

THE LOVING WAY

BY

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AT

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Good Morning Everyone,

It's great to be back here again – now for the third time.

Like the other two talks, this one is also based on a book. But this time it's a book I'm writing. It's tentatively titled *The Loving Way*. It is about finding the presence of unconditional self-love. All of us have heard how important self-love is - like: you have to love yourself before you can love another.

Self-love – not easy for a lot of us especially us spiritual seekers. We generally have high standards and expectations of ourselves along with a history of self-judgement and demands.

Writer and researcher, Dr. Kristen Neff, is a long-time specialist in self-compassion. In one of her books she wrote:

“I found in my research that the biggest reason people aren't more self-compassionate is that they are afraid they'll become self-indulgent or proud. They believe self-criticism is what keep them in line. Most people have gotten it wrong because our culture says being hard on yourself is the way to be.”

Yes, we are highly conditioned: feelings of unworthiness, inferiority, not being lovable, not good enough, are conditioned in us by our parents, teachers, our culture, advertisements, and general competitiveness that's all around us.

My own deep life-long sense of unworthiness began at a very young age.

My mother was very judging especially about my appearance, my shyness, my absent-mindedness. She put me on a diet at age 5 even though I wasn't actually overweight. Being deprived of food through diets at a very young age caused cravings that led to a serious food addiction and later bulimia which I struggled with for almost 50 years. I disliked my body and so many other things just as mother had.

This unworthiness caused me to be a door mat in relationships. I thought I needed to do and do for everyone in order to prove that I was deserving of love. I did and did to the point of exhaustion never concerned with how I felt or what I needed

I tried my best to be a kind and loving person. I didn't want to hurt anyone and tried to help whenever I could. But to myself, I was a hard taskmaster, oblivious to my own inner pain.

Cancer was my wakeup call. I knew I did not love or care for myself as I should but I had no idea **how** to accomplish self-love, especially unconditional self-love. I had lived a whole life believing that **I shouldn't** accept myself as I was – that would be wrong. **Accept** addiction! Just accept so many things I abhorred! **Love** the person who did them! **REALLY?** I truly believed they would never go away in the presence of acceptance and

Lying in bed with painful cancer 3 years ago, I had a lot of time to think. Everyone said I was an especially kind person, very considerate and compassionate. But to myself – I was something else. My attitude seemed to have always been: if I didn't hurt anyone else, it was ok!

But then I got real and saw this all in stark clarity! I realized an obvious truth! Listen everyone:

Cruelty is cruelty,
Lack of compassion is lack of compassion.

These energies don't just change their destructive nature just because we are pointing it in one direction verses another! Nor do they change their negative effects on peace, wellness and joy either regardless of where pointed.
So cruelty is cruelty!

The word cruelty seems harsh doesn't it! But let's look at the definition of cruel.

The Webster's dictionary defines cruel as ***“disposed to inflict pain or suffering and devoid of feelings about it! (no compassion for the victim)***

So the plain fact was that I embodied cruelty energy. I also realized that the subconscious is always listening, the cells are listening. As I laid in bed, I thought it was no wonder I had cancer! How could I NOT have some physical or mental disease considering the constant negative self-judgement and self-abuse.

As you can imagine, this was a painful to see. But seeing this clearly was a necessary part of changing it. I realized it was NOT ok that I treated myself cruelly and lacked self-compassion. It was NOT ok that part of the energy I was offering the world was the energy of cruelty

I decided to go on a journey to learn unconditional self-love

But I had never read anyone say HOW to achieve this.

HOW do I learn to love?

And so I went on a journey of discovery and I found some answers.

The first thing I discovered that there was no way to **learn** to love because love is what we already ARE. And so, if the essence of me is love. How can I **learn** to be myself? Impossible.

It occurred to me that I had gone about it from the wrong angle. So it came to me that if it's already there, what is preventing me from experiencing it? Probably the cruelty energy?

The first thing I discovered was that the cruelty was not done by me. Not done by the higher intelligence, the one who had mystical experiences and KNEW

I found that the doer was the conditioned mind. My mind was acting out of fear. And, I saw that this was not my fault, and not the mind's fault. My mind had been conditioned to fear from childhood. My fearful mind was simply being a typical fearful mind – the only thing it knew to do – the only thing it **could** do in the face of habitual fear - lash out, judge, remind, demand and punish - all in an attempt to avoid danger and failure. It always imagined the worst possible outcome and tried to warn me to prepare for it. It was trying to protect me. It was in survival mode. And in survival mode, inflicting pain is part of surviving, and there is no room for feelings of compassion. So, the results are “cruel” – totally understandable!

A Course in Miracles says If it does not look like love, consider it a plea for help. My mind was lashing out in full plea-for-help mode.

I also realized that the fearing mind with all its judgements and demands would go on doing what it had always done unless and until, someone or something Intervened and interrupted the conditioned pattern. And what would that be: Obviously love, in the form of CALMNESS, REASSURANCE, and ACCEPTANCE.

