

You Are Made of Love

Every time Valentine's Day comes around, it reminds me of how much time and effort I spent in my youth trying to please some totally unavailable, but to me, irresistible young man. What a waste of time that was! The harder I tried to please my Prince Charming, the more he seemed determined to go off to find someone else's foot to squeeze into that coveted glass slipper.

But in those days, I still believed what had been drilled into me by my Grammar School teachers: 'Try really hard to succeed in life and the world is your oyster'. So I tried really, really hard to please the young men in my life and I tried even harder to gain 3 good A levels – and still got rejected by my first choice of university, York, and ended up at Liverpool which was great, but where I was basically depressed for three whole years.

I then tried really hard and failed to get a lectureship down south somewhere, only to end up being more or less gifted a lectureship at Manchester University -which again turned out to be wonderful, but not what I had tried so hard to get. Eventually the penny began to drop. Trying so hard to succeed in life was no guarantee of success. However, it took me another 40 years or so to fully realise that I really did not need to try so hard to control every aspect of my life, including trying to control those close to me.

As a small child, I came to believe that it was my key role in life to make others happy and that unless I did this, something awful would happen to me. Now looking back, I can see that at the time, this belief was not at all crazy. My adoptive mother made it very clear to me that my role in our family was to make my father happy and that failing to fulfil that role would have serious consequences. For example, she once refused to speak to me for several weeks after I forgot to buy my father a Father's Day present when I was about 14 years old.

So you get the picture. But now I know a fundamental fact about life that has made a big difference to my own long-term well-being and happiness, so I really want to share it with you this month: *You cannot do anything to ensure someone else's long-term wellbeing or happiness.* Plus, and it is a big plus, you

cannot even do anything to ensure that someone else loves, likes, or appreciates you.

I think so many women in particular spend virtually their whole lives trying to please or change the man in their life, with relatively small rewards. Think for example of how many women go on supporting and even 'trying to save' their alcoholic partners. This is such a common phenomenon that there is even a special organisation called Al Anon to support the partners of alcoholics and to help them to come to the realisation that unless an alcoholic decides to stop drinking there is nothing their partner can do to help them.

The same basic rule of course applies to drug addicts, gamblers, shopaholics and anyone else who constantly engages in self-destructive behaviour of one kind or another. You cannot even rescue your own son or daughter from this type of addictive behaviour. Trust me! I have seen so many loving mothers try to do this, only to fail miserably.

So this month, maybe we could all mindfully notice when we have strayed into someone else's business by giving someone unsolicited advice or trying to fix their problems for them. We might also notice – whilst cultivating great compassion for ourselves - when we are worried about how someone else perceives us, and then remind ourselves that how someone perceives us is *entirely* down to them and *completely* out of our control.

Unfortunately, human love is usually conditional and can thus turn to indifference or even hatred very, very quickly. 'I used to love you, but you have put on so much weight I am afraid I have found myself a much slimmer model.' 'I cannot love you anymore because we no longer share the same political views'. Yes, these days, we will even refuse to love or appreciate someone simply because they hold different political views to our own.

But true love is not like this at all. Love simply flows ever outwards from an open, compassionate heart and never distinguishes in any way between the loveable and the unlovable.

I suspect that the major reason why we all struggle to love indiscriminately like this is that our own dear heart has been so badly scarred by past traumas of all kinds. Because our hearts are now pretty closed up to defend us against more

arrows of misfortune, we are simply not in touch with the infinite well of love at the very core of our being. If we were, there is no way we would be seeking any kind of love or approval from anyone in this world.

I have occasionally been blessed to sense this well of infinite, unconditional love at my very core. But most of the time, I am still far too distracted by all that glitters in this world, or all that seems to threaten my wellbeing in this world, to connect to pure love energy within me and all around me. However, I do now know that letting the world be just as it is, whilst extending love energy out into it is a great way to strengthen our own connection to universal love energy, or as some might call it 'Love Divine.'

The more we gain even the smallest of glimpses of this universal, unconditional type of love, the more we will gradually let go of our personality-self's craving for the love and approval of others. Do I still worry about whether other people approve of me? You bet I do! However, these days when I notice myself worrying like this, I pause, smile warmly to my worried personality-self, and gently remind myself that whether someone likes me or not is really none of my business.

So in this month of 'love' maybe you might like to reassure yourself that you were born loveable and that no one can take this spiritual birth-right away from you – not even the mother from hell who treated you as though you were not the slightest bit worthy of her love, nor the love of your life who once dropped you like a stone and shattered your heart to pieces.

Despite what all those Valentine's Day cards may say, you definitely do not need someone special to complete you. You are wholly loveable just the way you are, whatever relationship you may - or may not - be in right now. In fact, you are not just loveable. At your core, you are love and nothing but love and absolutely nothing you - or anyone around you - ever thinks, says, or does can alter this miraculous truth about your true nature.

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