

FORWARD

Like all of life the content of this book has evolved over a period of many years. The first version written in 1995 dealt with what love is, its qualities and the power love has to affect individual lives. In later years, as my own life unfolded, I came to realize that while the word love was used in every possible context it was not talked about or defined as a subject in the general populace. In fact, when the subject came up I observed an interesting phenomenon. People, both men and women, would squirm with embarrassment; a response that has been inherited through time in order to mask or avoid the matter at hand. It was as if I had started talking about something intimate that isn't discussed in polite company. That observation triggered the question, Why isn't love taught as a subject at home, in school or as the primary component of a business ethics course? The lack of any concrete answer to this question heavily influenced the direction of the writing.

In the fall of 2009 I tripped over one of life's unexpected markers while Googling™ the latest research on human vibrations. Specifically, I was looking for mainstream documentation on the impact of collective human energy. When a Google™ search of the phrase 'human energy net' failed to return even a single reference I was, to say the least, surprised. To my mind the phrase captures exactly the idea that, like the world-wide web, we are all globally interconnected.

That discovery triggered the decision to expand the title and purchase the domain name. Subsequent research, along with personal experience, confirmed my belief that there is a very real need for the subjects of love and human energy to go mainstream. Thus a book is born.

This forward would be incomplete without a special thank you to my husband, James, for his unfailing support and encouragement as well as providing feedback and his editing skills.

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and so we choose to change our rusty ways and our old habitual responses, to emerge a love that is fresh and new.... Love cannot happen unless I am willing to commit myself to making it happen and this is a process that requires courage and determination. How can we break destructive patterns and work to create love in our life? Looking at the different levels of love, we will become more aware of the highest level of love within our self. "In the midst of winter, I found within me an invincible summer."

Lipton, B. H. 1998 Nature, Nurture and the Power of Love. *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health* 13:3-10
Leo Bersani "Power of Evil, Power of Love"

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This book could have been named "A Practical Handbook for Changing the World". The concept is simple enough. Every single person has an effect on the pond of life. We all contribute to it and are responsible for its health. Good, or at least better, health is promoted by individual choices that are based on the characteristics of love. Making those choices requires knowing what love is, knowing yourself, and monitoring the thoughts and emotions that influence our actions. By understanding and 'owning' this concept we can each do our part to ensure that our contribution to the Human Energy Net is positive rather than negative.

This is where the dynamics of love comes into play. The Greek root of the word dynamic means power and strength (dunamikos - powerful; dunamis - power; dunasthai - to be able, see). One definition of dynamics is that it is *the controlling force of any kind and the study of that force*. It pertains to energy or power; *to motion causing change*.

Love becomes a controlling force in our life by first understanding its core elements and characteristics – Love's Code. The next step is to measure, through a process of self-assessment, how well we are aligned with Love's Code in our thoughts and actions, which includes understanding the complex influences that colour our thinking and pattern of behaviour. The third step, a life-long endeavour, is to implement the qualities of love into all aspects of our life.

Undertaking and implementing the study of love results in change. While the degree of change depends on a number of factors, it is certain that the quality of our inner life changes for the better. That change is then reflected outward both in our actions and the energy other people feel.

How one person can make a difference globally can be explained by an aspect of Chaos Theory. Named the ¹Butterfly Effect, the theory demonstrates mathematically that one very small change in a large system can, over time, put into effect a large change in the whole system. The example most often used is that the motion of a butterfly's wing can eventually change the weather in another part of the world.

Another example, relevant to us all, is the effect ²cows and sheep have on global warming. According to recent research the footprint on the environment of eating one 250 gram hamburger patty is the equivalent of driving a mid-sized car 16 km, which doesn't seem too bad all things considered. However, multiply this by the world-wide consumption of hamburgers (McDonald's sold 100 billion as of 2005) and that one hamburger patty leaves a huge imprint on global health.

To visualize this concept more clearly, imagine a place where the principles of love and human energy are integrated into the fabric of the community. They are taught as subjects at home and in schools with the same emphasis and attention to detail as reading and writing. By the time the children in the community become adults and enter the workforce it is quite natural for them to make decisions based on the characteristics of love.

Natural selection dictates that a few of the children will move into positions of leadership where decisions of the few affect the many. Because of their early training these leaders take for granted that corporate and government policy should be based on the elements of love and understand that such policies are not a detriment to success.

It takes only a little more imagination to see how this one community could influence a world. Generation follows generation with each being taught from infancy the principles of love. They then take the seeds of what they know and plant them in other parts of the world. The fruit born of those seeds is a radically different world than what we know today.

"Love Imagines the World", a line in an opera by composer Peter Sellers, describes perfectly the dynamic of love. Progress at every level in every field starts with forming a picture of what could be; asking the question "What if...?" Throughout history progress has been made because just one person dared to imagine the impossible and then proceeded to take the actions necessary against all odds and obstacles to make the picture a reality. What this book asks of you is to imagine a world driven by the energy of love, which will make

¹ Ian Stewart, Does God Play Dice? The Mathematics of Chaos, p. 141

² http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/project_data/DocumentLibrary/EV02007/EV02007_4601_FRP.pdf

the world a better place for all people everywhere. We can have a world of peace, a world where abject poverty, human atrocities and wilful destruction of our planet is relegated to the history books. It may not happen in our generation or the next or even the next, but it can be done one person at a time by changing the Human Energy Net.

The principals outlined here will not make you wealthy, successful or give you a perfect life, although they can improve the quality of it. It is not about achieving perfection. It is about understanding the dynamics of human interaction and how to train our thoughts and emotions for a more positive outcome that ultimately affects the world.

ABOUT HUMAN ENERGY

The study of human energy in the scientific and medical community is, relatively speaking, a recent development. ¹Dr. Valerie Hunt, with advanced degrees in Psychology and Physiological Science from Columbia University, is a pioneer in the field. Her research ² shows the connection between human behaviour and the influence of the immediate environment. Dr. Hunt says, "The energy field is the primary source of the interaction of a person with her/his environment. Whatever happens to you, it is your field that gets influenced ahead of anything in the nervous system or brain".

Each of us sends out and receives a constant flow of energy created by the conjoined twins of thought and emotion. The effect of this exchange can be as soft as the gentle touch of a warm breeze or have the strength of a hurricane. A burst of irritation or joy is like a match that flares and quickly burns out. Habitual thought/emotion puts an imprint on our health and well being, our immediate environment and ultimately impacts the Human Energy Net.

The visible demonstration of emotions created by a *repeated pattern of thought* can become etched on our face for the entire world to see. Contentment and happiness can be seen in the crinkles of laugh lines and a certain sparkle in the eyes. A teenager wears a perpetual pout of discontent; an elderly person shows the worries of a lifetime in the creases and valleys of their skin.

In everyday life it is the sense we get from another person that tells us without words or body language their state of "being". One co-worker smiling for no apparent reason is a ray of sunshine; another is wrapped in an invisible storm cloud and you know to stay out of the way. A particular person makes you uncomfortable for no apparent reason. Their words are innocent enough, but their thoughts are not and that is what is being communicated.

A critical component of human vibrations is the understanding that it is *always* a two-way exchange. Each instance noted above will initiate a corresponding response or reaction. Which one it is depends on a number of factors that include personality, mental/physical health and level of awareness. It is easy to say that it is always a choice, but the reality is that we react or respond automatically until we have developed awareness to a point where it becomes a choice.

"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest- a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and of a foundation for inner security." -- Albert Einstein, N.Y. Post, November 28, 1972

¹ <http://valerievhunt.com>

² <http://www.freshmag.com.au/science.html>

COLLECTIVE ENERGY

A walk in the forest or along a deserted beach has a different 'feel' than a walk in the city. A rock concert will produce a different energy than a symphony. Walk into one office and it feels good to be there; walk into another and you can't get out fast enough.

These are just a few examples of the vibrations we pick up on a daily basis. The walk on the beach is restful because the rhythmic sound of the waves rolling onto the shore emits an energy we pick up as soothing. Put even a few people on that same beach and the restfulness of your walk will be diminished, at least to some degree, by the vibrations being emitted by those people, particularly if *their* enjoyment includes playing rap from a boom box at full volume.

Put a group of people in a place for a specific reason and they will collectively create energy that can range from the beautiful and sublime to a killing spree. A wedding or convocation ceremony brings people together in celebration. A rock concert creates a frenetic energy that coils through the crowd like an out-of-control electrical charge that suspends common sense and 'normal' behaviour. And then, although rare, there are the sports fans that, under the influence of what is called mass hypnosis, take their passion for the game and turn it into an unbridled lust for destruction.

Several years ago I was invited to attend a drum ceremony. It was an experience quite alien to me and therefore out of my comfort zone. At one point in the ceremony we formed an unbroken circle by holding hands. The only sound breaking the silence was the rhythmic cadence of a drum in the background. In those ten minutes or so I went from being wary of the unfamiliar to experiencing beauty at its essence. Why? After all, it was just twenty people with a mix of personalities and backgrounds in a circle and a drum beating. What made it joyous and beautiful? The answer is energy created by intent. The majority of the people there had been to such a ceremony before, had experienced the beauty and came with the intent of experiencing it again. People new to the ceremony like me, who came with no intent or expectation, were able to share in the experience because of the ¹vibrations being emitted by the majority.

An important side note here is that I would not have been able to benefit from this experience had my mind 'been made up' that it was a bunch of guru hogwash. Had this been the case the harmonic vibrations would still have penetrated, but would not have been felt at the conscious level. The 'hogwash' mentality would have in effect erected barriers to the experience and separation from the group. Played out, the next scene could have included a person in the group exclaiming at the wonder and joy of the ceremony. My response would have been, at the least, total incomprehension and very possibly outright sneering.

Of course, the opposite of the above is also true; one person can strongly affect the many. History is dotted with individuals who have stood out from the crowd and changed the fabric of society for good or ill. And we have all been in situations where one person assumes control with the strength of their personality.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

On Loving Creations.ca, where James and I have our respective art portfolios, there is a section named the ²Hero's Gallery created to make the statement that one person can make a difference. The eight people chosen for the gallery - a mix of gender, age, race, personality, and backgrounds - have each, in their own way, influenced thousands, if not millions to be better than who they are. But then there are the anti-heroes who are infamous for their inhumanity. So what is the common denominator that propelled these people into the spotlight?

It is not a gift for oratory. Speeches by Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. bring us to tears; a speech by Adolph Hitler sends chills down our spine. But six-year-old Ryan Hreljac had no such skills.

¹ See ``[Subtle Energies in the Classroom: Phenomenological Research on the role of Energy in Education](#)`` by Marti Anderson, Subtle Energy Activism Network, Bangkok, Thailand for a more scientific explanation.

² http://www.lovingcreations.ca/hero_gallery/

It is not superior intellect. Yes, Albert Einstein falls into this category, but Candace Lightner knew no such fame before founding Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

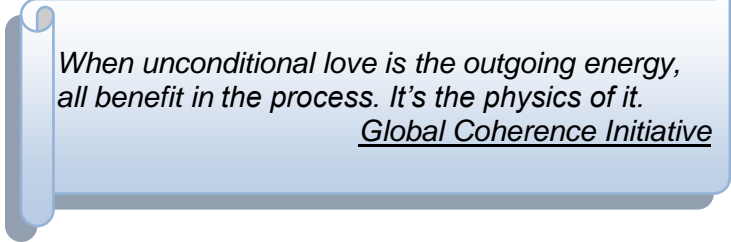
Nor is it wealth, good looks or even charisma.

