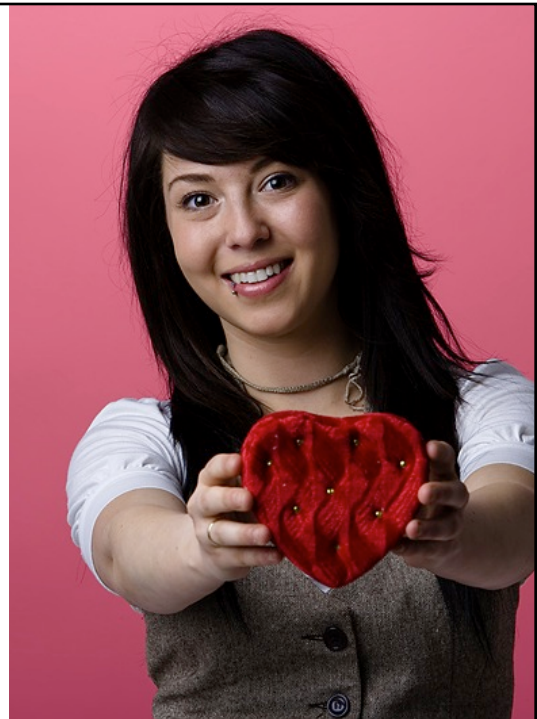


Overcoming Grief with Gratitude



Three Types of Love

- **Eros = Judgment level love**
 - Love as desire
 - This is an self-love, desiring what we perceive will make us happy
- **Philia = Justice level love**
 - Love as equality and familiarity
 - This is the love of happy relationships, which is where we have a mutually beneficial exchange
- **Agape = Mercy level love**
 - Unconditional love
 - This is the Divine love, which loves with no expectation of anything in return

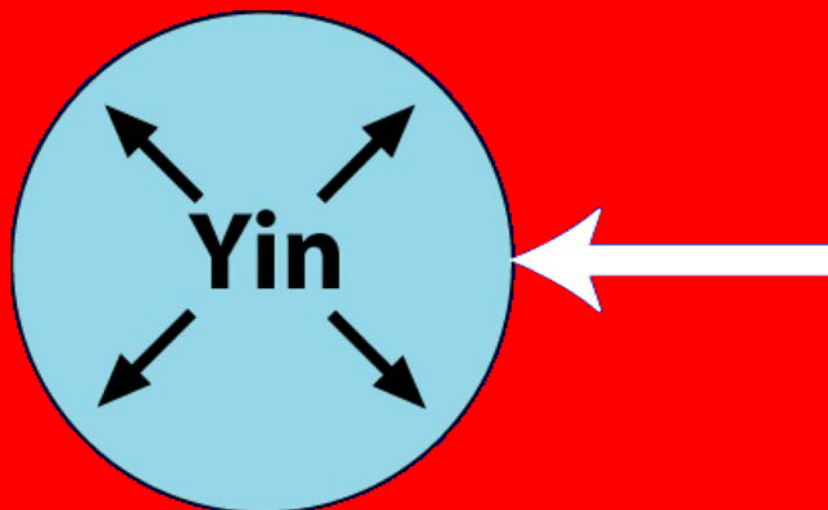




Ego (Judgment) Based Love

- “To the ego, loving and wanting are the same, whereas true love has no wanting in it, no desire to possess or for your partner to change. The ego singles someone out and makes them special.”
 - Eckhart Tolle
- When one operates on the judgment level, all acts of “love” are conditional and self-centered
- Our gifts to people are “investments,” which we come to resent when the person we’ve “invested” in doesn’t give us the expected return on our investment
- In other words, our “gifts” are not real gifts, but rather bribes

The Flow of Pleasure



Pleasure and “Love”

- The experience of pleasure causes peripheral dilation of blood vessels, which increases blood flow to the extremities of the body
- This heightens our senses, particularly our sense of touch
- In other words, we expand (yin), or move outward to welcome or “soak in” the experience

