

Love_x

IN ACTION

OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF
TRAUMA IN RELATIONSHIPS

Fairy Colston

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‘What and Where is love?’

The 5 Ways I learned to recognise love, even if another was not saying 'I Love You', and recognise where love was not, even if another was saying ‘I Love You’, helping to overcome the effects of relational trauma.

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130 Pages

Published in the UK by Fairostar Entertainment Ltd
217a Aberdour Road, Dunfermline KY11 8LU
www.thefairyshow.com

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PREFACE

This book came about as a result of witnessing and experiencing abusive, violent and dysfunctional relationships in childhood, I often wondered as I grew older and began developing relationships of my own, how I could tell if, when someone told me they loved me, whether they actually did love me, or if I was being manipulated, coerced, gaslighted, lied to, abused or controlled, even if they were unaware that they were doing so, and consequently, how would I know if ever I was doing that same thing to another?

It took experiencing these types of dysfunctional and codependent relationships on my own before I began to see patterns of behaviour that would occur in each that I learned to avoid. It also took experiencing heartfelt, fulfilling and honourable relationships to begin to see the patterns in those that contributed to the growth and strength of the relationships I wished to create, both in my personal and professional life.

I only came to learn what love truly was however, when I began learning **how** to love myself.

When I experienced the changes and effects that love had on me both spiritually, mentally, emotionally, even financially and in the relationships I had with those around me, including family, friends, colleagues and clients, I learned that love was not just a feeling, or an emotion, but that love was something you did, love was an action, and when I began to do it and put it into action, I began to see and understand relationships in a whole new way, the fear I carried around relationships began to leave me and I was able to see more clearly each and every day, where love was, and with who and where it wasn't.

I'm so grateful to all those in my life who helped me to understand love on a deeper level and especially to those who loved me, so unconditionally, so purely, so truly, who helped me grow, and find myself, and develop in ways I never thought possible, who helped me overcome fear in my self and my relationships in order to take steps forward to fulfil my potential in life.

Through many discussions and experiences with my family, friends, brothers and sisters, colleagues, therapists, coaches and counsellors over the years of healing, self discovery and personal growth, this book was born, I am thankful to them all for helping this book come to light.

INTRODUCTION

Love. The one thing every person, religion, theology, or way of life will agree is one, if not THE most fundamental aspect of life, and yet, something that so many of us often feel eludes us, in ourselves, in our relationships, in our families or in our societies. Where is the love? They so often ask. What even is love? Ask many others, who would even try to narrow down something that is so encompassing, so vast, so mystical, magical and unexplainable.

How do any of us even know what love actually is? Hundreds if not thousands of people have written books about love for centuries, for marriages, for families, for God, and yet still, today, there are so many people the world over who will agree that in their individual lives, their idea of love, maybe isn't what they thought it was, many who once upon a time may have been so sure of what love was, wondering if they ever really knew love at all.

When you ask people what love is, their answers are so varied and different, some say Love is acceptance, some attribute love to feelings, to emotions, some say it is in doing nice things for others or giving gifts, or being caring or being helpful, some say it is in what you say, or how you make someone feel, some people say things like 'love is sacrifice' 'love is a warm feeling in my heart

& soul’, others will say ‘love is giving someone the warm side of the bed, or the cold side of the pillow’ ‘love is service’ ‘love is gifts’ ‘love is caring’ Some say love is in us, some say love is found in loving others, some say it can only be found in God, it seems almost every idea or description of love is as unique as the person themselves, as if everyone see’s or knows love in so many ways, some of which are even contrary and sometimes even opposing to another’s perspective of what love is, how can it be so?

We use expressions like ‘I’m falling in love’ or ‘falling out of love’, some people who have been jaded or hurt in the past often say things like love is stupid, love hurts, love is waste of time. It almost seems as each of us have different ideas and no one really has a defined understanding of what love is in it’s simplest form, and so if people don’t actually know what love is, how exactly is it possible for us to give it to another person fully or to know if you are receiving it in return?

I’ve heard partners who after separation or divorce, claim that they were never loved by their partner, only to hear the other partner argue that they loved them with everything they had and that it was them who had not received love in return, for the then opposing partner to be gobsmacked at the idea that they did not love. It seemed almost absurd that someone could love their partner, and yet their partner not actually feel love from them, and yet for many, this is often their experience of love in relationship.

In religion, it's one of the greatest commandments given to mankind, to love God with all thy heart, mind and soul and to love thy neighbour as thy self.

Now, if we all have different ideas of what love is, well, it would stand to reason that many millions of us may find love such a challenge, it would be absolutely understandable for love to be a difficult thing for most people to know exactly how to do in a way they and others feel is successful or how to receive in a way that another knows how to give so you can feel it too.

I used to think I knew what love was, As I've grown I've come to realise over the years that I had never really understood love. All the ideas, many similar to above that I carried did not necessarily equate to experiencing love in my life, many of the people and especially romantic partners I once upon a time claimed to love, I realised only a handful of years later, that I didn't particularly even like them very much, I felt I'd got it wrong, that I'd made a wrong choice in the person, and had gone so far as to say that I did NOT love that person anymore, or maybe even ever.

What a painful thing for another to hear those words 'I don't love you anymore' which for many of us, if a person claims to not love us anymore, it almost feels as if WE failed in some way, either failed to say, or to do, or to act in some way, oh if we'd

only did this, or said that or acted this way, could we have kept their love? So many of us equate all that we say, act and especially do, to be the very reason **why** someone loves us, and yet the truth, is that someone loving us, is something that they do, not something we do, which for many is a very bizarre concept.

Consider the words ‘Love thy neighbour as thy self’ What does that mean? Is it even possible to do?

What about when they peeve you off? Or what about those who are far from righteous or those who are mean, cruel or dare I even say it . . . evil? Unfortunately there are people in the world who do evil things. In religion, even though consequence is expected, we are still expected to love those who sin. How do we ‘love’ someone who could do things like that?

If, we are asked to love people who even do things that we find abhorrent.

Then surely, SURELY love CANNOT be about acceptance, surely it CANNOT be about allowing? Surely love CANNOT mean being ok with things that we do not find ok.

So what is love? I longed to know . . . desperately. It seemed I was so very misunderstanding of what love actually was and I especially longed to know what love was when no one said ‘I love you.’

Before embarking on another relationship, I desired to know whether I could recognise love, could I trust that I knew if someone was actually loving me? Could I trust that I was giving love to another? I longed to know what love was without wondering if it was real or if they would change their minds in a few months or years, I longed to know what love was in it's most basic form, it took me over 30 years and a string of failed relationships before an encounter with Love in it's highest form literally blew apart all my understandings and brought me to life and Love in a whole new way.

HOW TRAUMA MANIFESTED IN MY RELATIONSHIPS

Coming from a traumatising childhood, surrounded by traumatised people, if you asked those around me if they loved me, surely they would say yes, and yet did I feel loved? I did not.

For many years of my life I felt very unloved, alone, misunderstood, violated, manipulated and controlled. In my youth and early adult years I was at the mercy of and witness to

domestic violence, neglect, abuse, parental divorce and abandonment, drug /alcohol dependency, and mental illness. The only thing I had to trust in regards to knowing what love was, was another person's word. If they said they loved me, well I guess that must mean that they did . . . otherwise, I didn't have the first clue how to define it. When it came to people doing things for me, I had learned that I would likely be 'due' someone, when it came to 'gifts' or acts of service, they would in some way require to be 'paid back', it was very much a world where "you didn't get nothing for nothing."

That foundation set the precedent for the first relationships I chose as I grew older. That being, if they said they loved me, well then . . . I guess that meant they did . . . even and sadly regardless of what I felt, and regardless of what my thoughts told me . . . even at the times when I was sure, SURE that they did not love me, it would not be long for them to convince me, beg me, plead with me, lie to me and eventually I would believe them. I didn't know what else to go on and in my heart I truly wanted to believe that I was loved and that I was worthy of love, even if it didn't quite feel like I was.

I felt that me trusting their word, was me loving them in return. Any feeling I had that didn't match up with that decision, I put down to the idea that I was likely insecure, telling myself it was probably because I had such a traumatic past, I figured that there must have been something wrong with me in some way, I'd

tell myself it was because I was likely broken or traumatised or that I couldn't trust myself or my feelings.

The problem with only trusting others words, meant that people were able to lie to me, cheat me, deceive me, gaslight me, manipulate me, coerce me and still with their words insist that they were loving me or 'trying' to love me, and I would often, (sometimes after a while of feeling upset, I would eventually believe them again and allow them to 'try again' or to 'get it right this time')

If they didn't tell me they loved me for any length of time, I literally was unable to tell if they did or not and I would find myself asking them to give me reassurance I somehow, to confirm whether they did love me or not, with their words, because I simply couldn't tell what love was in actions.

It was within that misunderstanding of love, that encapsulated my whole mistrust of relationships, mistrust of people, the insecurity, lack of confidence and self esteem.

It was also within that misunderstanding of love that I became an easy target for manipulation, lies, deceit, and people pleasing, which in essence was me simply lying to myself and others about my own true thoughts and feelings in order to appease others, in order not to upset them, or in order not to 'lose their love', and all the things that I truly did think, feel and envision within myself, I repressed with smoking, drinking, drugs, sex and spending.

This was how trauma manifested itself in my experience of relationships. My personal growth and my ability to achieve my full potential was stunted as a result, the trauma had me choosing abuse over care, choosing poverty over abundance, choosing silence over expression, choosing isolation over connection, choosing drugs over healing, choosing anger over peace, choosing sabotage over service.

MY JOURNEY TO LOVE

My journey to discovering love began in 2014, age 32, on the edge of myself, I was depressed, chronically stressed and broke, struggling with continual suicidal thoughts. It was a few months after the end of my third long term relationship, I left with both the children, walking away from everything we had built together, our home, our business, the cars, money, lifestyle, everything. My partner at the time did not believe I would leave, he did not believe that I would walk away from everything that we had built together, and the idea of me choosing to be alone, and raise the children alone as a single mum

without support, to him seemed crazy, however my stubbornness refused to let me give in, and I left.

I found myself a little 3 bedroom home and moved in with the kids, those first few weeks were terrifying, the gravity of the situation really hit me hard as I realised I had no support and no job, I hadn't applied for a job for years, I was used to hiring people for the business I ran with my ex partner, I had little to no confidence in own self or in my ability to work for anyone else. I felt like my life was over, I was out of ideas and out of resources, I recall thinking many times, 'I'm done. That's it. I've ruined everything.' I couldn't see a vision for how to move forward.

At that point in my life I had no belief in God, so praying to or asking God for solutions or ideas or ways to move forward was never even an option to my mind at that time. Instead I sat with myself in my kitchen late at night, smoking profusely, drinking bottles of wine, and going over and over in my mind the things I could do, the things I knew how to do, how could I put them to use and what might work, but nothing seemed to fit, it seemed my degree was of no use to gain myself a job locally, and all the skills I had acquired came through running the businesses, I had no certificates or qualifications for them, so it seemed to me that those skills could not be 'proved' on any application form, all the other ideas I came up with needed money, people, or time, which at that point, I simply did not have much available to me.

In between the barrage of ‘ruined everything’, ‘can’t survive this’, ‘can’t cope’, ‘worthless’, ‘should probably give up now’ thoughts that bombarded me relentlessly. There was one idea that I clung too. An idea that popped into my head every time I found myself on the edge of abandoning all hope completely, it was the idea that while I still had my imagination, my mind and my hands, that I should at least try to bring to life the dream that I had long, long imagined since my childhood, which was that of bringing the storyworlds in my mind to life.

Ever since I was a little girl I had visions of storyworlds and characters, the worlds I saw, I longed to go to, to escape the pain of the reality of my childhood, they were so beautiful, so wonderful and so magical, I wanted to live in them and be in them, I didn’t want to be part of the harsh and painful world that I experienced each day. I would sketch, write and draw worlds and characters and hide them from the world. I didn’t show anyone, and anytime I did pluck up the courage, I would become so passionate about them, many would laugh at me, calling me ‘wildly imaginative’ but to me the worlds were very real, they were real because I could see them, I could go to them anytime I desired, I could live in those spaces inside my mind and heart anytime I wanted just by closing my eyes. There were characters there who supported me, who were kind to me, who encouraged me and when life became especially tough, I would always turn to them, I was always safe in my inner worlds.

In my waking life, I could walk through the woods and forests and nature would come alive around me, I would see faces in the flowers, I could feel the presence of trees, they were all very alive to me, I would share the things I saw or felt with those around me, pointing out faces, or little worlds, yet my imaginings often seemed misunderstood by others, I recall a member of my family thinking I'd "gone crazy" and thought it would be a good idea to try have me sectioned in a psychiatric hospital. Without my knowing they spoke to one of my siblings about my penchant for 'talking about mushroom houses and fairy people' and asked if my sibling would sign a disclaimer form to have me sectioned and taken into hospital against my will. How grateful I am when my sibling replied to say 'no, there's nothing wrong with her, she's a storyteller' I have never been so grateful that they stood up for me and for my storyworlds or I dread to think what they may have tried to do to me.

I grew more fearful over the years of expressing these worlds or sharing the imaginings I had, fearful that someone around me would either try to lock me away or do something bad to me as a result of the things I saw, so I kept them inside, drawing them only in my journals or art books.

My dream however was always to bring them into this world, that others may be able to experience the beauty and wonder of them too.

During the months following the separation and as the feelings of hopelessness regarding the future grew inside me, I made the decision that if there was anytime to try and bring these dreams to life, that time was now.

I met a screenwriter friend online, and shared how much I wanted to bring these worlds to life, and asked if he would help me, he told me rather nonchalantly, to simply write them and bring them to life.

‘I can’t just bring them to life’ I’d tell him, ‘I’m not good enough, I don’t have what it takes, I haven’t learned enough about writing’, he seemed dumbfounded, knowing I had studied for many years, completely college and university courses, and studied some of the greatest books on storytelling and screenwriting, he tried for many months to work with me, encouraging me to get over the thoughts in my mind and just write the stories.

However I had no idea how to get over thoughts inside my mind, as far as I was concerned, my thoughts were my thoughts, how do you just get over your thoughts, they had always been there, it made no sense to me, I was absolutely convinced that I simply did not have what it took to write the stories and figured I would go to the grave with these stories untold inside me, and the thought of that devastated me. I would often argue with him, trying to defend my ‘inability’ to write. He had already heard so many of my ideas and stories and shared how much he really

loved my ideas and my visions, how he really wanted to help me bring them out, in a last ditch effort to support me, he offered to pay a life coach/ success coach who he worked with closely, to work with me.

Now I had never had a life coach before, I had never had any kind of therapy, or counselling or any sort of support in that area so I was apprehensive and rather against the idea of someone telling me how to live my life (at least that's what my imagination told me life coaches do) 'I don't need a life coach' I'd tell him, 'I live my own life, I don't need someone telling me how to live my life' however he was adamant that it would help me, my stubbornness was off the charts, I hated the idea of anyone telling me what to do or how to live, so ignorant to the role of a 'life coach' I argued and argued, he tried explaining what she would do, how she would do it, offering scenarios that may occur and how she would work with me, I was even more hesitant and not at all comfortable with talking about my past or my childhood or any of the thoughts or feelings I had in myself, after a LOT of to'ing and fro'ing, and his adamance that if the only thing I got out of it, was simply the ability to write my storyworlds, then it would be worth it, so I very reluctantly agreed.