The death of Candace Lightner's daughter by a drunk driver initiated burning outrage and a determination that no other parent should have to suffer as she did at the hands of a drunk driver. As a result drinking and driving has become socially unacceptable and relevant laws have been changed in countries around the world.

A grade one teacher, Mrs Prest, told Ryan Hreljac about children in other countries that were dying for lack of clean water. In his young mind there were no obstacles to fixing this. It was wrong; it needed fixing. The first seventy dollars he raised doing chores has since translated into millions with ¹"518 water and sanitation projects in 16 countries bringing clean water and sanitation services to over 640,000 people". An element worth noting in this story is his parents' loving response. He was not given that first \$70; he had to earn it over several months. When that test of his commitment had been passed they jumped in and supported his goals with the kind of help that led to a foundation being created and a true success story of help and hope.

Mother Theresa was motivated by a loving heart and the conviction of her faith. Ghandi, Mandela and King were motivated by the belief that all people should be free. Rick Hansen, famous for his Man in Motion world tour, says ²"I'm driven by wanting to make a difference and leave this world a little better than when I arrived."

Adolph Hitler's motivation was fanatical hatred for his mother, a Jew. That hatred *combined with the conviction of his own superiority* led to genocide and



*When unconditional love is the outgoing energy,
all benefit in the process. It's the physics of it.*
Global Coherence Initiative

a world war. Throughout history others like him have committed crimes against humanity, as do many today, convinced that their way is not only the right way, but the only way. The fear generated feeds their ego and supports their view of their own superiority.

The propellant for these and thousands of others who make a difference, one way or the other, is unshakable motivation fuelled by iron-clad conviction. The intense energy created by these dual mind processes flows outward and takes on the properties to attract what is needed to achieve the goal. It is a mindset of sustained belief and putting into action whatever is necessary to support that belief.

Variations of human energy at work are played out countless times across the planet in every culture at every level from children playing in the school yard to the deliberations of heads of state and corporate giants. The ultimate health and well being of the planet, and the people on it, depends on individuals at every level understanding and taking responsibility for the vibrations we create. The means to changing our personal vibrations is to understand and put into practice the Code of Love. The challenge to understanding and implementing the Code of Love is our own fragile humanity. We not only contend with diverse personalities and personal experience but with a confused idea of what love is, or should be.

¹ <http://www.ryanswell.ca/story/index.html>

² <http://www.rickhansen.com>

LOVE DEFINED

A Google® search of the word `love` returns 1,470,000,000 web pages. A click on the definition link takes you to a full page of the different ways the word is used. Included in the list are words like deep affection, fondness, caring, sexual passion, emotional attachment, strong enthusiasm and charity. It would be quite safe to say that it is a word used world-wide on a daily basis in some form or another. People use the word both casually and with intensity; with great hope; with great bitterness. The medical community uses it to explain human psychology; scientists map its chemistry; it is exploited to sell products. These aspects of love are part of our emotional make-up as human beings and as such have great power to influence our behaviour.

Then there are the qualities and characteristics of love that are defined as something else. Under the heading of “good manners” we teach our children to share, be courteous and treat other people with respect. Businesses and universities teach `ethical behaviour`. The military and other institutions promote `a code of conduct` that includes honour, respect and caring. Empowerment and altruism are modern day buzz words that embody the concept of unselfishness, humanity and self-sacrifice.

Certainly love incorporates all of the above, but it is much more and little understood by the majority. It is quite literally the force that binds. It is an intrinsic force known and felt by every single one of the ¹6.5 billion human beings on this planet. A gentle touch on a baby's head, heart-melting awe seeing the sky painted by the dawn or listening to music that enraptures are just a few of the human responses that have love as its source. Science can monitor the results of these `feelings` as brain wave patterns, but cannot provide a definitive explanation of the source.

What has been researched and proven is that without the nurturing aspect of love both animals and babies fail to thrive physically and emotionally. Children and adults deprived of love try to fill the empty place where love should be. The unconscious need to fill the void can be seen in eyes that reflect only loneliness and pain, in the single-minded pursuit of power and money, in the many forms of addictive and abusive behaviour.

By definition love doesn't care and is at the same time all-caring. It doesn't care about the colour of your skin or your religious beliefs or whether you are fat, skinny, short or tall. It doesn't care if you are old or young, male or female. It doesn't care if you are a crook or a saint. Love is given to all even-handedly without conditions, reward or punishment.

To grasp this concept compare it to the oxygen we breathe. It is a necessary component of life and well being, but is unseen and mostly unnoticed until we don't have it. It is everywhere, every-time and for everyone, crossing all barriers of culture, race, creed and doctrine.

LOVE'S CODE

Acceptance • Compassion • Gentleness • Joy • Honesty
• Humility • Nobility • Respectfulness • Thoughtfulness • Trustworthiness

Just ten words and yet, with their inherent characteristics (see table below) they describe love in its perfection. What makes it perfect is that every quality noted is applied equally to every human being and all living things in every situation. Were a human being to demonstrate all these qualities all the time then they would rightfully be deemed perfect. But this book is not about being perfect. It is instead a guide for making different choices that lead to greater harmony and contentment.

¹ May, 2007 U.S. World Census

Consider for a moment the individuals throughout history who have had the greatest impact for good on humankind. Without exception they have demonstrated some, if not many, of these characteristics. Now consider your actions on any given day. No matter where you live in the world, your economic status or position, chances are that, knowingly or unknowingly, you have demonstrated one or more of the aspects of love listed here. For the most part, we don't think about these actions – we just do them. Even when an action of love is given with intention it comes so naturally that it is not identified in our mind as a component of love.

The inherent properties of diamonds provide a good explanation for the Code of Love and its application in the Actions of Love. Diamonds have been assigned a high value by humans throughout known history. In their natural state both diamonds and love are brilliant and last forever. Their value, which can vary greatly, depends on a number of factors, but is determined primarily on how much light can pass through.

The following excerpts are taken from the ¹Diamond Quality Guide produced by Christian Bernard Stores. The descriptions fit the qualities of love at its finest.

Fine quality diamonds have more fire, more sparkle, more value and are very rare.

Two diamonds that look alike at first may, in fact, be very different. Two diamonds of equal size can have very unequal values. The differences between them may be subtle indeed. It is the different combinations of ... these characteristics that determine the quality and value of a diamond.

Diamonds are cut into a number of shapes, depending on the nature of the rough stone. When cut to good proportions, the diamond is better able to reflect light, creating more scintillation, more sparkle.

It is the cut that enables a diamond to make the best use of light. When diamonds are cut to ideal proportions, light is reflected from one facet to another and then dispersed through the top of the stone.

Diamonds are found with a range of colors. The most desirable color for a diamond is no color. It is the colorless diamond that allows white light to pass effortlessly through it and be dispersed and reflected out as a rainbow of colors.

Most diamonds contain very small natural inclusions. The fewer and smaller the inclusions are, the less likely it is that they will interfere with the passage of light through the diamond and the more beautiful the diamond will sparkle. Diamonds, more than any other gemstone, have the capacity to produce the maximum amount of brilliance. A diamond that is free of internal/external inclusions is very rare and therefore more valuable.

Fine quality can be found in diamonds of all shapes and sizes.

The elements of love are as specific as the instruments in an orchestra. Each instrument has its own unique qualities or characteristics and produces music in a distinctive way. When played alone, depending on the skill and talent of the musician, it can make beautiful music. When the same piece of music is played by two or three instruments the music becomes richer, fuller. Put all the instruments together under the direction of a maestro and the music becomes a magnificent symphony of sound and vibration that envelops mind, body and spirit.

You are the maestro. You choose the instruments of love that will be played in the daily business of living. You are also the musician who, through conscious choice, knows the instrument and understands that it is only through practice that its full potential can be achieved.

As you study the characteristics of each element keep in mind that, like the notes in music, the table is mathematical in nature with specific definitions assigned to each key component. In contrast, the observations are a subjective commentary based on my own perceptions and studies.

"I believe that love is the greatest thing in the world; that it alone can overcome hate; that right can and will triumph over might."

John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

¹ <http://www.christian-bernard.com/diamonds/diamqual.htm>

Do yourself a favour and argue with me. Read what I have to say and then play it out across the landscape of your own circumstances. Accept some of it, all of it or none of it, but do think about it, because it is only through the process of conscious thought that the seeds of change can be planted.

People *can* change given knowledge coupled with desire. I know this because of the many times I have seen people make the choice to change as a result of circumstances that, unfortunately are often quite tragic. I have seen people change out of the simple desire to be more than what they are. I have seen people change when the proverbial light shines in their mind and suddenly they 'see ' what it is that needs changing. Over the course of a lifetime each of these examples could be valid as the catalyst for change that leads to growth as a human. Growth and maturity are integral to all processes of life. No living organism is designed to stagnate or stay the same. That is not to say that it doesn't happen, it is just not the natural order of life's construct.

My challenge, both in writing this book and laying out my perceptions of love, is to adequately incorporate the understanding that humans are complex, unique individuals and that no one brush can be applied to all. You may and probably do share traits and experiences with thousands of people across the world, but how you think and feel as an individual is unique to you as my thought process is unique to me.

As you read through the next pages on what love is use the words as a measure to assess how much or how little you apply love in your own life and thoughts. The measure will vary considerably from one person to the next depending on personality traits and the components of your life. For instance, empathy and compassion is part of my nature so it is not something I have to think about. From childhood it has hurt me to see someone else in pain either emotionally or physically. On the other hand, acceptance, particularly the part about being non-judgemental, is something that has been learned and requires my attention on a regular basis. In the instance just given, if I deem the person a whiner or having a pity party, the inclination is to say, "Get over yourself!"



Love Is an altogether amazing force. It is not something you can physically reach out and touch, but it has more reality and impact than any physical entity. Without the energy of love, the universe would cease to exist.

The essence of love is beauty
trees blowing in the wind;
clouds hovering above the
earth to bring rain and growth;
birds singing a melody of praise to the universe



TABLE OF LOVE'S CHARACTERISTICS

The headings in the table below are the primary elements of love with a drill-down of associated characteristics. Combined, the words form a template of love perfected.

Love is constant, unfailing and has no fear. It is....

