

Love: More Important Than We Think

February is a month when we think of love. Valentine's Day brings thoughts of love, but mostly romantic love. Love has many definitions, such as "an intense feeling of deep affection", "a great interest and pleasure in something", "a person or thing that one loves", "feel deep affection for", and "like or enjoy very much". While romantic love is great and a wonderful thing to focus on for the month (or year and life), the other definitions of love also have a profound impact on our lives and our enjoyment of life. Love goes a long way in our satisfaction about who we are, where we live, what we do, how we spend our time, our relationships, and our overall life satisfaction. Love, like most other things, has positive aspects and negative aspects.

Love or loving someone or something can have positive effects on our lives. When we love what we do we tend to be much more successful at it and overall report a much lower level of stress and a higher satisfaction with our lives. When we love where we live, it also results in a lower level of stress and a higher satisfaction with our lives. When we love who we are with our time seems more enjoyable and uplifting. When we love a subject it seems so much easier to learn, remember, and put into practice. These are just a few examples of the benefits and power of love.

However, there are some drawbacks to love. If we put our joy and satisfaction in how much we love someone and/or something, it allows for depression and dissatisfaction when we don't "feel" the love and/or we tell ourselves we don't love, really don't like, or even "hate" someone or something. Love is a very powerful emotion that has the ability to improve our outlook on life and our satisfaction with our lives, but we must be careful how much power we give it, especially when we "don't love" someone and/or something. Many failed subjects in school, many failed attempts at things in life, and many failed relationships occur because we tell ourselves that not only do we not love it, but we convince ourselves that if we don't love it, it is not worth our time and attention. This can result in many missed opportunities to be happy, to find more things to love about the world around us, and most importantly can lead us to harm ourselves and/or the people around us. So, what do we do about love?

Since love is not only a noun, but a verb, it is something we do. As with all things that we do, we can actually improve by practicing. Also, a great book, gave us guidance on what love is and how to practice love, stating, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs..." When we apply these guidelines, it will become easier to love ourselves, those around us, the world around us, and our lives in this world. If we have patience, use kind thoughts and words, refuse to be envious or selfish, do not do things to dishonor others, avoid getting angry easily and forgive, we will find that our capacity to love increases and we will find ourselves loving more people and more things around us and even find things to love about tasks that are not at the top of our list of things we want to do, like taking a class you're "not interested in," housework or work tasks that "need to be done," working with someone "we don't care about," etc. If we practice these guidelines of what love is, we improve our chances of seeing beauty in the world around us and beauty in those we didn't appreciate before.

I hope this month brings many opportunities to practice love. I hope it brings a lot of moments that you really love and a lot of moments that increase the things and people you love. We are not perfect and neither is our capacity to love, but with practice we can improve, which is something else to love. Keep an open mind, be patient, focus on the people and things around you, seek to be kind, and appreciate the beauty around you. May this month and every month be filled with love.