Now, I don't know if you follow my @fairyworldwide or @corasdragons pages online, if you do you will see that I often talk about childhood domestic violence and the effect it has on

children and subsequently the effect it has as they grow into adulthood, I also talk a lot about various adversities in childhood. I'm very passionate about the work that I do with children and families in that area purely because of lived experience, little did I know that, the decision at this point in my life, to reluctantly agree to speak with a coach, would become one of the most transformational points of my entire life, it was at this point, where I would begin to see what I was truly made of, and learn the building blocks that helped me transform childhood trauma into something so powerful.

I met with her online, and one of the very first things she did after meeting and introducing herself was to give me a questionnaire to complete. Not just any questionnaire, but a self love questionnaire.

THE LOVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Fill this in' she told me 'and we'll talk about the results afterwards.'

Well wasn't this the little eye opener? Several pages of questions asking, how I love myself and how I love others.

I filled it all in, very happy with my answers, and returned it to her and then we sat looking over the score, I scored top marks for loving others, of course I thought to myself, I was the ultimate people pleaser, I always looked after others, I was always attentive to their needs, I was always hyper vigilant to others emotions and feelings, I always knew when something was up with another person, I was always there for them, to be with them, to understand them, to support them, to help them.

I could pick up a shift in mood from across the room, I always seemed to know where people were emotionally, at any given point in time, I was always a shoulder to cry on, and knew who needed support in any given moment, a motherly figure for anyone who needed care, a sentimental soul, everyone's 'go to place' for help, support or even advice. When anyone in the family needed something done, they came to me. They knew I would be the one to step up to the plate. It kept me going, it gave me a sense of being needed, a sense of value, it gave me a reason to live.

However, when it came to loving myself, 0% . . . all the answers I gave to the questions of how much I cared for myself or give to myself or looked after myself . . . nothing . . . my coach sat looking at me, I sat smiling. I expected her to say 'how wonderful' as she looked at the results, and without any emotion, she asked 'how do you feel about that Clairey?' Something in my mind told me this

potentially wasn't as wonderful as what I felt it was, but that didn't make any sense to me at the time.

'Well . . . I think that's wonderful' I began explaining 'I'm not an egotistical person or anything, or love myself like that, I'm not up my self in any way at all'

She just kept looking at me.

So I continued . . .

'I'm not like one of those people who think they are all that, it's just not me.'

I could tell from the blank stare that this wasn't something that she was looking to hear, and I didn't exactly know what to do about it. I looked over the questions and the answers that I'd given. I looked at the results and for the first time considered, maybe this wasn't so good after all . . . or was it?

I didn't know.

She asked me what I was looking to achieve by working with her, was it a goal with my career, with my family, with my finances? I began sharing with her that I'd like to be able to share the storyworlds that were in my heart, to write story books and bring those stories to life through animation and film, so I can share my ideas with the world.

She asked why I hadn't done it yet, and I told her I couldn't finish any of my stories, that they were wonderful and great characters, but I just couldn't seem to complete them. I told her how I thought maybe I needed to learn more or study harder, even though I'd studied at college and university, and read and studied many of the greatest books and courses on story writing up to that point, I still figured I must be missing something. I told her, maybe I hadn't learned 'the secret formula' yet, whatever that was.

She told me there was no secret formula, nothing I needed to learn, there was no studying I needed to do, which was the most bizarre thing I'd ever heard. I mean if that was the case, then I would have been able to write them by now, surely?

She began speaking about negative thoughts and the subconscious mind, and how they needed to be transformed or changed, which I didn't really understand, I'd never considered my thoughts as negative or positive before, as far as I was concerned, all the thoughts that I had, were just my thoughts, they were just me, they just were what they were, and the negative thoughts that she called them, were just thoughts that I had about myself anyway, anytime I called myself a name such as 'stupid' or told myself to get a grip or pull myself together, whatever it was, I felt it was usually because I was actually being stupid, or I was actually

needing to get a grip and pull myself together, so I didn't really understand the concept she was speaking of, or what she meant when she spoke about changing them.

She began speaking with me about the subconscious mind, how the ideas we pick up in childhood influence the things we do, and the ways we act including in our relationships and our careers.

She began sharing how going back and revisiting our childhoods could unlock our ability to do things we felt we couldn't. It all seemed airy fairy and wishful thinking to me, and I was very against the idea of visiting my childhood, I just didn't want to look at it, I didn't want to talk about it, I wasn't interested in doing any kind of psychological woo-hoo, it was dead to me, as far as I was concerned, it was in the past and that was where it was staying.

She told me how I needed to do the inner work which meant facing ideas or beliefs I picked up from my past if I wanted to create something new for myself. I felt overwhelmed, afraid, confused. I had never known of anything like this, and I'd tell her, 'I'm not interested in talking about my childhood, I don't get what that has to do with anything', at that time, I didn't regard my childhood as domestic abuse, I thought that it happened to everyone, all kids got smacked about, and screamed at, it was normal, it was just part of how we grew up, I believed that was

how you learned respect, it happened to us, it happened to our parents, it happened to their parents, it just was the way it was, I began to challenge many of the things she was saying, I'd tell her she'd got it all wrong, that there seemed no need to do any of that.

'I just want to write my books and screenplays, just teach me how to do that. I'm not interested in talking about my childhood or looking at any of the past, it's dead to me, it's gone, I just want to learn how to write my books, so can you coach me on that please'

She sat looking at me, and then continued trying to explain that the problem, wasn't that I couldn't write the book, the problem was that I wasn't loving myself enough to allow myself to feel safe enough to write the book, and it would only be through doing that, that I would be able to write the book.

I just couldn't get it.

My mind was just not wrapping around the concept of what she was saying and the more I tried to understand it, the more I felt like brain damage, she began saying things like 'You are a writer already Clairey' I just laughed 'no I'm not . . . I WANT to be a writer' I'd tell her, 'but I haven't written anything yet, I can't finish a darn story, therefore I'm Not actually a writer'

'No, you **are** a writer already Clairey' oh my gosh, honestly, it felt so frustrating to hear someone tell me I was something that I wasn't, and I couldn't get my head around why she felt it was ok

to say that I was things that I wasn't, it seemed like I was basically lying to myself, pretending to be something I wasn't, she would consistently say things like 'you are supported', 'you are a wonderful writer', 'you have what it takes' crunch time came when she told me 'You are so loved Clairey' . . . to which I could only laugh but not because it was funny, but literally because I could not find another emotion to express . . . it sounded like hippy type flowery power nonsense, and I felt so, so angry about it, 'Why do you say that?' I'd ask her, 'No one loves me, no one gives a sh* about me, I'm here to care for everyone else, but when it comes to me, no one loves me', she told me the thought wasn't true, that it was a lie, and I was just like 'What the f* do you know about my life, what do you know about what is truth or lies?! You don't know what I've been through, you don't know the experiences I've had, I'm telling you now, no one loves me! No one cares about me! No one gives a sh* about me. You don't know anything about me.' she replied with 'I know you better than you know yourself.' Well . . . as you can imagine . . . with a burning rage boiling up in my body, I made the decision there and then, that this coaching sh* wasn't for me, it wasn't going to work, 'I'll write the f* story by myself' I told her, I don't need this sh*.

'oh, you're just going to write a story now?' She replied, I told her 'yes, I'll just write the story, I'll do it this evening'

She replied ‘ok, well let me know how you get on with that, and if you need me, just drop me an email’

I was furious and recall thinking how I’m glad she had these meetings online with me because otherwise I may have physically went for her

It was almost as if she wasn’t even phased, as if she figured ‘oh she’ll be back’ and that was the end of our meeting. I was utterly convinced that I would prove her wrong, there was no way she would hear from me again, other than for me to share with her the book I’d just finished ‘without the need for dragging up BS’ I felt very angry, annoyed, insulted, and absolutely convinced I would prove her wrong and I would show her that I didn’t need her help, I didn’t need her showing me anything, ‘Life coach? Pfft . . . who needed a f*’ life coach? She doesn’t know anything about my life, I’ll show her, I’ll do this without her’ I didn’t need her trying to bring up a past that I had long since buried, and all I had to do was write the darn story.

So I sat down that evening fuelled with a burning fire, I was going to show her that I could, I told myself I didn’t need no flower power life coach filling my head with ideas of ‘just tell yourself you love yourself.’ as if that was going to make a difference and I began writing the story, absolutely convinced in my mind, ‘this time’ ‘this time I will finish it’

I sat down at the computer and I began..

THE BREAKDOWN/ BREAKTHROUGH

The Fairy & The Wolf . . it was already quite late but I was sure if I just stayed focused, I could get the story out and wrapped up in a couple of hours, I began line after line, pondering who the characters would be and where were they going and what were they up against . . the ideas were flowing, it all seemed to be going well and things joining up just as I had wanted them to, it was going so well in fact that I had not even considered the little thoughts that were creeping in to mind as I was writing, I got over the half way mark even thinking how particularly well it was going, feeling I'd obviously made a good choice by setting about to do it on my own, I could do it, who needed someone trying to change me or my thoughts, the story was forming, I began to see parts flesh out in front of me, I was pleased as I stopped to have a little look over all that I'd done up until that point and thought about using the last part of the story to wrap things up and join the dots together.

As I began pulling the different parts of the story together, I began to consider thoughts like, maybe it's a little on the long

side, maybe I should take a little part or two out, I hadn't really thought about an ending, maybe I should have considered having an ending before I began, that would have been helpful. Maybe I could wrap it up by bringing it to the point of the story, 'what was the point in the story' there really wasn't a point, I wrote it purely to prove something, I guess, it wasn't really going anywhere in particular, and it's not like anyone was even going to read it, I just wanted to prove to my coach that I could, I considered thoughts of how I wasn't exactly going to be showing it to anyone, just like all my stories really. Maybe it was a waste of time, maybe there was just no point to it, just like every other story I'd written, no one was ever going to read them, no one would even care whether these characters make it or not, who would be interested in anything I was writing. As the thoughts were swirling around my mind, I began to feel very sorry for myself, yet at the back of my mind the thought kept coming in, I had to show her, I had to prove I could write this story, 'come on now Clairey, push through, make it happen, get to the end.' Almost defeated I picked myself up and began trying again, even if it wasn't making complete sense, at least just wrap it up so it's done.

I carried on writing, by that point I felt none of the story was making any sense at all, almost as if I was making up random gibberish just to write something that could pass for even a rubbish type of ending, as I was writing I began crying, the

thoughts of ‘what a terrible writer I am’ began overwhelming my mind, ‘what a waste of time it all was’, how I’d been desiring this all my life, and it was all just wishful thinking, a fancy dream, ‘possible for other people, for writers, for those who could lie that kind of life, but not for someone like me, not for Clairey from the block’, ‘who cared what Clairey from the scheme wrote?’ The thoughts went round and round ‘I was never going to be able to do it right, every time I ever wrote a story this is what happened’, ‘I would never be an author, never be able to write these stories’, ‘no one would ever see these worlds’

It became a relentless bombardment of demeaning mental bullying and criticism, and they kept coming one after the other and so did the tears, I still wasn’t able to recognise at that point that those thoughts were not just thoughts, but actually were ‘me speaking to myself’

‘I’ll never get it right’ I’d tell myself ‘I’ll never be able to bring these story worlds to life, I’ll never see my books written, I’ll never have my characters on screen, I’ll never be able to bring my dream to life’ sobbing, tears streaming down my face, as I thought what was the point in even being here, the thoughts became more intense as I cried out how much I hated myself, and I hated my life, tears streaming down my face and soaking the keys of the keyboard, I picked it up and banging it on the desk, yelling and swearing, calling myself all the names under the sun, you useless,

worthless good for nothing piece of . . .’ ‘can’t even write a five minute story!! Call yourself a writer, you’re a f* joke!’ a vile tirade of abuse began pouring from my mouth, rage and anger filled my whole body, I became consumed by a spirit of fury that seemed to completely take over me, screaming and yelling and growling and snarling and fists curled up whacking everything and hitting everything and without warning, I felt all of myself and my spirit shift out of my body, almost as if I had stepped to the side of myself, and everything was unnaturally calm and still, except I caught a glimpse of my body beside me, and it was still violently screaming and snarling like an animal, having lost all control, and then just as quickly as I felt my spirit step aside, I shifted back into my body again . . . and I just stopped still as the dead of night, looking at my own hands in front of me, looking at the mess around me, and I realised ‘. . . that was me . . . or rather, it wasn’t . . . but it was, it was in my body’

I saw a monster in myself, a violent angry dragon of a monster.

I sat down in my chair in stunned silence, trying to process what I had experienced.

I had no words.

I had nothing that could explain what had just happened.

I’d never experienced anything like that, I didn’t know of anything like that happening. It seemed out of this world and I couldn’t explain it. I didn’t know what to do, should I call someone, who

would I call, what would I even say and then my coach came to mind.

I reached over and picked up the keyboard, thankfully it still worked, I began searching my emails for her address and wrote a quick email to her, telling her what I had tried to do that evening, how I wanted so much to prove her wrong, and then explaining everything that happened afterwards, and how when I'd tried to do it, how a barrage of thoughts took over my mind, then how I turned into this angry infuriated monster dragon type thing, how it took over my body without me even noticing that was happening, and then how I was moved out of myself for a few split seconds, and wasn't in my body anymore, and then I was back again, and what was that, and more importantly, how do I get that dragon out of me.

She replied very quickly, very happy to hear from me and quite astounded by my experience, we spoke briefly and this was the moment where I submitted, and was willing to try the things she was asking me to try.

I felt awful, consumed with shame, guilt and disgust, I didn't want to even look at myself and yet in the same breath, was willing to do anything she asked to 'get it out of me'

The very next session with my coach, I began learning some very simple practices that I introduced into my daily habits, slowly at

first, but I was willing to do them, no matter how silly I felt, no matter how ashamed I felt, no matter how embarrassing I thought it was, I did one thing at a time, and then moved on to the other, until I was using and practicing most of them on a day to day basis.

All of the practices and understandings I teach about in Cora's Dragons Training course, include these practices, such as affirmations, journaling, meditation, and also daily rituals and routines for eating, sleeping and cleansing habits.

THE PRACTICES

One of the first exercises that she asked me to do was stand in front of a mirror and tell myself 'I love you' which for the first couple of times was VERY weird, I don't know if you have ever done mirror work before, or do affirmations in the mirror or how that feels the first time you do that at least for me, it was the most strangest experience.

