

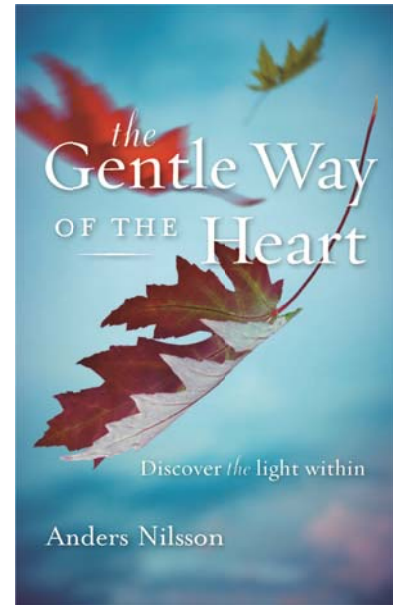
EXCERPT FROM

THE GENTLE WAY OF THE HEART

By Anders Nilsson

“The Light Within”

(1389 words)



Love is the realization, sensation or feeling that emanates from our true self when we exist in the present moment. Sometimes love may be hidden behind layers of false perceptions such as shame, guilt, or feelings of not being worthy. However, love is always present, even when it is masked by these negative emotions. This is part of what makes life so beautiful and truthfully real for each of us that we have the source of love within and it is always available to us even in difficult times.

What is the meaning and experience of unconditional love and how can we more frequently bring it into our life?

Acceptance

When we fully *accept ourselves and everyone else* without conditions or pretenses, a deep sense of connection and compassion becomes possible. Unconditional love is the same as unconditional acceptance. It is when we accept others and things exactly as they are that we remove any boundaries between us. A mother holds her baby in her arms with a deep sense of gratitude and warmth. When her love is unconditional she knows she will accept whatever the child will one day try to do or want to be.

Think of the self in the same terms: when you fully accept who you are without judgment, you can embrace wherever your life and instincts takes you. The feeling of unconditional love towards yourself arises when you don't hold anything against yourself. Neither regrets about the past nor any judgments about how you act or how you appear in the present. *Total acceptance also means total forgiveness.* All that has happened prior to the present moment can be released to become acceptance.

I know from my own past how I sometimes felt shame when I thought that I could not measure up to the expectations often encountered in my life such as in relationships or at work. On this particular occasion, I had organized a major research center proposal that involved many scientists at the university. The proposal was declined since it had several flaws and I took it personally that I had failed, not only for myself but also for the whole university. I wanted to go home, pull a blanket over my head and disappear from the world. I have a ceramic bowl, formed as a red heart inside the entrance of my house where I keep the keys, to always remind me of my heart. When I saw it I woke up from my pain. I released the incident, and I realized that my mind was playing tricks, and indeed I can accept what had happened. I eventually became so accepting that I laughed so much at my own reaction that my neighbor came and wondered what was going on. I closed the event of the day by bringing full acceptance towards myself through forgiveness.

In these situations when we accept ourselves it is like our own awareness is holding us in the light of love. In such a moment there is no striving towards perfection or any need for change. We accept ourselves exactly for who we are and what we have done.

Keep in mind, we should not confuse unconditional love with romantic love. In romantic love, first we are deeply in love, where we accept our partner exactly for who they are without expecting anything in return. However, often with time a component develops from our false self that is not love, represented as a need to be loved by someone in order to compensate for what we have not yet found within ourselves.

My colleague Larry often worries about whether his wife really loves him, because he seeks her affection to compensate for his own lack of self-love when he feels unworthy.

When we instead bring forward our unconditional love, it overflows and we accept everyone as they are and everything exactly the way it is without hesitation or judgment. In that moment, we don't need approval from others or to prove anything to ourselves.

We may wonder how, in such a perfect state of mind, we can approach change if we always accept things as they are. We can always have the intention of change, while still accepting the present moment. The secret is to accept the moment, since it cannot be changed, while we act to make the next moment different and accept that

moment when it arrives.

Finding the Light Within

When we are in acceptance and no barrier exists it brings the warm feeling of love that we cannot really describe in words but we all know when we feel it. We are no longer separate but connected within ourselves to the Divine.

We can practice focusing on the sensation of feeling unconditional love as often as possible. We stay focused on the present moment and feel the warmth inside our chest, close to the heart, and at the same time, we experience that we are radiating this feeling all over our body and to those around us. Let us picture a light inside our heart. That light is the love that radiates warmth.

In my workshops I have guided participants through a meditation where they, in a relaxed state, were discovering the light within themselves. They were asked to put their attention on the outside of their chests where they would find a door into their heart. Opening the door and stepping through the portal, they were suddenly immersed in light coming from all directions, a most profound experience for them that provided a connection to the light for the rest of their lives.

My own experience is that I feel warmth radiating from my heart down into the stomach, the legs, up to my throat and head. I naturally follow my breath that goes all the way down into my abdomen. It brings warmth and a feeling of well-being that somehow pulsates all out from my heart into the surroundings, connecting me to all there is.

It is almost that I can hear beautiful music within but still there is only silence, it feels like there is an explosion of colors but again there is nothing really in my sight, I can smell a wonderful fragrance but there is nothing in the air and it is like someone is gently touching my body giving me goosebumps but there is no one there. I recommend practicing this exercise if you have not already found it or you may want to invent your own way to enter into the light.

The light is soft and gentle, an embodiment of acceptance. It is an image of our true self that radiates a feeling of pure love for ourselves and everything that exists. *There is no beginning or end of the light – it has always existed and will always exist.* The light is beyond what we think of as time and space.

That we are light and that Tao (the Way) or the Divine resides in our heart have been in several core spiritual teachings. Jesus said *“You are the light”*, the Buddha taught *“Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life”* and Lao Tzu wrote *“The Way is not in the sky, the Way is in the heart”*.

My friend, Samantha, is a single mother with an infant baby that she loves very deeply. She often talks about how the light emanates from her when she looks into the eyes of her baby daughter. In such moments there is no time or space, only the light between them. When the baby smiles and laughs, the portal opens fully in her heart and there is an explosion of light.

With the portal open to your inner light, you can show your beauty to the world and remind yourself that you love every single cell in your body. When your body is *connected to the light* in your heart, *miraculous healing can occur*. Each individual cell becomes the embodiment of your true self.

With learning acceptance comes another amazing realization. If we embody the light within us, a light that has always existed, then *it is not possible to destroy or to end the light*. This means that we are completely safe, the light exists independent of physical pain, war, emotional distress or even death itself.

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