Acceptance		Compassionate		Trustworthy	Joyful	Noble	Thoughtful
Tolerance Open-minded non-judgemental Lenience mercy compassion humanity kindness Forbearance patience self-control restraint moderation mercy Charity kindness humanity compassion generosity altruism benevolence sympathy understanding consideration	Acknowledgment understanding comprehension awareness Recognition credit gratitude acknowledgment appreciation respect	Sympathetic Empathetic feeling concerned kind kindly kind-hearted considerate caring gentle Feeling concern regard love sympathy Concerned relate to affect involve be about have to do with be connected	Kind caring nice gentle thoughtful benevolent kind-hearted humane considerate humanitarian kindly Benevolent Considerate	Dependable Reliable Responsible Truthful Honest Constant Faithful Upright Honourable admirable worthy praiseworthy moral principled good respectable Humble Modest Unassuming unpretentious down-to-earth Meek gentle mild unpretentious	Delight happiness contentment gladness cheerfulness pleasure enjoyment ecstasy elation joyfulness Wonderful blissful pleasurable enjoyable carefree generous Fine discerning perceptive grand impressive marvellous magnificent Modest Gallant Polite respectful Self-sacrificing	Dignified Gracious courteous kind Respectful Polite civil courteous considerate Gentle Mild calm kind tender moderate placid temperate Soft quiet light mellow restful	Considerate kind caring unselfish selfless attentive sympathetic solicitous helpful peaceful Honest Truthful Sincere Straightforward Open Law-abiding Scrupulous

ACCEPTANCE

Tolerance			<p>Acceptance, as a component of love, goes beyond the confines of just tolerance. It is an open plain with no boundaries. It is a state of mind, a way of thinking that says in essence “You are human; I am human; we share space on this earth” and that in itself is the only criteria for the acceptance that ultimately counts. It is the umbrella over every other attribute of love.</p> <p>Acceptance is a choice we make with our intellect and by understanding the difference between being human and being a human. Every single member of the human race is entitled to acceptance by the fact of their birth respective of their choices or circumstances. We do not have to agree with or like the choices they make as a human. We should, however, appreciate and acknowledge the circumstances under which those choices are made. People of different cultures, skin colour or upbringing may well be so alien to us that their way of life and thinking is beyond our comprehension. <i>Still, the essence of love asks that we extend the gift of unqualified acceptance to every human being.</i> Within such acceptance there are no criteria of liking or not liking, agreeing or disagreeing. Just as love ‘is’, so too is acceptance.</p> <p>Acceptance is the greatest challenge we have as human beings. You only have to look at history to know this is true. Throughout the ages millions upon millions of people have died for no reason then they were different from their killers. Not accepting another human being, just as they are, has always been and still is the root cause of the majority of conflicts from domestic disputes to outright genocide.</p>
Open-minded	Forbearance	Acknowledgment	
non-judgemental	patience self-control restraint moderation mercy	understanding comprehension awareness	
Lenience	Charity	Recognition	
mercy compassion humanity kindness	kindness humanity compassion generosity altruism benevolence sympathy understanding consideration	credit gratitude acknowledgment appreciation respect	

A note of caution is warranted here. At no time should acceptance be confused with condoning bad behaviour whether it is a child, an adult, an organization or a nation. The human race has made what progress we have because men and women throughout history have had the courage to stand tall against the crowd and say “No, we will not accept such behaviour”.

COMPASSION

Empathetic	Feeling	Concerned	Kind	
feeling concerned kind kindly kind- hearted considerate caring gentle benevolent	concern regard love sympathy	relate to affect involve be about have to do with be connected	kind-hearted humane considerate humanitarian kindly caring nice gentle thoughtful	<p>Notice that the word pity is not included in the list of words defining compassion and yet it is the word most often cited as a synonym. It is an interesting phenomenon of the language because, for the most part, no-one wants pity; it makes them feel small and inadequate. They do, however, want us to care and that is what compassion should be about.</p> <p>Of the words listed to describe compassion the one that speaks to me the loudest is 'understanding'. To truly understand another person, or even our self, requires that we look beyond what is visible to the layers of circumstances that are hidden. It is to undertake the mental exercise of walking a mile in another person's shoes. It is to understand that we are not all equal when it comes to the choices we are accorded.</p> <p>A woman in an African village has a very narrow window of choices compared to even the poorest of the poor in more developed countries. The boy growing up in middle-class suburbia has a far wider spectrum of choices than the boy growing up in the ghetto. People born with mental or physical incapacity must deal with limited choices throughout their life. And then there are the choices made by each of us every day that are coloured by perceptions born of personality, culture and circumstance.</p> <p>Compassion is not exclusive to the obviously less fortunate. Using the characteristics of perception and awareness we can – anytime, anywhere – pay attention to the landscape of another person's face and know they are hurting. Your response to that hurt may be nothing more than acknowledgement and a gentle word of understanding; it may be an invitation to talk. Whatever the response, that person will know, at least for that one moment in time, that someone cares enough to notice their pain.</p>

GENTLENESS

Mild	Soft	
<p>calm kind tender moderate placid temperate</p>	<p>quiet light mellow restful peaceful</p>	<p>Being gentle with ourselves and others is a cornerstone of what love is. We give ourselves the gift of grace then pass the gift on to family, friends, co-workers and strangers. Acting with grace means to help, not hinder; to offer good will instead of judgement. It is mercy; clemency and kindness in both thought and action.</p> <p>The underlying essence of being gentle is in close proximity to forgiveness. It is a word not listed on the Table of Love's Characteristics because in perfect love any need for forgiveness is negated by acceptance. However, forgiveness is the word most often used to describe the action of 'letting go'; a process of thought and emotion that greatly benefits our well being. Letting go is to wrap a person or circumstance in the softness of love's energy. In return we benefit from the gifts of restfulness and peace.</p> <p>For many people the characteristics associated with the word gentle literally go against the grain either by genetic structure or environment. Modern living seems to be about stress and turmoil and yet, according to any number of wellness books and articles, it is quiet and calm that is the effective antidote.</p>

JOY

Delight	Wonderful	
<p>happiness pleasure enjoyment ecstasy elation joyfulness</p>	<p>blissful pleasurable wonder enjoyable carefree</p>	<p>In the symphony of perfect love joy is not one instrument, but the totality of sound coming together in triumph. It is the appreciation of all life coupled with the recognition that each component is precious.</p> <p>Happiness is both a gift and natural component of love that comes with living its principles, knowingly or unknowingly. It is a state of mind and being that is as calm and serene as the sea on a sunny day.</p> <p>Joy will find you when you can see the beauty and wonder in every circumstance, respective of its face. Because hidden behind the crevices and creases of the many faces of circumstance there is a purpose, and that purpose is called opportunity. When you see this, when you know it to be true, joy becomes your companion.</p> <p>Practicing what is lovely is to go to sleep picturing a tree covered in springtime blossoms. It is taking joy in the sound of a bird in song. It is to know wonder at the clap of thunder preceded by lightening scorching the sky. It is to take pleasure in a stranger's smile; to listen for kindness in a word softly spoken.</p> <p>Your world and mine is made up of things to do, people to see, or just watching TV. These are the things that are automatic in our world, the things that occupy our thoughts and emotions out of, for lack of a better word, habit. For most people the experience of joy is the equivalent to an annual vacation. It's wonderful while you're there, but the experience quickly fades to an occasional memory as you get caught up in day-to-day living.</p> <p>We do ourselves a great favour by taking time to remember that the place of joy exists and that we can go there at anytime in an instant. I recall one day at work that I was just plain having a 'grey' day. There was no particular reason for it, at least none that I knew. I just felt sad, a little cranky and most definitely out-of-sorts. And then, going outside for a morning break, I thought, "I don't want to feel this way and I don't have to." With the thought I mentally lifted myself up. I could feel the change in energy as it started at my toes and moved up through my being. It was an extraordinary experience. In seconds my internal landscape was bathed in the bright sunlight of joy.</p>

HONESTY

<p>Truthful Sincere Straightforward Open Law-abiding Scrupulous</p>	<p>The value of honesty cannot be overstated. Think what the world would be like if deception had no part in its fabric. Jails would be almost empty, leaders could be relied upon and, most of all, we would feel safe and know our children would be safe in trusting another human being.</p> <p>Honesty, particularly self-honesty, is so important that without it a human cannot truly thrive and any state of happiness is diminished. Honesty is not afraid of the light of day and has no need to hide. Dishonesty is furtive, afraid and loves the dark. <i>To be expanded.....</i></p>
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HUMBLE, NOBLE AND RESPECTFUL

Humble	Noble	Respectful	
<p>Modest Unassuming unpretentious down-to-earth Meek gentle mild unpresumptuous</p>	<p>Dignified Gracious courteous kind generous Fine discerning perceptive grand impressive marvellous magnificent Modest Gallant Polite respectful Self-sacrificing</p>	<p>Polite civil courteous considerate</p>	<p>These three elements of love have been grouped together because they are to a degree interrelated, although at first glance it may not seem so. Studied carefully, the words describe the characteristics of a great leader who understands and bows to the responsibilities inherent to good leadership.</p> <p>Historically, the children of royalty were trained from birth to understand their place in the world and to accept the sacrifices and duties that came with the job, which was to serve the people. Were we to live in a perfect world, the same type of training would be given to every child who demonstrates leadership qualities respective of their social or economic status. Such schools would be a construct of a society that recognizes that the overall health and well being of any society is largely dependent on the leaders at every level from teachers to corporate heads to heads of state. In this perfect world leaders would be chosen both for their qualifications for the job and their proven ability to practice most the qualities listed here.</p> <p>Since we do not live in a perfect world, we can individually work to make these qualities our own, whatever our role in society. We can also, when and where possible, do our part by choosing leaders that demonstrate these qualities.</p>

THOUGHTFULNESS

<p>Considerate kind caring unselfish selfless attentive sympathetic solicitous helpful</p>	<p>The characteristics listed here, individually and combined, could be summed up in the question, sincerely asked, "How may I help you?" It has been proven over and over scientifically and empirically that helping others is good for us; that acts of kindness send 'feel good' endorphins through our system and induce a sense of well being.</p> <p><i>To be continued....</i></p>
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TRUSTWORTHINESS

Dependable Reliable Responsible Faithful Truthful Honest Constant Upright Honourable admirable worthy praiseworthy moral principled good respectable	<p>Trust is a huge and essential element in the inter-relations between people. As children we trust the adults in our life to keep us safe. As we grow older trust is an essential foundation for friendships and life mates.</p> <p>Being trustworthy, a close cousin of the all-important element of honesty, is a way of living that extends to every aspect of life. It is not a given. Rather, it is earned through constant, repetitive actions that say in essence, "You can rely on me."</p> <p>One example of trust is letting our kids know that they can <i>always</i> call home for a safe ride without fear of a lecture or judgement.</p> <p>The big thing about trust is that it takes time, sometimes a very long time, to build and only a moment to destroy with an act of betrayal or even 'just a lie'.</p>
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In the 4th century BC the Greek philosopher Empedocles argued for the existence of two forces, love (*philia*) and strife (*neikos*), which were used to account for the causes of motion in the universe. These two forces were said to intermingle with the classical elements, i.e., earth, water, air, and fire, in such a manner that love served as the binding power linking the various parts of existence harmoniously together.

BEING HUMAN

Every organism, from the smallest to the largest, has a combination of unique qualities that define it as a species. A few important aspects of being human are the ability to think rationally, the range of our emotions and our ego. Personality, place and status, genetics, physical and mental capacities as well as experience add to the mix. Separately and in combination these factors provide the nuance of shading and colour that make each human being unique. It is the complexities and variables of being human that impacts our actions and thinking every day and that creates a filter through which we view the world. To successfully implement the practice of love as a way of life it is necessary to acknowledge that the filter exists and then work to understand how much or how little the filter distorts our thinking.