I first began standing in front of the mirror in the morning, and in the evening, just saying 'I love you' and to begin with, I thought it was just ridiculous, I was standing in front of a mirror talking to myself and telling myself I love myself, this is just embarrassing, I

was very conscious of my kids potentially walking in the room and catching me, potentially thinking I was crazy and had lost my mind, I was just not down for it at all, but I kept it up, every morning and night and I began to realise after the few times that I was having thoughts in my mind coming up and very loudly in my head telling myself ‘this is ridiculous Clairey, you’re looking really stupid right now, you’re talking to yourself in a mirror, telling yourself you love yourself, you need to stop this, this is ridiculous’ but I carried on anyway, and they got louder, and they got stronger and I began to notice some mornings when I got up and I was doing the work and telling myself ‘I love you’ I started to respond in my body and this was when I started to really believe what I was telling myself in the mirror and I started to have this juxtapose going on between what I was saying and the thoughts that were going on in my mind, so I could see in the mirror, my body responding when I spoke kindly to myself, so I started upping it, started pointing out features ‘I really love your nose, I love your eyes, I love the shape of your face’ and really pointing out all the different parts of myself that I love and these thoughts had become strong that some morning when I got up to do it they would overwhelm me and I would break down in tears and I spoke to my coach about it and shared with her ‘gosh this morning it was so strong’ shed ask what happened and id say ‘the thoughts became too much’ and this is where I had to learn to start capturing every thought and putting them to paper and then

I started learning these five practices that I began to use whenever I caught one of these thoughts, whenever I journalled it out and put it to paper

For the course of around 4 weeks I practiced every day and every night, religiously, and without fail, I began spending a lot of time with myself in meditation and prayer, and using journalling I was able to find memories and experiences from my childhood and my past, that mimicked some of the things that were going on within my mind and my body, I learned to ask my own self questions and find where my pain was, I learned how to listen internally to what was coming up for me, and to validate it, rather than push it away, I learned how to sit with some very deep intense emotions in my own body, without reaching for alcohol, cigarettes, or any other vice to try to push them away, or pretend they don't exist.

For the record, sitting with some of those feelings, felt like hell.

I cried a lot, I raged a lot, I experienced a lot of flashbacks and returns to experiences in my childhood or past relationships that I did not feel I wanted to ever look at again, I hadn't realised that many experiences of the past were still living within me, that I thought I had 'pushed them away' but they still existed, they were still vying for my attention and fighting for my love, every day inside my mind, and with my experience of life, which now I recognise, as those parts of my self, past and life that needed to be seen, heard, and loved so they could be put to rest.

I had simply never known how to 'love' them, it completely confused me, the idea of learning how to love myself and yet I hated the things I saw, or heard or felt inside myself, I couldn't connect the two. So, I figured I must have the "love thing" all wrong too.

Through the practices I began to slowly learn what love actually was, I found my ability to focus become stronger and sharper, and especially when under pressure, I learned to anchor into a space of peace which helped me greatly in feeling grounded, safe and secure inside myself no matter what was going on around me. I found clarity, hope and potential for the future, I began to build trust in myself and in my ability to do the things I always desired and to make a change where I felt I could, I began to strengthen my relationship and connection both to myself and to God. Primarily through them all, I began to feel seen, heard and understood.

As I worked these practices into my daily life, I began to foster an environment in my body and self where I felt safe and able to release a lot of pain, a lot of thoughts, and a lot of stored up memories and fears I had been holding onto for so long, and process them out of my body. As that pain was released, and as the 'dragons' each found rest, the environment within my heart and mind began flowing rivers of peace, serenity, and wonder into

every moment of my day. That presence and feeling stayed with me, morning and night.

After a manner of weeks, moving through daily experiences transforming my thoughts and journaling my feelings and imaginings, as I released and found rest for some of the major 'dragons' that I was carrying, I began having profound spiritual experiences, it seemed the more I cleared out that old environment within my heart, mind and body, the more love, peace and power was flooding in, each of those floods were taking me to spaces and places and experiences that I had never experienced before, almost as if my body or mind was realising 'actual chemical highs' from within me, I did not know at first what was happening to me or what to attribute it to, at the time I had no knowledge or understanding of transformation or coaching, I hadn't experienced these feelings of empowerment before, back then I did not have space in my heart, my mind or my body to feel it, I just knew I was experiencing something amazing and having beautiful visions, hearing kind, loving and incredible thoughts and ideas, and feeling intensely powerful sometimes overwhelming feelings within my body, I began having visions of spaces and places I could never have dreamed and yet it wasn't just a dream, it was like my whole heart, mind and body was physically and spiritually going to these places, experiencing them in the here and now, they were beyond anything I had ever

experienced, some days it was literally like a heavenly realm was merging with the world in front of me and I could see things around me that others seemed completely oblivious too. At first I didn't want to tell anyone because I thought they'd think I was crazy and yet at the same time, I just couldn't keep it to myself, it was so incredible and so wonderful and so beautiful I often found myself pointing them out to friends or family or anyone nearby, 'hey did you see this', 'hey did you notice that' many people would stop, look and only then seem to be aware that something magical and beautiful had been there all along and it seemed at points most days, they were all I could see.

One morning I was showering and going through my morning routine, and had the most deep, visceral and encompassing spiritual experience, I have never been able to bring fully to words, every time I recount what happened I only ever seem to be able to express a portion of it at a time, then I share again, and it seems almost as if I'm telling a different story, because there was simply so much, it was like experiencing a multitude of experiences, across multiple spaces, timelines and understandings all in the same moment, I often feel our human bodies are simply too limited to comprehend vastness like that, it's like my words cannot express the immensity of the experience, because they are so limited, I saw colours that were outwith our spectrum of colour vision, I heard sounds outwith our spectrum of sound, there were

feelings, and other spiritual ‘bodies’ (I say bodies, but they were different from what we imagine a body to be), it was as if I moved between worlds, and saw things and heard things about myself, my life, my past, my future that left me utterly stunned, it was an experience that completely wiped my whole understanding of what it meant to be who I am, to be alive and to experience life, I have been forever transformed from it, and I will remember it for as long as I live. The most profound understanding I came away from it with, was the knowing inside myself that God is real, that He actually exists, I recall dropping to my knees on the floor in the hall outside the bathroom door, dumbfounded and amazed, with tears streaming down my face, just saying over and over to myself ‘Oh my Gosh, God is real, He is actually real. He is actually real’ and the realisation that at that time in my life, I didn’t have anyone in my closest family or friends who fully believed in God, and that dreaded realisation of ‘no one is going to believe me’

I used to think people who believed in God were crazy, I actually did, those people standing in the street with their little signs chanting ‘Jesus’, ya’ll need saved’ type thing, I was like ‘what is even with that?!’

I recall that morning realising, they must all know something that I had never, ever known, and now that I know, I wondered what everyone I knew would now think of me, but at the same I was

also thinking ‘well do I really care what they think?’ I felt so elated in my body, my energy was so high, I was so bright, literally like I had been given a whole new lease of life, it seemed all fear I ever had was completely washed away, my mind was crystal clear, the memories that I used to have flashing in my mind were gone, it was like they had been washed out and my body felt calm, at peace, there was no anxiety, there was no uncomfortableness, I felt like a new person, for the days and weeks after, I would have wonderful visions for things I could be or do or create, the thoughts in my mind were gentle, kind, loving, encouraging, and the peace and calm I felt in my body meant I could take action on those things I envisioned and thought, without any worry or fear attempting to stop me, it was over the course of that month that I wrote Cora’s Dragons, and began writing another couple of books (not yet released) and then started up my company and began reaching out to organisations, I was having ideas do things and thinking ‘oh I could do that’, and then ‘yes I Could do that, I am going to do that’ it was literally a mind of ease, and joy, and flow, it was amazing.

One of the scriptures I later learned in Malachi 3:10, says ‘Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room to store it.’

That was literally the experience that I feel I had of going through the releasing of old (or what I now know as repentance), and turning my heart and my mind to the truth of my potential, and clearing that space out, in order for God to come in and when He did He poured out SO much love, SO much peace, SO much energy, SO much power, SO much blessing, filling my body, mind and heart so completely, so fully that I had not enough room to store it, it overflowed out of me and into everything I touched and still does, whether it is family, friends, work, even those I don't know or have ever met. Those experiences were my first taste of what love truly felt like. I learned primarily both what was within my own control and what was actually not. I learned that loving myself in actions, created a space for real love to come and fill up my heart, mind and body. I didn't force it or fake it, or push it, or demand it, I simply cleared the space for it to grow and develop within me, and in that, I learned I had the ability to be able to then love another, and support them in creating space for love to grow and develop within themselves too, not only when times were good, but most especially, when times were hard, overwhelming and sometimes fearful. I see the real work as helping put to rest anything and everything that is not of love, so that real love can be fostered within.

When scripture talks about faith without works being dead, I believe that love without action is dead too. Love didn't come to

me for no reason, it came as a result of the actions that I had taken in myself with my memories, my thoughts, beliefs and feelings in my own body, and how I made space for them. It came as a result of listening to them, staying with them even when it was uncomfortable, seeking to understand where and why and how the thoughts, beliefs or imaginings were even arising within myself, so my own self felt heard and seen. Those actions, were the ones that helped me to transform the wretched and toxic relationship I had created within myself, into something that was able to foster the spirit of God and when those loving actions allowed fear, pain, and hurt to be put to rest, the power and immensity of love could not help but fill the space that was left behind.

Love truly does transform, but to love someone, yourself or another takes more than simply saying, 'I love you', or holding them or buying nice things. Love is something you do for yourself and others to support the creation of that space where love can grow and develop within. That is when love truly transforms. The power that love has when it fills the body, can transform your whole perspective of life, it can change how you think about yourself and others, it can change how you feel inside your own body. It can literally blow away everything you think you are that you will never, ever be the same, That's what it done for me.

The more familiar I became with myself and how I loved myself, the more I began to attribute the different aspects of what I was doing, and how it was supporting me to grow.

I was also then able to show these same traits in my relationships with others, including family and friends

As a result I began to learn there were ultimately 5 fundamental aspects that I did over and over that brought confidence, self belief and courage into my life. I found myself growing and developing in ways I had always dreamed, and I began practicing the same things with others around me, at first, with my own children, and as a result I began to see them flourish.

I also saw them going through their own transformations of self, as they (just like I did with my coach initially) fought the love I was offering to them, and as I watched how they were reacting in the same ways that I was reacting within myself when I first began loving myself, I could understand where they were, and therefore everything they said at that time, I knew none of it was personal.

I had the strength to stand still, holding space as they transformed and released thoughts, ideas and beliefs that they were holding on to previously that were hindering their own confidence and self belief, and I began to see them grow as a result of the love I was able to truly give them.

I began to feel more free as a mother, I am so grateful for experiencing the power of that love in my lifetime, so that I have the ability to be able to give it to my children in the actions and words that I shared with them.

And sure, I wasn't perfect, I had moments where it became so much that I lost my own temper or shouted back or demanded that it stop, and then realised and had to love myself back to a space of peace, and then return to my children and explain myself.

One thing that is so beautiful about the practices is that there is no running from myself, just as my children cannot run from their selves, it is clear and we all know when love is present and when it is not, and when it is not, we can ask exactly for the thing we need, and we all know and understand the language.

We all know and understand that in that moment, we would like to be loved, with these aspects, and it humbles us especially if we realise we have been doing the opposite.

Because we also know ultimately what impact that has on long term confidence and self belief too, we are able to fix any mistake we have made as quickly as we can in order to get back on track with ourselves and with one another.

Therefore true forgiveness is possible, recuperation is possible, growth is possible, repair is possible and more love is possible.

There are 5 ways I recognise love, and know if I am loved by another person without them having to say I love you, or if I am actually loving another, without having to say I love you, and also how I recognise if I am not loved, even if someone is telling me they love me and it all relates back to the simple actions I used to love my self. Many people can say ‘Oh but I do love them’ but I’m not talking about just the feelings or the emotions of how someone feels for you when they are feeling happy or joyous for or with you, I’m talking about the actions that have the power to help you to grow, transform and develop love within yourself in order to reach your full potential in order to experience the powerful love of God within your own being.

Over the next section of this book I will go through these five fundamental principles of love and how they help to foster an environment for love to grow. I believe all love starts with self love. If you don’t know how to love yourself, you will not actually know how to love another person. I say this because it is only through loving yourself that you realise just how difficult it actually is, just how challenging, convincing and at times ferocious your own mind can be when it attempts to hold on to it’s old ideas and beliefs. Once you understand how challenging that work is, you will then have a taste for just how challenging it can be to support and work with another, you’ll likely develop

many of these principles of loving others simply as a byproduct of practicing them with yourself.

THE 5 FUNDAMENTALS OF LOVE IN ACTION

Love is always needed, wanted and required, however love is most frequently required and needed the most, when it is the hardest to be able to love. Many of us feel at these difficult times, that loving someone comes in the form of accepting, and sometimes even placating behaviours that otherwise may be destructive. Many feel if they are not ‘allowed’ to behave in such ways, that it must indicate a lack of love and yet from what I have learned, real love is far more simple than that, so simple that it can be given in all situations, no matter whether the behaviours are ‘acceptable’ or not. Which means even if I do not accept or agree with either another’s behaviours or actions or even my own, I can still show love in that moment for them or for myself, and that love will be what supports either of us to heal, grow, overcome or if necessary, even change and develop the behaviours or actions beyond what we otherwise would have been able to. Real love is powerful and simple, it’s essence flows throughout the world very tenderly and yet it’s presence has the power to bring kings to their knees.

1.

PATIENCE / PRESENCE

Define:

- Patience: The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious
- Being Present: Focused and engaged in the here and now, not distracted or mentally absent.

The first key I learned to unlocking love, was patience, and what it actually meant to have patience, how much of a difference patience made in any relationship, be it with yourself, a partner, child, friend, even a colleague or stranger. Previously I was very impatient with myself, I expected myself to just be able to ‘let go’ of things, or ‘get over’ things or ‘ignore’ things, I expected myself to be able to get things right first time, or know or understand how things should be, I expected myself to have the answers to things in life and be able to just get on with things, and when I didn’t, I would feel frustrated, annoyed, angry, or as if

there was something wrong or broken about myself. Having patience with myself, taught me how to be present when the ish of life was hitting the proverbial fan, I learned how to listen and be present when I was met with opposition in my mind, thoughts, imaginings or beliefs.

Many times I would experience triggers from the past or seemingly unnecessary worries or thoughts, they'd sometimes appear to be irrational, erratic or make no sense, sometimes they were memories from the past or fearful imaginings of the future, often I didn't fully understand where they came from or why they were there, and for many years I felt I had little to no control over them, almost as if they came into my mind like a freight train, 'out of the blue' and without a second thought, I'd find myself on that proverbial thought train hurtling through the world, and sharing those ideas or thoughts with anyone around me as if they were factual, as if they were the actual truth, and pushing through anything that tried to deny them or tell me they could be anything other than what I thought they were.

It seemed I couldn't stop myself from 'saying', 'doing', 'thinking' or 'being' a certain way (even when I didn't want to be) fuelled by the anxiety or panic that was surging through my body. I figured any thought, idea or belief that came to my mind 'must' be true to some degree, that it must have come for a reason, rarely if ever did I consider that the thought might not be, what I

initially thought it was, so I would often act on those thoughts as if they were truth and basically cause a riot in my life as a result.

