

# Self-Empowerment

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The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## LOVE ANY-WAY

The title of this article holds several meanings, depending on the spacing, punctuation, or one's inflections when reading it aloud. "Love anyway" can proclaim that we are to act with love despite apparent challenges or losses. "Love any way" might mean that we are to love the different paths that claim to lead us toward enlightenment, or it can mean that we are to extend love in any manner or style that we can embody and express.

The phrase has captured my attention, so I would like to share some thoughts about "love any-way."

I recently read *All About Love: New Visions* (HarperCollins ©2000) by bell hooks (no capital letters in the author's pen name). Born Gloria Jean Watkins in Hopkinsville, Kentucky in 1952, author of more than 30 books, she has been a professor of English and is well known as a social activist. In this particular book she explores with critical analysis what love is, how it is sought in our society, other authors' insights about love, and her own personal journey. The preface establishes her motivation:

When I was a child, it was clear to me that life was not worth living if we did not know love. I wish I could testify that I came to this awareness because of the love I felt in my life. But it was love's absence that let me know how much love mattered. I was my father's first daughter. At the moment of my birth, I was looked upon with loving kindness, cherished and made to feel wanted on this earth and in my home. To this day I cannot remember when that feeling of being loved left me. I just know that one day I was no longer precious. Those who had initially loved me well turned away. The absence of their recognition and regard pierced my heart and left me with a feeling of brokenheartedness so profound I was spell-bound.

Grief and sadness overwhelmed me. I did not know what I had done wrong. And nothing I tried made it right. No other connection healed the hurt

of that first abandonment, that first banishment from love's paradise. For years I lived my life suspended, trapped by the past, unable to move into the future. Like every wounded child I just wanted to turn back time and be in that paradise again, in that moment of remembered rapture where I felt loved, where I felt a sense of belonging.

We can never go back. I know that now. We can go forward. We can find the love our hearts long for, but not until we let go grief about the love we lost long ago, when we were little and had no voice to speak the heart's longing. All the years of my life I thought I was searching for love, I found, retrospectively, to be years where I was simply trying to recover what had been lost, to return to the first

home, to get back the rapture of first love. I was not really ready to love or be loved in the present. I was still mourning – clinging to the broken heart of girlhood, to

broken connections. When that mourning ceased I was able to love again.

I awakened from my trance state and was stunned to find the world I was living in, the world of the present, was no longer a world open to love. And I noticed that all around me I heard testimony that lovelessness had become the order of the day. I feel our nation's turning away from love as intensely as I felt love's abandonment in my girlhood. Turning away we risk moving into a wilderness of spirit so intense we may never find our way home again. I write of love to bear witness both to the danger in this movement, and to call for a return to love. Redeemed and restored, love returns us to the promise of everlasting life. When we can let our hearts speak.

Ms. hooks' search for a definition of love led her to psychiatrist M. Scott Peck's classic self-help book *The Road Less Traveled*, first published in 1978. Echoing the work of Erich Fromm, he defined love as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." Explaining further, he continues, "Love is as love does. Love is an act of will, namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love."

We do not have to love.  
We choose to love.

## Love anyway

Recently, Rick and I had the experience of the death of our beautiful little 10-day-old newborn granddaughter, Shayna-Lynn Carel. We planned the funeral and hosted relatives and friends in our home afterwards. There were many inspirational messages shared and loving condolences extended to us, as well as to the grieving parents, Matt and Erin.

I felt moved to speak at the funeral about the feeling of heartbreak. While it is natural to feel the sadness of such a passing, I believe that the idea of our “hearts breaking” can be experienced and interpreted in different ways. The meaning we draw from such an experience can have a huge impact on whether we open to love in the future. The pain of loss can tempt us to defend against open-hearted loving, believing that we can protect our hearts against future painful losses. That is a disastrous choice, as the defense against love keeps us in chronic pain of separation and dis-ease.

On the other hand, I believe that the pain of grief can be understood as the protective shell around our hearts cracking wide open. If we allow that pain, and love anyway, we herald in a greater capacity for compassion and love. We can join with humanity for greater healing.

Love does not hurt. Love heals. It is in the face of loss that our capacity for compassion and love has an opportunity to expand. The call is to love in spite of the pain of loss. Love anyway. Despite your losses and disappointments, you will find that extending love is the best medicine.

## Love Any Way

There is not a single “right” way to express love. We have a boundless supply of loving expressions. Although some may seem more comfortable for certain people and appropriate to certain circumstances, we have most likely limited ourselves by getting into a rut, following habits that were established long ago. Consider trying some new ways to extend love.

There are loving words we can say, for example: *I love you, I care, and how can I help?* Then there are the wordless messages of love through smiles, hugs, listening, patience, gifts, prayers, blessings, honesty, kisses, eye contact, emotional support, acceptance, gratitude, creativity, sharing etc.

