

We Can All Be Beacons of Love
by Tasha Halpert
North Grafton, MA

When we love sufficiently we can give what is needed when and where it is needed. When we love ourselves sufficiently we can help to heal the world just by keeping our eyes open for what needs to be done right where we are. When we look with the eyes of love we can see that all are children of God; that that is our universal connection. Yet those of us that are different from the perceived norm, whether in our sexual orientation, our physical appearance or our mental or physical abilities may become targets of those who do not love themselves.

We learn about love as children. If the love we are given does not feel to us like love, we become disappointed and begin to believe that we are not loved. If we are not loved it means to us that we are unlovable. This belief, often hidden in the midst of sad memories, may be the primary source of lack of self esteem in adults. Many years ago, with the help of a therapist I was able to recognize the love I had been given by my parents for what it was. I saw them in a different light and was able to learn to love myself much more.

In my adult life's work of helping people to learn to love themselves, I have found the biggest stumbling block to people's healing and wholeness is lack of self love. Yet the more I love myself, the easier it is to be grateful for and accepting of the love of others. Sadly, those that are lacking in self love may not be able to let themselves feel the love others have to offer. Instead they often will be suspicious or even resentful, feeling those offering love may want something from them or are trying to manipulate them in some way.

Unfortunately, many children are taught by well meaning parents to give to others and not to themselves, because it is "more blessed to give than to receive." This is too often applied to love. However, no one can slake another's thirst from an empty cup. If we have not given ourselves enough love, we cannot give others the love they deserve and want. Over time I have learned better to love and also to forgive myself when I have not been loving. Thus I can help others to do the same. Unconditional love grows with practice.

Beneath any perceived differences, we are all the same. Our hearts beat with the same yearnings, the same hopes and dreams for ourselves and our loved ones. The Dalai Lama has said, "My religion is kindness." His religion is how he lives his life. This is true religion, a guide to daily life. The way I see it, the more I can love, the kinder I can become. The kinder I become, the more tolerant I can be with others as well as myself.

When we feel comfortable, happy, and secure we can look out at the world and see what is needed in the way of love and compassion. We can bless the weary cashier who might be slow with the line, or be patient with the demanding friend who is hurting. Teaching by example, acting with love and compassion toward others, we can become beacons of unconditional love to guide others through their pain, suffering and despair to a new vision of life as a way of love.