

Needing Others for Pleasure

Let us examine how our needs for pleasure and affirmation can limit and distort our experience of love.

We create relationships that give us pleasure and affirmation as well as security. We may be dependent upon the other for money, shelter, sex, travel, clothing, encouragement, compliments, humor, tasty food, a clean house, comforts, or even his or her beauty.

Yet, if he or she stops providing these for us, or decides to provide them for someone else, do we continue loving that person or do we feel hurt, disillusioned, and overcome with feelings of injustice, anger and perhaps revenge?

The condition here is that “I love as long as you provide me pleasure, happiness or excitement. If you stop, my feelings change.” It is conditional love.

Needing Others for Affirmation

We may also depend on someone for affirmation. This may take various forms.

1. We are affirmed when others obey us. “You listen to me and do what I say. I can control you. That makes me feel powerful and worthy. If, however, you stop doing whatever I say, I will stop feeling love and unity with you.”

This becomes a problem for parents when their children move into adolescence. This can also occur between spouses. In many countries a wife might be suppressed at first, and thus, the husband feels powerful and affirmed. If, however, she begins to think and act for herself, he begins to panic and can become angry and sometimes aggressive. The roles may also be reversed where the woman controls and feels affirmed.

2. We also feel affirmation when someone needs us or is dependent on us. This could occur between parent and child, teacher and student, friends, or between the “savior” and the “needy.”

In these cases, the “needed” feels affirmed by and perhaps superior to the “needy”. This is one aspect of codependency. Some of us find meaning in life because someone needs us or depends on us. If however, the other doesn’t want to be the child, the student or the needy one anymore, do we feel the same attraction and love? If not, our love is mixed with our need to be “needed”.

In such a case, we need to give, offer, and sacrifice in order to feel useful, worthy or boost our self-image. If this is the case, then all that we offer in these situations, all our sacrifices, are actually for ourselves and not for the others.

That does not negate the fact that others may actually need us, or that we also simultaneously have feelings of altruistic love. We are often motivated by two or three motives simultaneously

3. A third aspect of this attraction for affirmation is the situation in which we “love” those “who affirm our rightness”, either verbally by telling us we are right, or simply by belonging to the same social, political, religious or spiritual group and thus embrace a similar belief system.

“I love you because you agree with me, you are like me, you affirm me”. If they change beliefs and convert to another political party, religion, or spiritual group, will we feel the same closeness and “love?” Perhaps yes, perhaps no.

A fourth aspect of this affirmation principle is infatuation – called “Eros” (in Greek “erotas”) or “falling in love”. In this case there is a mutual (occasionally only one-sided) infatuation on the physical, sexual, emotional and sometimes mental level. This is a special attraction between two persons who excite, bring joy to and stimulate each other positively. This positive stimulation often has to do with the needs for security, pleasure and affirmation.

This intensity of these feelings seldom lasts more than a few years. The couple then has the possibility of transforming their “Eros” into a steady form of unconditional love, or facing the sadness of conflict and / or separation. Sooner or later, we will come face to face with the other’s various negative aspects, and if we cannot love them as they are, the relationship suffers.

Until we are able to love unconditionally, we will be unhappy, insecure and frequently in conflict with those around us. We will be able to do this only when we have matured sufficiently so as to experience inner security, inner satisfaction, inner freedom and a steady feeling of self-worth.

In other words, we can love purely only those who we do not need.

When we need others, we cannot love them unconditionally. This might be difficult to comprehend at first, but deep thought and observation will prove it to be true. Being able to love without conditions is a basic prerequisite for both a happy life and spiritual evolution.

Be sure to look for the remaining the parts of this series:

1. What is Love ?
2. Love or Need for Security ?
3. Love, Pleasure or Affirmation?
4. Selfless Love
5. Spiritual Universal Love