When I began to simply pay attention to the thoughts, feelings and imagined visions that were coming up within me, and hold space simply to witness the experiences as they occurred, without deciding whether what I was witnessing was true or not, when I was simply present and noticing what the thought was, what it said inside my mind, how it felt in my body, what visions I imagined in my heart, and just witnessed them, seeing them as what they are, without judgement, I found I could see them more objectively than before, and rather than assume them to be true for this now moment, I began to be present with them, letting myself know that I could, see or hear or feel what was going on inside me, but not necessarily see the experience as something that had to be true about this moment, although recognise them simply as as possibility that they may be, but not necessarily definitely are.

I found when I was present with the thoughts in my mind and feelings in my body, and considering them simply as possibilities rather than truths, it meant I was able to slowly open my mind to other potential possibilities also.

Alternatively, when I was not present with them or recognising them, if I tried to push the thoughts or feelings away or deny them, the feelings and energy would come back again even stronger than before. I found in considering the possibility,

that it 'may be true' but that also, it may not, and maybe another possibility may actually be true instead . . . I was then able to calm my heart, mind and body to a point where I could look at the various possibilities, and then decide for myself, which feels better in myself or which makes more sense, it also gave me the opportunity to consider, were these thoughts and ideas were reflections of this now moment? Or were they flashbacks from the past? Or projections of the future?

It took a lot of practice of doing this over and over again, to get to a point of begin able to objectively look at my thoughts just as potentials and possibilities, before making any decisions about their validity.

My aim then was to catch the thoughts BEFORE they took hold of my body . . . before I had a physiological response. To determine whether the thought was a fear from the past, a projection of the future, or something in this now moment. I knew if my body was already engaged with the thought, then I would be flooded with emotion, and once the emotions were flowing, I would find it very difficult to stop my mouth or my actions from acting out as if the potential was actually true.

Catching thoughts before they take hold of my body has been a real practice, it has meant slowing down and paying attention, being patience and being present to whatever is coming up inside of me in any and every moment of my day to day life.

One of the ways I allow myself to become fully aware and to recognise what I am seeing, thinking or feeling inside, is to journal and write down my experiences, especially if I feel overwhelmed or if a thought comes out of the blue and sideswipes me and also takes me on an emotional rollercoaster. When I write down and journal what is coming up, I am able to see clearly what is going on in my heart, mind and body, and whether my perspective is looking from the past or the future, or whether I am experiencing something in relation to this now present moment.

If I don't stop to pay attention or give awareness to what is coming up inside me throughout my day, or how my imaginings, thoughts and feelings are influencing my decisions and behaviours, they can easily go unnoticed by my conscious mind and before I know what is happening, my behaviours and decisions are being influenced by those thoughts and feelings, and I begin acting out and speaking out in ways that may or may not be serving the highest potential or possibility for my life, the thoughts would consume my mind, feelings overtaken my body and my mouth and then I'd have caused a riot in my life as a result, which because I was unaware of what I've just done and not paid attention to the forces inside my own mind that were driving my behaviours, I probably then would have put the blame on whoever I was dealing with or whoever else was in the vicinity at the time.

When it comes to growth and development and fulfilling our potential. It is important that all of the ways we think, feel, speak and act are in alignment with the highest potential and highest truth for who we are in our own life in order to bring that truth to pass. We also must be aware of what our own highest potential and truth actually look like for our self, in order to be in agreement with that. Being able to be patient and present in order to recognise how we are seeing, thinking and feeling through out the day in various situations and align that with truth throughout the day helps us to know what thoughts and beliefs are driving our behaviours and decisions, and whether they are contributing to our life or sabotaging it.

As I grow more fully into my highest potential, and move into new areas of growth and development, I still subsequently experience bombardments of fearful imaginings, thoughts or feelings inside myself that I require to put to rest before I can move fully forward. I know if they are not being put to rest (through self love in action) they will keep moving through me and causing riots in my life as a result. We're all susceptible to fearful thoughts, or imaginings in our lives and those thoughts or imaginings may be different for different people based on their own unique life experiences, from childhood, from relationships, to visions and dreams of the future.

Once I became comfortable with recognising the various ways triggers would come up in me and being patient and present with what I saw, heard or felt, I began to feel a lot more comfortable around others who were experiencing triggering thoughts or feelings in themselves, and was able to be present and patient with them during those moments of overwhelm.

Recognising that whatever they were experiencing was unique to them, and not necessarily linked to the moment they were having with me. It meant whenever someone I loved or even someone I didn't know became overwhelmed with emotions and began behaving in ways that would not seem to do themselves any favours, rather than having the initial thought of judging them or assuming the worse, or even trying to deny, push away, distract or leave them, I had the ability to be there, and stay with them, in the uncomfortableness and simply ask questions that allowed them to recognise where they were, what was coming up for them, whether it was past, present or future experience, and support them as they simply became aware of where this was coming from, without any judgement about what it meant, and without taking any personal responsibility for it.

It became a super power that many of those around me whom I loved, were almost shocked by when I was able to hold space for them in their triggered moments.

If you do not know how uncomfortable and unsettling it feels looking at your own self and staying patient and present with what is coming up for you, without judging, punishing or trying to push it away, it will be very difficult to have the patience and presence needed for another, especially as they move through the discomfort of not only recognising something in themselves, but also knowing it is being witnessed by you in that moment. When you have a full understanding of the discomfort of such an experience, you are able to understand the humility required to hold space in the face of another's exposure, whilst holding no judgment and as a result, you are able to meet another on a level that to them will feel safe, seen and witnessed, especially if they may have previously been attacked, punished, hurt or otherwise.

When patience and presence are given without judgement, either to oneself, or to another, or from another, fear is able to be released with grace, and love has the opportunity to grow more deeply than ever before in ourselves and those around us.

That ability to be seen, and heard, in truth, without judgement, no matter if it is uncomfortable, painful or even considered 'ugly' is so incredibly healing to our soul.

And just as you give that patience and presence to yourself, you find you are able to show more patience and presence for others when they feel afraid, vulnerable, exposed or out of sorts, it's one of the most fundamental loving actions that you can do for yourself and for another and have done for

yourself, to simply recognise, and bare witness to the truth of who you are in any moment, and that includes the both the comfortable parts of our self and the often considered ‘ugly’ parts of ourselves.

‘I’M STILL LEARNING TO LOVE THE PARTS OF MYSELF THAT NO ONE CLAPS FOR’ - RUDY FRANCISCO

THE LACK OF PATIENCE / PRESENCE

Just as with all things in life, where there is the potential for love to be developed in a relationship, friendship or partnership, there also lies the potential that love can be diminished or destroyed within a relationship, friendship or partnership, and often you can find that occurring in a space where a lack of patience or presence is occurring.

Many times people are often simply unaware of the damage that can be caused to relationships and especially the ‘creating of a loving environment’, when elements of patience and presence are not actively fostered, and especially at moments where someone is opening their heart or mind about something they struggle with and instead of being met with patience or presence, they find themselves met with impatience, anger, frustration, distraction, or another beings lack of interest or attention, seemingly not caring about what is being shared. Many people often report as a narcissistic trait, and can be incredibly damaging.

When someone is impatient when another is attempting to share their thoughts, feelings or imaginings, or is counting down the minutes until they stop talking simply so they can get their word in without actually listening properly, paying attention, or being present to the moment and experience of another, it can very quickly result in the sharer’s heart or mind shutting down and preventing further sharing, in a bid to protect itself, causing a person to hide or try to bury the fearful thought, imagining or feeling inside themselves, covering it with a sense of shame or even anger, and as a consequence a person very often feels unheard, unseen, unsafe, as if their experience doesn’t matter to those around them, it can induce feelings of isolation, loneliness, disconnection.

Could you imagine how frustrating it may feel if someone you were close to was being impatient with you while you wished to share something vulnerable or important, or they were attempting to distract you from what was coming up, or they were denying your feelings, or telling you, you shouldn't feel that way, or that you shouldn't think that way or shouldn't see that way, or pushing it aside or pretending it doesn't matter, all the while you feel in yourself that you'd like to be witnessed and you'd like their patience and presence while you share something that means something to you. If the other person is unable or unavailable to be present or patient with you, you may feel it necessary to close down and not share the truth of what is going on for you internally.

As a result these feelings and emotions can begin to bottle up internally. If this happens on more than a few occasions, and especially if it becomes a consistent pattern in your relationship, this can begin to manifest in ways that are not healthy. If you cannot feel heard in a safe, peaceful environment, you may begin to look for other ways to feel heard, this could result in uncontrollable emotional upset or a lack of control on your part, where you feel frustrated, or even angry when trying to express yourself, which can potentially make conversations unsafe for all involved.

One way this frustration can manifest is in an attempt to be seen or heard in other space, which may turn into criticising

your partner outwith your relationship, either to friends, colleagues, co workers or others. Now it may indeed be true that you feel unheard or unseen in your relationship, however I've often found this type of 'talking about your partner' to other people is not something that is conducive to a healthy relationship, and often can cause those around you, such as friends or family to bring their own judgments regarding your relationship or your partner, and those thoughts, ideas and beliefs can influence you and your relationship in even more destructive ways.

There are ways you can seek healthy support, such as through counselling or therapy where you can speak about the difficulties and ask for techniques or ways that you can use to attempt to share with your partner your need to be heard, seen and safe within your relationship in order to re-establish the ability to communicate within your relationship. It may even be a good idea for both of you to attend couple counselling or therapy in order to find ways that work for both of you.

Not having patience or presence with another, especially in a romantic relationship can also manifest in other ways such as forcing thoughts, feelings or imaginings that desire witnessing into a space internally where they feel they have to be hidden, or contained or covered over, inadvertently creating a 'ticking time bomb' of pent up sadness, frustration or anger that feels it has no controlled outlet for expression, and instead can then become

volatile, and unexpectedly unleashed at any moment, usually when no one is expecting or prepared for it, and can be very damaging for all those around as it often carries not just ‘an issue’ that requires to be spoke about in that moment, but every other pent up issue alongside it dating back goodness even knows how long.

How many times have you experienced, either another person, or yourself, literally unleashing a torrent of fury and pent up emotions from days, weeks maybe even months before and hurtling them all out in one swoop at someone near or dear to you, we often regard people who do so as neurotic, or passive aggressive, when the root of it, has been either not expressing the truth safely, or not finding a safe space to share the truth and feel heard, seen and safe.

Emotions are energy in motion, they are meant to move us to express and to take action, they are not meant to be held in or pent up, they are not meant to be contained. The energy of emotion cannot remain hidden or repressed within the body, it cannot be pressed down, pushed away or suppressed for long. It is very unhealthy to suppress emotions, they simply must be allowed space to be safely and healthily expressed.

This is another reason counsellors are so valuable in their positions, as they offer spaces to share thoughts, feelings and memories or imaginings in a safe space without judgement or

retribution and therefore help people to simply feel heard, and seen in their individual experience of life.

Now one thing to note, especially in regards to the emotional ‘blow outs’ that sometimes occur in relationships. There are times, where sometimes people lose control of themselves when they blow out to this degree after a trigger, and may not necessarily be safe to be around, where they may have the potential to attack, or harm, or hurt, or blame or create a fearful environment for another.

Your ability to love yourself precedes your ability to love others, if you’ve ever travelled on a flight, you’ll often hear the attendant share how in the case of an emergency, you require to put your own mask on before attempting to help another. Love for your self is an absolute necessity first and foremost before you can have that love for another.

There are those who are able to sit down and share their thoughts, feelings and imaginings with you in a safe, controlled, albeit maybe even emotional way, and even though may feel emotional or upset, they still have the physical and cognitive ability to control themselves, their behaviour and their words, in order to respect you and the space you are holding, whilst also formulating how they feel, what they are experiencing or what they may like to experience differently without losing control of themselves, and there are those who may have so much pent up emotions or unheard thoughts or feelings, that when attempting

to share how they feel can lose control of their own self or with whom you feel afraid or in danger, in situations like that, it is important to protect yourself and if required, move away from the space as quickly as possible, you are under no obligation to remain in any space where you do not feel safe.

However when someone is safely being honest and open about the truth of what is going on in their heart, in their mind or in their body, and have a healthy sense of humility, in this space, your patience and presence is like a healing balm, that not only helps them feel safe, seen and witnessed, can also open the doorway to love being fostered within their being and supporting them in reaching their highest potential within.

‘WHEN WE TELL OUR STORY IN SAFE SPACES, WE FIND HEALING.’

When we are impatient, distracted, absent, unavailable or in denial about how we feel in ourselves and do not make space in our lives to allow ourselves to be aware of and witness to what’s really going on within us, or to share it safely with others, we slowly begin to develop feelings of being unseen, and unheard, a

quiet resentment is created within, which can develop into feelings of frustration or even anger.

One of the key fundamental needs we have as human beings, is to be seen, heard and expressed. When we don't make space for ourself to witness and listen to what is going on in our own self internally, we are unable to express what is real for ourself to others and it can have a huge detrimental effect on our wellbeing, and before long, we may begin to take those frustrations out on those close to us, ultimately destroying the capacity for love to grow, and inadvertently compounding trauma and dysfunction.

Now, from time to time, in every relationship, there will come times and moments where it is simply not the right time or space in a particular moment to be able to give attention or presence to a particular conversation, and it may have to be scheduled for a more convenient time, which is another healthy way of being able to set aside time to share, talk and hear one another fully.

However that will require effort on both of your parts to ensure that time is honoured, if the time doesn't happen and you find yourself consistently not having that presence, that patience, not having that attention or attentiveness for things that are coming up for you that you would like to share and where feeling heard and seen would help you to heal, to grow or to transform,

you risk a build up, and that is certainly not going to help you overcome difficulties that you might be struggling with inside yourself, and will not support your need to express, to feel seen, heard and safe, in order that you can grow and transform and heal in your whole self. Whole love helps you to feel whole, and to grow into all that you are destined to be and the purpose of our relationships, are to support and help each other to do that.

Many people sometimes feel the need to hide the truth of what is coming up in themselves, for a variety of reasons, such as fear, shame or guilt, it can feel very frightening to be exposed to another human being in such a way, many are so used to only being seen on a surface level, only being seen for who they tell people they are, rather than for what is really going on underneath, it is very uncomfortable for many people to be so open and truthful about the aspects of themselves that others 'don't clap for'.

It is much easier to distract ourselves from those uncomfortable feelings and there are many avenues on offer for distraction, from drugs and alcohol to sex, gambling, shopping.

If you were being impatient with yourself, or you were trying to distract yourself from what was coming up, or you were in denial about it, or pushing it aside or pretending that it doesn't matter or not actually being present with what is coming up in order to be able to heal it, you will push it aside or distract yourself from

it, and similarly if you are in relationship with another person and something was coming up for them, you would generally feel impatient, or distracted, absent or in denial about what was coming up for them, or unavailable for them when they needed you to be there and be present with them.