I resisted the demand that I suddenly become unconditionally self-loving. Would we beat up on a baby for falling many times in an effort to learn to walk? This would be cruel, wouldn't it? My mind had a 60+year habit of fear. To demand that this be reversed immediately would not be a loving way

So no more cruelty! This would be a kind, gentle, compassionate and loving way to open to the presence of love and deal with the fear that caused all this suffering.

So, I did a lot of experimenting and came up with some steps that really were effective – magical in fact.

The first steps in the loving way:

1. First I decided to watch my judgements of myself. Why judgements? Because in looking at each judgement carefully, I realized that ALL judgements, disappointments, angers – all were fear based -regardless of the type of judgement. When I remembered to be aware of judgments, I allowed the judgement to be a reminder that fear was present.
2. I discovered the next thing to do was to dismiss the actual judgment and concentrate on calming the fear. I found that judgements were just an expression of fear. So it was the fear that needed to be healed.

I resisted the temptation to argue with or reframe the judgement – that would be judging the judgement. Nor did I argue with fear by logical reasons as to why fear was inappropriate. I found that cold lecturing was not loving, accepting, comforting. I accepted that fear was present and attempted to calm it lovingly.

The most effective reassuring words I discovered went like this: “It’s OK, we are OK, Let’s let everything be ok right now”. (as if I’m saying it’s ok, we are not in danger)

For example: When I called myself “stupid” after yet another forgetting of my keys. I would say “its ok – let’s let this be ok for a moment.” When the mind calmed down, I would then figure out what to do in a calm way. It was magical how the keys would just often appear, or I would find a way to get them quickly. The mind can’t think well if in fear. Decisions are difficult in the face of fear. **Calming fear with love creates clarity and paves the way for love/wisdom to enter the scene.**

If I was judging myself for overeating again, I would first say, “its ok, let’s let this be ok for right now.” Then when the mind was calm, I would lead the mind to accept that it happened and be happy anyway and go on about my affairs. I would often ask: What is wrong with this moment right now? Or What can we do right now to have joy? Where before the slapping myself down for overeating would cause fear lasting the whole day. It was amazing how my eating normalized as I gave myself more understanding and just calmed the fear with love. I didn’t need to eat to stuff fear anymore.

And so I spent some months learning to calm the fears of my mind I became happier, more at peace with myself, and for the first time in my life comfortable in my own skin.

This opened a desire to bring in love in a more powerful way because I realized fear can be there without obvious judgement of the mind – for example when my buttons are pushed by someone and I start to feel that feeling (its fear).

Much of my fearful conditioning derived from my upbringing with a very unloving mother.

And so I imagined the characteristics I thought would make the ideal mother. I wrote it down:

My ideal mother is one who is there for me no matter what, a mother who can be counted on to have my back always, one who is wise, patient, who takes me in her arms and comforts me when I am down and reminds me that I am a child of god, A mother who believes in my greatness and my gifts, who encourages me always, and when I make mistakes, when I fall, no matter how many times, she is there with her wisdom and love helping me find the lessons needed for an even more meaningful life of expression and joy. A mother who sees my light always and inspires it and expands it. A mother who always sees and acknowledges the Christ within me!

I made the radical intention to be such a mother to myself

And so I now talk to myself a lot. I imagine taking myself in my arms and comforting me, I say often that it's ok, this now is ok, you are safe. Let's try again this time with joy and calmness, we can do it, I'm here for you. If my mind is going in circles trying to figure something out, I breathe slowly and just say: 'Its ok, don't worry, it will turn out fine" Let's rest for a while and turn it over to God"

What I've discovered is that in doing this, I'm leading the mind as its natural master and being the mind's natural master, the mind listens. These dealings with the fearful mind, when practices well, have an unconditionally loving quality. Sometimes the mind responds with almost audible sighs of relief. I have found that **the help the fear wanted all along was relief from fear itself.**

I have finally found self-love and it is becoming more and more unconditional. I'm myself coming to be more often aware of the presence of love within and I want everyone to experience this.

It's all seems so simple now – unconditional love is what we actually ARE. We just have to calm down fear that is preventing its expression!

Just to summarize, we have discussed just two powerful steps you can take right now.

1. Watch your judgements- know they come from fear and put the judgment itself aside and simply calm the fear with loving reassurance and acceptance. "its ok"
2. Become an ideal loving mother or father to yourself and start talking to yourself and treating yourself like that.

In doing these two things, you open doorway to the unconditional self-love that is already there.

So, perhaps when we sing the final song this morning “Let there be love on earth and let it begin with me” This may have a more expanded meaning today!

Let’s all put an end to cruelty... by calming fear. What we are is LOVE itself and let us offer only this to ourselves and then that will become our healing gift to everyone else in the world – a world that needs this so very much

I love you, thank you,
Namaste