

Are There Different Kinds of Unconditional Love?

Dale Goldstein

Love is universal, but is the limitless love you feel for your child different than what you feel for your spouse? How so? And, is that a good thing?

Many years ago, when my son was a baby, until he was 18 months old, he slept with my wife and me in a family bed. One night, in the middle of the night, I awoke and looked over at him. I was struck with the awareness that I would unhesitatingly give my life for this being. That moment changed my life!

Then, I looked at my wife and wondered if I would unhesitatingly make the same sacrifice for her. I realized that I would give my life for her, but I would hesitate for a moment before I did so.

I am a purist! Unconditional love means love has no conditions. In my understanding, this is the only True Love. The moment one puts conditions on love, it is no longer love. So, for me the question has been one of "How can I live in a state of pure, unconditional love?"

I have tasted this state on many occasions. The first experience was when I had a very deep spiritual opening when I was 25 years old. For a couple of weeks, I was Love. My first wife, feeling somehow excluded because this Love was impersonal, said to me, "You love me as much as you love Zonk's (our cat) shit!" And she was right!

Unconditional Love has no boundaries. It makes no distinctions. If God is Love - in at least one aspect - and God loves all his children equally, then how could love for one's child be different than love for one's spouse?

At least in quantity! However, the quality, the flavor of Unconditional Love, varies with different beings. It is different, not better or worse. No judgment! No hierarchy!

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Simply, a discrimination of qualities exists in the experience of Unconditional Love with different beings: children, spouses, friends, clients, colleagues, teachers, pets, etc.

And one needs to include oneself in this Unconditional Love. In this regard, one could say Unconditional Love is the love of Truth and the Greatest Good. It includes setting appropriate boundaries. I remember reading a book by Robert Aitken, Roshi, where he said, "If a student asks if he can have my typewriter, I will say, 'No! You can borrow it, but you can't have it, because I count as one, also.'"

One final thought: Universal, Unconditional Love does not come from within. It is truly omnipresent. One morning a number of years ago, I woke up Knowing that the earth is a loving Mother to us all, and the earth is surrounded by a loving Universe. Since that time, I have seen that Love is an aspect of our True Nature. It permeates and informs everything! One can never fall out of Love; one can only lose awareness of this deep and fundamental Truth. Realizing and re-remembering this Truth is a quest that requires sincerity, discipline, and surrender to the longing to Know and live in Unconditional Love.

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