That denial, disregard, ignoring, lack of attention, lack of support, presence or patience all show a lack of love.

Similarly if someone was doing the same thing with you if you needed that presence, if something was coming up for you, and they weren't there for you, or they weren't showing that presence or they were distracted or something else was coming up, you would not feel heard, seen or loved and it would cause you in some degrees to either begin withdrawing or becoming resentful in yourself and find other avenues to feel seen, heard and loved.

Simply being witnessed, without being punished, pushed away, denied, told you are wrong, (or worse) someone saying 'you shouldn't feel that way' helps us to actually recognise our own humanity and feel supported, we recognise that we all struggle at times, to some degree, in different ways and with different things and our patience and presence in action offers a very powerful way to help ourselves and others to feel love.

2.

UNDERSTANDING

Define Understanding: the ability to comprehend something; a sympathetic awareness, forgiveness or tolerance of others feelings.

Understanding feels a lot like love, being with someone who understands you, who understands what you mean, what you're saying, what your intentions are, who understands why you do the things you do, what you meant to do when you did the things you didn't mean to do, understanding is a love language of it's very own. How relaxing and at ease it feels to be with someone who understands who you are and how you operate, sometimes it seems people have this ability naturally, which may come from having or being with someone who has experienced similar dynamics in their life or relationships, for example, in their past or their childhood or from living a similar lifestyle.

I always believed that understanding was something you had, not something you learned. I believed things just were the way they were and if you didn't understand them, well, there must be something wrong with your way of thinking. I hadn't considered that actually, not understanding something, wasn't necessarily because something was wrong with another's way of thinking, either in myself or others, but in fact it was simply that either myself or others had not experienced those same things, or had experienced something completely different and therefore understood things in a different way. It wasn't that it was wrong, or broken, just different and that understanding could actually be learned. It seems like such a basic thing to write here and yet for many years of my life, that truth eluded me.

When I began working with my first coach, I began to understand that many of the ways I had learned to be, were not necessarily ways that would serve me or my potential. I learned if I wished to live a different life, a more fruitful life, a more loving life, a more successful life, then I would require to learn and understand new ways of being. In this, I began to take the time to understand who I actually am, what I had learned in life, and more importantly, what would I like to experience and understand in my future. In this I began to find love for myself in ways I had never previously experienced.

I learned in order to understand, I had to sit, ask questions, be curious and willing to listen.

Through my previous practices of presence, sitting with myself and journaling what was coming up for me in any given moment, I had already learned how to hear the things that we're coming up in myself at any given moment, and I began to take more time to dig into why those things were coming up for me, what was the first experience or memory that I could think of where that memory or thought had occurred, where was I, who was I with, and what did I actually desire in those moments, how did I feel about it? How did I actually WANT to feel about it? And WHY? Why did it matter? Why was it important to me? I'd go as far as I could.

That kind of understanding took me to whole new levels within myself, I began to feel more acquainted with my past, my childhood, my pain, my anger, my frustration and also with my dreams for the future, my goals, my desires, my intentions, once I began to understand my intentions behind the things I did or felt, I began to find so much forgiveness for the ways I felt, thought and saw in myself.

I had never previously given myself the attention and focus I needed to understand who I was, I simply felt I was acting and reacting in response to the experiences I had in my everyday life.

I did not sit doing this for no reason of course, looking to simply dissect myself or pull myself apart, my focus was primarily on learning to understand why I was doing things that did not necessarily serve my potential, so that I could understand my intentions and therefore consider new ways of being in order to support new behaviours in myself and in my life that would bring about the results I wanted in my life or relationships.

So when I said things I didn't mean to say, when I connected with people in ways I didn't desire to, when I acted in ways that seemed against what I believed or stood for, it was in those moments where I would sit and ask myself 'what was that?', 'where did that come from?', 'why did it come up?', 'what was I hoping to achieve?', 'where had I saw that before?', 'did it serve then?', 'how would I like it to be?', 'what would I have to know or experience in order for that to be different?', 'why did I want things to be different?', 'what did it mean to me?'

When I come to understand in myself why I behaved in certain ways, it became so much to both forgive myself, and also express myself to others if necessary in a way where they would understand me too, (even and especially if they had not experienced similar things) However it also gave me the potential to begin to shift how I behaved, in order that I could influence the impact and effect I had, in my self, my relationships, my career and ultimately in my life.

In order to understand myself, I had to be able to understand what was making up my sense of self, what was making me 'who I am' How did I see, think or feel in myself. I had to ask myself questions that dug a little deeper into my psyche and my past, in order to understand, and this is really where our understanding of our own self helps us in our relationships, and so an act of love for yourself would be to ask yourself questions in order to get to know yourself.

Do you spend time getting to know yourself? Do you self enquire? Do you ask why you are the way you are? Why you think the way you think? or where things came from? Do you understand or seek to understand your desires, your fears, your longings, all the different parts that make up your individual personal experience of life.

What makes you happy? What makes you sad? What do you want to achieve in life? What do you want to avoid? Where do you see yourself in 5, 10 years in future? How do you envision your life, your marriage, your family, your business?

Asking these kind of questions and others that you can think of, can really help you get a good idea and understanding of who you are and how you work.

One reason this is so important is, if you don't understand yourself, if you have not self enquired, if you don't know why you do the things you do, or where things in your self are coming from

in your self or your life, when you actually meet another person and they ask you about you, and they begin enquiring about who you are in order to understand you, which is an act of love from them, they may ask things like what makes you happy, what makes you sad, what you want to achieve, what you want to avoid, where you see yourself.

These questions about who you are, what you want and why you do the things you do, are really important for close people in your life to know, but if you haven't done that self enquiry in yourself, and another person in relationship begins to enquire about you, you can't give them the true answers of your own heart and soul because you don't fully understand your self, so they may ask you questions and you may just make up random things, 'oh I might like this or I might like that' but is that really true and what's really difficult for another person who is trying to love you by understanding you and enquiring about who you are is, if you can't give them answers that are true for who you are, then they have no chance of knowing who you truly are either, and therefore they'll be unable to show up in ways that actually support who you truly are because they don't actually know who you are because you don't actually know who you are. (You may need to read that again) :)

So one of the other most important aspects of being loved, giving love and receiving love is in understanding of self and another.

Ask questions to discover who you are and what makes you who you are, and why you do the things you do, and where these things come from?

And most importantly, are these things that you wish to keep? Or change?

For many of us, there's lots of things in our past, our childhoods or past relationships that make us think things, and do things that do not necessarily serve our highest potential and self, these things have made us become the people who we are today, and they're really important to understand, firstly so you are aware of your own individual self, and also so that you are able to express your individual self and share with others and also so you are able to make decisions about how you would like things to be or how you may change your own behaviours towards yourself or others in the future.

It's an especially loving thing to be interested to know about another person, and is a wonderful experience to connect with another where they can articulate to you, who they are, and why they do what they do, who self enquires, who takes time to understand themselves, to know who they are, why they do what they do and who asks similar questions in order to understand themselves, so they can share that with you, that you may be able to understand them and know who they are. You are then able to have a more full understanding of each other, and look into the possibility to learning new things, opening your world view to

other experiences that may influence or even change how you show up in your relationships or life

How comforting it is to feel known, to feel understood, to feel like those who you are in relationship with, be it family, friends, colleagues, or even strangers can know you, understand you and relate to why you do what you do.

Are you asking those questions of others? Are you interested in getting to know another person, are you interested in learning how they work and why they work and how you can support them, do you care to know, but not only who they are and what they do, but why they do it, that why is a powerful driving force. It is the why that drives the words, the behaviours and the actions. When you understand the why, you are better able to understand how strong the force is behind what they do and why they do it.

There are many reasons for our behaviours, sometimes they come from reasons to protect, or reasons to serve, reasons to connect or reasons to isolate, reasons to express or reasons to silence, reasons to feel, or reasons to clam up, reasons to think, reasons to imagine, or reasons simply not to.

The reason is everything.

It is the why behind what people do that drives them to do it consistently and continually, even and beyond what they would otherwise do.

Finding that why, discovering that why, will help you to be able to see how it serves, or how it sabotages yours or others potential.

Our 'why's' in life continually drive us, if you wish to change the ways you show up in the world, understanding how you show up in the world and why you do it, is the first step, looking then at how you'd like to show up, and also why, will help you to learn to formulate a new way and a new why, a why for why you want to do something else, something different, if that why becomes strong enough, you can completely transform how you show up in your self, in your relationships, in your business, career and life.

That why is powerful, why people do things, will get them through almost any how, when it comes to our relationships, understanding our selves and each other, understanding why we do the things we do is an act of love.

THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

One of the most obvious ways you can recognise when understanding is not there in either of your relationships, is when there is a misunderstanding in what we do, and why we do what we do, and either party appears uninterested in listening to your perspective or point of view, with any intention of clearing up the misunderstanding.

Sometimes others set in their own mind an idea about what or who they think you are, and may have a lack of interest in actually getting to know who you are, or why you do what you do. You will also notice the lack of understanding, if another tends to accuse or make assumptions about who you are, assumptions about why you are the way you are, or why you do the things you do, others may potentially jump to conclusions, or formulate things about who you are in their own mind, without actually asking questions or enquiring to know if they are actually true for you, if you don't have the ability to say 'that's not true for me, or that is not how I see, not how I think or not what I feel' and then have the opportunity to actually share what you DO see, what you DO think and what you DO feel, with the intent of helping the other to understand.

If others are choosing for you, or implying visions, thoughts, feelings for you and therefore having a misconstrued idea of who you are, this can show a lack of understanding and

sometimes a lack of even having a desire to understand you or who you are.

This does not help you to feel seen, heard or understood, and therefore does not foster an environment that can support the growth of love.

Another way to know understanding is not present in your relationships may come in the form of someone asking questions about who you are and then twisting it, 'oh so what you're actually saying is this' and if you attempt to defend or explain your perspective or understanding, they may again say something along the lines of 'oh so what you're actually trying to say is that' which misconstrues your meaning or understanding. Sometimes people just simply don't pick up exactly what you mean and so sometimes may think you mean something that you did not, however it is important to recognise how this is presented to you, is it presented as a question with the intent of understanding, from a space of genuine curiosity and desire to learn and understand, or is it presented as an accusation or assumption, that it IS, or you ARE.

For example 'Are you leaving at 4pm' Vs 'You're probably just going to leave at 4 anyway'
'Did you come home late last night?' Vs 'You probably wandered in at whatever o'clock'

‘Who were you on the call with’ Vs ‘I’ll bet you were on a call to another woman’

The probable and bet’s and sure’s are all assuming and accusing that something HAS actually happened or WILL actually happen, without asking, which always gives the opportunity for ‘no’ and for correction of thought or idea.

When another twists your words or attempts to alter your understanding of yourself is a very unloving thing. It is not respecting what is actually true for you, and instead attempts to project ‘their’ understanding on to yours. When understanding occurs in a space, another intends to actually understand your perspective or your experience, free from contortion of their own. They would ask questions to begin with to determine ‘how did you see that, how did you think about that, how did you feel about that?’ And in response to your sharing, if they were unsure, they may ask such things as ‘what I heard was . . . is that right?’ or ‘correct me if I’m wrong, however this was what I understood’ Giving you the opportunity to say yes or no, or correct them if they had picked it up wrong, this is a respectful way to bring understanding into your relationship, by understanding one another.

One of the aspects of abusive relationships is a thing called gaslighting, where a person leads you to believe you are a

certain kind of person, beyond what is actually true, in a movie called Gaslighting, a husband makes his wife believe she is going crazy by continually dimming the gas light, and pretending that it didn't happen, making his wife question herself and her reality. This is often something that can occur in some relationships where a person begins to gaslight another, by holding a vision of who the person is and continually painting the vision onto the person, even if done in jest, what occurs over a period of time, is the person begins to question whether they are actually that person that they are being painted as, and then before long, they begin to show up as that person, behaving in similar ways, speaking in similar ways, everyone around them can see the change, but they themselves begin to believe that they are actually the person / identity that is being painted on to them. The other then appears to others as if they are a victim of some kind of abusive tactic or manipulative behaviour. For those who are aware of this, and who use it on their partner understand how highly abusive and manipulative this is to distort a person's reality and identity. However there are also those who are unaware that by doing this, they are actually abusing their partner or being very unloving toward them. The highest identity that we have, is our highest potential and possibility, if we are going to paint a partner as anything, we should always seek to speak to them AS IF they are already that highest potential, and that highest possibility, always speaking to and bringing out the best in our

partner, not ever seeking to minimise or distort their identity in the Highest.

Sometimes naturally there are aspects where we may miscommunicate or misunderstand one another, if that's happened even in a space of love it can be very easily cleared up, but if on a consistent basis these things are actually occurring, they can begin to impact on our belief systems over a period of time and begin to distort our perception of self, is misunderstanding, accusation, assumption is occurring on a regular basis, even if someone is telling you they love you at the same time. Those acts of accusation, misunderstanding are acts that are very unloving, they don't help you to grow, they don't help you to learn, they do not help you to become all you're destined to become.

3.

COMPASSION

Define Compassion: sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others coupled with a desire to support and help.

I speak about compassion in a way that's very close to empathy, as in feeling how another person feels, and empathising with their pain or their suffering, similar I guess to putting yourself in another person's shoes, and imagining how something may feel, if you were in that situation too, or if those things were happening to you, or you were experiencing what they were experiencing and how might that feel for you.

Though with compassion, there's a slight difference in that compassion actually compels you to want to help the other person, it compels you to step in and actually do something, something that might help, something that may relieve the suffering, lift their spirit or lend a hand, it's not simply just feeling

what another person is feeling, it's feeling and then also being compelled to actually do something to support, help, or relieve the soul of another in some way shape or form.

Learning firstly, to have compassion for myself was a whole vibe, I was often rather heartless in my approach to myself, having grown up in a violent environment, where people didn't care how you felt, or what you thought, it was a case of 'do it or face the consequences'. As a result, I learned to put my feelings aside, that they did not matter, it felt that others didn't care when things went bad for me because they went bad for everyone, and they didn't care when things went good for me because 'who do you think you are anyway? Do you think you're better than the rest of us?'.

This mindset however, eventually caught up with me in my adult years, I could no longer contain the immensity of feelings that I had over my experiences in life, the anger that I felt within, and the desire that I had for love and to have people in my life who truly cared when things were tough for me or who were truly happy for me when things were going well and who wanted to help.

I felt very angry with many people, with the world, with my past, with my potential for the future (which at that time, as much as I hoped and dreamed about my future, I didn't really believe it would amount to much), I had a very cynical view of people and the world, pushing down all of my feelings with cigarettes, alcohol

and drugs. Friends and family would often share that they were afraid of me or intimidated by me, my language was harsh and aggressive, I had a very strong presence about me, very rarely did anyone ever cause trouble for me, but often people were very hesitant about the idea of causing me any trouble because they could not be sure how I would react. The impulsiveness and inability to guess my next move, helped me feel safer in myself. I recall being told in university by a gentleman on my course that “ladies really didn’t talk like that” my response was to tell him to “F off, I’ll talk however I want” It would seem like such a juxtapose nowadays for me to paint this image of who I used to be, so many who know me now would tell you that they could ‘never’ in a million years imagine that I had been such a woman, so often I am considered a strong woman, but delicate and caring, all of which I contribute to learning how to have compassion for myself.

