



Polly Young-Eisendrath, PhD.

# Gather up Your Brokenness

Love, Imperfection and Human Ideals

# True love is...

- knowing the beloved well
- accepting the beloved as she or he is, in reality
- mutual, reciprocal, egalitarian, deepening in interest and engagement because it is **both mysterious and familiar**
- mindfulness, empathy, equanimity, emotional maturity, open communication and truth-telling



# True love is NOT biological.

If love were based on a biological instinct that is rooted in survival, then it would not be so difficult for people to practice. In fact, true love is not necessary for procreation, mating or protecting our children.

# True love is not the same as:

**attachment bonds:** attachment (identification with the other that creates anxiety about being separate), separation anxiety, grief – both infantile and adult attachment bonds

**romance:** a psychotic illusion or fantasy (that feels like a drug) of being fulfilled or completed by another, someone who is your “perfect match”

**idealization:** a fanciful love that splits off the hate or disillusionment towards another, thus omitting the reality of the other person’s limitations

**desire:** longing for something that is missing, something that is wanted, a restlessness or dissatisfaction with things as they are



# Love is like science: it helps us embrace the truth about another and about our self

To love another person, you have to be a whole self and permit your beloved to be a whole self, too. This is confusing because we tend to believe we are “helping” our beloved child, partner or parent by telling him or her how to change and why change is necessary. You know in your bones, you want your beloved to know you, as you are, and to accept you without demanding you change.

Just as we come to know the natural world as it is, rather than as we imagine or want it to be, loving another requires us to remain interested and alert to that other person – just as he or she is, always willing to see him or her freshly.

# True love is mutual and reciprocal – a two-way street

In order for love to be “true” it has to be love on a two-way street:  
both people are vulnerable to it and both people can rise to its  
demands: **THIS IS RARE**

*Love means to learn to look at yourself  
The way one looks at distant things  
For you are only one thing among many.  
And whoever sees that way heals his heart,  
Without knowing it, from various ills-  
A bird and a tree say to him: Friend.*

From “Love” by Czeslaw Milosz



# Love's #1 enemy is idealization

Idealization is the belief that the other person (or oneself) is perfect, complete or pure

- Parents idealize their children
- Children idealize their parents
- Romance demands idealization of the beloved
- Romantic comedy feeds on idealization
- Pornography creates idealized and controlled “objects”

Idealization is our control of the object of our desire so that it does not become real and limited

# The Nature of Reality

## Dukkha

- Unsatisfactoriness, anguish, stress, discontent, restlessness, gaps, confusions, off-centeredness

## Anicca

- ceaseless change, impermanence at all levels of existence

## Anatta

- Interbeing, no-thingness, no-self, embeddedness, the absence of thingness in all phenomenal, contextualized



# Love brings us reality up close and personal

*...and whether we bear it for beast,*

*for child, for woman, or friend,*

*it is the one love, it is the same,*

*and it is blest*

*deepest by loss*

*it is blest, it is blest.*

From "Oddjob, a Bull Terrier" by Derek Walcott

# Cherishment: Love on a One-Way Street

True love is mutual and reciprocal (both people are dependent and vulnerable), but it can be confused with Cherishment – love on a one-way street. “Cherishing” is the term I use for keeping and holding someone dear and cultivating your affection for that person. It is different from mere “care-giving” in that cherishing has pleasure at its core. We feel pleasure in coming to care for another well and to know deeply his or her needs.



# Cherishment is Non-reciprocal Love

- practiced in parent-child relationships
- practiced in therapeutic relationships
- practiced when caring for animals
- practiced when caring for those who are ill or infirm or cannot reciprocate

# Cherishing does not require a whole self or vulnerability:

There is a great deal of pleasure in cherishing another when we come to know that person as a particular being with strengths, weakness, needs and character. We feel pride and joy in seeing our beloved thrive.

In true love, we are vulnerable and open-hearted, and in need of the other person's reflection, desire and interest. Cherishing, love on a one-way street, is a lot less stressful and touchy than love on a two-way street.

Many people hide from true love all of their lives (even if they learn to cherish others) and are afraid of being known in this intimate way, even if they long for it. Notably, some spiritual teachers and masters never make themselves vulnerable to personal love AND idealization of a spiritual teacher guarantees love on a one-way street.



