

Do You Love Too Much?

by

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"Life is too short to be little."

Pippi Stanfield

Henry Drummond, born in Scotland, wrote an essay in 1874 entitled "The Greatest Thing In The World". It still greatly influences our lives today. Drummond reminds us that everything that we seek or covet will eventually end - the new and exciting will become old and tarnished. The only thing that will endure is love. If we love abundantly, then we will live abundantly. He describes unconditional love as having nine characteristics:

Patience- waiting to begin, but remaining calm and not in a hurry. Always ready to do what is needed when the time comes.

Kindness - easily doing the simple things to make people happy. Know the difference between trying to please (manipulation) and giving pleasure (love).

Generosity - giving up envy or any ill will to those we compete against; being magnanimous.

Humility - putting a seal on your lips and forgetting what you've done after you have been patient, kind, and generous.

Courtesy - being a gentle man or woman means it is against your basic nature to do an ungentle thing. The ungentle, the inconsiderate, the unsympathetic nature cannot be courteous.

Unselfishness - happiness never comes through having or getting or being served by others. It comes through giving and being of service.

Good temper - being free from jealousy, anger, pride, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, sullenness, pouting, and a short fuse.

Guilelessness - believing in others, seeing the bright side, putting the best construction on every action. When we respect another it is the first step in restoring lack of self-respect.

Sincerity - striving to get the facts, searching for the truth with a humble and unbiased mind and cherishing whatever is found.

The business of our lives is to have these things fitted into our character. The one eternal lesson for us all is to find ways to show more love in every aspect of our lives. It is truly noble to keep love in the midst of life - among people and things and troubles and obstacles and difficulties.

But a very strange phenomenon is occurring today in our society. We psychologists are finding that there is an all too common breakdown in relationships when one partner becomes abusive and hides under the cloak of "unconditional love". "If you truly loved me *unconditionally* then you would accept me as I am... (and tolerate the abominable way that I treat you). When are you demonstrating unconditional love and when are you taking abuse? When do you love too much?

Here are some clues: When being in love means being in pain, you love too much. When most of your conversation is about your partner's problems, you love too much. When you excuse your partner's moodiness, bad temper, indifference, or put-downs as problems due to an

unhappy childhood, you love too much. When you don't like many of your partner's basic characteristics, values, and behaviors, but put up with them thinking that if you were more attractive and loving enough, (s)he will change, you are loving too much. When your relationship jeopardizes your emotional well being, or even your physical health and safety, you definitely love too much.

The phenomena of loving too much are a specific syndrome of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Sometimes the client is from troubled family, but sometimes they are not. But their partners in almost every case grew up in severely troubled families in which they had experienced greater than normal stress and pain. A dysfunctional family is one in which members play rigid roles and in which communication is severely restricted to statements that fit those roles. Members are not free to express a full range of experiences, wants, needs, and feelings, but rather must limit themselves to playing that part which fits with the other family members. In dysfunctional families, time stands still, reality is denied, and the roles remain the same.

For those who have dedicated themselves to a higher plane of living but have been snared in the roles of loving too much, the road to recovery can be tedious. There is always a pull to do more to help the dysfunctional partner, especially when rays of recovery may glimmer. The first step is to go for help. That means giving up the idea that you can handle it alone. You must face the reality that things have gotten worse in your life, not better, and that, despite your best effort, you are not able to solve the problem.

In getting this help you will be able to come back to who you really are and develop your spirituality. That means that you will learn to let go of self-will, of the determination to make things happen the way you think they should. Instead, you will accept the fact that you may not know what is best in a given situation either for yourself or for another person. There may be outcomes and solutions that you have never considered, or perhaps the ones you've most feared and tried hardest to avoid may be exactly what is necessary in order for things to improve. Self-will means believing that you alone have all the answers. Letting go of self-will means becoming willing to hold still, be open, and wait for guidance for yourself. It means learning to let go of fear (the what ifs) and despair (the if only's) and replacing them with positive thoughts and statements about your life.

If you have loved too much, you can find relief in knowing that no one has to change in order for you to feel good. In nourishing your spiritual nature your life and your happiness come to be more under your own control and you are less vulnerable to the actions of others... and this is the true essence of unconditional love.

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