Embracing love and forgiveness

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Anger, dislike, and hatred can be real emotions, however, they often also could be irrational and unhealthy reactions.  Hatred has a greater impact on the “hater” as compared to the person or object being hated. In addition, overcoming hatred can be difficult since hatred reinforces itself. Hating someone or something gives an individual a false sense of power. Also, it may appear that an individual is helpless and that others are the cause of one’s feelings of anger and hatred.  However, as Martin Luther King Jr. stated, the most powerful tool that one can use to combat hatred is love. Dr. King also said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." With this in mind, one may inquire “are you asking me to love the person I hate? That defeats the purpose of hating.”  The answer to this question is yes!  God and religions ask their followers to love thy enemy. Jesus asked us to love our enemy as well. Once we begin this practice, we will see an elimination of wars .  Deciding to love something that you hate, whether it is a person, situation, or a part of oneself, can be a transformative experience. Love is a powerful force that can help one free oneself from confinement, and relinquish being a hostage to negative emotions.

However, it is normal for an individual to feel anger, dislike, bitterness, resistance, and/or resentment when trying to love that which one hates. The latter is something that requires continuous practice. It is not a onetime event or effort.  One may have to rehearse this over and over again until it becomes like an automatic, knee jerk reaction.   The transformative practice of loving something that you once hated changes emotions from hatred to love, leaving less room in our hearts for hatred. In addition, there will be less of a need for those negative feelings, and as one therapist called them, ANTs, or Automatic Negative Thoughts.  The goal is for one to transform one’s ANTs into PILs, or Positive Intentional Love (Kalayjian 2008).
     While it is difficult not to be judgmental, transforming your negative thoughts into PILs helps the universe, or Gaia.  Even if you don't care about the universe, care for yourself, as by transforming your thoughts you will feel emotionally lighter and freer.  Anger and hatred are extremely negative feelings and weigh heavily upon us, especially our hearts.   In contrast, when you are free, you disrobe yourself from revenge and negativity, therefore becoming healthier and happier.  In addition, when you are free, you can begin helping others to achieve this state of nirvana that you have achieved. When you respond to people with love, radiating such transmutes their negative energy. You not only empower yourself by not letting their negativity enter your personal space, you also help them transform their ANTs into PILs. In this way, you not only rise above the negativity and hatred, you become a role model to others’ transformational journey.

 Gandhi once said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Loving a person or object that you previously hated sends a positive and transformative energy that vibrates throughout the universe. Instead of reinforcing hatred, you become an advocate for love.   As Henry Longfellow stated, "If we could see the secret history of our enemies, we would find there enough suffering to disarm all hostility."  Gandhi also said, "When I despair, I remember that through history the way of truth and love has always won.  There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall - think of it - always.”

When we are so occupied with judging others, we don't have time to love them, according to Mother Teresa.  Remember Einstein’s words, that "there is no mistake so painful that love cannot forgive; no past so bitter that love cannot accept; and no love so little that we cannot start all over with."  Forgiveness is shifting from the automatic ego reaction, grounded in anger, self-protection, and hurting back, to a non-reactive conscious response of empathy; that is, considering that the other person is ALSO a human being, and perhaps not mindful.

During these economically challenging days and throughout the holidays I challenge you to make a commitment to love more and create the peace within yourself and all around you. DrKalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com, 201-941-2266; [**www.meaningfulworld.com**](http://www.meaningfulworld.com)