We watched a show on television where the plotline had a patient intensely in love with a woman who, in his mind, did not return his love. His brain translated his emotional pain into a heart attack every time the woman came near. The doctor's solution was to shock his brain so that all memory of his love would be erased. A side effect of the procedure was that *all* memories of people and events were erased. I don't know the validity of the medicine involved, but it did get me to wondering what each of us would be like as adults if all of life's experiences – good, bad and indifferent - were erased and we were left with only our inherent personality traits. It raises the question, one that psychologists have wrestled with forever, how much of who we are is a result of life's experiences and how much has to do with our own personality? What follows are my own observations on the subject.

A key to finding the answer to anything is to know enough to even ask the question. You cannot ask “What is a computer?” if you have never heard that such a thing exists. You cannot even begin the journey to find the answer to “Who am I?” without first understanding the dual nature of being human and the third element that holds the potential of bringing the two together.

In each of us there are two parts to the whole. One indicator of this is our own mind talk. We use the words ‘I am’ or ‘you are’ as if there are two people talking in our head instead of just one. These two-word combinations provide a starting point for understanding just who these two people are.

See the words that follow ‘I am’ as having emotion or the feelings about who you are as the context - “I am happy, sad; lonely; loved; kind, mean; angry, loving.” The ‘I am’ identifies the internal; who we are at a given point in our life. It is the alone part of us; the part that can’t be shared in words because its fundamental nature is energy; the same energy we send outward and that is felt by people in close proximity. It is also this part of us that is reflected outward through our eyes: her eyes sparkle with life; his eyes are a pool of stagnate water with the life gone out of it.

In contrast the words ‘You are’ identify what is external – “You are stupid, smart; fat, skinny; rich, poor.” It is these words that form the perception we have of how the world sees us; a perception which may or may not have any basis in reality. It is this part of us that uses reason and rationality to make sense of a world that has fallen off its axis into chaos and uncertainty. It is here that the instinct for survival and the need to feel safe physically, emotionally and financially are firmly entrenched.

A third part of us is what I will call the Centre as a means to describe its importance and value. Some of you need no explanation of this place; its reality in your life is a given. For others it is foreign territory and the majority don’t even know it exists. A few of the place markers that tell us of its existence are discontent, a feeling that something is missing; a yearning that has no name. The reason it remains undiscovered is because access requires us to suspend the reasoning part of our mind.

The Centre is where the purity and power of Love resides. It can be a place of temporary sanctuary or where we live for a time. I have experienced it both as a sanctuary and place of abode, but the siren call of life has drawn me away. We have labels for the few people who call this place their permanent abode. They are called saints, gurus, prophets, mystics, messiah. It takes living in the Centre to meld the duality of outer and inner mind into one.

For the rest of us it is a sanctuary we visit for rest and renewal. It is always there to welcome and offer succour, but the more we visit and the longer our stay, the more tranquility and harmony spill over into our everyday life and we actually ‘love love’.

Acknowledging the existence of the Centre is not a requirement of ‘owning’ the characteristics of love; it helps, but is not a requirement. We can go in an instant at any time in every circumstance and be connected to something far greater than our individual parts. It calls to us to be more than what we are. It is in this place of beauty and tranquility that we find our own unique guidebook to fulfillment and purpose.

The first step in the journey to the Centre requires dissolving the barriers of disbelief created by our mind. Doing this is not a process of thought. It is instead the action of letting go, of release. Once we have taken this first step, which can be extremely difficult for some, the Centre sends a beacon of light to show us the way. Arrival is instantaneous and noticeable by the all-encompassing infusion of softness and joy that is the ever-so-gentle transforming touch of healing love

PERSONALITY

Our individual personality is the lead character in the play called life. Everything we do, say, think is coloured by the combination of personality and experience. While experience, particularly the experiences of childhood, plays an important part in who we are, it is our personality that largely determines just how we deal with each experience.

I have watched this played out on more than one occasion when two people in the same family and same circumstances make completely different choices relative to a given circumstance. In an adverse scenario, one person will respond with thought and understanding; another will crawl into a box of their own making to hide; and yet another will react with anger and resentment. Another scenario is where children raised in a loving, nurturing home choose a path of destructive behaviour.

A niece with a talent for perception once said to me “Aunt Norah, you walk around with your head in the clouds.” I thought about it and thought about it and thought about it because that’s what I do. I think about and analyze everything; pulling every thought apart and then putting it back together again. The tendency to think and over-think everything is a rather large aspect of my personality that works for me and against me in the business of living and my own practice of love. I may not be able to change or even want to change this characteristic, but by recognizing it I can offset the detrimental effects by paying attention and choosing a different course of action when warranted.

We do not need to be slaves to our personality. Yes, we are each born with specific character traits. However, the overriding factor is our innate ability to choose how much or how little those traits will affect how we live our life. That is not to say it’s easy. Modifying personality traits is on par with moving away from beliefs taught to us as children. It can be done; it’s just not easy.

COLOURS OF EXPERIENCE

Experience starts literally at birth, perhaps even before, and gets piled on each day lived with a multitude of flavours and texture. Some are subtle and hardly noticed; some are bitter; some sweet. If a particular experience is repeated over months and years it becomes imbedded in our essence or the core of who we are. This is also true of an event or events that greatly impact our sense of self. At every stage in life we are the composite of all our experiences to date, both perceived and real. How we respond or react to a given circumstance is largely determined by our own experience and/or the experience of those who influence our life.

An example of this premise that stands out for me is my husband, James, and our friend, Mark. These two men have very different personalities and outlooks. What they have in common is that both were raised in close-knit, rural towns within a family unit that was loving and supportive. The result, even though their other experiences were quite diverse, is that both men demonstrate a rock-solid confidence in themselves and their ability to deal with anything.

The contrast to this is my own family who, through circumstances and choices made, lived mostly in isolation both in rural and urban settings. It was also a family whose members grew up in an atmosphere dominated by fear. The outcome in this case is five adults and 14 grandchildren plagued with insecurities. Some have overcome the legacy of childhood, at least to a degree, others have not.

A multitude of factors contribute to a person’s experience in life. A few that play a major role are culture, gender and health. Then there are the times in life, especially as young children, that most experiences are dictated by someone else with little choice given to the individual. As a person grows older more and more of what is experienced is a matter of choice. In fact, the majority of what we experience over a lifetime, whether it is recognized or not, is the result of the conscious and subconscious choices we make on a daily basis. However, the experiences that tend to have the biggest impact are the unexpected ones that, like a punch in the solar plexus, leave us gasping for breath. Whatever the experience, we can’t undo any one of them. And yet psychiatric facilities are filled with people unable to let go of the hurts inflicted.

Truth is fluid and ever changing, always expanding – if you let it. Truth is made known to us by degrees as we are ready and willing to open our minds to understanding. If at any time we close our minds, if we think we

know enough, then truth will cease to come. It is like completing grade school and believing that all there is to know has been provided making further education a pointless exercise. Or, it is like building a basement and moving in thinking that this is all there is; that dark and damp is normal without considering the possibility that there is another way to live, a way that brings light, fresh air and infinite possibilities.

BAGGAGE OF BAD EXPERIENCE

Few childhoods are perfect. Most of us carry baggage of some sort or another into adulthood. But, at some point, maturity insists that we no longer “blame” events and people in our childhood for the choices we make as adults. We recognize that, unlike childhood, we are accorded the privilege of choice and need not be bound by the past.

Letting go of hurt, anger, anguish, heartache, hatred or any other emotion that retards our growth and prevents the happiness that is our due requires, first of all, acknowledging and accepting the fact of the emotion held. You cannot let go of something if you refuse to see that you have it and that it is affecting your well-being. Exploring the source of the emotion attached to a bad experience can be painful and difficult. *Accepting* that it has an effect on your life, and learning to live with it, is even more difficult.

Recognizing the impact of my own childhood drama and trauma was a process of many years. There are things buried so deep under the protective layers of forgetfulness that I’m left with only a sense of menace and dark shadows. It was only recently, however, that I came to understand the need for accepting that those childhood experiences are part of who I am and cannot be undone. It’s like breaking a leg that doesn’t heal quite right leaving you with a limp. The limp is always there as a reminder and it does make doing certain things more difficult. You are, however, still capable of living a full, productive life and being successful as a human being. If, on the other hand, the remembered pain and limitations imposed by the injury dominate your thinking and attitudes then you will live the life of a cripple.

In an earlier version of this book there was a section on friendship. After hours and hours of writing and rewriting the section I still had only one paragraph and it was mostly taken from a dictionary. I had no idea the extent of the issues I had harboured on this subject. I knew that the inability to make friends had been a lament for years; that it puzzled and hurt me. Then I realized that I just had to let it go and, of course, the immediate question arose “How to I do that?” The answer that came to mind was, “You just do”. You break the chain of thoughts and emotions that keep the hurt alive by mentally melting just one link so the buried hurts, anger and confusion can flow out.

It actually *can* be just that easy; a split second of true understanding instantly changes something in our emotional centre. I know this to be true because it has happened to me on more than one occasion. Usually, however, letting go is a process of conscious steps taken one at a time that starts with honest assessment and recognition.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE – PERFECT

People demonstrate just how imperfect they see themselves through casually spoken language that has a negative at the end of the words, ‘I am’. I am stupid, fat, thin, clumsy, lazy, a perfectionist. Or it can be seen in the words ‘I need’; ‘I want’. The paradox is that however imperfect a person sees themselves they insist that the other people in their world conform to their idea of what the world should look like.

Living by the Code of Love can be your goal without necessarily measuring up to your criteria for perfection. It does not mean you will never be late for an appointment, burp in public, leave the cap off the toothpaste, cupboard doors open, or want to put a pillow over your head when the kids yell for breakfast. What it does mean is that you endeavour to accept yourself and others as they are without trying to change either, which would seem to contradict the whole purpose of this book. Perhaps this will explain it:

My sons, like their mother, are both klutzes. Do I think that to be an imperfect trait? Absolutely not! I’m smiling even now at the many grins shared when something has been knocked over or broken. Do I want them to change? No. Mind you, when one too many things have been broken, they (and I) might want to change this particular trait. Or not.

It seems for a lifetime that my own personal bug-a-boo has been the fact that my gene pool is totally lacking in self-discipline. I figure that someone just plain fell asleep on the job when this particular trait was being passed out. But now I ask, "Why is self-discipline important? My sister, were she alive, would ask, "Who wrote the book of shoulds?" And she has a point. The so-called 'book of shoulds' – from morals to mode of dress - has been written and rewritten throughout history, culture by culture.

What is really important is to be comfortable in your own skin, to accept who you are – warts and all. You most certainly can choose to change some aspect of yourself, but it needs to be for the right reasons. Right reasons do not include changes somebody else thinks you should make, and that 'somebody' includes society as a whole. Do not misunderstand. In no way am I advocating a "me first and the heck with you" attitude. It is just such an attitude that has done great damage to the world in which we live. In fact, the way of love is such that, as you develop love in your life, morality and ethics naturally fall in line with the attributes of love. It cannot be any other way.

But what about the 'wants' of life? I want to be slimmer, fatter, exercise more, eat better, be smarter, get ahead, and be financially secure. All of us have one or more of these wants. But how important is it for us to achieve them?

First of all, only YOU can decide what is important and why. Be sure of the 'why' before you expend energy and effort in an endeavour that, from a higher perspective, has no importance. Remember that every action we take has a consequence - for good or ill; that the best measure is always, "What does love do?"