# Four Insights on the Path of Individuation

1. Our personalities are naturally dissociated, discontinuous and hard to manage, but can begin to be known through what we have transferred, projected, and reacted to in others.
2. Our nighttime dreams and daytime fantasies contain seeds of wisdom that arise from a source that is outside our ordinary awareness and not under control.
3. We have some kind of purpose or work or contribution in life that we need to discover by actually trying things out, but cannot be fully forecasted from our ideals or ideas.
4. We are responsible for our actions and speech even though we cannot always control them or the feelings that accompany them.

In your family,  
there may be cherishment,  
but not true love.

Because true love is demanding, radical, and spiritual, its practice is not widespread. Families can function well without it and in some cultures – for example, in China and Japan – it is discouraged between spouses because it is thought to be wrong to become preoccupied with a spouse.



# Personal Love is a Spiritual Practice

1. Practice mindfulness and compassion with your beloved and yourself
2. Recognize that you do NOT KNOW yourself and need a mirror to see yourself
3. Seeing and accepting your beloved allows you to find yourself through trusting another to reflect you back
4. Recognize you are unconsciously motivated by early emotional habits, just as your beloved is, and that you can fall into projection – projection is our primary defense of our unconsciousness. You and your beloved can and will readily use each other as the target of projections that are painful and destructive. The most destructive patterns of this projection-making factor in love relationships can be discovered and analyzed in effective individual and/or couples psychotherapy.
5. Remember the Marks of Existence – that we are all fundamentally broken, limited, and embedded in contexts that we do not control
6. Return to CURIOSITY about yourself and your beloved as often as you can – a fundamental NOT KNOWING
7. Remember that love is a difficult path, but will reward you with the feeling of having been seen and known

# Let go of the division between Transpersonal Love and Personal Love

When mutual personal love becomes a spiritual practice, as Cynthia Bourgeault (a Christian hermit) reminds us, it means “baring one’s heart with particularity. This is the path of transformational love and it puts a human face on the Transcendent.”

True love is felt as raw vulnerability with our own needs and desires exposed. True love opposes control of the beloved while strengthening your need and dependence on the relationship for your own foundation.

You see into another person so specifically and so deeply that you see through him or her to whatever you take to be the Divine Source, refracted back again through your own self.



# Mindfulness and Compassion

**Mindfulness:** a kind of awareness that combines concentration and equanimity and leads to clarity of perception

**Compassion:** the ability to accompany anguish, suffering or adversity with accurate empathy and help

# Altogether and All at Once





# The Self-Conscious Emotions

## **Shame**

The desire to hide, cover up, lie or die because you feel inferior or superior or defective.

## **Guilt**

The desire to repair bad action or wrong-doing.

## **Envy**

The desire to destroy or diminish what another has because you cannot have it for yourself.

## **Pride**

The feeling of pleasure from having or being or doing something.

## **Self-pity**

The feeling of being the victim or being set apart from others in terms of suffering.

## **Embarrassment**

The feeling of being self-conscious or awkward and the desire to cover up.

## **Jealousy**

The desire to possess what someone else has because you feel you could have it yourself.

# Come Healing

## by Leonard Cohen

O gather up the brokenness  
And bring it to me now  
The fragrance of those promises  
You never dared to vow

The splinters that you carry  
The cross you left behind  
Come healing of the body  
Come healing of the mind

And let the heavens hear it  
The penitential hymn  
Come healing of the spirit  
Come healing of the limb

Behold the gates of mercy  
In arbitrary space  
And none of us deserving  
The cruelty or the grace

O solitude of longing  
Where love has been confined  
Come healing of the body  
Come healing of the mind

O see the darkness yielding  
That tore the light apart  
Come healing of the reason  
Come healing of the heart

O troubled dust concealing  
An undivided love  
The Heart beneath is teaching  
To the broken Heart above

O let the heavens falter  
And let the earth proclaim:  
Come healing of the Altar  
Come healing of the Name

O longing of the branches  
To lift the little bud  
O longing of the arteries  
To purify the blood

And let the heavens hear it  
The penitential hymn  
Come healing of the spirit  
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