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What Will Love Give You? by [Margaret Paul, Ph.D.](#)

Article published on January 11th 2012 | [Relationship](#)

Did you grow up believing that if only someone REALLY loved you in the way you needed to be loved, then you would feel happy, safe, lovable and worthy?

Certainly being truly loved by parents goes a long way toward supporting children in feeling safe and lovable, but it is not the whole story. Even if your parents did love you the way you needed to be loved, if they didn't role-model loving themselves, then it is likely you absorbed their forms of self-abandonment – judging themselves, turning to various addictions to manage their feelings, and making others responsible for their feelings and sense of worth.

My parents did the best they could, but their best was far from what I needed to feel loved, safe and worthy. Additionally, they role-modeled many forms of self-abandonment which I incorporated into my survival mechanisms.

I grew up believing that if only a man would really see me and deeply value what he saw – and if he was consistently warm, caring, open, honest, gentle, tender, compassionate and sensitive, I would finally feel safe and worthy. I believed that his love is what I needed to feel happy and lovable.

The problem was that, even when he was being loving, I had learned to be so unloving to myself that his love barely made a dent in my sense of worth. I was right that love could give me all that I sought, but I was mistaken about where the love needed to come from.

EXTERNAL LOVE, INTERNAL LOVE

External love feels wonderful, and the sharing of love with another is, in my experience, the highest experience in life. But as long as I was abandoning myself with my self-judgments; staying in my mind and ignoring my feelings; giving myself up to care-take others in the hopes they would love me; getting angry when I didn't get the love I wanted; crying and being a victim as a form of control; and turning to various addictions such as food, worry and perfectionism, I was unhappy. It took me many years of searching for answers to understand that, until I learned to give myself the love I needed, not only was I unable to share love with another, but another's love was the icing on the cake – not the cake itself.

My love for myself needed to form the foundation of my sense of worth, safety and lovability. Realizing this many years ago has brought about profound changes in my life. Now I am the one who is consistently warm, caring, open, honest, gentle, tender, compassionate and sensitive with myself, and the more I am able to be this with myself, the more I am able to be this with others as well.

If you think about it, it makes so much sense that, as adults, someone else can never be the consistent source of love that we all need. No one is with me 24/7, and even if they are a caring and sensitive person, they do not live inside my body and cannot know what I feel and need, moment by moment. As much as I would have loved for my fantasy to be true, there is no way it can be true. It took me time to fully accept this and let go of the hope of getting the love I needed from someone, but now I truly treasure the sacred privilege of taking loving care of my own body, mind and soul.

The love I need is always here for me, for this is what Spirit is. When my intent is to be loving to myself, the love that is Spirit and the wisdom to take loving action in my own behalf, enter my consciousness. Being loving to myself and sharing my love with others is a much more fulfilling way

to live than always trying to get love.

Article Source:

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Article Keywords:

love, self-love, self-abandonment, self-worth, happiness, mind body soul, spirituality, spirit, Margaret Paul, Inner Bonding

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