FILTER OF PERCEPTION

Each of us has a view of life and living, a world view so to speak, that is integrated into our identity as an individual and as a group. A basic component of that identity is what we believe to be true. The truth as we know it is the measure by which we judge all other people. We want, need, them to conform to our belief because that validates our truth. This premise can be seen in every aspect of living from our first impression of a person newly met to ethnic wars.

The majority of people I've met through the years, on the surface at least, are pleasant, decent people. They will sigh with wonder at a beautiful sunset; take pleasure in a kitten or baby at play. In-your-face despair, dejection or hostility is the exception, not the norm. But that is *my* perspective.

I am reminded of a young man I worked with in a restaurant. When I made a similar comment about customers being mostly nice, he responded that, as far as *he* was concerned 90% of people, not just customers, were just grumpy creeps.

It's called perspective. That young man was bitter and resentful at a world he saw as passing him a raw deal. He looked on the world with angry eyes and so could only see anger.

To be continued.....

I'M RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG

"It's my way or the highway!" could be the rallying cry for all the countless wars based on ethnic and religious differences. A group of people has a collective belief that has been passed down through the generations. That belief is as much a part of their identity, both as a person and a group, as the colour of their skin. The need to be safe and secure in who they are can only be satisfied by proving to everyone, by force if necessary, that their way is the right way. To concede that another group might be right in their beliefs is to enter a frightening maze of doubt and confusion. How can two people with opposing views both be right?

It is an interesting study on how we come to form our beliefs, which can be anything from a rabbit's foot is lucky to core racial tenets. It cannot be overemphasized that the single most important influence on how we think about the world and ourselves is what we are taught as children. Even when we rebel against what we have been taught and consciously seek to replace those beliefs, they are still embedded deep in our subconscious and will rise again and again throughout adulthood to cast doubt on our new beliefs.

I once wrote a children's story to explain how people become prejudice against other people outside their own group. The story is about a Pooke who grew up in Pookenhavenville, a village tucked away in a tiny pocket of the world, where everybody believes the moon is made out of green cheese. One little Pooke decides to leave the village and explore the world. In the course of doing so he learns that the moon actually isn't made of green cheese and he believes this because 'science' has proved it. After many years and many adventures, the little Pooke finally gets the chance to go to the moon. He climbs out of the rocket, steps onto the surface and, in the excitement of the moment, reaches down and scoops up a handful of the moon to eat it.

In the era in which I grew up children were taught a dress code. Only certain clothes were appropriate for a specific occasion. Jeans were appropriate (for boys anyway) for a ball game, but certainly not for a job interview or a nice restaurant. The belief was that you showed respect for yourself, other people and a place by taking the time and making the effort to dress appropriately. Through the repetition inherent in childhood instruction this became a basic belief in the way things should be. Anyone not conforming to this belief was considered ill-bred, lacking in self-respect and perhaps just a bit mentally off.

As the eras have changed so too has the dress code - drastically! Still, that early training in what is 'right' continued to prevail as part of my belief system (and still does, but that's another subject). As a consequence, job candidates have been dismissed without further ado because they couldn't be bothered to 'dress for the occasion'. The fact that they may well have fit into the organization quite well and even contributed something special was not a possibility in my mind because I equated a dress code with self-esteem and a good work ethic.

This example of a belief may seem quite minor (I have hundreds of such beliefs as do you), but consider the possible effects on the people who missed out on a job because of just this one belief. Consider too what their belief system, or lack of it, might be on the subject of dress. There are countless variables as to why a person would show up for an interview in a torn t-shirt and dirty jeans that has nothing to do with their ability to do the job.

Another aspect of the need to be 'right' has to do with personal self-identity; that sometimes very loud voice in our head with the ever-repeating refrain of me, me, me. Why me? Why not me? Look at me; see me. I'm right, you're wrong and I'm going to make sure you know that whatever the cost to our relationship or peace. I have seen this played out over and over in business, politics and on a personal level. In fact, prior to the moderating influence of middle-age, I was quite often a participant. Why? Why do we act this way when we know how damaging the outcome can be to ourselves and the other party?

Like so much else in what it is to be human, there is no one answer because people are not simple carbon copies of each other. Not being a mind reader or a psychologist, I can only share with you my observations and what is in my head on the subject.

As is often my habit when trying to answer one of life's many puzzling questions I try to see the situation through the lens of a perfect world. In the business world this is called management by objective. In my perfect world, and please do notice the word 'my', every child is treated with dignity and respect, two very important characteristics of love. As a result they grow up with a solid sense of who they are, which cannot be threatened by the opinions of others. It is a place of safety and security that allows connection with other people instead of disconnection and isolation. Because they accept themselves it is easy to accept other people and to treat all people with the dignity and respect that is their right.

As we get older being right seems much less important. Perhaps it is because experience has taught us that we are quite often mistaken in our assumptions and views on the world; that the panoramic view afforded by age allows a greater perspective and, most importantly, that truth is fluid and ever-changing.

UNDERSTANDING OUR DIFFERENCES

Through the years of observing people and their behaviour I've concluded that overall we are a rather strange species. Individually we are our own worst critic and yet we use ourselves as a measure for how everyone else should think and behave. The underlying premise seems to be that a world populated by our clones would make more sense and, of course, in many ways it would, particularly when it comes to communication and understanding how another person thinks. It might also prove to be our worst nightmare.

While working on the 'great garden project' of 2009 I had substantially completed six of the eight gardens and wanted to put the coloured bark mulch on the paths between the gardens that were finished. To me it was a way of visibly measuring my progress. My brother, who was working on the rock walls along the main pathway, thought I was crazy. To Dave's way of thinking you finish one aspect of a project before moving to the next. His mildly disgusted comment was "It's half done!". "Exactly!", I replied. To Dave the three words were a negative; to me they were a positive. In this instant, neither of us was right or wrong; we just had a different approach to the same end.

Then there is the inherent difference in our perception of how males and females think and communicate. I used to think that a man's limited ability for self-expression was a social construct and, to a large degree, it is. Men in societies around the world are taught early to be tough and that tears are for 'girls'. In fact, it is a rather sad commentary on our thinking as a society that one of the worst insults between men is "Don't be such a girl!"

That aside, recent studies point to a biological difference. One such study conducted by ¹Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen presents the ² theory that each of us has a brain `type` – male, female or balanced - that is not necessarily gender dependent. His studies show that "the female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy, and that the male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems".

This is difficult for the opposite sex to understand and the source of a great deal of miscommunication.

To be continued....

EMOTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Each of us is responsible for only our own emotions. When you perceive yourself as being responsible for someone else's emotions then you suffer the consequences of guilt when you are unable to make them happy.

And you do them no service - no matter how much you may think you are doing it out of love and/or consideration. You might just as well put a ball and chain around their ankle and pound a stake through the chain into the ground. Because as long as you allow them to rely on you for their emotional well being, you keep them from moving forward to learn how to make their own choices and be the master of their own emotions.

Each of us, every day and in every situation make a choice to react or respond. We can choose to be happy or mad or sad. We can choose to be miserable over a love gone wrong. We can choose to take responsibility for someone else's emotions with the inherent consequences. We can choose to allocate blame for our own mistakes. But for every negative choice possible there is a positive choice just as readily available. We can choose to look at every circumstance as an opportunity to grow.

What we cannot do is make anybody else responsible for our emotions nor should we make ourselves responsible for theirs.

¹ Simon Baron-Cohen is a professor of developmental psychopathology in the departments of psychiatry and experimental psychology, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and director of the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge (source: http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/bios/baroncohen.html)

² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/life/feature/story/0,13026,937913,00.html>

LOVE DIMINISHED

We all get annoyed or irritated at times; even lose our temper and say things later regretted. We worry about the kids, our job, the house. We all have moments of the 'great me' when we want/need attention. These things are part and parcel of what it is to be human and, when they are momentary and not sustained, have no great affect on anything.

However, some emotions have the force of a hurricane that destroys or damages everything in its path. Below is a brief overview of a few of the biggest detriments to the practice of love.

INTOLERANCE

A young woman, dark skin, dark hair, gets on the commuter train. The only seat left has a bag on it. The bag belongs to another young woman, little more than a girl, who has white skin, blonde hair. When the dark haired girl asks to sit down the blonde gets up, stating clearly, without words, that she would rather stand than sit beside "one of them". The "one of them" calls the blonde a bitch, but the look on her face says the anger is just a cover for the hurt of being shunned, once again, for having the "wrong" ancestors. Her day is ruined.

Watching this small human drama unfold I wonder what goes through the mind of the blonde girl. Does she justify her behaviour, send a mental sneer, or does she think nothing at all?

The dark girl cannot change the colour of her skin or her ancestry. The blonde *can* change her attitude, but why would she? The prejudice played out this early morning most likely came from her parents' and friends who learned it from their parents, but they cannot be blamed. It is the girl's choice to accept her parents' attitudes without questioning the validity of those attitudes.

The blonde is pretty, tall and slim. Perhaps she has never known the hurt of rejection in her young life. But, sooner or later, she will experience that hurt. And when she does, will she make the connection? Will she say to herself, "Oh, that's what it feels like." and send a silent apology to the dark skinned girl on the train, and all the others she has hurt with an inflated value of her own worth.

The other side of this snapshot of life is the choice the dark-skinned girl made. She chose to react. Instead, she could have chosen a soft rejoinder; to turn the dagger of prejudice into an extended hand of love.

To be continued....

FEAR

We call it anxiety, worry, apprehension, stress or phobia, but it is all fear and it will dog our footsteps and nip at our heels - if we let it. In recent years it has grown like a virulent fungus fed by the media and our governments. Left unchecked it will consume us and destroy our quality of life.

Our children are so tightly wrapped in cotton batting to keep them safe that the muscles needed for independence and thriving as an adult atrophy. The message of fear seeps into their pores and erodes hope and belief in what is good.

Fear of change keeps people chained to habits of thought and action that serve poorly. It limits their vision to a narrow band of life that holds a false promise of safety and stability. It deadens the hope of expanded possibility and erodes the human capacity for growth.

To be continued...

HATRED AND ANGER

Give in to the need to scratch an open, but healing, wound or infection and you not only delay the healing but take the chance of making it worse. The same applies to such emotions as resentment and hatred. The underlying wound that causes these emotions is very real. The equivalent of scratching a wound is when our mind goes over and over and over the injury, keeping it open and bleeding.

My experience with hatred was many years ago, but still remembered with clarity for the affect it had on my life. I was just nineteen, a single mother of a toddler. Due to circumstances beyond my control I was unable to pay

the rent and went to my father for help. He slammed the door in my face. Hatred was born in that instant of shock and pain and became my constant companion for the next eleven years. Letting go of that hatred did not come until, at the age of 30, I saw very clearly that the hatred was like a large boulder in an otherwise lovely garden and that nothing would ever grow in the place where the hatred resided.

When I look at this emotion I see only shadow and dark, roiling clouds. What is not black is gray and the light of love cannot shine through. Anger will turn on love and tear it apart.

I have heard people say that anger has its place; that you have to get angry for someone to listen. In fact, history supports this view. Our world has seen many changes for the better because someone got mad enough to do something. We see anger as having authority. It does, but it is the authority of a bully. Love too has authority, but it is the authority of an aristocrat.

To be continued....