Learning to have compassion for myself meant allowing myself to actually ‘feel’ what was real for me in any given moment, not necessarily with the view of acting any of it out, but simply feeling it in my body. Anger? Allowing my body to feel the constriction and the heat and the blood pumping and short sharp intakes of breath as the feeling of anger coursed through my body. Sadness? Allowing myself to feel the weight of sadness, in the pit of my stomach, to allow the tears to flow, to taste them, to really be in the experience of allowing myself to actually feel it, no

running away, no denying it, no telling myself that ‘I shouldn’t feel this way’ or that ‘I should feel something else’

Allowing my feelings to simply be what they were, and support and remind myself that they are allowed to feel what they are feeling. We have so many different emotions in our bodies, and they come for so many different reasons, whether we consider the reasons for those emotions as valid or not, we still feel them, and the way to allow ourselves to move beyond them, is to allow them to move through us, otherwise they get stuck and pent up inside of us.

That pent up energy that I had, where I refused to allow myself to feel my emotions, explains why, for so many years, I carried such a strong and palpable spirit of anger and frustration everywhere I went, even though I smiled a lot and laughed a lot and simply got on with whatever I had to do, the feelings that I was not allowing myself to sit with and feel, were building up and stacking up inside my body, and though I did my best to remain peaceful, other people around me could feel and sense that spirit of anger and frustration and often felt uneasy or unsure when it would come to the surface. Which it did in moments of overwhelm, often it was small things, that did not deserve such a reaction, like the straw that broke the camels back that would be the trigger for those emotions to come tumbling out of me, though often that meant I had little to no control over how they would land or be experienced by others, and it meant I had little to no

control over how I expressed them, which would often mean they'd be delivered with little to no tact or care for how anyone else felt. It was dangerous and destructive for all my relationships, including the relationship with myself, my partner, my children and family, and anyone else who may have been caught in the firing line.

I share with my children often the importance of letting our feelings move through our body, through our tears, teaching that our emotions literally are energy in motion, and they are meant to move through our body and be felt, otherwise we contain them inside and the energy they contain can get trapped inside, and mixed up with lots of other energy from other times, and the combination of all these different energies that were not released at the time they were meant to be released can change how we feel inside and can make us feel quite different, however, if we allow the energy to move through, the energy doesn't get stored up inside us, it is expressed as it should be and can be shared through many different means, either through talking, or even writing, or music, or dance or art. Communicating our feelings is a way that we feel whole in ourself, and especially when our feelings are heard and acknowledged by others.

Having compassion for yourself primarily is allowing yourself to feel what you are feeling, and doing what you can to help yourself feel comforted, feel soothed, feel ok in allowing your emotions to move through. You might be feeling how hard things

are for you at a moment, or how amazing things are for you in another moment. Our feelings can be fleeting and so easy to experience so many in a small amount of time. One thing I was sharing recently with a dear friend and coach was how many think of compassion as one person feeling how difficult things are for another person and especially when someone is struggling or if they are having difficulties and you can get into that place where you are in their shoes with them, and you can grieve with those who are grieving and feel with those who are feeling and support those who are experiencing challenging situations in their life. Of course compassion is being able to be there in the muck and the mire with another as they go through hardships, however compassion is also sharing with another when things are going particularly well in life, when another is succeeding, or achieving things that have taken a lot of effort and time, that also require the support in feeling happy and joyous in success and knowing it is ALSO ok to feel that, there is a lot in society that also attempts to prevent people from feeling joy, success, achievement in life, there are also elements of compassion in terms of feeling alongside another no matter whether you are happy for someone who is happy, joyous when they are joyous, or congratulatory helping to raise another person up.

Compassion for me, goes both ways, it's not just supporting and validating feelings when someone feels they are down and out, but also when things are going really well, and

others are on the up, they still require support and knowing that they're not alone and that they have someone who understands and can share in the experience too.

When you are present for another's experience, and when you really understand what something means for another, you can imagine how it would feel for you, and in that sense, you begin to see how much it really matters to have people in your corner, who support, who understand and who validate your experience of life. It is so natural to feel your emotions, the greatest beings upon the Earth have also been the most compassionate, supportive and understanding, Jesus felt great compassion for others, he grieved with those who grieved, he wept with those who wept, and even though he may have had a higher understanding of many of these things, he was still there with others, having that compassion and those shared feelings.

Are you compassionate with yourself? Do you allow yourself to sit with your feelings, do you allow them to come up if you're struggling with something, do you have compassion for yourself, do you feel compelled to support yourself and help yourself to feel ok in that space, do you hold space for yourself, and allow yourself to be ok with what is coming up? Without trying to change it, or make it better, or fix it, or distract from it, or run away from it, or mask it with other things.

I was really good at that for many years, distracting and masking my feelings with all sorts of things, often I turned to cigarettes, drugs or alcohol, to numb the feelings or cover over them, that's why I believe I became 'addicted' in many senses, not so much to the coping mechanisms themselves, however I was addicted to masking my feelings, and I'd use the coping mechanisms, whatever they were, to do so, the feelings however were so persistent, as feelings are, they occur all the time, every day, often we have so many different feelings in one day, and because I hadn't learned to have compassion with myself, I had not learned that it was perfectly safe to sit with them, that it was perfectly ok to feel what I was feeling (so long as I did not use the feelings as a reason to take action, especially action that may cause harm or otherwise to another person) but simply to feel it inside my body, and to remind myself that it was ok to feel what I was feeling. There were so many experiences that I had in my past, that had led to these emotions storing up in my body, there was so much that I needed to grieve for, so much that I needed to feel anger for, and feel sadness for, that I had not allowed myself previously to feel, caused by experienced that had happened, that naturally anyone would feel sad or angry about and it was so important to recognise them and to recognise the pain that had come up to be felt, deserved to be felt, it was valid and it was right to feel it, and anyone who had gone through experiences like that would have felt exactly the same way, and they would have been

right to feel angry or sad or hurt or betrayed by them. However having kept them in for so many years and not felt them, and allowed them to build up inside my body, I was trying to run away from how I felt, I didn't want to feel them, I didn't want to feel vulnerable or afraid or scared or sad. I hated how it felt in my body then, and escaping those feelings became my 'go to mode' of operating.

I believe the act of love for myself, of actually sitting with my own feelings WITHOUT reaching for something to numb them was one of the most, if not, THE most difficult thing I had ever learned to do. It was so incredibly uncomfortable, I would find myself filled with rage and anger at the thought of doing it, and when I first began to actually do it, the feelings that came up were more intense than I could ever have imagined, some of those feelings I had pushed down for many, many, many years of my life, and there was an accumulation of many years of anger and many years of pain, and it felt unbearable, excruciating, I could feel my guts churning and my stomach seizing, I did not want to sit in it, I would much rather reach for smokes, for alcohol, for drugs, for something, anything to numb it, anything that meant I did not have to feel those feelings, but in the staying with it, and in the feeling of it, in the practice of sitting with myself in a space I called 'my sacred space' (which was essentially a little cushion in the corner of my bedroom, with a little mirror and shelf where I placed candles and flowers and things that I loved, where I took

myself to late at night when the house was quiet, the kids were asleep, when no one could disturb me, and no one could find me or see me at my most vulnerable) this was where I allowed those feelings to move through me and as they did so, I'd cry and rage and weep and as I allowed myself to feel and remind myself that I was safe to feel, I began the process of releasing them out of my body and as I did so, my body lightened, the release of that pent up energy was like the breathing of fresh air, years of intense energy that had been stuck in my body was now moving out and afterwards I felt so much lighter and free'er, and more at peace than I had ever felt before in my life, it was cathartic beyond anything I had ever believed it would be. In that sacred space of allowing myself to feel complete vulnerability, fear and sadness, I found afterwards a peace like I had never found before.

I had for so many years been used to numbing myself and my feelings, I didn't allow myself to have compassion for the fact that, there were things that happened to me in life that really, really hurt, and it was ok to recognise in myself that it hurt, that it was sore, that it pained me, sometimes greatly and deeply and that it was ok to feel the sadness, anger that arose from that hurt. It was important to allow naturally what came up to move through and be with that for the space of time that it needed, and then when it began to fade away and I found myself moving into a space of peace, then I'd wrap my arms around myself, gently cradle myself and remind myself how safe I am now, how loved

am now, how cared for I am now, how supported I am now, once I found the space of peace and stillness in my heart and came back to the moment where I remember again that I was alone in my room, I'd blow out the little candle, and have a drink of water before going for a warm shower and resting for the night.

Those nights were powerful and sacred. They were evenings that no one knew about or experienced with me, nights of healing, of releasing years of torment and fear, and the compassion I held for myself in that space, helped to heal a once very broken heart.

Having that empathy or sensitivity for yourself, to sit with yourself in pain and allow yourself to grieve what needs to be grieved, which to begin with, may feel particularly challenging especially if like me you had been pushing down a lot of your emotions, or using other methods of coping to either block them off or cover over them. When you first begin to feel them, they may feel quite intense, and when they begin to come up, they may really, really come up. It is now that you remind yourself this is part of the process, and you are safe now, to allow these feelings to move through and out of your body. The feelings are not here to stay, they are here to move through. Now it may be that there is a lot of emotions to move through, and maybe only a small part of them may come up the first time, maybe another small part will come up another time, and then again and again, and you may

need to sit with your emotions on quite a few occasions, possibly even feeling like it is the same thing you are sitting with each time. From my experience I have had to sit with some emotions many times before they cleared away the bulk of their energy, and then they would still occasionally come up, though not as intense as the first or second time, this is when I knew that I was releasing a lot of the pain from the past and that I was actually beginning to heal.

To begin with, the ritual of allowing myself to feel, felt like a very powerful experience, nowadays, I just cry all the time, often wherever I am and with whatever I am doing, and it's never an experience that seems out of sorts for me, I have quiet cries, gentle cries, little weeps through my day, like 'Oooh my goodness, my gosh, that was awful, boohoo', 'Oh that must have felt so terrible for her/him, boohoo', 'oh wow, isn't that so beautiful boohoo', and I love it, I gently cry for a few moments or however long I need to, sometimes people don't even know I am crying when I am, whenever I feel moved by life I just let the emotion, whatever it happens to be, move through, and allow myself to feel it, and then it clears away and I'm ready for the next experience, as a result I often feel that sense of peace and calm with me, and the weight of emotions doesn't have the chance to build up in my body. It feels very childlike in the sense that it is often very real and true for how I feel in almost any given moment, sometimes if it is particularly strong, I try to wait until after I am home,

however other times I just let myself have a little cry or a weep wherever I am, it's like I now have this knowing and understanding that we're all in this human experience and it's always going to have it's emotional moments and its ok to feel what you feel, and it's the same with another person, things are going to come up, things are going to be hard, also things are going to be great, and you're going to need to feel however it feels, and it's good to feel supported in that, to be there for myself but also to be there for others and have others be there for me, simply supported, knowing that they are there, they can feel the difficulty, the suffering or the challenge, and they desire to be there, to offer support.

It is a most wonderful and beautiful gift to be able to hold space for another to feel their emotions, to simply be and allow them to let their emotions flow through, wether they be sadness, joy, anger, excitement, or pain and recognise it simply as a moment of the individual expressing whatever pain or joy out of their body, whatever energy is stored there, and simply be there with them in the moment, (providing it IS safe to do so. As stated earlier, loving yourself precedes loving others) allowing what is to be, and supporting them in their ability to let it flow through, and if necessary, lending a hand, a hug or a pat on the back, though above all, simply lending an ear, to listen and eyes, to witness.

Being compassionate for yourself, being compassionate for another person and also recognising when another is being compassionate with you too, is so powerful for connection, it often supports me to feel unjudged in my expression of being human, when someone you care about or who cares about you, is able to give time, to be there with you, to tune into how you're feeling, and to hold space for you to feel what you are feeling, in those moments when you need support, to know they are there, and they know you've got this, you are not alone. Is such a powerful way to show love and care and results in feeling more connection.

THE LACK OF COMPASSION

A lack of compassion in a relationship can manifest in many forms, and show itself in ways that create huge disconnection between people, and can really destroy the potential for love to grow in any relationship, either with yourself or others, it shows up in acts of heartlessness, selfishness or disregard. It shows up uninterested, uncaring, an inability to even be interested in attempting to tune into or consider how another

person may be feeling, the perspective they are coming from or how an experience or lack of experience may feel for them, in whatever situation or circumstance they find themselves, it feels very isolating when someone you are with shows a lack of compassion for how an experience feels for you. Likewise whether that experience is something that is particularly tough to be in, or something that is particularly exciting or great for them to be in, having an attitude of indifference to another person's feelings or experience, or not really being up nor down about how someone else other than themselves is experiencing life, shows a real lack of concern and lack of interest, which can be construed often as a lack of care for another's wellbeing or experience of life or even your own, if you are being indifferent towards your own experiences of life, it feels especially deflating for a person to be on the receiving end of indifference or a lack of compassion or concern, it can often feel as if your experience of life doesn't matter, or your pain or joy doesn't matter, or even worse as if you don't matter as a person, to whomever you are sharing your experience with. It shows up as apathy, and results in huge disconnection in any kind of relationship.

It looks similar to:

'OH SO YOU HAVE THESE EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS, WELL BIG DEAL, WHAT DOES THAT MATTER ..?'

I had memories from my childhood where I had approached people with difficulties that I had, and was cast aside with a 'oh you think you've got it hard, well what about me' kind of attitude, it showed a complete disregard for the experience that I was having in life, and just as painful was when life was going particularly well or I had achieved something I had really worked hard for, and when I shared it with those I loved, they were neither up nor down about it, it felt as if who I was, what I did or how I felt just didn't matter to them, that it held no meaning or value for them and yet for me, it was something I had either worked so hard for and was so pleased to have achieved or struggled so much to build or attempt to achieve, as if that energy, that time, that effort, those struggles held no weight in their eyes, and it pained me so, so deeply.

Love cannot grow in a space where there is indifference or a lack of compassion, and especially in a space where if you brought the lack of compassion up, and if you are met with an 'ok, get over it already', 'pull your socks up', 'get a grip' type of

attitude, in an attempt to shut down your expression, or to prevent you from holding another accountable for their lack of compassion or interest. Sometimes it can also come up as an absolute refusal to talk about or listen to what is going on for you, a refusal to hear you out. I recall being told in the past, that others simply had ‘no space to listen to this emotional sh*t’ It often led me to try to hide how I felt, repressing my emotions, not showing them to people or in places, which ultimately led to me becoming an emotional ticking time bomb, because I had so many emotions pent up inside me that were not being expressed and not safely given space to pour out.