There are many ways to express and extend love to another and also to yourself. While many will say, “You gotta love yourself” not too many people seem to know how to do that. It is not a single one-time experience. It is an ongoing process that includes commitment and discipline. By holding yourself and

another in high regard and listening within for guidance, you are inspired by your inner wisdom to express the highest and best thoughts, words, and deeds – over and over, in each moment.

Being loving by expressing and extending love may not always feel like the sweetness and light of romantic love. Caring for a sick friend or relative, dealing honestly and with integrity with a difficult person, or letting go of expectations may be challenging, but check in with your heart’s inner wisdom. It knows love in all its many forms.

## In this issue

I am happy to share the poetry of Rev. Margo Ford, who I connected with through her published poems in Unity’s Daily Word. It is a delight to make new friends through the publication of this newsletter. I am inspired by Margo’s writing and more importantly the life of spiritual service that she is living, currently in central Texas.

I often receive emails with inspirational stories. The story on page 3 is about a little girl who writes a letter to God and gets a miraculous response. I checked [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) to find out whether the story is true or just an “urban legend.” The story is true; reported in the San Antonio Express-News in 2006. It is not known who replied to this little girl’s letter to God, but someone working in the ‘Dead Letter Office’ of the US postal service did a very loving act. I hope you enjoy this awesome example of love.

Nan Merrill has written a magnificent book of Psalms. It is obvious that Ms. Merrill loves the Psalms and has reinterpreted them to reflect Divine Love in a new and fresh spirit, as living prayers to the Beloved. See page 4 for a lovely example. Where the Bible’s wordings of the Psalms are sometimes patriarchal and punitive, Ms. Merrill brings the expression of Unconditional Love to them without losing the essence of meaning from the originals.

Enjoy!

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*

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### ***A Course in Miracles study groups and The Voice for Love workshops***

Open your mind and heart to the consciousness and experience of miracles. Share in the peace and joy that results from changing your perceptions as you allow your Inner Wisdom to lead the way.

Spiritual study groups & workshops are held in NE Philadelphia and South Jersey locations. **See page 6 for an upcoming workshop on February 8, 2009 in NE Phila.**

For info call Rev. Jill Sabin Carel 215-742-0552.

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# Loving Thoughts

When in my mind  
I seem to find  
That chaos runs supreme,  
I simply let go  
And affirm that I know  
God grants our sweetest dreams.

If fear runs high  
And it feels like I  
Have nowhere safe to be,  
I remember then  
That it's always been  
God's light that's guided me.

Any thoughts of lack  
Can only attract  
Those things I least desire.  
So from a loving place  
I trust God's grace  
To set my heart afire.

Situations may seem  
Like a terrible dream  
That painfully touch my brother.  
But if some live in doubt,  
I will still reach out  
With love in my heart for another.

If gossip starts  
And hardened hearts  
Have nothing kind to say—  
I go deep inside  
Where true peace abides  
And hold loving thoughts each day.

I forgive here and now  
As best I know how  
Betrayals and hurts from the past.  
My heart is set free.  
Nothing more can hold me  
From living the Love that will last.

Rev. Margo Ford

*May this holiday season touch your heart with  
love, forgiveness, and healing.*

*Blessings to you and your loved ones,  
Rev. Jill Sabin Carel*

# A LETTER FROM GOD via USPS

Our 14 year old dog, Abbey, died last month. The day after she died, my 4 year old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey. She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her. I told her that I thought we could, so she dictated these words:

*Dear God,*

*Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I am happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick.*

*I hope you will play with her. She likes to play with balls and to swim. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her You will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.*

*Love, Meredith*

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey and Meredith and addressed it to God/Heaven. We put our return address on it. Then Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven. That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office. A few days later, she asked if God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, 'To Meredith' in an unfamiliar hand. Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, 'When a Pet Dies.' Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note:

*Dear Meredith,*

*Abbey arrived safely in heaven. Having the picture was a big help. I recognized Abbey right away. Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart.*

*Abbey loved being your dog. Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in, so I am sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.*

*Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and sending it to me. What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you. I send my blessings every day and remember that I love you very much.*

*By the way, I'm easy to find, I am wherever there is love.*

*Love, God*

## VOICE FOR LOVE MESSAGE

*The following "Voice for Love" inspirational message is shared with you through Rev. Jill Carel. Jill has been sharing messages of comfort, healing, and guidance in private counseling sessions and via telephone. She now offers workshops to teach others to access this Inner Wisdom for themselves.*

Blessings, Dear One. Thank you for your question about "Love Anyway."

Love is.

For one to choose love – be loving, receive love, express love, extend love – one yields to one's own essence.

When language is attempted to describe this experience, it always falls short because the dualistic nature of language would have you describe something that is higher, or something that is deeper, something that feels a particular way, or looks a particular way. And similar to your multiple choice questions, it is "all of the above." It is higher, deeper, and inclusive of all that can be contained in that moment. Any time one chooses love and they are willing to yield to love's call, it can look like many different things, including speaking or not speaking, smiling or not smiling, touching or not touching, being close or far.

