

Week 2 Lesson 4: Love

There is a part of you that is Love itself,

and that is what we must fall into.

It is already there.

Once you move your identity to that level of deep inner contentment,

you will realize you are drawing upon a Life

that is much larger than your own and from a deeper abundance.

-Richard Rohr

Dear heart,

All humans desire happiness and love. This desire is what binds us as a species.

We can recognize that desire in others no matter what container they offer it to us in.

People come to us in all kinds of ways. They can be complaining or anxious. They can be angry or irritable. Overjoyed and loud. Whatever arrives, we can know that what is needed is Loving Kindness.

Loving others requires us to go within. It is the only way we can be soft and strong at the same time. Being vulnerable and strong is powerful when we open to it.

This does not mean we will sit down in a zen state at any given moment. Loving Kindness does not mean that we open ourselves to abuse or even a vindictive spirit. Sometimes the most compassionate thing we can do for a person is to release them.

But we always have access to a place where we can focus our intentions again. We return to self-love because it is from that place of peace and harmony that we can offer love to others.

Practices for Welcoming Love

It takes courage to love, but pain through love is the purifying fire which those who love generously know. We all know people who are so much afraid of pain that they shut themselves up like clams in a shell and, giving out nothing, receive nothing and therefore shrink until life is a mere living death.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Below are two practices for you to spend time with. The more time you spend with them, the more you will invite LOVE.

These practices have both been adapted from my book and have proved to be so valuable over the years. I hope you find that they are a gift that you can use for a lifetime.

Give yourself time and space this weekend for both practices. Then take time to write in your journal about your experience with each one.

A Simple Practice for Welcoming Love

Breathing practices help us to rewire the pathways in our brains. Do this breathing practice as often as you like this week and use it to focus your attention and heart on what you want to bring in to your life. I will use “more love” as an example of what we want to bring in.

Sit in a cross-legged, comfortable position on the floor or in a chair with your feet on the floor.

Place your left hand on your heart and your right hand on your abdomen.

Close your eyes and picture one small habit or change that you want to bring into your life. Use something from your list. You can even write it down on a small piece of paper or index card if that is helpful.

Begin by exhaling fully.

Now take a deep inhalation. Slowly expand the ribs, the abdomen and the upper chest.

Exhale slowly, contracting the ribs, the upper chest and the abdomen.

Continue to breathe slowly in and out and feel the expansion and contraction of your chest and abdomen with your hands.

On the inhales, picture bringing more love into your life, into your days. Welcome it in on the inhales.

On the exhales, release any tension or resistance you have around opening yourself to more love..

Continue this body and breath prayer for 15 minutes (or as long as you like).

End by bringing your hands into prayer pose and bowing, honoring your intention.

A Loving Kindness Practice

from *A Heart of Gold* by Jane Reeves

Sit comfortably where you can be still for a while. Close your eyes and think of the kind of love a new mother has for her child. As pictures come to your mind, nurture in your heart the kind of deep, abiding love we think of as “motherly.” Maybe it will be a mom and child you have been around, or maybe it will be the love you had for your babies. Spend a few minutes connecting to that love. Fill up a large pitcher with that love.

Now picture yourself sitting where you are now and imagine that pitcher of love being poured out over you. Bathe in Loving Kindness. Don't hurry. Just sit with the sensation of something being poured over you. Imagine it as love. Connect to loving yourself in this moment.

Next, you can begin to take that same pitcher of love and pour it over yourself in all the images of yourself that come to mind. Maybe earlier in the week you had a fight with your partner. Pause that memory and walk over to yourself and pour Loving Kindness out. Take a moment to accept that love, to connect with it, even in a moment you may not find yourself very loveable.

You can sit with this exercise for an hour or a whole day, remembering and pausing moments where you pour this pitcher of love out. Happy moments or sad moments or even neutral moments may come to mind. Maybe you see yourself standing at the sink washing dishes or carrying groceries into the house. You can meet yourself in even the mundane moments with this pitcher of love.

When you've spent as long as you want with this exercise, you can raise your hands in front of you. Picture that love being physically poured out one more time and fold it into your heart as you close your meditation.