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION

James, my husband, is one of the few people I know who knows intuitively where the behaviour switches in his brain are located. When a trait, habit or characteristic no longer serves him, he goes directly to the panel of switches, unerringly finds the right one, and turns it off. There are a few other people I've met through the years that have this ability, but the majority of people, including me, do not. Instead of just flipping a switch and moving on with our life, we try to rewire the whole mechanism through will power, affirmations and a myriad of other techniques. Unfortunately, I can't provide a map to the location otherwise I'd use it myself. What I can do is share what I've learned through the trial and error of living.

There are hundreds of self-help books and workshops that tell us how we can improve our life through the power of positive thinking – we can get rich, be successful, lose weight, gain confidence, etc, etc. The books aren't wrong; I am a huge believer in the power of our mind and honestly believe that any one of us can 'turn water into wine'. The 'but' here is that every one of these programs requires

- a) self-discipline;
- b) an ability to visualize;
- c) self-discipline;
- d) making the time to practice the exercises; and
- e) self-discipline.

It is the self-discipline and consistency part that results in only about 10% to 20% of the people who purchase these programs achieving their goals.

NEW – THE TYRANNY OF HABIT

Our brains are, in effect, wired for repetition and will default to the pattern of thought and behaviour until, through repetition, the pattern is replaced. However, even with the highest of motivation and intent, making that transition requires commitment and persistence with an undertone of gritted teeth determination.

Not too long ago a mini epiphany about 'being in the moment' was to have a subtle, but profound, affect on both my life and the contents of this book. The insight provided the means to experience the multiple benefits of being in the moment, but also brought home all too well how quickly and easily it is to fall into the vortex of habit.

"Her head is in the clouds" or "she's a space cadet" are just two of the mostly accurate descriptions applied by the people who know me well. A rather pronounced tendency is to be chasing down some thought or other instead of paying attention to what is going on in front me - like a conversation or a chair that really shouldn't be tripped over. Respective of the annoyance factor to the people who love me, not to mention myself, I didn't worry about it overmuch; that was just me.

Then a pattern of speech emerged that caused some concern. It was like my brain became disconnected from my mouth. I would think one word, but an entirely different one would be spoken. For instance, the thought "When you go to the airport" would be said as "When you go to the freezer." It has without doubt been a source of humour through the years, but it began to happen with more frequency so I finally mentioned it to the doctor

who sent me for a memory assessment. The doctor who conducted the assessment said that he could see no physiological reason for the phenomena; that I just needed to focus and resume the 'quiet time' of earlier years. James, who knows me better than anyone, has been saying something similar for as long as we've been together. However, the time and space was right for the doctor's words to 'click'.

The first thing noticed was a pattern of what I thought of as nervous energy. Thoughts would flit from one subject to another and then take off with the speed of light to land on yet another subject totally unrelated to the first two. In the course of observing this pattern I became aware that my body movements reflected the fast, jerky tempo of my thoughts. Then I made the connection with "being in the moment", something I had known about for years, but that had just not sunk in below the level of head knowledge. Suddenly I *knew* how one related to the other.

Implementing this new found knowledge required a shift out of high gear; to slow down in order to be completely engaged in each moment whether a thought, a conversation, an activity or just moving from one place to another. It meant being consciously aware of body, mind and speech at any given moment. The result was quite remarkable. Tense muscles relaxed; movement and speech became softer and calm permeated my entire being. And I stopped tripping over chairs.

As I was to find out the hard way, staying fully engaged in the moment is no easy task given our innate slavery to habit. An essential element to establishing and maintaining the new habit was and is setting aside a portion of each day for what I call quiet time. Contemplation and reflection for fifteen minutes (the first five are needed to go to slow mode) at the start of the day initiates a rhythm of quietude that acts as a cushion for whatever the day brings. The 'but' *here* is that the cadence will revert all too quickly to previous patterns without the twin guards of diligence and resolve.

SEE THE PERSON YOU'RE WITH

Unless you are a very important person (read rich and/or powerful) or a celebrity chances are that people do not hang on your every word. This has nothing to do with whether you are liked, loved or respected. It is just that the majority of people are so caught up in their own thoughts and their own life that they just don't 'see' you. Their eyes may be on you, but their ears are closed to anything except what is going on in their own head.

Just for the fun of it I have tested this theory a few times by stopping what I was saying in mid-sentence or inserting something silly like 'the frog jumped into the tree' in the middle of a sentence. Either way, my little fun went completely unnoticed, which had the effect of making me feel invisible. I also know this to be true because of the many times my mind has been elsewhere when someone was talking to me. Or, they would try to talk but what I had to say was obviously far more important so I would interrupt them to make sure my point was made.

Seeing the person you're with includes the small details like listening well enough to know what name they prefer to be called. It is to be aware of a person in your space at any given moment; to 'see' them as a unique individual worthy of your attention. At first, 'seeing' may simply mean extending common courtesy. But over time, with self-taught awareness and practice you become more attuned to stranger, foe and friend. You will be able to look in the eyes of a clerk at the store, a co-worker or family member and see their emotional barometer. Then, with words and/or actions, ask the silent question "How may I help you?"

POINTED FINGERS

We humans are too often inclined to choose criticism over praise. We walk into a room that is obviously neat and tidy, but instead of noting how nice it looks we zoom in on the dirty spot. "Oh look, you missed a spot!" Nobody likes to be criticized and yet for many it is a dish served with relish at every opportunity under the false pretence of helping.

Criticism can be served as censure (disapproval, condemnation, belittlement) or analysis (appreciation, assessment, evaluation). The first warps capacity and ability; the second offers encouragement and promotes creativity. Criticism points a wagging finger with the emphasis on 'you'. You are so lazy, irresponsible....

Instruction carries a tone that says, "I accept you totally as you are, but you may wish to do this another way." Instruction assumes the person being instructed has a right to their dignity and respect as a human being.

Most people know the expression, or one like it, "When you point a finger at somebody else you are pointing three fingers at yourself." Like most sayings, this one has a truth hidden behind the obvious.

Rightly or wrongly, we make excuses and justify our actions and attitudes on a regular basis. Love asks that, instead of pointing a finger with a nail in the end, that we do the same for the other person.

There is *never* any excuse for intentionally offending another human being. Putting someone down, insulting them, making them feel small is just *wrong!* It accomplishes nothing worthwhile and only serves to add bitterness, anger and resentment to a world already overburdened with dark energy.

*How marvellous to let the other "be"
and have them accord the same grace to me.
Making choices without decree
is life without prickles daring to be free*

POWER OF WORDS

One definition of the word "stupid" is dolt, dullard, pudden-head (*ref:excerpt Dictionary.Reference.com*) In our society, perhaps in all societies, it is a word that gets used a lot. We direct it to another person or at ourselves. We use it when someone has done something perceived as 'dumb' or hasn't used their common sense or to indicate lack of intelligence. In every case it is a put-down. It says, in essence, "You are inferior".

To be continued.... expand to include subtle influence of words that come and go in society.

CONSCIENCE, NOT GUILT

Whatever you might think conscience is, a construct of culture or innate to being human, it can act as a useful guide in the practice of love provided it is not confused with guilt. The ¹*American Heritage® Dictionary of Idioms* defines conscience as "the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong".

For the purpose of this discussion, a *healthy* conscience is something that lets us know when we are out of sync with love by producing a 'squirmy' feeling in the pit of our stomach. It kicks in when we are contemplating an action that will harm and makes itself known in the form of remorse when we have taken such an action without thinking.

By contrast, guilt is ²defined, in part, as "self-reproach for supposed inadequacy or wrongdoing." It is form without substance in that it is someone else's idea of right and wrong and may or may not have anything to do with the practice of love.

To be continued....

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² The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

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There are few universal solutions in life. This is so because people and circumstances cannot be painted with the same brush. I believe that the one exception is understanding the nature and power of love and adopting the practice of love, to the best of our ability, as a way of life. Every single human being on the face of the earth can benefit from greater understanding of what love is and putting that understanding into practice. It is only the degree of the benefit that will vary from one person to the next. What I can say with confidence is that anyone who is willing to put in the effort will be happier and more content.

My son, Chris, said once in a letter, "Before the flower blooms it has to be in the darkness of its bud." My response was to ask the question, "In human terms, what does a seed look like as it grows into its destiny?" First, like all seeds of any kind, it is in darkness and unable to see the flower it will be. But it *knows* it will be a flower because it cannot be anything else. The drive to be something better, to improve our health and habits are just some of the elements of a seed growing. Planting seeds of love and caring by giving of our time and talents are more elements of the process. It is the doubts, the confusion, the fear and struggle that keep the flower from blooming more quickly. By allowing such elements into our thinking we cause a frost to lie across the land.

"Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor... Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting."

Mother Teresa

It is an extraordinary thing to be happy; to hum along with a merry tune respective of what is happening in your life. The value of happiness is beyond measure. Picture yourself protected and safe inside a glass globe. Inside the globe are green meadows arrayed with spring blossoms; birds soaring free underneath a blue sky singing their own unique melody. Being happy protects you from the slings and arrows of other people and life. At the same time happiness creates an energy that emanates outward to envelope the people close to you.

To accomplish anything in life first requires that you imagine it - put an image in your mind. Then you must want what you see and know that it has value. The last step is to act upon the desire again and again and again until that first vague glimpse of what could be becomes reality.

The practice of love is a life-editing choice that can be made by anyone. But, like any lifestyle change, it requires a commitment to change lifelong habits of thought and action. At first, this may seem quite difficult, but over time practicing the dynamics of love becomes so incorporated into the fabric of your life that you can't imagine doing anything else.

Choosing to put the practice of love in your life is a choice that will naturally lead to other choices. There is no right or wrong, good or bad. The practice of love chooses one way over another because to do so is to be in line with what love is. How you think, what you think, what you choose to read or watch, how you spend your time and with whom are all choices that are made every day. They may not seem like important choices, but when we make the same choices day after day they have a cumulative effect that, over time, changes who we are.

A skater, to become a champion, must practice for hours every day, day in, day out, year after year. Is it work? Well, yes. It's hard to get up those two hours early; to give up hanging out with friends. Yes, it takes making what are sometimes hard choices. Is it a struggle? Yes and no. Flying around the ice, getting that twist just a little more perfect is sheer joy. But I doubt there is a champion anywhere, of anything, who has not at some point said, "I can't do this, it's too hard." And yet they carry on because to not skate is unthinkable.

And so too is developing love. At first it may seem like a struggle, like hard work. But, as you stay the course, as you live love, it quite literally becomes your nature until to be or do anything else seems strange - alien.

GETTING STARTED

As in all things in life, implementing Love's Code into your life requires a starting point. You have to know where you are before you can get to where you want to be. Look at it this way. If you want to go someplace, even if it is just to the other side of town, and you have never been there, you have to start with a statement or acknowledgement of your starting point.

To take it to the silly, if you actually live on Pine Street, but in your head you think you live on Elm, you can't possibly get to where you want to go because you are starting with misinformation. So you need to know, or to own up to, where you live right now. You live in a house on a street in a town. You own the house. The house is you. The house may have many rooms, or just a few. It may have an attic, a basement, or both. It may be a mansion or a shack. It can be one, or the other, or both. Your living room can look like a mansion and your bedroom like the aftermath of a war.

The point is for you to know and understand without judgement what your house looks like right now. Are there bags of garbage hidden in the basement left over from childhood or broken relationships? Is one room bright, sunny and sparkling clean, and another dark and dingy?

