his intuitive skills he created while he was growing up, thus being able to utilize his innate skills as an adult. Now, when confronted with problems, he will pull on all of his mental, spiritual, and emotional resources to come to a balanced and most likely, positive conclusion.

As far as discipline was concerned, I didn't need to do very much of that. I did however offer many boundaries that both protected my children and at the same time allowed them to see the value of what I had imposed. They were like spectators, and not someone who was having something done to them "for their own good." This also gave them a sense of empowerment in their own involvement and participation in the boundary limits. I often would ask when they did something wrong what would they think was a good punishment for the thing they did. Many times they were much harder



on themselves than I ever would have been. This also fostered a more personalized involvement in their own, on-going journey of self-discipline.

My third and youngest boy was a challenge as a very young child, and he tested my patience and virtuous Love constantly. He had obvious conflicts that caused him to act out in very physically and emotionally aggressive ways. This concerned me a lot, but I never felt incapable of helping him to help himself to get better control and more personal understanding of his emotions. I must say his emotional displays scared me from time to time.

I prayed an awful lot during these difficult times, and that too was a blessing and Love for oneself. I knew intuitively that he needed spiritual guidance, so his father and I enrolled him in a church-based kindergarten. This would give him the basis of the Christian love model in a social environment that allowed for constant exposure to the good moral values of a Christian. He stayed in that private school situation for two years. It was a very wise move in the direction of helping him to come to terms with his own extreme and overpowering emotions that surely affected him as much as myself.

Today he is a young adult with an awesome, balanced personality. He is a straight "A" student studying computers and engineering at a major university. He has maturity far beyond his years.

Children have a natural affinity toward the healthy and balanced parts of life, and when they start to veer off of this path of natural righteousness a parent doesn't need to look very far for reasons or clues as to why their child is acting out in a negative way. My third child had to deal with an extremely difficult divorce, and consequently handled the stress the only way he knew how.

Sometimes siblings or other influential persons cause a child to get into excessive negativity. The outcome for the child initially is guilt. Parents tend to want to place restrictions on the child's behavior. This move is only a band-aid on the real problems. A break in the fundamental parent-child relationship is most likely the cause. When a parent falls out of rhythm with their Love for their child, children will react. They will do whatever it takes to get their parent's attention and Love.

We parents often get caught in the net of our children's verbal outbursts, some that seem almost like assaults in and of themselves. However, a wise and virtuous parent will haul in those impulses to lash out against the attack, and see it for what it is. I am not condoning or suggesting disrespect to be tolerated any more from your child as to tolerating it from anyone else. If verbal disrespect occurs, calmly state that you will not tolerate that abuse.

Children will test family and life boundaries in an effort to establish who they are as a unique human being. It is a very natural and sometimes emotionally painful process that has to be experienced, in order to lay the groundwork for the later move away from the parents, and into the real world. A successful adult world is where we can choose a partner, live emotionally centered, and find the satisfying relationship that mature Love has to offer.

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Thank you for reading my story and thoughts on Love.

Although this story is often autobiographical, what is most personal is most general.

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