



## **Loving Yourself**

**By Ross Bishop**

Do you love yourself? Most people will say, "Yes," but they have to think about it. The simple fact is that most of us don't really love ourselves. We don't appreciate our redeeming qualities and are painfully aware of our failures. If I were to ask you to list the ten or twenty worst things in your life, you'd rattle them off without too much trouble. But on the other hand, if I asked you to list the ten best things in your life, after about the first five, you'd probably have to think about it.

This is particularly interesting if you consider that life is filled with many more good things than bad ones. We don't often think about it but each day in America is filled with sunlight, trees, flowers and food, loving dogs and cats, good people and simple joys. Even rain and snow can be beautiful. I am not asking you to become a Pollyanna, because life does have bumps and bad things do happen to people, and we need to remain compassionate toward the pain of those who are afflicted, but for the enormous majority of people, each day is filled with little miracles.

You can however choose to see things differently. It's the old "glass half-full or half-empty thing. People tell me: "If only my life had been . . ." "If only I had . . ." "Things would be different if . . ." Lives filled with regrets, missteps, pain, failures, mistakes and missed opportunities. People's assumptions are that they have done it wrong or, that the world is unfair and that no matter what they do, things will not come out right.

These people measure their worth on the outside. They look at other people's lives and measure their "failures" against other's "successes." When you measure yourself by things external there will always be someone who is richer, smarter, faster, better looking, more secure or more successful than you are. It's just a setup to make you feel badly. It's a direct road into the dumpster.

Here's the dilemma – you're human. That means that as a matter of definition there are places where you do not move harmoniously with life. So, of course you are going to have failures. Otherwise you would not be here! It is really that simple. Learning to live in harmony is what life on earth is about. At this stage in our evolution we learn far more from our failures than from our successes.

That doesn't mean that you ignore your problems – they have come to teach you and that is the most important thing in your life. But, and this is very important, they have not come to teach you what you think they have. You think that your life experiences have come to teach you "how to do it right." Sorry. That's not it. Your experiences are trying to affect how you respond to life, and that is a very important difference.

The Universe really doesn't care whether or not you balance your checkbook. What The Universe does care about however, is how you respond when you screw things up. No one likes getting those overdraft notices in the mail, but how badly do you beat yourself up when that happens? The Universe isn't after you to keep a perfect checkbook. It just wants you to stop beating the crap out of yourself when you are presented with a problem. As the entity Bartholomew points out: "We are all thrown off balance by external events, but nothing pulls us off center like the things we do to ourselves. If you had a friend who said the things you say to yourself, you'd get another friend!" The challenge for all of us is to learn to live harmoniously with life, no matter what is thrown our way. You don't have to like what's going on, in fact, you rarely will. But, you cannot do much about events as much as you can try to control them, there are far greater forces at work here. What you do control is how you respond to life. And by the way, that is the secret to a long and healthy life!

The truth cannot change, so it is your perception of yourself that must shift. The difficulties you experience all (perfectly) focus attention on the places where you do not live in the truth, where you do not move in harmony, where you do not hold compassion (mostly for yourself). You can try to understand it, but when all is said and done, you are going to have to learn to live from your heart. No matter how you slice it, it's about compassion.

So you have a choice. You can see your difficulties as problems, condemn yourself for being a failure and stay stuck; or learn to view your problems as opportunities for growth and work with them. Your pain and dissatisfaction are essential parts of the process. When they get large enough, they will propel you to give up your old ways of thinking and change. By the way, that is why God will not take away your pain.

It is interesting to look at people who are successful. I'm talking about real success not just financial success, although the two often do compliment one another). Successful people have accepted failure as a necessary part of their growth. They have failures, sometimes real whoppers, but those failures do not define who they are. Not successful people carry their failures around like stigmas of their unworthiness. It gives them proof that they are not OK. At some point successful people realize that that their limiting beliefs and old ways of thinking are keeping them down and so they give them up. And they don't like doing that any more than you do.

OK, so now that you know the truth, finding compassion should be a fairly straightforward thing to do. All you need is to decide to love yourself, walk out the door and do it. Yes? So what's the big deal? Why is doing that so difficult? You want to love yourself. Don't you? Or, do we just say that?

The blocks to your self-love are centuries old. Let's look at where they came from. Life presents you with situations (opportunities), to move to greater compassion. You resist because it conflicts with the way you see yourself. Stepping into that opportunity would require you to be more open. That makes you feel more vulnerable than you think you can handle and that is just too scary. So rather than move to your heart, you say no to the situation - you create emotion. You shut down, close your heart, blow things up, walk away or set things up to fail, etc., etc. "I did the best I could," you say, and still you got hurt. Instead of learning from the situation and making changes, you end up feeling unloved and unlovable.