Using the above as a guide, take a good, hard look at the inside of you, at your emotions and thought patterns relative to your life. See as clearly as you can what the real, hidden you looks like in the context of family, home and recreation. What parts do you like, what don't you like? And remember, this has nothing to do with how much money you have or how you look on the outside.

Remember too that this kind of assessment and change is an ongoing process. Discovering the bits and pieces of garbage hidden away in the attic takes time and the willingness to shine a light on the dark corners of mind and heart.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Thoughts, without the harness of restraint, flit like a humming bird or go round and round and round like an out-of-control Ferris wheel. Emotions are what put the spark into thoughts. Our mind can be flitting here and there with no apparent pattern when suddenly it will land on a memory that triggers an emotion. The emotion radiates both within and without like heat waves rolling across the desert.

Thinking about what you think is the foundation for changing the energy you project. Like weeds that are pulled from a garden you change your pattern of thinking by first noticing the thoughts and then eliminating the ones that do not serve your peace of mind. Make no mistake; this is a life-long and often difficult undertaking. Thoughts, measured in milliseconds, chase each other across the landscape of our mind all day, every day and will, as often as not, spark an emotion that can lift us up or pull us down. Learning first to be conscious of thoughts and feelings and then eliminating those that do not serve takes time and practice. Is it worth the effort? Absolutely! It is the difference between a stray leaf buffeted and blown every which way by the slightest breeze and a strong oak tree that remains anchored and secure through every storm.

"You are what you think" has been a statement made throughout the ages in one form or another. Put another way, whatever you pay attention to, give thought to, will be reflected in your attitudes, speech and behaviour. *Every* action, including inaction, is motivated by a thought and/or an emotion held consciously or sub-consciously.

Not all thoughts give birth to emotion, and not all emotions have enough strength to be felt by any but you. This is why it is so very important to pay attention to what you think, to listen to the tone and texture of your thought-emotions. Learn to recognize and understand the quality of your thoughts, which operate much like the transmission in a car. Upbeat thoughts keep you moving forward; downbeat thoughts put you in reverse; and idle thoughts just sit there taking you nowhere.

As monitoring each thought, along with the emotion behind the thought, becomes a habit through practice you come to 'hear' immediately when a note is flat or out of tune with what love is.

I have for quite some time understood the importance of accepting ourselves and loving ourselves. What I was unable to put into practice was the acceptance without the criticism. I could love myself but; there was always had a 'but' attached.

At thirty-something I was in sales, a job that required calling on businesses. To understand what I'm saying here you need to know that at that time in my life I was extraordinarily shy (read insecure) and to my mind every single door had huge chains to keep me from going inside. In a word, I was terrified.

One day while waiting to see the manager, I noticed a young woman who worked in the office. She was overweight, slightly unkempt, and wore glasses. With shoulders rounded and slumped, head hanging down, she projected an air of dejection. She seemed somehow familiar, even though I didn't know her. Then I realized I was looking at the perception I had once had of myself. Knowing that I had changed, I wondered why.

You see, despite imagined chains on the door and terror in my heart, I did quite well in sales. What other people saw was a woman who dressed well, carried herself tall (all 5'2" of her) and exuded confidence. And, while it was a long time before the inner image changed completely to match the outer, the changes on the outside inspired confidence from other people, which in turn inspired confidence in myself.

One night I spoke at length to a friend who told me a story I want to share.

My friend's life was not going well. She and her husband were in trouble financially, their marriage of a number of years was on the brink of collapse, and there were family conflicts. She told me that her life only started to 'take off' when she followed the advice of a minister.

He told her to look at herself in the mirror; look directly into her own eyes and say, "I love you." This does not seem like such a difficult task to undertake. And yet Buff (*a nickname used for privacy*) told me that it took her three weeks of struggling with herself to do it. The result was extraordinary. She made an intense and profound connection. Tears poured down her cheeks in what I suspect was a needed cleansing..

The story doesn't finish there. When Buff went back to the minister and told him of her breakthrough he replied that there was one more thing she needed to do. He said, "Now I want you to hug yourself."; again, something seemingly quite simple. Once more Buff could not bring herself to do it. But she was determined, and vowed she would not sleep until the task was completed. Buff stayed awake for 48 hours, but she did it.

Now, giving herself a hug and saying "I love you." to the image in the mirror is a daily practice. And her life has indeed turned around.

The next step is deciding to change the traits that prevent you (in your own mind, not anybody else's) from liking and loving yourself.

There is no one-sentence formula for learning to love you. The first step, as in everything, is knowledge. You need to acknowledge the importance of loving yourself. It then takes an honest assessment of the characteristics and attitudes that make you who you are. To do that you need to step outside of yourself in order to look inside. Bobby Burns, the well-known Scots poet, is quoted as saying, "God grant us the gift to see ourselves as other people see us."

Before you set out on this self-analysis keep in mind that each of us is a tapestry of interwoven, multi-coloured threads formed by experiences and personality. If you have never had occasion or interest to 'look inside', you might wish to take the time to do it. You should also keep in mind that the outside is often a reflection of your attitude toward yourself.

Think for a moment how you define yourself. Think of one or two adjectives. Mother, father, boss, employee, rich, poor, charming, beautiful, handsome, good, bad, plain, sexy, attractive, soft, hard, tough, gentle, ambitious, lazy, intelligent, stupid, smart. These are just some of the adjectives we can use to describe who we are. It's hard to pick just one or two. The reason for doing this exercise is that the tools of love cannot be used for your benefit until you see the need for them. You will not see the need until, unless, you undertake an honest evaluation of yourself. Part of that evaluation is asking yourself what is important to you, and most important of all, are you happy in your under-belly – the place only you see.

Do you perhaps think, like I did, that taking on the characteristics of love will make you a dull, boring person, stripped of any ability to function in a competitive world? It doesn't. It is true that what you consider important does change. But what is also true is that by aligning your ideas, attitudes, and behaviour with love you project a different, more positive energy. The people around you will, for the most part, respond accordingly. The reason for this is that energy projected from love attracts the positive instead of the negative. The exception, and it is the exception not the rule, is when the other person has put up a barrier to anything positive by their own choices of anger, resentment, fear and hatred. With this type of person, and we all come across them at one time or another, the best we can do for them and ourselves is to understand and return a soft answer.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude and praise are a corner stone of love. If hate and resentment are weeds that choke the growth of love, then gratitude with praise is the fertilizer that makes love flourish.

Praise seems like a rather outdated word. In today's language it is used sparingly, particularly in the secular world. And yet, in its guise as honour (another rather old fashioned word) it brings body, mind and spirit together in harmony. Honour love; honour life. Allow wonder, joy and awe to fill you up until a song is born, a song that will lift you up to soar with the eagles. Inhale gratitude and you will exhale joy.

Early in my studies I came across the counsel that we should be thankful in all things, good, bad or indifferent. At the time life was so bleak that it seemed like an impossible quest. How could anyone possibly be grateful for the heartaches, disappointments and "stuff" that life tends to pass out?

At first the practice of gratitude was hard slogging. I didn't have it in me to be thankful for the 'stuff', but I found that there was always something that I could be grateful for and, when things got bad, I would start listing them: I have two fine sons who love me; I was born in Canada; I'm not crippled or mentally challenged; I can read and write.... Given some thought the list was actually quite long and by checking off what was good I was not dwelling on the 'bad' and felt better for the exercise.

For some people the list might be quite short. Imagine living in the ghetto eking out a living that barely feeds your family and being in constant fear for your life and that of your children or watching your children die from lack of clean water. Still, they laugh; they love. Or how about the man that was so paralyzed in a ski accident that all he could move was one eyelid, but went on to write a book one blink at a time? Humans have amazing resilience and can adapt to the worst possible circumstances; and that of itself is worthy of praise.

It is the so-called 'bad' things in life, along with and perhaps even more than the 'good' things, that make us who we are. At its essence life is about growth. Life offers the gift of opportunity wrapped in the question "What will you do?"

These days gratitude is automatic and admittedly far easier to practice. Ours is a happy home with love as its centre point. We live in a lovely town free of the fear and stress so prevalent in the city. I rarely walk up a flight of stairs without being grateful that I can; the crippling arthritis that put my mother and two sisters in wheelchairs passed me by. The list is long and for that I am grateful every single day.

PARENTING

From a biological process lasting a few seconds a baby is born; a few pounds of flesh and blood whose primary needs are to eat and sleep... and be loved. What kind of adult the baby becomes depends on many factors, but the single, greatest influence is the parenting the child receives.

For at least the first six years of a child's life its parents (or parent) have the status of a god that is all-knowing, all-seeing; perfect in every way. In those first years a child's foundation is formed with the attitudes of the parent(s) on virtually everything, including culture, race, and economic status. Most importantly, what a child knows about love is based, almost exclusively, on the words and actions of the parental figure. Consequently, a child grows up with a particular vision of love. That view will be a version of what love should be or it will be distorted, blurry, even warped.

The view a baby or young child have of their parents is so deeply imbedded that it goes far beyond thought or even feeling. It is something they just know without question. As babies and young children we attach

expectations and assumptions to our parents that we attach to no other. As a result it is our parents who have the ability to crush and disappoint us far more than any other human. At our most basic level we cannot accept that our gods are less than perfect.

The importance of the responsibility cannot be overemphasized. It is a responsibility so great that the future of the world hangs in the balance. In generation after generation each child becomes an adult and makes decisions based on childhood influences. A child taught to love through word and example is far more likely to make decisions as an adult that are based in love. Were that same child to be taught that life is cruel and hard, that you take what you can get, then it is likely the decisions made as an adult will reflect that attitude at both the micro and macro level.

PARTNERS IN LOVE

Depending on your point of view, I have been blessed or cursed to have had a number of relationships that have ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. Either way, each one offered a gateway to viewing the world through another person's eyes. They also provided the means to assess and measure the essence of what makes a relationship, and the people in it, thrive.

Being 'in love' provides one of our greatest opportunities for growth. It can lift us up to heights unknown and then turn around and pull us down to depths of despair. It can bring joy that turns on a dime into virulent hatred. A good relationship is beautiful beyond measure; a bad one can be the very core of who we are.

To be continued.....

IN THE WORKPLACE

Through the years of a long and varied career I have been privileged to be mentored by excellent managers who intuitively understood that you get better results with a positive approach. These men and women taught by example that treating people with respect, no matter what their position, age, intelligence or skill level, pays dividends in cooperation and team building. There have been a few poor managers as well, but those experiences only emphasized the benefits of positive reinforcement as a management style.

While respect should be inherent to all human interactions the dynamics of the workplace present a challenge as well as opportunity to affect our environment in a positive manner. The workplace is unique in that it brings together a group of people with diverse personalities and backgrounds in an atmosphere that is not only competitive by nature, but has an underlying component of fear.

One aspect of working with a mix of personalities is how it affects the collective energy of one department or even the whole company. The energy felt can be noticeably positive, wholly negative or both. How much or how little of either depends on what the staff, individually and collectively, is projecting. One dominant personality, particularly in a position of authority, can lift up or pull down an entire office. The opposite is also true. If the majority of staff is projecting one kind of energy, their collective strength will offset what is being projected by the one, even if that person is the 'boss'. A few examples come to mind to demonstrate how this works.

