

Love

Love has many definitions, and, if we ask other people to define it, we will receive a great variety of answers. Perhaps this is because love is such an individualized emotion which can express itself in a variety of ways. Love is something we all seek in one form or another, and yet it seems to elude us constantly until we find love within ourselves.

Many of us make the mistake of wishing for love, while failing to give it away. Some of us are convinced that if we receive enough love, all our problems will be solved and we will be happy. What we are doing is shifting the responsibility for our happiness to others. We need others to love us because we cannot love ourselves. If we are not happy, we believe the cause is love withheld. We may even resent those we think are withholding their love.

In our frustration, we may attempt to manipulate people into loving us by trying to please them. We may try to make them dependent upon us. We are willing to do anything to make ourselves loved by others.

Love cannot be forced, bought, or manipulated. It must be unconditional. Sometimes our efforts to force love fail; sometimes they succeed. In either case, the result is the same — the happiness we expect to feel is not there.

A turning point in our lives may come with Emotions Anonymous. We are greeted by people who follow the concepts of the program and do not argue, do not criticize, and do not judge us. Many at these meetings may even show us love when we are unable to love ourselves. When we have felt unloved for many years, perhaps our whole life, receiving this unconditional love can seem very strange to us. At first we may be frightened by this love and afraid to accept it. As weeks pass we often feel the kinship, the friendship, and the fellowship of the group. We see that EA is a place which not only welcomes us, but also accepts and loves us. Our self-esteem begins to rise, and we become able to accept genuine love from others and to express this love to others.

As we begin to work the Twelve Steps of the program, we better understand and accept ourselves. We realize it is all right to be "powerless over our emotions." We look at ourselves honestly and begin making changes in our thinking and behaving. We discover a way to take care of our mistakes and to forgive ourselves and others for past actions. This process of working the steps helps us to begin to love ourselves. As we love ourselves, with all our faults and imperfections, we can truly begin to love others.

Love appears to have a boomerang quality about it — the more we give it away, the more it comes back to us. We find if we show love to others, if we look for all that is kind, generous, and worthy of love — then that love will be returned to us. We realize we all need love to live a satisfying and happy life.

As we work those steps which help us develop our awareness of a Higher Power; We begin to see that spiritual love is always unconditional. It is not withdrawn on days when we are depressed or angry. It is not withdrawn because we fail at a task. We find our Higher Power accepts and loves us just as we are.

As our awareness of love grows our whole outlook on life changes. There is greater meaning in the "Just For Today" which says, "... Happiness does not depend on what others do or say or what happens around me. Happiness is a result of being at peace with myself." We come to understand we alone are responsible for our happiness. As we

learn to love ourselves and others, the genuine love we have been seeking will come naturally, one day at a time.

Love is . . .

- sharing.
- being respectful of others.
- caring about others' needs.
- giving others space to grow.
- helping when needed.
- accepting differences in others.
- feeling others' pain as well as joy.
- letting go.
- looking for the good.
- giving ourselves a chance to grow.
- being at ease with others by not having to protect our egos or be defensive.
- treating ourselves with gentleness.
- recognizing our uniqueness.
- accepting ourselves.
- acknowledging there is a Higher Power who can help us.
- continuing to practice the EA program.