

Ren (Benevolence, Love)

Niria Hall

Queensborough Community College

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Love/Benevolence

Acceptance allows the self to take control, rather than the external force to control the person. The thought, the emotion, and then, finally, the initial action is the chain linked process to any and all external stimulus. This means that motivation and emotion are parallel and are learned consciously and or subconsciously. This is particularly comforting because if the thought influences the emotion and the action, then we can ultimately learn to control the thought process to influence positive emotions and actions. This is commonly known as emotional intelligence, which is the catalyst for self control. Peter Salovey and John Meyer describe emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions (Coon 392). The idea here is not to suppress emotions but to acknowledge and accept them as an essential part of who we are and how we survive (Coon 392). Fear is the emotional innate instinct that aids in the protection of our well being. This instinct protects against anything harmful to our physical, mental and emotional existence. This fear does not involve any thoughts or actions under higher brain centers. Love is a higher conscious of self. This particular emotion has to be nurtured, for continued existence. Love is an award in itself because it is freeing, Fear is shackling.

Fear is clutching. It leaves no room to understand, manage, use and perceive emotions effectively and diminishes all true authenticity of what love is. Despite the banality of the phrase, "*you must first love thyself before you can love another.*" its truth is quite uncanny and to dispute this truth would be done to no avail. I can not give what I do not have for myself. *How do I*

identify and believe what self love is? To truly possess self-love is to accept yourself as you are, despite anything external from you, be it material and or relationships. This acceptance accompnies an authentic love of self beause you now understand that anything outside of you does not make or define your being. I came to this realization after many years of self harm, dealing and battling my depression, inconsistant therapy, motherhood and destructive, self demeaning relationships. I associated my self worth through people and things outside of me. We must understand that nothing external of you can be controlled. Realize and accept that the only control there really is, is control of self. Love is the incentive of self approval, without any superficial validation. Believing and practicing self love aids in tapping into that limitless potential, while fear of judgement and failure, withdraws and retreats.

My lack of self love was evident in the destructive relationship I possed within myslef. It commenced at the tender age of fourteen. The pinnacle age of coming into self, when the bodyand hormones are noticably changing. These hormonal changes greatly impacts the chemical stability in the brain. According to Bruce S. McEwen, M.D., high levels of stress in the brain help to activate the “fight or flight” instinct. In contrast, these high levels of stress that aid in survival, can also remain at high level causeing the chemical imbalance in the brain that can very well lead to depression. At such a young age i definitely could not identify what these intense moments of feelings were. All thought was it was normal to experience such radical changes physically, emotionally and mentally. To add insult to injury, it didn't help that I was teased for not being as bodily developed as the rest of the girls my age. Eventually, this teasing took its toll and I began to withdraw immensely. It was at this age that I engaged in self harm to cope with intense, confusing, foreign feelings.

This coping method continued on and off for over ten years. I have never experienced such a satisfying relief of internal pain with physical pain. It was so emancipating to release all of these thoughts and feelings on my body as I slid the razor across my skin. The cuts separating on each side, exposing unseen flesh and the blood that appeared to me as the pain within finally escaping. I would even smear the blood from my wounds all over the entire area that was cut. I grew to revel in the physical pain as all I felt was the numbing sting with each laceration and the quieting of that which I felt within. Each new wound, lowered the deafening volume inside. It felt invigorating. *Perceived control influences behavior and emotion* (Skinner, Connell and Patrick 781). All I knew was that I finally found my outlet and it was mine. No one can take this from me. I was in full control on how felt. This coping method ultimately lead to mandatory therapy sessions, which was inconsistent because of my resistance. I did not desire to stop the cutting, it helped in more ways than one. Contrary to popular belief, most “cutters” don’t want to kill themselves. This is purely a coping mechanism to release intense feelings of emotion. Even though the relief is short lived, to us, those few minutes, hours or days mean everything when the emotional intensity is suppressed. We actually can not wait for the next trigger, to commence another ritual. This coping mechanism was also a defense mechanism for me. I attempted to keep people at bay on the thought that people will see what I do as abnormal and therefore, stay away from me. I tried to keep myself isolated as much as possible. Even when I was around the masses I really did not want to be seen. My thought process was, they will see my scars not me and I will be left alone. However, to my surprise I attracted more people to want to know about *me*. Random people who would approach me in regards to my scars. “Those tats are dope.” “What are all those scars on your arm?” “Did that hurt?” “Are you a cutter?” “Why do you do that? You’re too pretty for that.” However, the people I did encounter