That kind of environment is not one that fosters love, it can damage and destroy the ability for love to grow in a relationship, and ultimately creates a very toxic and destructive environment.

When I learned how powerful having compassion was for myself, compassion for the struggles that took me down, as well as compassion for the fight in me to get back up, to have my own back, to be with myself, to feel what I was feeling and if necessary encourage and root for myself, pat my own self on the back, it really helped me to gain strength in myself.

However when I showed no compassion for myself, for my struggles, my fights, my wins, I felt unsupported, and I could not find the strength to keep pushing, the lack of compassion and support weakened me, it left me feeling hopeless, discounted,

alone, disregarded, as if I did not matter, as if the fight or the struggle was simply not worth it, as if winning was not worth it. I'd often feel 'what's the point?' I'd be consumed with thoughts and feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, isolation.

When indifference, disregard, denial, or an apathetic attitude towards yourself or another has chance to grow, it completely destroys strength, it weakens both yourself and others, it prevents love from being able to grow in the space between you and others, it also disconnects you from the support you need to push on past adversity. It can often leave you feeling very alone, isolated and unseen, having others around you who seem to show no care for you or for your experience of life, is such a painful experience.

To be going through an experience in life and to have either yourself or another person showing no concern, no thought, no consideration to what you're going through, almost as if you don't exist, as if your experience is unimportant, as if they just haven't taken a moment from their life to stop and recognise that you're actually here too, that you matter, that you exist, that you mean something. It can feel devastating.

Adversity and struggle is very much a part of life, it will come to us all, none of us are exempt, we simply cannot go through life or become all we have been designed to become without learning who we truly are and what we're truly capable

of, and it is often through adversity, struggle and challenge that we learn who we are and what we're capable of. Though, one of the best combats to overcoming adversity, struggle and challenge is having support, and support comes in feeling seen, heard and understood, it comes in knowing that another person can relate to where you are, to what is going on for you, simply knowing that they either have felt what you are feeling or can place themselves in your shoes, gives you strength to keep going, you don't feel alone, you know it's not just you in the ring.

Many people think encouraging people or saying kind words is what offers support, and sure it is supportive in many ways, but that to me is kindness in action. Real support for me, has often come in the form of having another by your side, who either has felt what you're feeling or can step into your shoes for a moment and feel with you what you are feeling in this moment, someone who can have compassion for you, can recognise that 'gosh, if I was in these shoes . . . I'd feel that too' that feels supportive and understanding, that lending of an ear, lending of a hand or pat on the back means everything. It is so simple in it's application and yet it reaches so deep into the heart of another.

Having compassion for my own self and my own experience of life, reaching back into the moment of my childhood or trauma I experienced in previous relationships and looking at myself then and thinking 'gosh, in those shoes, dealing with those things, in that space, of course you would feel those

things, of course you would experience life that way' it felt so reassuring to my soul, and so healing, and then learning to have that with another, and being aware when another person was experiencing the very natural ups and downs of life, and being there to show compassion, concern, care and sensitivity to their experience, was what helped to grow a loving environment in my relationships, it brought a validation to the experiences that we often struggle with in life, it brought the feeling of not being alone and it brought a lot of strength, both in the setbacks of life and in the achievements.

4.

KINDNESS

Define Kindness: being friendly, generous and considerate

Kindness fosters an environment for love in many ways. Being kind towards myself manifested in different forms. First I began practicing kindness in the things I would say to myself, especially when I was having a hard time, or if I made mistakes or said or done things that were not the greatest, previously I would be very unkind and begin almost mentally verbally beating myself, calling myself names and such, so when I began showing and practicing kindness to myself, I began with simply thinking kind thoughts and telling myself kind things that I would expect a friend to say to me if I had messed up or made a mistake, which often simply sounded like ‘it’s ok’ or ‘it’s going to be ok’ or ‘this is just part of the process’ words that simply confirmed that we all make mistakes sometimes, or reminded me that whatever space I was in or whatever experience I was having

in life, that I would be ok, that it may not necessarily be something that was going to be 'bad' for me, per say, it really helped to assuage the fear that I had often carried that something bad would happen or I would be treated meanly or badly for making mistakes or for not being 'perfect' all the time.

I'd choose words that helped to assuage fear, words I had always longed to hear as a child from someone close to me, and especially when life was feeling hard or when I was simply overwhelmed with my experience, my choices or behaviours.

Sometimes it was simply just reminding myself that things were going to work out for me, sometimes it was reminding myself that I was going to be ok, other times, that I was safe, or that I was ok to move away from situations where I did not feel particularly safe. I would practice words of encouragement or words of permission. Reminding myself in my thoughts and words that I could experience gentle things, loving things, friendly things, things that cared for me, things that were considerate of me. Sometimes just reminding myself that however I was feeling in that moment, was 'ok' to feel in myself, that I was safe to feel, whether I felt afraid or upset, or scared, or happy, or joyful, or excited, that I didn't have to pretend to feel anything else, I did not have to hide my joy, or hide my sadness, or worse, hide how I felt, I simply 'allowed' myself to be who I am in any moment.

Once I had these basics in place. I began catching myself whenever I was being unkind in my thoughts or words to myself, and transforming what I was saying simply by saying something different, something more kind, something more caring, something more gentle, something more friendly, something more allowing, something more considerate. Sometimes if I swore at myself or called myself a name (which was a common occurrence in my mind previously, and usually this happened when I had done something that I thought I could have done better) I would instantly check myself and remind myself, ‘no, we’re still learning, it’s ok to make mistakes’, ‘it’s ok not to get this right first time’, ‘it’s ok to try again’ It doesn’t matter how old we get, we are ALWAYS learning, we are always growing.

Oh how often we berate ourselves when we do not get things right first time, or we do not get things perfect, or we do not have the answers to begin with, or if we make mistakes, which we often do, especially when we are trying new things, or moving into new spaces or starting new relationships, or new jobs, or anything that we’re doing for the first time or a new time, we are pretty much guaranteed to mess it up at some point or even make many mistakes to begin with, but how we learn from those mistakes is everything, the steps we take afterwards either to rectify those mistakes or to try again in a new way is the real measure of the man, or woman. Being ‘ok’ with allowing myself to learn, and grow and make errors and fix them, and not get it

perfect first time, but to try again, and again if necessary was one of the kindest things I learned to do for myself.

As a result of the previous experiences I had in life, I had always been very harsh with myself, inside my own mind, even cruel at times, I would often call myself names or swear at myself, even if something wasn't necessarily anything to do with me, I'd frequently refer to myself as a f* idiot, or stupid f* something or another. I didn't use kind words to speak to myself, it was so ingrained in my way of being, that I didn't even recognise it as something that was not particularly kind, I hadn't even considered that I could speak to myself in other ways that would be kinder, I hadn't even considered that it might have a difference on the ways that I felt about myself and in my self. I had huge difficulty with people saying kind things to me, because it felt so alien, that I often wondered if they were lying, or if they were trying to manipulate me, or if they were going to try to hurt me in some way, so I always felt guarded and on edge, anxious and unsure. I was much more comfortable with people who spoke to me badly, or sarcastically, than I was with people who spoke to me kindly, or gently, and I had not realised there was a link between the way I spoke to myself, the ways I thought about others and the way I allowed others to speak to me.

Once I had begun being kinder to myself in my words, I began being kinder in my actions and in my touch, toward myself, one of the practices I had during my sacred space moments, was

in showering in the morning or in the evening, and whilst in the shower I would often put my arms around myself and very gently rock myself side to side, gently rubbing my arms, I'd close my eyes and tell myself loving kind words, I'd say things like 'well done today, you did great, somethings worked out brilliantly, and the things that didn't, we can try again tomorrow' 'I love you very much, you are precious to me', 'you are wonderful and you mean so much to me, how grateful I am for you.'

The cells of our body remember our experiences, whether in the words that are spoken to our body or the touch that it feels. For someone who has experienced abuse or trauma in their childhood or relationships, so much of that memory of abuse is actually stored in the cells of the body, so much of the healing occurs in the loving of the body back to wholeness. If this can't be done by having others gently nurture you and your body, with kind words or kind touch, then it can begin with yourself.

For me at the time, I felt very uncomfortable with others being kind to me, I would not have been comfortable with them touching me in kind ways or speaking to me in kind ways, it would have made me squirm, so I had to first become accustomed to how that felt in my own body and cells. I also began treating myself differently, in the small things such as how I took care of my skin or how I brushed my hair each day, for many years I had been so accustomed to tearing at my hair so violently while I was brushing it. I had been so used to it, that it just felt normal, so

when I began taking time to gently brush my hair, trying my best not to snap or tear any piece of it, it meant slowing down, being careful and if I came across any knot or tug, rather than tear or try to rip it out, it meant taking the time to untangle each of the strands with gentleness so as not to break any, (or certainly as few as possible), it felt so thoroughly healing. I began taking better care of my skin, moisturising, cleansing and massaging in ways I hadn't done before, treating myself gently and carefully, alongside hugging myself and holding myself were all ways I learned to give more kindness to my body and self, and then ultimately how I also gave this kindness to those whom I loved, in my relationships and in my family.

Being kind in the words I was speaking and in the actions I was having towards myself, including the ways I was touching and moving, and in how I treated things around me, I became very conscious of how I moved with my energy. Once I was comfortable with how that felt in my own body, I began considering the effects that my kindness had upon the people around me, including the words I spoke, the ways that I connected or touched, and in the ways that I interacted and treated the things around me and others, including property and the environments we spent time in, I began recognising when they too were responding in similar ways, with their words, their touch and the ways they did things, including how they moved in the space with me, when that kindness was there, I knew that was love in

action, I knew something was growing in that space that I had not experienced before, there was a safety, and an ease that felt wonderful to be held within.

Once I began these morning and evening shower practices of kind words and kind touch, I began to feel more comfortable in my own body, I could feel the cells of my body responding to the kindness I showed in a lighter and more free'er way, as a result I began to notice particularly when other people were being kind toward me, in their words or in their touch, and instead of feeling uncomfortable or squirming, I began to feel into it and allow it, I would smile to myself and allow the experience to be one that supported a greater and much lighter sense of my self. I found kindness to show up in my world as gentle, friendly generosity.

I found kindness to be considerate of others alongside myself, it meant paying attention to others, and how they were experiencing me, and my energy, how they were experiencing my words, or my touch, or my deeds. I began to recognise that kindness was not all about me, it showed up in recognising others, not judging them for their experiences, not having any should's or shouldn't with people and their experiences, it meant simply being there and offering kindness as balm to their soul, it showed up as graceful, merciful and gentle, I learned through kindness that there was no need for scolding, no need for 'I told you so's', no need for 'you should, or you shouldn't', kindness was healing and powerful in it's ways. Kindness came in encouraging supportive

words, affirmations and validations. I began to love kindness, both for myself, for others and from others. When I saw kindness in action either with myself or between others, my heart instantly warmed because it knew kindness had an ability to create an environment where love was safe to grow.

THE LACK OF KINDNESS

A lack of kindness, has the ability to destroy the potential for love to grow. A lack of kindness is often harsh, cruel, uncaring, judgemental, brash, sometimes even violent, aggressive, abusive. Unkindness often scolds ‘you should do this, or that, you should be this, or be that’ it is mean, inconsiderate, unhelpful. Unkindness doesn’t help anyone to grow or overcome or learn, especially if mistakes are made, or imperfection shows up. (Which it often does, as imperfect beings)

How can love grow in a space where you are punished, scolded, hurt, judged, attacked, accused, for growing, for learning, for making mistakes, for not getting things right or perfect (Which we never can or will) It perpetuates states of fear, and we know that fear does not help anyone to learn or to grow, fear actually closes down the mind and body to learning, it sets our bodies into spaces

of fight or flight, which means the higher functioning of the brain is switched off, and our limbic system kicks in purely with a focus on survival, how can a child or adult learn in an environment where the higher faculties of the brain are being forced into shutting down for protection. Punishment does nothing for helping anyone to grow or learn or become their best self, only love has the ability to open the mind, heart and body to learn new things, to try new things, to experiment, to practice, to grow, which we all do at different rates. A lack of kindness in any relationship, including with yourself will not support the growth of your highest potential, it will not support development of your higher faculties, it will not help you to reach your truest highest potential of self, it will always restrict and limit your abilities, gifts and talents.

If there's not kindness in your relationship, either with yourself, with others, or in others relationship towards you, love does not have the opportunity to grow and therefore open the higher faculties of the heart, mind and soul.

A lack of kindness will show up in behaviours that are often cruel, harsh, uncaring, judgmental and often carry elements of scolding, saying things like, 'you should have did this or you should have done that', 'I told you so', and other mean things. That are not kind, they don't help you to grow, they are not aspects of love.

Have you ever caught yourself doing that to yourself? Inside your own mind? Berating yourself internally, 'I should never have done that' or 'I should have done that', 'you stupid . . . this . . . that . . . or the next thing' how did that make you feel? Can you imagine how destructive that can be in a relationship, either someone doing to yourself, or you doing to another, calling someone stupid or scolding them for doing things that were not pleasing to you.

There are ways and means that we can communicate with one another when we feel upset or triggered, such as explaining in ways where another person can understand how something makes us feel, this is how love is grown, it takes patience, presence and understanding, it takes us communicating in ways that are kind, compassionate, understanding, this is HOW we bring love into our relationships, it is how we grow and develop in our fullest potential.

If we are unkind, harsh, cruel aggressive or even violent in the ways we speak, touch or connect with ourself or others, all we do is create withdrawal, shut down aspects of the brain, body and heart which is unable to learn, unable to express truthfully, unable to be present.

Sometimes people say 'you have to be cruel to be kind' and many people give this as a reason to actually be cruel in their treatment of other people, either in their words or even in their actions, towards their partners, family, friends or even children,

the idea that you have to be harsh to be kind or to help people to see or understand, and yet it is so far from the truth. If someone had these sort of behaviours toward you or if you are having them towards another, even in yourself you might think that you are being loving or that you love that person, however when you do these things, or treat people in this way what you actually do is shut down their ability to learn and grow, you close down their ability to try new ways or to practice doing things in ways they haven't before, so if someone has made a mistake or has done something in a way that does not serve, you can still be kind while expressing that particular things don't work for you, or don't serve you, you can still be kind and understanding toward another person without berating them or tearing them down, without being cruel, insensitive or judgemental.

When there is a lack of kindness in any space, or there is cruel, judgemental or harsh behaviours or words, or scolding's or 'I told you so's, or you should have done this, or you should have done that' the ability to grow and learn shuts down, a loving environment is not created and therefore love does not have the opportunity to grow fully as it would in a situation where kindness was present and therefore it doesn't serve the highest potential in that situation.

Really being aware of, 'are you kind with yourself, with your words, touch and behaviours', 'are you kind with your words, touch and decisions for another person?', 'are others kind with

their words, touch and decisions for you?’ Helps you to see whether you are in spaces and places that are fostering an environment for you to be able to grow into your highest and fullest potential, and also whether you are fostering an environment either for yourself or for others that allow you or others to grow into your highest potential.

5.