For a short time I worked in a small company with only ten or so employees. The staff was dedicated and hardworking, but also knew the value of fun. We enjoyed chatting and joking with each other and made it a point to have an extended weekly lunch together. In contrast, the owner of the company approached the business of business with sober intensity. In her mind there was no room for fun and frivolity. In this instance

Writing in his 2000 autobiography, Andersen noted that "a belief that success is inevitable has proven very powerful in my life." Explaining his core belief, he said that "... the greatest force in life is love.... If people will believe in the power of love and let it work, it can do wonders."

Former Gov. Elmer L. Andersen served only two years as governor but changed Minnesota

the good humour of the ten outweighed her dour approach with the end result being that the positive energy made it a good place to work for all of us.

Another time I had a long-term assignment in the accounting department of a major retail chain. The mostly young and inexperienced staff was supervised by a wannabe dictator. This woman would make a deliberate show of looking at her watch when she saw a staff member heading toward the washroom. It was quite apparent that the staff was intimidated and hated working there. They spoke in whispers and then only about the business at hand. A laugh was nowhere to be heard and you could almost taste the negative energy generated by fear. Not surprisingly the department had a high staff turnover.

The most compelling example of observing the dynamics of a workplace occurred at my last place of employment before taking early retirement. In some ways it was like watching and being part of an unfolding drama with the first scenes set in a menacing forest and then making a slow transition to an open meadow under clear skies. What made it fascinating to watch and a privilege to be a part of was seeing the story within the story of one man whose superior leadership changed the lives of many and influenced an industry.

The workplace was made up of a small mix of professionals and support staff. The office was small, cramped and rather dingy. I was hired to replace the office administrator who was leaving after three years. It was not a happy place. The secretary sat at her desk hunched over as if seeking protection. When someone came to the counter for assistance her response was sullen and the help minimal. She had just returned from a six-week stress leave. It didn't take long to find out why.

The hour and a half spent with the person I was replacing was more than enough to see that being in control, down to the smallest details, was an essential component of her management. As I was to find out later she ruled the office and the people in it with the proverbial iron rod. Chit-chat and laughter were forbidden.

The counterpoint to the office administrator making life miserable was the head of the department. He was an extraordinary leader who brought together opposing factions and worked tirelessly to provide mentorship and promote equality. He wore the mantle of authority with quiet dignity and was highly respected in the industry.

Changing the atmosphere that had been poisoned by the former administrator took time, patience and gaining the trust of staff that had every reason to be wary of administration. Using the skills learned from my early mentors procedures were changed and responsibility delegated. An open door policy invited collaboration and encouraged initiative. The result, particularly when viewed from the point of contrast, was quite amazing. There were staff outings, lunches together and birthdays celebrated. The once sullen and unhappy secretary greeted people with a smile and was quick to offer assistance.

Another example of what 'love in action' looks like in the workplace was provided by a young manager named Branca. A woman in her early twenties had been sent from Toronto for training in the position I held temporarily. Soon after she arrived she became quite ill and I wanted to speak with Branca about her situation. She asked if it could wait as she was due in a meeting in the next two minutes. I told her that, yes, it could wait as it was personal. Branca's response was "Then I have time, let's talk." That evening Branca left work to spend the night with Nancy so she wouldn't be alone and sick in a strange city. A few months later, when Branca treated me to a farewell lunch, I commented on how extraordinary it was for a manager to go to such lengths for an employee. Her reply was startling and worth repeating. She said that she had grown up in a perfect home with parents who loved and supported her and then had gone on to marry a perfect man and secure a job she loved. Giving back, where and whenever possible, was a way to show gratitude for the life she was given.

MONEY AND POWER

The primary mandate of being in business is to make money, which in turn provides jobs and drives the economy. That is the upside. The downside is when it is seen solely as the means to accumulate power and possessions with selfish disregard for people or the planet. Sadly, those who follow this path discover, often when it's too late, that such things hold no lasting value. They die without ever knowing the satisfaction and joy that comes with using money and influence as a tool to enhance lives. Such people are given the opportunity to leave a legacy of hope for this generation and the generations to come, but choose destruction.

To be continued....

CHANGING THE WORLD

A news clip tells about women in Afghanistan protesting a law that allows their husbands to rape them. A human barrier of police tries to protect the women and a few male supporters from the men throwing stones at them. Hearing this causes my heart to melt in a pool of sorrow mixed with horror that such practices could still exist. I ache for the women who are the victims of this inhumane law and for the makers of the law who are so imbedded in their belief that they cannot see the inhumanity.

And then I step back and see the situation from a different perspective. For thousands of years the men in this and other cultures have been raised to believe that women, however beloved, are inferior in every way to men; that it is the man's role to protect their women from themselves. In essence the message is that women are a man's property to do with as he wishes. It is their in-born right and they see no reason to change it. At one time the so-called Western culture had much the same belief.

And then I think, "How different is this law that we perceive as abhorrent then America's law that protects the right to bear arms?" It too is embedded in tradition and defended by every means possible. The underlying menace of both laws is harm to another human being. Again I ask, "How are the two laws so different?"

The laws noted are just two instances of cruelty, heartlessness, brutality, callousness, sadism, atrocity and unkindness of one human being to another. So how do we change these things when they are imbedded in the very fibre of a culture?

Changing the way the individuals in a culture think has invariably been the result of one human being stepping out from the crowd and stating, by word and action, "This is wrong!" That one step made by one person opens a small portal that allows other people to join the first in a new way of thinking. As more and more people embrace the change there is a subtle groundswell of influence that builds over time until finally the leaders too embrace the change either through personal choice or political pressure. On a few occasions throughout history it is the leader who has started the process, but more often than not, it has been one ordinary individual whose only claim to the extraordinary is the courage to stand alone and say, "This is wrong!"

NEW - ONE MOMENT PLEASE

The tick-toc of the clock marks one moment, then another and another. It is relentless. No matter what we're doing, where we are or who we are it will continue its steady march of moments through the days, weeks and years of our life. Like a droplet of water on the tip of a leaf we have each moment for the space of a heartbeat before it joins the billions of other moments of a life lived.

Phrases like "he's lost in thought" and "how time flies when you're having fun" express the relativity of time. Days unfold in timeless innocence for the very young. In youth it slows to a crawl waiting for adulthood. In the middle years of parenting and work it becomes a precious commodity in that there is never enough. And then, inevitably, in the final years of life it slows once again until it stops with the last breath taken.

Imagine a place where time has no relevance at all; where each thought and every activity has the flavour of a vacation where you do what you want when you want to do it. In this magical kingdom time is a luxury that all can afford. Everything gets done that needs to be done without the choking pressure of time.

In fact, we have the capacity to live in just such a kingdom or at least a version of it. As noted in 'The Tyranny of Habit, it takes, shifting out of high gear; slowing thoughts, body and being. This of itself has tremendous value. Suddenly there is time to smell that rose, to inhale the beauty of a sunset and exhale appreciation.

There is time to look into the eyes of a love one and commune silently in the melody of love. It is these moments that bring the calm of a pristine lake on a warm summer's day; a calm that radiates outward into every aspect of life.

"Life can always get better or worse but I have learned to live with the day you have right now. The only guarantee about tomorrow is that it will come no matter what your plans are. So make your plans, but live for today and what makes you happy for today." Chris Mutch

As you continue to practice living the moments of life, you find that time does indeed expand to accommodate all that needs doing. Concentrating on the moment at hand in a centre of calm is highly productive with far less mistakes both in the practical world of commerce and on a personal level. You find that the next thing that needs doing has its own moment and you can rest easy knowing that it will get all your attention when its time comes.

It is a self-imposed mindset, endorsed by an economy driven society, that has driven us to a frenzy of gotta go, gotta have, gotta do. I have lived in that hurly, burly world with its demands of more, always more. At the end of the day – or a life – it serves up little in the way of real satisfaction. The ‘stuff’ is nice to have, but its value has been so over-inflated that we have lost sight of what has real value – life, love, happiness.

In the span of ‘all time’ we are given just a few short years to live in this time, this place. We do well to remember that what came before is done and gone, and what will be, will be. We cannot undo the past, and the future for most remains an unknown until we get there. What we can do, should do, is *live* the moments of our life to their fullest, seeking the truth that serves our individual growth. If we live each day to the very best of our ability and understanding then we need not concern ourselves with the future, either here on earth or what lies beyond.

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that our world is in need of repair. Children starving, acts of terrorism and genocide, the effects of global warming fill our news on a daily basis. Fortunately the doom and gloom is being counter-balanced with the ever-growing trend toward altruism and goodness; a bright light on the horizon for humanity.

Remember that every single person has an effect on the pond of life. Knowingly or not, each of us contributes and is responsible for the health of the pond. Were we to live in a world where love was predominant, our world would indeed be different.

For those wishing to have the Code of Love as the dominant factor in their life there are two responsibilities that must be met. The first responsibility is to not be the cause of disharmony; not an easy task given the inherent limitations of being human. The second responsibility is to consciously, actively contribute to the harmony and balance of our universe.

As stated throughout, this book is not about being perfect or having a perfect life. It is about making you more aware of who you are, of other people, of how you act and react. Because if you open your mind to “see” and “hear”, even a little differently, a seed will have been planted that, with even the smallest amount of attention, will grow into something uniquely you, uniquely beautiful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Self-educated businesswoman, artist, wife, mother, grandmother are labels acquired over a lifetime. The life contained within the words has been rich in both experience and learning on a journey that has had many ups and downs, twists and turns.

The mother of two sons and grandmother of three, I live with my husband, James, and brother, David, in the small community of Powell River on the Upper Sunshine Coast of BC, Canada. We moved here in 2005 to pursue our art and enjoy semi-retirement from the hectic pace of demanding management jobs.

Although an avid reader from childhood I was twenty-five before discovering a talent for writing, of all things, government documents and correspondence in my capacity as Senior Municipal Clerk in a small community of 3,000 people. In subsequent years the business writing expanded to include published interviews, formal appeals, business reports and marketing material. In my early thirties writing became a means to communicate thoughts and ideas on life. The resulting ¹collection of journal entries, stories, letters and poems reflects two decades of turmoil, change and growth.

In the fall of 1990 the seed for Love's Dynamic was planted by way of a dream. In the dream I climbed out of a suffocating black hole to stand on a high plateau. Behind me was a panorama of mountains and valleys with a road that twisted and turned, which I knew represented my life to that point. In front of me was a gate in the middle of a wooden fence that extended from horizon to horizon. In my hand was a large key that I knew opened the gate. But I wasn't ready to open it. Instead I looked through a knothole and saw only the faintest outline of mountains and sky. Again I knew why. I was being given the opportunity to paint my own future and it could be anything I wanted.

As dreams do, one led to another. In the second dream I was in a foreign country giving a lecture on love to a small group of people influential in the affairs of their country. The invitation came as a result of the popularity of a book on the subject of love. It was then that I had the first inkling of my heart's desire and what I wanted the picture of my life to look like. At the core of my being, more than anything, I wanted to write and talk about the power of love for change in the life of every individual and in the world.

Dreams, however, seldom come true in an instant. It took almost twenty more years of life, living and learning and the dream is still in the making.

Norah LeClare

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LeClare

¹ www.lovecounts.net