



Love is a decision

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

— Corinthians

Who has not pulled the petals from a daisy? She loves you. She loves you not.

You repeat the words, hoping. Wondering. You love me. You love me not.

When you are young, love comes like a storm into your heart.

Love can overtake you, sweep you up. Love can destroy your sense of balance.

Love can take you for a roller coaster ride.

When you are older, love becomes a thief in the night. It is there. It is not there.

Your parents tell you to work at it, but you find yourself slipping away. Why should love be like hard work?

Why can't love be easy?

The love in youth and the love of experience are two different things.

Yet in youth, we mistake our infatuations for mature devotion. We want to grow up too fast; we want to join the adult community who, we do not realize, struggle every day with love.

With experience, we realize that our childhood notions of love will continue unless they are replaced by a more mature love, a deeper love, a love that is more akin to faith than emotion.

Those of us who have been divorced or think of separation know that romantic love holds little promise for those who do not love themselves. Self love, then, becomes the basis by which others recognize and are attracted by our bouquet of strengths.

What is self love? Is it bragging? Is self-aggrandizing? Does it mean you stand in front of mirrors a lot?

Self love means agency. It means power, the freedom to choose. It means that you delight in your personal strengths. It means you respect yourself, take care of yourself and forgive yourself.

Compassion comes from the kind of self love that declares itself open,



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vulnerable and resilient.

I would walk a thousand miles for you.

To have true agency requires a sense of self-security. People with a sense of self-security are capable of a resilience that enables them to overcome difficulty, find jobs in foreign places, bounce back from tragedy.

Those without this level of security often lead quiet yet desperate lives. I feel trapped. I feel stuck. The choices are few; the path narrow; the doubts many.

I am lost, you say. I am not worthy of love, you say. Nothing comes easy, you say.

I am nothing, you say finally.

From the bottom of despair, from the heart of darkness, there is something that teaches you a universal truth. From the lowest of the lows, the reckless of the reckless, there is something that teaches you a universal truth.

What truth? What wisdom?

That you are great. Yes, you are. That you are deserving of the greatest of love. That good things will come your way and surround you.

That in nothingness is found this small little secret: You create your own experiences.

If you are tormented by your desires, you can calm your heart and desire nothing but what you already have.

If you are tormented by sadness, you can release your anger, forgive yourself and see sadness for what it is, an emotion, a mechanism, a direction that can be changed by movement – the quick effort of a telephone call, the transformation of a simple walk in

the February rain, a long embrace.

We cannot make up in one February day for all our difficulties and challenges, but we can begin the day with an exhortation: I am worthy of love. I deserve deep and meaningful love.

I am found.

When I was young, I looked up into the clouds and wondered how my life would be. I would lie down on the cool grass and look up into the blue sky and wonder.

If I closed my eyes tight, I thought I could feel the earth turning beneath my body.

Where am I going? Who will I be? Who will love me?

Today, I am defined not by my net worth, my occupation, my possessions, but by those who love me.

Those that love you. My wife, my children, my family and friends.

Those that love you. Your ancestors, your great, great family. Who loves you?

And all of us here wish you great love, the kind of love that begins in a private yet vast relationship between you and the universe, the love that whispers in your ear at the worst of times – yes, you are worthy of great love.

Give, and it shall be yours, say the paradoxical words of our knowledge-bearers. Let go of desire, and your heart will be full, the wisest of the wise tell us.

The petals of the daisy float on the wind. You love me. You love me not. Me. Or not me.

To be or not to be, that is the question, exhorts the great dramatist.

And to be, to really Be, is a courageous decision about recognizing the fullness of this singular moment.

Stand up and be loved. Say the words out loud: I am worthy of great love.

You are worthy.

But how do you love? How do you love?

With reckless joy. With an open heart.

With an abundant faith. Like a single petal floating on the wind. You are never alone.

Okanagan College's Stan Chung is acting dean of arts and foundational programs. Contact him at stanchung@gmail.com.