TRUTH

Define Truth: the quality or state of being true

Truth is such a powerful means of love, and when I say truth, I don't mean the 'Oh here's what I really think of you and your mother truth' that some people like to share as the truth, which is simply their 'individual truth' I mean the highest potential for the truth of who we are as spiritual beings in a human body, whatever you may call it, I understand that people have various different beliefs, and not everyone necessarily believes in God or even calls God God, many consider higher potentials in life, which may also be referred to as Spirit, the almighty, the Universe, Angels, Higher Beings, The Highest Truth, Whole Truth, Highest Possibility, Highest Potential, this to me, is what I call Truth, I also regard this as God, however, it is in essence the ever present truth of who you are in the highest potential. If you were to realise your highest potential and

possibility as a fully developed human being, the truths that would exist for you in that space that would bring out your highest potential. Which is something that cannot be taken from you, even if you have experienced developmental trauma in your past, or have had adversities and experiences that have impacted your development in significant ways, the highest truth is something that is true for you, is something you deserve to experience, and something that you have every right to experience as a human being.

Even if you chose not to step into that highest truth for yourself, the possibility that it is true, will always exist for you, no matter what journey or choices you make in life, it is the gift and blueprint of wholeness for you and for your life that is always available for you, in every moment of every day throughout your entire life.

This wholeness in human development is what I refer to when I talk about Truth.

The kind of truth that reminds you of not only who you truly are but the truth of who you can become, of what is wholeheartedly true for you as a human being, even if you've not experienced it as yet in your life.

Now I find that truth even in the best of times can sometimes feel hard to believe is possible, especially if you are struggling in yourself or life, or if you have experienced many

struggles in life which have shown you everything other than the highest truth.

If you have something going on, either now or in the past where you are believing in something other than what the highest truth says is available for you, hearing someone tell you the truth of your potential can sometimes trigger, frustration, annoyance, even anger, like ‘How can you say that?’, ‘Why would you say that’, ‘No, here is what’s actually true for me’, or ‘I don’t want that kind of truth’ Sometimes truth can really jar in a person’s experience, especially if it is not something that has been experienced, or is something that is so desperately desired to be experienced.

In order to deliver truth in a way that it is intended, in order to support another or yourself to reach that full potential or to ease into the possibility of it, it requires to be delivered with all of the keys that support the development of a loving environment, such as patience, understanding, compassion and kindness, so that they all can merge together and then truth can be delivered in a way that helps yourself or another actually open their mind and heart, to the possibility of considering higher truth as an option to be experienced in life.

It’s not not like you can pick or choose one or the other of these keys to creating a loving environment on their own, they all flow with one another and work together, and especially when you are delivering truth.

What ultimately creates change in another persons world, is the acknowledgement and understanding that there is a higher experience to be had life, and especially in relationships, with yourself, with others, with your family, or in business. If you are open to this potential, you can begin to move towards creating, accepting and experiencing these higher possibilities. However if you have experienced developmental trauma, either in previous relationships or in childhood, there may be aspects of your mind or heart that are closed off to the idea or potential, and the only way to open that up, is to create. Loving environment internally, and around you, in order that your heart and mind feel safe to open to that potential, and all the possibility of this higher truth to be experienced in your life.

If you are in a space with someone, or someone is in a space with you, and the environment has been created where love can grow, and you have an understanding of and for one another, you have a compassion for where they are at, you are patient, present, there is kindness occurring between you, truth can be delivered in a way that 9 times out of 10 will be able to be received by the other person, even if it's something that the other person may not actually believe is possible for their experience of life.

When you have pillars of presence, patience, understanding, compassion, kindness around you holding you up in a space of love, and you feel safe, seen, heard, loved, and you

know that you are around people who have good intentions for you, higher truth is able to be received and the potential considered, either by yourself or by another, you can allow a higher truth and possibility to penetrate your heart and mind and that is what fosters the space of growth and becoming, and fosters more love to grow within your relationship.

Accepting a higher truth for myself and my life was something I found really hard to take in when I first began working with myself.

In my mind I had so many beliefs and ideas that I was 'worthless' and all sorts of ideas that were very untrue and yet I believed them to be who I was, so when I was give a higher possibility for who I am and who I could be, and what my potential was, I just could not accept it, I could not allow out, I fought it and argued against it. When people told me there was the potential that I was loved, I just could not accept it, when people told me that there was the potential that I had purpose, that I meant something, that I was valuable and worthy, I just could not allow myself to accept it, until I began to foster that space of love in and around me.

Only then was I able to open my heart and my mind to the possibility that there was ore available for me, and only then was I open to the possibility of experiencing it.

Here are some things that I know to be the highest truth for who I am as a wholly developed being, and these are the things I anchor too every time I need truth in my life and to remember that:

- * I am whole
- * I am healed
- * I am forgiven
- * I see myself in the Highest
- * In wholeness, I can do all things
- * I am loved
- * I am heard
- * I am seen
- * I am supported
- * I am honoured
- * I am valuable
- * I am worthy
- * I am secure in who I am in Wholeness

In Wholeness I am whole, unblemished, I am divine, I am secure, I am unmovable, untouchable, I am healed, I am forgiven, I am understood, I am loved, I am seen, I am heard, I am adored, I am supported, I am honoured, I am valuable, I am worthy, these are all truths, so when I first began learning who I am in truth, these were very, very hard for me to take because I had so many other

beliefs going on, such as ‘I’m not loved, who loves me?’, ‘I’m not heard, I’m not secure, I’m insecure, I don’t know who I am, I don’t know what’s going on, I’m not supported, nobody cares about me’

I had all these ideas going on, so anyone even saying these to me, made me feel angry, I wanted to argue with them, I would tell them ‘Stop it! Stop telling me these things, they are not true for me, they may be true for others but they are not true for me.

Only when I began to foster the environment of love in myself was I able to actually consider the possibility that they might be true, and allow myself to receive them.

I would tell myself, even if I don’t feel this right now, even if I don’t think this right now, even if I don’t believe it, am I willing to consider the possibility that it might be true? Am I willing to trust that it may be true for me?

I remember having my first experience with my coach, and she was telling me these exact same things about myself and I was SO mad with her and I told her ‘you need to stop with this, you don’t know who I am, you don’t know where I’ve come from, you don’t know what I’ve been through, I’ve had all these sort of experiences’ and she said ‘Clairey, I know you better than you know yourself’ and I was like ‘Oooft’, steam coming out my ears ‘How could you say that?!’, ‘I know who I am’ I told her, ‘I’ll tell you who I am!’ but she knew the highest truth of me, she knew this truth of who I am, a truth that I had not even considered as

truth and was completely closed off to believing or even hearing from another about me.

She knew what was true for my potential and she also knew how stubborn and strong willed and with an absolute refusal I had to believe what she was saying, because of the fear and the trauma that I lived within in my own heart and mind.

Then one evening after working with her and having an emotional breakdown, I recall sitting in the kitchen and the thought came upon my mind, ‘What if the things she is saying are actually true’ . . . ‘What if . . . I am actually loved . . . what if . . . I am actually valuable . . . what if . . .’

My mind blew wide open. If these things were true, then that means I could do the things I always longed to, I could be the person I always felt I was inside, all of a sudden it was like my mind grew, my potential grew, the possibilities for my experience of life grew, and I was like ‘Wow, does this mean I can do, be and have these things I’ve always dreamed of’

That truth was ultimately the love that I needed in order to be able to grow and transform.

Discovering that higher truth of who I am in wholeness, was such a powerful transformational point in my life, such a powerful act of love, for myself, and I know, it is also a powerful transformational point in other people’s lives also, when they discover the truth of who they are in wholeness, and especially if like myself, you spent your entire life believing and thinking ‘these

kind of possibilities would never exist for someone like me, especially with all my brokenness or my trauma, but actually. Learning how to love myself changed all of that, because once I learned how to love myself and I learned how to bring that truth into my heart and mind, that was game changing for my entire life.

I AM WHOLE, HEALED, FORGIVEN. IN WHOLENESS, I CAN DO ALL THINGS, I AM LOVED, I AM HEARD, I AM SEEN, I AM SUPPORTED, I AM HONOURED, I AM VALUABLE, I AM WORTHY, I AM SECURE IN WHO I AM IN WHOLENESS, I AM UNMOVABLE IN THE HIGHEST TRUTH

THE LACK OF TRUTH

Just as truth is powerful in creating transformative change, lies are just as powerful in preventing change, in holding you down, holding you back, preventing you from developing fully in your potential and possibility. Those lies can crush your dreams,

prevent you from seeing beyond your current situation, circumstance, or the trauma from the past.

Sometimes we tell ourselves we will never amount to all we can be, or we tell ourselves we will never be all we dream of, or that it happens for others but not me, sometimes it is other people that say these things to us, but they are not the truth, and I'm here to tell you this today, as someone who used to think this way and then absolutely transformed my life, when I transformed my ability to love myself and open my mind and heart to a higher truth, that I had never even considered before, it transformed my entire life.

Some of the ways you will know that there is a lack of truth, is through the obvious, lies & deceit, either in our own minds, or through others.

Sometimes when others make up things about who you are and hold you to them, or they just decide in their own minds that they have this idea of who you must be or why you are the way you are, you must be doing things for this reason, or that reason, yet the things they say go completely against the Highest truth of who you are, but they've decided it's true in their mind, so they try to hold you to it anyway.

Sometimes they are gossip or slander your name behind your back, they may tell you things like 'you're never going to be anything' and when I say they, I also mean yourself, talking about yourself in this way, do you consider yourself unfixable or

unforgivable, or hopeless or alone or that no one hears you or no one cares or that no one loves you, if you look at your highest truth, you can clearly see that those statements are actually untrue, they are all lies, however if believed to be the truth, they will prevent an environment of love from growing, and therefore will not allow your heart or your mind to open to accept or receive the highest truth in order for it to become a possibility in your life, that you can experience it. I have found many items in my life, where people have tried to deceive me, or prevent me from reaching my highest potential, and been very unloving toward me, telling me I would never amount to much, telling me I didn't have what it took to be successful or to fulfil my potential, telling me I was good for nothing, that my past would always be held against me, that I was unworthy or love or of success.

When I used to tell myself I was worthless or good for nothing, or didn't have what it took, that wasn't love, that wasn't me loving myself, that was not me supporting myself to fulfil my highest potential. I was being my own biggest bully in my own mind and heart, the things I said about myself were awful and completely against what the highest truth about me is, they did not help me to grow, they were suffocating me, they were crushing my spirit from the inside, it was only in being able to accept the highest truth that helped me to grow.

So even if someone does say 'I love you' or you are telling yourself 'I love myself' but you are not sharing with yourself the

fundamental truths of who you are, and the potential for all you can be, how can you be said to be loving yourself, how can another be said to be loving you and loving all you have come to be.

Once I discover the truth of my highest potential, it was much easier to see when others were lying to me, previously it would hurt when I heard them say things like that but then I would question myself, doubt myself and sadly on quite a number of occasions, I began to believe the lies that they told me, and it did have a hold over me, in the sense that I stopped trying to reach a higher potential. Inside my heart and mind I had began accepting the lies, but once I recognised they were lies and compared them with the truth I had learned, I was able to show love for myself through patience, presence, understanding, compassion, kindness and reminding myself of the truth and I was able to move past them and take action towards the desires of my heart.

That was how I learned not only what love was, but how it caused huge transformation within my heart, mind and experience of life and relationships and helped me to reach a higher truth, potential, and possibility for my experience of life.

It is written in scripture that God sees you in His image and countenance, that is how you were made and how he see's you, in his perfected light, no sin, no blemish, that is the vision he not only holds, but is actually how he sees you.

So if those around you, do not see you as whole, do not see you as healed, do not see you as worthy, loved, honoured, respected, confident, successful, abundant.

Then they are **Not** looking at you with the eyes of God, they are **Not** looking at you with the eyes of Love, they are not looking at you in the Highest Truth of your Potential.

AFTERWORD

If we are not familiar with practicing these principles on a daily basis in our relationships either with ourselves or others, it may take a little bit of time and practice to do these things for ourself and ultimately within our relationships, and we may require to have a lot of forgiveness with ourselves and with one another as we learn how to practice these things, but with practicing these principles in our relationship, we have a real ability to create a healthy, loving powerful relationship that supports one another to develop into our fullest and highest potential.

There are ways and means that we can communicate with one another when we feel upset or triggered, that help each other to understand how something makes us feel, and gives us the opportunity to practice patience, presence, understanding, compassion, kindness and truth with one another, this is HOW we bring love into our relationships, and how we grow and develop in our fullest potential.

It is important first and foremost that we learn to practice these aspects with ourself in order to experience what comes up inside us, and how we manage that, in order to know and understand what may come up in other people when these things are

practiced also, it is not always easy, and that is why patience, and understanding, and kindness are so, so important. Trauma is a very difficult thing to navigate, and many of us experience it in our lifetimes, if these tools help you and help your relationship to bloom, I would love to hear about your experiences.

When loving yourself:

Do you understand or seek to understand yourself, are you patient and present to truly hear yourself, are you compassionate with your experiences, why things are the way they are, where they came from are you kind to yourself with your words and your touch and your decisions and do you share with yourself the truth of who you are in wholeness?

When loving others

Do you understand and seek to understand them, are you patient and present to truly hear them, to actually listen to their own individual experience, are you compassionate with their experiences, are you kind with your words, your touch and your decisions for them and do you share with them the truth of who they are in Wholeness

When being Loved by others:

You'll know that you're loved if they are seeking to understand, or understand you and who you are, if they are patient and present

to truly hearing you, if they are compassionate with your experiences, if they are kind, with their words, their touch and their decisions for you and for your life, and do they share with you the truth of who you are in Wholeness.

- * **PATIENCE / PRESENCE**
- * **UNDERSTANDING**
- * **COMPASSION**
- * **KINDNESS**
- * **TRUTH**

You'll find when these five keys are present in your relationships, and in your deeds with others, it will foster an environment that can hold the presence of the highest love.

The only way I could overcome the trauma that had stunted my development in my life, and begin to fulfil my potential, was to employ these practices, and allow love to grow in myself and in my relationships.

Love shows up in action, if it is not showing up in action, love is not present. We are here to experience the power that love has to transform, to free and to bring to life that which we desire more than anything to bring to life. Fostering a relationship full of love is easy when we know how.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Having experienced violent abusive relationships from birth through childhood and early adult life, I had some very messed up ideas of what love was. I was 32 years old before I first experienced real love & in the most unlikely place, it's experience completely transformed the relationship I had with myself and those around me.

Within a matter of years I was able to begin developing and cultivating supportive, loving relationships around me.



I was finally able to recognise love, and to know when I was loving myself, when I was loving others, when I was being loved BY others and without anyone having to say the words, and equally as important, I was able to recognise when I was not being loving or being loved, no matter if I or others were saying those words.

In this book I share the practices that I learned that helped me discover love in it's most basic form and how the principles helped me overcome the effects of trauma and contribute to my growth and development, gifting me the ability to build transformative, powerful and loving relationships.