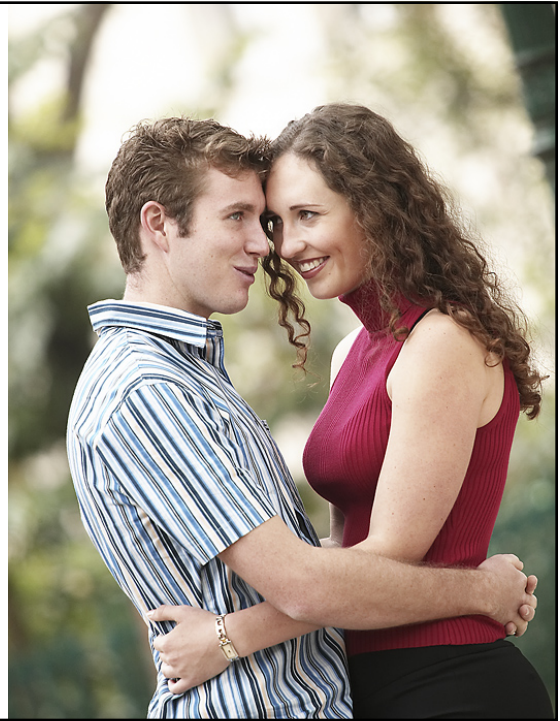


Erotic Pleasure

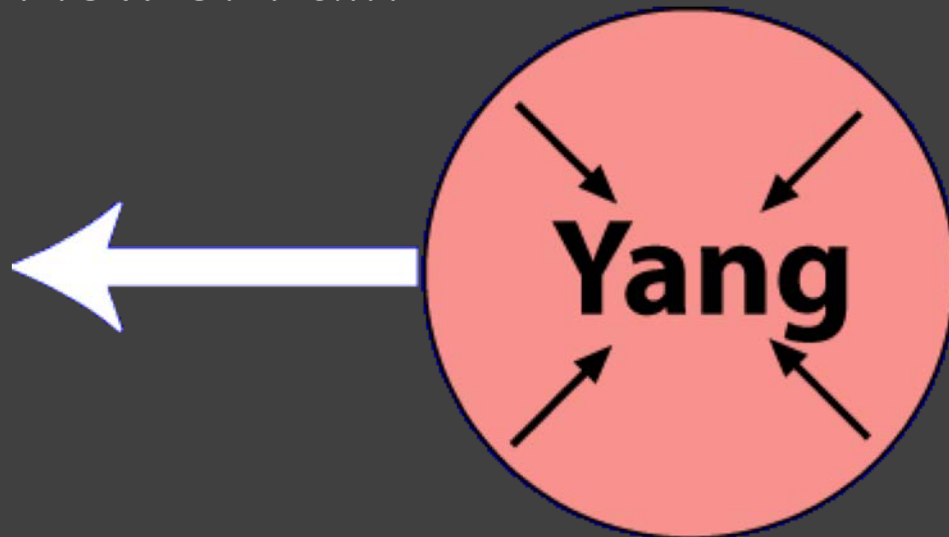
- All of the parts of our body that are most subject to erotic pleasure have blood vessels very close to the surface
- Blood flow, therefore, is intimately associated with our experience of love (desire or eros) and pleasure

When We Are “In Love”

- Cheeks flush
- The face glows
- Eyes sparkle
- The body is warm
- The skin softens
- Muscles relax
- We smile a lot
- We feel good



The Flow of Pain



Pain

- The experience of physical or emotional pain (“shock”) causes blood to flow inward decreasing sensation
- Muscles tense to prepare for action
- In short, we withdraw from life (put up our guard) to protect ourselves and withdraw inwardly, closing ourselves down



Pain and Shock

- Very intense pain (physical or emotional) can cause us to go into shock
- In shock, the color drains from our face and we become pale and cold
- We feel numb and detached
- Blood rushing into the chest creates a feeling of pressure and pain around the heart



Avoidance

- Pain can cause us to experience avoidance
- That is, we can seek to avoid any situation which bears similarity to a previously painful situation
- We close down and become unable to be open to certain experiences
- This is why there is a thin line between love (i.e., desire) and hate (i.e., repulsion)