Your unworthiness has been confirmed, and your self-condemning beliefs have been reinforced. You feel lousy but, in not exposing yourself, your vulnerability has been safely tucked away from another encounter with life. You're isolated and alone, but "safe," (at least for the moment).

When The Universe has not been successful in getting a person to look at their resistance through its "normal" process, it will then create a larger learning opportunity. The more a person resists, the more pressure the universe applies and the more the person will suffer and experience pain. The conflict between rigidly held beliefs (fear) and pressure from The Universe to move to greater harmony is what creates our pain and suffering. Something has to eventually give, and it isn't going to be The Universe. If the person persists, the pressure will grow until there is a collapse, so that they are unable to continue the old way. We call this a crisis. The crisis may be a disease, a serious accident or the loss of someone close to you; but

some way or other, The Universe will find a way, sooner or later, to get you to surrender.

Put yourself in God's place. There are billions of souls who do not yet live in the magnificence and grace of their beingness. You can't give them Grace because they have free will, and besides if they use their free will and decide for themselves that they really are wonderful and special they will hold that truth much more deeply. So what would be the most powerful way to get them to know and deeply hold the truth about themselves?

You set up ways for them to believe (temporarily) that they are unlovable and unworthy. They are bound to be dissatisfied with that prospect and their frustration will provide the impetus for them to make changes and move toward the Truth. They will have to do this, for untruths (disharmonies or imbalances) in The Universe will not be sustained. When that transformation happens, these billions of souls, having once lived in untruth, will hold the magnificence of their beingness not possible by any other means. Is the process difficult? Yes. It is uncomfortable? You bet. Does it feel unfair? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely.

I'm not asking you to like the process. You're not supposed to. But, once you understand what is going on, and can see the events of life from a larger perspective, everything that happens down here becomes far less personal. You are still not going to like it when someone does something unkind, but you begin to see things in a completely different context.

Let me tell you a story: When I first met Bruce he was a half step away from living in the street. His health was in chronic jeopardy and he was in constant, often agonizing, pain. He could eat few foods and could barely take in enough nourishment to remain alive. He looked like a death camp survivor. His refusal to address his inner pain was so profound that his soul had brought him near death on several occasions in attempts to break the stranglehold his fear had on him. His case is extreme, but you will recognize some of his feelings. I suggested that he do some stream of consciousness writing, and he returned with these notes:

My God, I haven't accomplished anything! My future looks dim. There is no way I can be secure and safe. I am frantic and terrified that I won't have a home or food. This world is going crazy. There is no one out there I can depend on. I am fed up with this world! I want to leave it. Death is the only escape. Where is the comforter? I am so angry, I want to lash out but it doesn't do any good. I don't have a voice. I fear being reprimanded or harmed. No one hears my cries of plight.

My mind doesn't have the answers. It only creates more problems and more dilemmas. I wait in silence. Something has to come in and guide me through this awful, painful maze of existence. Where is Love? All I want is love, intimacy, connectedness with someone but I am afraid to trust another for fear of being hurt. Why am I so afraid to give up control to the unknown?

I am exhausted from not sleeping, of not being able to fall into sleep and from the pain. I feel displaced. Nothing on the outside will fulfill me. I feel so disconnected from everything - so distanced from the world. There is no security and a lot of anxiety. Where are the angels people talk about? I can't feel them. I can't even feel me.

Almost magically in the middle of his agony, Bruce's inner child burst through his writing and said to him with eternal wisdom:

When will you pay attention to me? When will you listen to me? When will you face me squarely and see me for what I am? I bring you the gift of pain to awaken you. I am underneath all your pain. When will you give me your time, your attention? You make a big deal out of suffering and then miss me. Please acknowledge me. Please find me before it is too late. Accept what comes fully and then you will locate me. Do not cover up the pain. I will only magnify it, and then you will feel tortured by your body even more. Be in the silence with love and wait with inner ears open to receive what I am. Give up the search for a solution to your dilemmas. It will only cause more pain. Bear witness to simplicity for it will guide you home. Your mind cannot take you home to peace. The mind must be a disciple of the heart to know peace. Your concerns are getting in the way of your being at peace. I wish to emerge and be free again - to just Be.

Ignore your mind and all of its stories and judgments. Be not afraid of the pains you carry on the surface of your heart. They are the shields that keep you from coming home. Arise with courage and determination to finish the journey. Feel your heart. Open your heart. When it closes, it is because of fear. Sit with that fear and love it with all of your heart. And then once again, you will be open and be filled again with love.

Nothing I could have said to Bruce would have had the force of that message. By going out as far as he did, Bruce now has a knowledge and experience that will allow him to help other troubled souls in a way no one else could. He paid a great price for that gift, but that was the path his soul had chosen for him.

Sir James M. Barrie said about Love:

**"If you have it, you don't need anything else,  
and if you don't have it, it doesn't matter what else  
you have."**

Give yourself something for Valentine's Day this year.

Ross Bishop