

The Yearning to Love and be Loved in Return

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“We are all part of the same human condition. The yearning to love and be loved is at the heart of who we are.” - Lynne Twist

That quote speaks to every man and every woman in every place and time! The world's greatest love stories, from the brilliantly successful ones to the dimly tragic ones, come down to the yearning to love and be loved in return. In every love story, there is a quality to the relationship that is defined by how each person deals with his or her own yearning to love and be loved.

Some of us have a stronger desire to love than to be loved. We pour ourselves out on everyone we love with abandon. We are supportive and nurturing, even if we risk suffocating the object of our affection. We may pour out our love in bold, brash, even bullying ways. I am thinking of men who only need a hint that something is wrong and then swoop in to fix the problem, their loved one, and the people involved! This also brings to mind women who turn into protective mother bears when their loved ones (cubs) are threatened.

Others who are more committed to loving than being loved show their support and nurture by being submissive, following their lover wherever he or she leads. Even if it is to a dark place, the supportive, nurturing, I-am-totally-there-for-you individual loves the risk of loving no matter the cost.

Then there are those of us with a stronger desire to be loved. As supportive as I think I am, sometimes my desire to be loved by my husband is so strong I embarrass myself! When he is preoccupied with something, with steely focus accomplishing something, if I interrupt and thereby incur even a slight dismissal, the pout that forms on my lips is telling! In an instant, it is all about me and my needs and desires. If I were truly one of those supportive types, wouldn't I have seen and appreciated his preoccupation with whatever he was accomplishing?

Managing my desire to be loved and choosing to sometimes follow my yearning to love, as a priority over my yearning to be loved, is simple enough. It can be heartbreaking to watch someone completely sabotage their relationship because nothing can satisfy the hunger for proof that their lover loves them beyond all others!

Of course, the supportive, nurturing lovers can sabotage their relationships too. Smothering love can snuff out love, shocking the supportive individual with the level of resentment the recipient of their love feels towards them and all their loving attention!

Yet, the “yearning to love and be loved is at the heart of who we are.” At some point in your life, I hope you were your mother's and father's beloved infant. Mothers and fathers do their best. Sometimes their best is brilliant, sometimes it is good enough, and other times it is barely adequate. Whatever your relationship with your primary

caregiver; when you were an infant, someone answered your call and met your needs. That person was an extension of you, as far as you were concerned, and when she or he was answering your needs and desires, it was as if the two of you were one.

When we fall in love with someone who falls in love with us, we see each other in a way that feels familiar. Falling in love is the closest we come to “mother love” – that love that answers all our needs. Even if the timing isn’t completely right; the need is answered by this person, this mother or father, who completes us.

I imagine the first time we feel the yearning to love and be loved happens the first time we realize our primary caregiver is, in fact, not an extension of us. The distance between that person and us must be wide and terribly tangible. Even if she is within arms reach, the sudden realization of the difference between us, of the boundaries that define each of us, must feel like a chasm.

Jump ahead twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years and the lover who reminds us of how it feels to be completed by another shows up without boundaries, longing to get as close to us as we will allow. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual closeness are aches easily filled by our new lover. Nobody wants that honeymoon period to end.

The honeymoon period ends. For some, the ache of what feels like separation might actually stir up grief. For others, getting some boundaries back in place, letting friends and family back in to their own and the new life they have created with their new lover is a breath of fresh air!

In whatever way you deal with the yearning to love and be loved, use it to the best advantage of your lover and yourself. When you feel the ache of it rising in your gut, let the ache grow. Let it come up into your chest, around your heart and throat, and breathe through it, in and out. Appreciate the gift of having someone in your life with whom you can satisfy that desire for connection. Let it drive you to acts of love that delight, not smother...acts of love that might even give a person some space.

Use it to value your ability to love and be loved in return. Use it to value his or her freedom to love and be loved in return. Use it to remind you that you two are vulnerable to each other in a way no one else is and celebrate that reality in your own heart, with lovemaking, and with respect. The quality of your loving will blossom into something even more beautiful than it already is!

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There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to

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