A Basic Life Lesson

- We do not control that which we love (desire)
- Control comes from fear and anger and actually drive away what we love
- The fulfillment of desire requires vulnerability, the ability to open and surrender to pleasure
- The inability to be open or vulnerable means we are unable to experience love and joy



Embracing the Polarity

- Life moves in a flow of expansion and contraction
- We inhale because we need oxygen, but in order to inhale, we also have to exhale and release the carbon dioxide
- We eat because the body requires nourishment, but the GI tract requires rest between meals so it can cleanse itself and recover before the next meal
- We need stimulation and activity, but too much excitement without periods of rest and “down time” cause us to become burned out
- Our emotions operate the same way, when flowing naturally we are happy sometimes and sad sometimes

Creating Space

- To have new “things” in our lives we often have to let go of the old to make room for the new
- We also have an internal space, which also must be willing to let go of the old to make room for the new
- Grieving is the process of creating internal “space”



Grieving: The Process of Letting Go

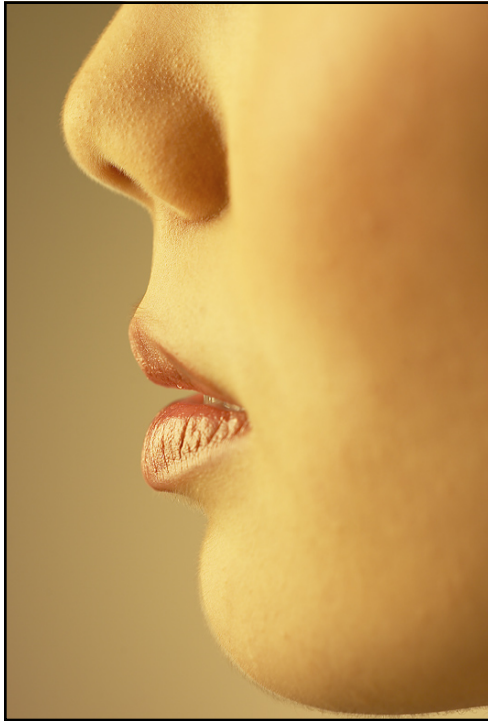


- One “lets go” of emotional pain by allowing oneself to fully engage the grieving process
- Fighting the pain prolongs it
- Embracing the pain fully releases it
- It empties the inner “space” and makes room for light, love and joy to replace darkness, pain and suffering
- Closing our heart doesn’t protect it, it merely numbs us to the experience of life

How to Grieve and Let Go



- If possible, find a place where you can be free to express your feelings without disturbing others
- Turn off all distractions: TV, cell phones, computers, books, etc. and just sit with your own feelings
- The more unresolved pain you have inside, the harder it is to be quiet and alone
- You must turn inward, not outward to heal your grief



Start with Breathing

- Tune into an unresolved hurt or loss, then breathe with it as follows:
- As you breath in, feel the pain in your heart and acknowledge it
- As you exhale, seek to empty your lungs as fully as possible, pushing as much air out of your lungs as you can
- At the same time imaging the pain flowing out of you



Emptying the Lungs

- Breathing connects you with feelings
- Exhaling helps you release emotions
- When you empty your lungs completely, endorphins are released which help you feel better
- Both grieving and laughter empty the lungs and release endorphins



Expressing Your Pain

- If you start to feel the urge to cry or sob, don't hold back
- True grieving always leads to sobbing, sighing, wailing, weeping and sometimes even screaming
- If you can't actually scream, try silent screaming (pretend you are screaming, but don't emit sound)
- Blocking the process inhibits the release of the pain



Rituals Can Help Us

- A ritual is a way of externalizing what is going on internally
- This can help one see something more objectively and release it
- Having other people participate in the ritual with you can also be very healing

Creating a “Letting Go” Ritual

- Start by creating a symbol of what was lost, this could be:
 - A photograph of the lost loved one
 - A former possession of the lost loved one
 - Or simply writing down what you want to let go of on a piece of paper
- Take this symbol and let go of it in some way, such as:
 - Burn it and watch the smoke ascend to heaven
 - Throw it in a river and watch the water carry it away towards the ocean
 - Hold a “funeral service,” dig a hole and bury it for the earth to recycle it
 - Flush it down the toilet
 - Put the paper in a helium balloon and release it
 - Give possessions away to charity



