

Surrender to Love

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Many of you who have worked with me know that A Course in Miracles (ACIM) and 12-Step Recovery principles continue to play a huge role in my personal healing. Growing up with an alcoholic father means that I've always been wary of alcohol and drugs, thus avoiding "ingestive" addictions that involve swallowing a substance like whiskey or cocaine. My parents taught me that I had to compete to get ahead, and I learned that my value was based on tangible achievements like grades, money, and home ownership. Most importantly I believed that I needed LOVE in my life, and without that certain someone to complete me I was nothing.

When I first saw ACIM at a friends book-case I was at the height of my love addiction, which showed itself primarily as attachment to sex, romance, and relationships to provide me with the mood alteration that I craved. Like any true addict, there was never enough of the love that I needed, and I never felt like I was enough. I opened the thick blue book to read: "Tolerance for pain may be high, but is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way..." I was hooked, and became ACIM student that very night.

About this time I experienced a revelation while attending a 12-step meeting for codependents. I realized with a jolt that I had made my partner into my "Higher Power"...yikes! For the first time I was able to introduce myself whole-heartedly at those meetings. "I'm Jill, a relationship addict ." (Now I say, "a recovering relationship addict") I admitted that I'm powerless, and stopped searching outside of myself for someone to reassure me that I was lovable, that I was enough.

The Course tells us, "You must have noticed an outstanding characteristic of every end that the ego has accepted as its own. When you have achieved it, it has not satisfied you. This is why the ego is forced to shift ceaselessly from one goal to another, so that you will continue to hope it can yet offer you something." The ego (also identified by some as Satan or the silver-tongued devil or logical, mature thinking!) constantly tells us that we are never enough, not smart enough, not attractive enough, not "in love" enough. I had been buying into this hateful message. I desperately needed another way of looking at the world and I was determined to find it!

The 12 step meetings had provided friendship, fellowship that provided the real life experience, strength and hope that I needed. ACIM gave me a course of study that taught me to live in love instead of fear, and advised me to surrender to God rather than pursuing the path of my own misguided ego. The words of the Course soothed me, and the message felt right, but "surrender" was terrifying. I believed that I had been controlling all aspects of my life, so I couldn't imagine releasing any part of it to God. Better for me to

be in charge!

My years of experience in 12 step meetings introduced me to the fact that I am powerless over people, places, and situations outside myself. I had worried that a surrendered or powerless life would seem passive, defeatist, and lacking in passion. As I continue to study the Course I am learning that surrender is not about defeat; it's about acceptance, joy, and faith. As the 12 Step Big Book says, we will feel our serenity level rise as we let go of attachment to outcome. Acceptance is the key.

Surrender is about ending the struggle in our lives when we admit that we're not in control, get ourselves (and our egos) out of the way and trust God (as we understand God) to guide us. Those of us uncomfortable to the "G-word" can substitute, Love, Universe, Divine Order - whatever terminology works. One of my early teachers used to mutter "Trust the process." when life became difficult. "Release your mind, and you will look upon a world released."

Whatever we are clutching most tightly is probably the exact thing we need to let go. Whatever we're most afraid of losing, may be what we need to release to make way for something better. As I look at my life I can see that life flows abundantly in the areas where I'm not attached, not clinging. As Marianne Williamson has written, "The True Abundance of the world is magnetized to the serene presence." In the areas of my life where I am most spacious, as Buddhists say, I can experience relaxed receiving. My hands are open.

Surrendering to Love means letting go of the barriers to love in our lives. It means perceiving only love and giving only love. Sometimes it seems there is only hopelessness, sadness, grief, or tragedy. Yet, when we choose love and act with love we receive love and peace in our lives - all ways, and even in the most unlikely circumstances. Sometimes this peace won't arrive on our timetable, but it always arrives.

Spiritual surrender frees us from fear and anger and points us in the best and highest direction for all concerned. It leads us to a life that is more joyful and abundant than we ever dreamed. Practicing spiritual surrender enables us to release our attachment to the illusions of this world. By surrendering our will and the logic of our rational minds, we can experience power much more potent than magic. We can experience miracles.