By some it may be considered an attitude, or a commitment, or just a willingness to be in alignment with the highest expression of good that that one can express in that moment. There are some who can maintain this willing choice of love for many moments on end, and others who just visit it from time to time when they feel impelled.

Special relationships – intimates, relatives, friends – are often the trigger points for making this choice to be loving. Those on the spiritual path become aware of the challenge to extend love as a result of what appears to be negative situations, which is the idea of "love anyway" despite seeming negative circumstances. It is those on the spiritual path who have chosen to recognize that negative situations are calls for love, and that inspires others to awaken to this call.

Blessed are those who recognize the opportunities to extend love in painful circumstances. They are the pioneers who show the way for those who might remain reactive for a longer period of time but who would eventually join in the love-fest – eventually – for all are on their way home to the state of unconditional love that calls to all. There is much gratitude for the lightworkers who are modeling the new paradigm that is emerging.

There is much hope rekindled in this country (U.S.) with the upcoming presidency of Barak Obama who is a symbol of peace, clarity, and self-

responsibility. As many are heartened by his victory, more and more are willing to follow the way of the lightworkers and bring the willingness to love into the dark areas of politics, work sites, family relationships, and all the challenges that humans face today.

Be heartened with this message, knowing that it shines the light on the road to the remembrance of the love that we are.

Love and Blessings. Amen

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## Psalm 3

O Beloved, how numerous are my fears!  
They rise up within me whispering  
there is no help for you.

Yet You, O Beloved, radiate Love  
around me, my glory;  
gratitude becomes my song,  
When I cry out to You,  
You answer within my heart.

I lie down to sleep; if I should  
awaken, my Beloved is there  
holding me with strength  
and tenderness.  
I feel secure.

Now, I shall forgive all illusions  
that my ego tries to build.  
For my courage is in You, O Love,  
You who are the Lover hidden  
in every heart.

Rise up, Love! Set me free!  
For through your guidance,  
my fears will fade into love.  
Free from fear, I will know  
the Oneness of Being that  
encompasses Everything!

I shall be free to serve Love  
with a glad and open heart.

*Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness* by  
Nan C. Merrill, ©2007 Continuum Publishing.

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## A Prayer for the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S.

*May our new president make his decisions motivated by peace, compassion, and Divine Love's Inspiration. May he find positive ways to meet the challenges of economic and political threat. May he be supported by wise and creative advisors.*

*May we recognize our responsibility to live from heart-centered wisdom to meet challenging issues with the spirit of cooperation, aiming for the highest and best for all.*

*Amen*

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# Daily Word

*Divine love radiates from heart to heart  
in an ever-widening circle of love.*

A good start to any day is for me to ask myself what I can do to create greater harmony in my life. The answer is most likely for me to express gratitude, and I do.

Thank you, God, for Your love for me and expressing as me." With these words of gratitude, I focus my thoughts and actions on my inner source of love. I set an intention on radiating love and understanding to others and follow through on this intention.

I focus on the love of God within me and within others. From one heart to another, we radiate love that expands in circles that draw other people in. As love reaches out, embracing more and more people, harmony flourishes everywhere.

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## Mother Teresa's *Anyway* Poem

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered;

**Forgive them anyway.**

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

**Be kind anyway.**

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

**Succeed anyway.**

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

**Be honest and frank anyway.**

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

**Build anyway.**

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

**Be happy anyway.**

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

**Do good anyway.**

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

**Give the world the best you've got anyway.**

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

*[Reportedly inscribed on the wall of Mother Teresa's children's home in Calcutta, and attributed to her. However, an article in the New York Times has since reported (March 8, 2002) that the original version of this poem was written by Kent M. Keith.]*

## Voice for Love Workshop

What do you desire?

Do you long for peace, wisdom, and guidance?

Do you want freedom from fear, guilt, loneliness, and suffering?

Do you seek to love yourself and nurture the gift you are here to share?

### **Experience the Voice for Love**

Learn how to receive clear guidance for any question you ask.

Experience a profound feeling of love for yourself and others.

Access a deeper sense of peace and clarity in your life.

When: Sunday, February 8, 2009

(Snow date: February 22)

10:00am to 4:00pm

Where: Northeast Philadelphia location

Cost: Sliding scale donation \$40 - \$80

Lunch included

Preregistration required. Call 215-742-0552 for information and registration.

## Circle of Miracles School of Ministry – One-year ministry training program.

Graduate as an ordained Interfaith Minister in April 2010. Class begins February 6, 2009.

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*Blessings to you!*

**The mission of Agape Interfaith Ministries is to encourage, support and inspire a deepening conscious relationship with Divinity for the greater experience of wholeness, abundance, love and peace. We serve to elevate consciousness through individual and group educational activities, and community service.**