Grieving Takes Time

- It takes about a year to grieve a significant loss
- This is assuming you are allowing yourself to grieve, if you don't the process can be much longer
- You can't rush the grieving process
- There are “good” days and there are “bad” days

Allowing Others to Cry

“It is a grave injustice to a child or adult to insist that they stop crying. One can comfort a person who is crying which enables him to relax and makes further crying unnecessary; but to humiliate a crying child is to increase his pain, and augment his rigidity. We stop other people from crying because we cannot stand the sounds and movements of their bodies. It threatens our own rigidity. It induces similar feelings in ourselves which we dare not express and it evokes a resonance in our own bodies which we resist.”

— Alexander Lowen, *The Voice of the Body*



The Crippling Effects of Sympathy

- Being sympathetic is the complementary role to being the victim
- Sympathy is giving in to feeling sorry for someone and feeling the need to rescue them
- Giving people sympathy helps them continue to avoid facing their own pain and maintain their role as a victim



Victimhood

- Unresolved grief can cause us to see ourselves as a victim
- The victim feels powerless to stop future pain and is constantly seeking someone to rescue them
- Victims whine, complain and manipulate others into trying to feel sorry for them and give them what they want
- Feeling like a “victim” attracts more situations where one plays this role in life

The Divine Opportunity in Grief

- Within grief is a divine opportunity
- Grief has the capacity to open our heart or cause us to close it more tightly
- If we surrender fully to grief, it will open us up to a greater capacity for love
- Many people report finding God through grief or what has been called “the dark night of the soul.”
- What we are willing to feel and acknowledge leads us to greater light, what we run away from, haunts us forever



The Power within Grief

“It was then that I understood pain, suffering and heartbreak in their true light—not as punishment sent by God, but as blessings, for in them were contained the very keys of progress, Light, power and complete dominion. In themselves, they were just what they appeared to be, unbearable burdens, but when accepted and enfolded in the faith and love of man they can be transmuted into utter, eternal glory. Man has true dominion over them, if he will but use it. They contain the power to turn darkness into light, poverty into plenty, heartbreak into ecstasy, pain into joy unspeakable. In man are the keys and the power and the dominion to rule over them, to subdue them, to glorify them. Or to be destroyed by them.”

Christine Mercie in Sons of God

Gratitude: The Lesson of Grief

“Every burden, every fear, each heartache, each quivering agony of distress and anguish can thus be offered whenever they appear, or accumulate on life’s road. As they are “let go” of, released, without strings or restrictions, to the Lord, they become sanctified and transmuted into unutterable glory and everlasting power. If man could only begin to comprehend the inestimable worth and value of that which he so intensely and violently resents and rejects, he would know that within the difficulties lie the leverage to lift the world. He would kneel in such deep, humble gratitude [and] thank God with such sincere worship and devotion for every heartache, every tear, every sorrow, for he would realize fully the dynamic magnitude of the power these things contain.”

Christine Mercie in Sons of God



Regret and Gratitude

- Much of the grief we experience is due to regret, the fact that we did not fully enjoy something or appreciate it while we had it
- Experiencing our grief without trying to vent or suppress it awakens us to how much people and things mean to us and awakens appreciation for all our blessings
- You have mastered grief when you are able to live everyday with a constant feeling of gratitude for all that you have.

The Path Glorious by Christine Mercie

I shall take all thorns on which I tread
 And weave a crown of glory for my head.
 The way of deepest darkness! Ah black night!
 I shall dispel thy gloom—disperse it by my light.
 The heartbreaks, the tragedies, the sorrows and the tears
 Shall be the shining glory of the coming years.
 The troubles and despairs I meet along the road
 Shall be the leverage to lift the load
 Of utter desolation, which I am called to bear
 And so I glorify all troubles with a prayer
 of deepest gratitude, exalted by my praise—
 And thus God walks with me in all my ways.
 And only power enfolds me as I move along
 In winged feet in rhythm with the Angels song.
 All darkness has been conquered! Gone is the night!
 I walk in glory and am clothed in light!