and engage with that were meaningful to me were those who approached me because they themselves engaged in self mutilation or they cared for someone who was doing it or did it. I thought to myself that this is more common than its made out to be. It was this realization that this was bigger than me and I could be their loving voice.

It was through most of my therapy sessions that I suffered with a depressive disorder. In these sessions I learned how to identify my triggers and how to cope accordingly. The idea was not to suppress or deny these intense feeling but to accept, analyze and manage them. I learned through these adaptive behaviors with my self harm and then through therapy, that I can change my thoughts, that control the emotion, that influence my behavior. I can control what I wanted to feel. Adaptive behaviors are the actions that aid attempts to survive and adapt to changing conditions (Coon, 379). These adaptive behaviors include actions such as attacking, fleeing, comfort, helping others and reproducing (Coon 379). Even though I gained productive knowlegde on my diagnosis and how to cope with it, I still was resistant towards the therapy, which slowed and stopped any progressive production. I ultimately slipped back into my depression.

My insecurities and relationship with myslef, spilled over into my relatoinships with others. One of these relationships was indeed abusive and lasted for the two years we were together. I fell in love with the potential I saw in him and was blinded to the reality of him. I just wanted to help him and I thought if I could be nurturing to what I potentially saw then we'll be great. I attached my self to the expectation of the outcome. The expectation being that he'll change and he will see and appreciate my efforts. Needless to say, there was no reciprocity and my disappointment left me feeling confused, hurt, angry, empty and unworthy. The more I gave, the more ruthless he became. The verbal abuse was accompanied by emotional and physical

abuse. The physical abuse commenced whenever I did not or could not meet his demands. I instantly became ugly, stupid and not good enough for not only him but, to anyone else if I attempted to leave him. I distinctly remember two of the many times I attempted to leave him and he retaliated my spitting on me. I thought I could not feel any worse then the moment he fixed his lips to spit on me, even with the physical, I felt even more depleted. Needless to say, not only did I think I deserved such treatment, I believed it. I truly believed that he wouldn't eminate such behavior, he wouldn't get so mad, if he didn't love me. I fell even deeper into my depression and my self harm became more intense. The day I officially realized I could not remain in the relationship, he attempted to throw a bucket of dirty water with bleach on me as I tried to walk out of his house. Even after I left the relationship, I was still trying to deal with or rather not deal with how I felt about myself and how I allowed someone to treat me in such a way.

It wasn't until the birth of my daughter in 2016 that my whole self perspective switched for the better. I was responsible for this whole other human being who had 23 of my chromosomes. I remember feeling this instant fear the day after she was born. I stared at her and started thinking about all the things she would experience – painful and pleasurable. I instantly wanted to lock her inside a precious china cabinet and protect it unapologetically. I didn't want her to experience the same pain I did. Then I thought, *I love this little girl with every ounce of my being and to shelter her from the pain would also rob her of most happiest experiences.* All I can do is equipe her with all the tools she needs to get through any and all painful experiences. That is the only way she can experience who she is and love and appreciate herself through the lessons learned. I can not take her through her journey I can only guide her.

If she is to take anything from me, it will be all the strength and confidence to love herself limitlessly and unapologetically.

In the end, I say all this to illuminate how essential it is to learn to love yourself unconditionally and fiercely. Love and accept who you are despite anything external of you. Love yourself so divinely that anything outside of you gravitates to your very being so naturally, that force is not necessary. Should you notice an ounce of force, in that same breath, you let go just as quick. Self love is a continuous journey from the cradle to the grave. I'm currently active in my journey and I've also become open minded to therapy. It's placed in my exploration of self love. This is a never ending, ever growing, learning process. I encourage you to embrace and appreciate the discovery of self.

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