

23.

Three Stages of Loving



When you see a cute kitten or smiling baby, you light up with joy. When you hear your favorite music on the radio, you move with pleasure. I want you to be happy, but I also want your happiness to deepen. I want our relationship to be a way for our heart's deepest yearning to open as love's full offering with or without our surface happiness. And I know this deepening of love takes a commitment to practice opening, since sometimes we both tend to close.

To practice opening, we both must feel the subtle fluctuations of our heart's depth of yearning. Sometimes I'm happy to love you skin deep and luxuriate in your beautiful fragrance and softness, as if you were my love-kitten. Sometimes

I want to share more deeply by discussing our feelings and hearing about where you want to go in your life and our relationship.

But you and I can also offer our hearts to each other even deeper. We can feel our deepest yearning to be seen and known for who we truly are. The divine love that flows through our deepest hearts longs to worship and be worshipped. By noticing how deeply we are opening our hearts to worship, moment by moment, we can choose to share our deepest yearning even as we enjoy other pleasures of life.

Your man can worship the shape of your breasts. He can focus on your nipples, kissing you, nibbling you, forgetting all else. But eventually his narrow focus becomes boring. You want a man to adore your breasts, but you want much more than that. Ultimately, you want a man who loves your breasts but especially loves your heart—and beyond that, you want a man who loves your breasts and heart but whose life is given to God, who is feeling you and *through* you to the depth of this divine moment, not simply limiting his life to the pleasure of your body.

You want a man who lives his life as divine poetry, penetrating you with the deepest expression of his heart. He lives as if every moment were his last, so he always gives his deepest gift, to you and everyone, as if it were his final gift, his fullest offering of presence. Even when he caresses and kisses your breasts, you can feel his love deeper than your flesh, entering

into your heart, and opening even deeper than your own heart. You can feel his love opening beyond all form, his presence opening you to infinity, to divine love without bounds, to God.

Stage by stage, your desire to be worshipped deepens. These stages develop through the years of your life as your heart's yearning grows deeper. You also fluctuate between these stages, moment by moment.

In a 1st stage moment, you want your body to be adored. "Notice me, and make me feel beautiful."

In a 2nd stage moment, you want to be physically attractive, but you also want your opinions and career to be valued. "I am a successful and intelligent woman. Listen to me, and value who I am as a whole person."

In a 3rd stage moment, you are ready to be worshiped as you are, as the light of love that lives as all life's power. "I am light. Take me, if you dare."

You are not just a body to be entered or a mind to be shared. You are the very light of life, alive as the love that yearns to open at the heart of all beings.

You are moved by a force of love much larger than clitoris and career. Your true power isn't limited by your body or created by your mind, but flows open as the force of love, alive and bright as the universe.

Your deep heart may yearn to be seen and worshiped as love's light, yet you may settle for a man who makes you feel needed for your body or mind. Although it may be painful to feel how you can ignore your heart's deepest yearning, your capacity to choose and inspire a deep man requires that you can feel the differences between 1st, 2nd, and 3rd stage moments of loving.

In a 1st stage moment, you degrade your heart's *deepest* desire in order to feel wanted and needed by a man. You disregard your heart's signals that your man is off the mark, that he is lying to himself and to you, because you are afraid to lose him. You suppress yourself so as not to frighten or offend your man, but your energy comes out in other ways, secretly

punishing him back for not loving you like you want. You may settle for inciting your man's abusive anger, because at least his angry presence is better than no presence at all.

You may praise your man's strength so he feels good about himself. You may give up your needs to cater to his. Your heart wants to be seen and loved so badly that you will do just about anything in the hopes of getting and keeping your man's love. You don't trust yourself to take care of yourself, so you are desperate for a man to take care of you. This is 1st stage feminine neediness.

In a 2nd stage moment, you choose to set aside your heart's deepest desire in order to create a safe haven of independence and self-reliance. Even though your heart still yearns for a man's true love to open you to God, you put your intimate life "on the back burner" while you prioritize achieving your professional goals and taking care of yourself.

You may minimize the struggle with your heart's deep desire to be ravished in love by a man by avoiding the strong, penetrative power of deep masculine presence: either you live alone, or choose relationships with men who are so confused or safe that they give you the space to do whatever you want.

You want enough space in your life to exercise your own masculine direction, so you either repel truly masculine men or choose men whose masculine love doesn't have the clarity, depth, or staying power to penetrate your shells of resistance and enter your life, body, and heart too deeply.

Even after you have exercised your own masculine directionality to achieve your financial goals and established your life the way you want it, you may find it difficult to meet a good man. Very likely, you are more surely directed than most of the men you meet. Your masculine presentation—which has become a habit in your body, voice, and breath—attracts undirected men who are needy for your masculine guidance, rather than deeply purposed men of passionate integrity who would be attracted to enter your feminine body and heart with their full masculine commitment, presence, and respect.

Your unclaimed heart continues to wait, still holding back behind a masculine shell of directionality—alone or in relationship—and you begin to wonder if you will ever be *fully* met by a man and lovingly claimed at heart. You haven't found—or allowed in—a man who you would trust with your heart's deepest yearning.

In a 3rd stage moment, you know that however successful and self-sufficient you may be, your heart still yearns to be entered and taken open. You long to surrender all control and allow love to move through your body and heart, so you can be utterly *possessed* by love. Your yearning to give yourself as love grows stronger than your need for a man to take care of you or for you to take care of yourself.

You will only attract and inspire a man who is as deep as you are offering your yearning, right now. So it is very important for you to know, moment by moment, what kind of woman you are being.

As a 1st stage woman, you try to get your lover's attention by giving him love even when he is not interested. You become a "doormat" willing to put up with his disinterest because you hope that by giving him love you will, sooner or later, get his love in return. You know that deep down he loves you, he just doesn't realize it right now, so you willingly play the victim to his disinterest as you wait and try to attract him. You know that he has the potential to love you, he just doesn't know how.

As a 2nd stage woman, you grow tired of your lover's lack of commitment, his incapacity or unwillingness to claim your heart, so you stop trying. Your heart closes and your body armors its softest parts from the pain of possible rejection. You shelter your untouched heart in superficial shells of occupation: listening to music, pursuing a career, cleaning the house, talking with friends. You learn to create healthy boundaries, cultivate your masculine directionality, and trust yourself more, so you are not needy of a man's support. But your deepest heart still yearns.

Without a deep man to help you stay the course of love, your body can become chronically self-masculinized. You push yourself toward your goals, and whether you fail or succeed, your body remains unravished, unopened, and dry. You can try to emphasize self-love, directing your love back onto yourself in a curl of ingrown protection, but this is no way to be claimed open by divine love.

As a 3rd stage woman, you learn to open your boundaries and express your heart's deepest yearning in love's vulnerable communion. You learn to relax open as your heart yearns. You learn to trust love.

Trust love—not a man or yourself. No person is worthy of total trust. Any man will, at times, waver in his love or falter in his commitment. And you will often waver in your own capacity to love yourself, as you often have.

Only love—the love that yearns open at the heart of all beings, the divine love that lives open as this entire moment—is worthy of total trust. Rather than devoting yourself to a man or to yourself, you can trust, surrender, and be lived open *as love*. You can practice this opening as love when you are alone or through two-bodied devotional surrender. If you choose two-bodied practice, then it is important to feel how you may be using your man as an excuse to weaken or guard yourself.

In the 1st stage, you weaken yourself in the hope of getting your man's love in return for your acquiescence. In the 2nd stage, you guard yourself by holding your deepest love in check, hoping to immunize yourself against feeling too much pain. You can even become numb. In the 3rd stage, you give your man love even while he may be hurting you because *you are alive as love*, because to deny him your love is to deny opening as your heart's deepest yearning. You offer yourself as the immensity of love you actually are.

For love's sake—for God's sake, yearning open as divine love—you offer your body open as love's puppet, you offer yourself to be lived open as love's flow, you offer your breath, voice, gestures, and actions as love's fully given gifts.

Your heart may feel wounded—by your man's disinterest as well as by your own sense of being undesirable—and yet you can choose to open your heart and body as an offering. You can look into your lover's eyes and relax your body. You can soften your breath and open your feelers outward, actively radiating love from your heart while feeling his pain, his fear, his hidden love.

You may be sobbing. You may be screaming. You may be trembling. But you are not closing. Rather, in spite of the pain in your heart and the stress in your body, in spite of your man's staunch opposition to love or your own lack of self-worth, you practice opening. Love is your discipline, and it is not always easy.

First, you love yourself, even loving your shells and your closure. Then, tender as love, you practice loving beyond yourself. To counteract your tendency for self-enclosure, you offer your yearning open to your lover. You actively open your heart as love's yearning, breathing more deeply, relaxing your body through pain, resistance, and neediness so your heart can feel your lover's yearning heart completely—eventually breathing your heart open to feel everyone's yearning.

With practice, your moods continue to flow, but your love-tenderized body lives full as a perpetually active offering, your heart relaxing open to be claimed by the moment's (or your man's) deep presence, radiating your deepest gifts of love to all.

Living with your heart closed and your body tense attracts a man of equal fearfulness, a man unwilling to offer his presence unless you are pleasing him. Living open—even while your heart hurts—attracts a man of equal willingness to open and feel you in deep mutual worship.