

SESSION 3: Love Wound - Disconnection, Shame, and Adaptation

WELCOME

Welcome again to our course on realizing a life of love! It's good to be with you!

Love is essential, but it's also challenging, because it's a skill that can both be simple and complex. Most of us had caregivers who were wounded to some degree in their capacity to love, so they couldn't teach us how to fully love and be loved. Many of us experienced some degree of trauma and neglect that left us feeling unlovable and challenged in our capacity to love and be loved. We entered adulthood with a Love Wound.

Fortunately, we can learn to love and heal our love wound. We do this through the practice of the WellMind Method. The WellMind method is the practice of the 3 A's of Awakening to love. The 3 A's are attending, appreciating, and acting with love. While the 3 A's may sound simple, the practice of the 3 A's can be profound. Through the practice of the 3 A's, you will heal your love wound and realize a life of love.

In our sessions together, we're exploring love and its benefits. We're talking about the love wound. We're studying the 3 A's and how to apply them to our lives. We're practicing many heart-mind practices for cultivating reverence. For acting with love, we're studying in detail 31 different love practices. By the time you finish this course, you will be well on your way to realizing a life of love.

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If you have a severe love wound, you might want to consider combining this course with psychotherapy to help you heal. If you have a moderate or mild love wound, this course will help you to heal and grow. If you don't have a love wound, this course will still help you to grow and transcend the limitations and suffering of the ego.

If you are new to this course, I strongly recommend that you review the previous sessions, because the first ten sessions make up the core foundation upon which the rest of the course is built. You'll need this foundation to benefit from the remaining sessions.

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SO LET'S GET STARTED

Last session I described my own personal story of my love wound and my healing of my love wound. Today I want to touch on the nature and consequences of the Love Wound and finish by talking about the process of healing.

As I mentioned about my own love wound, there are two aspects to the Love Wound. One is a **feeling that we are unlovable**. We experience this as self-hatred, feeling unworthy, inadequate, broken, or inferior. We experience harsh self-criticism. We are very judgmental towards ourselves.

If you experienced trauma or neglect growing up, you likely have a Love Wound. There is a loss of our original sense of our innate goodness. I believe we have all been wounded and have wounded. The differences between us are matters of degree. As you look back over your own life, see if you can remember times where you felt unloved or were actually harmed by others. You'll notice that in these experiences are negative judgments about your worth or lovability; when you experienced these negative judgments, you believed what you received. This is one aspect of the love wound. It leaves us feeling shame that we even exist.

The second aspect of the love wound—the other side of the coin so to speak—is a **lack of loving connection with something greater than ourselves**. We are an unlovable “me” that is disconnected from a loving “we.” Since Nature designed us to be interdependent, connected loving beings, this experience of not being a part of a loving “we” is very traumatic. This disconnection also fuels our shame.

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If we are loved well growing up, we maintain a sense of our innate goodness. We experience ourselves as loveable. This frees us up to love ourselves and others and to enjoy this gift of life. Nurturing and savoring life are our life agendas.

But if we suffered a love wound, our life agenda changes to trying to numb the pain of our love wound. Other than surviving, numbing the pain of the love wound becomes our purpose in life.

One way we do this is by **directly numbing the pain** through drugs or distractions. Alcohol and sedatives us to forget our pain. Opioids put us in temporary bliss. Stimulants overshadow pain with confidence and euphoria. Or, we can zone out on TV or video games.

People try to ease the pain of the love wound by working to get messages from the world that we are lovable through our talents, our achievements, and by getting others to love us. The idea is that if we get enough messages of our lovability through power, money, status, fame, affection, or admiration, then this will reverse and heal the original messages that we are unlovable.

There are three common strategies for dealing with the pain of unlovability. The first is to **obtain the admiration of others and our own self-admiration** through achievement and mastery. This strategy, one that I myself have attempted, has been called “The Search for Glory.” Dr. Karen Honey called this the “expansive solution.” Since achievement only provides temporary gratification and not lasting healing of the Love Wound, or true fulfillment, we can become addicted to work and other worthiness projects in ways that narrow our lives by shutting out play, joy, and loving connection with others. People who embrace the expansive solution can be perfectionistic and domineering. Their false self does not allow for integration of their vulnerable parts.

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The second common strategy for easing our anxiety about being loved, accepted, and belonging is to **make it our life agenda to please others to obtain their affection**. Dr. Horney calls this the “self-effacing solution.” Then our life agenda becomes a “Search for Love” to heal our broken sense of our unconditional lovability. With this strategy, we deny our own needs, erase ourselves, fail to assert ourselves, and bend over backwards to please others in the hope that then others might love us to help us feel more lovable. We try to become what the other person needs. The false self does not allow for the integration of our assertive and forceful parts.

The third common strategy is sometimes called the “**resignation solution.**” If we adopt this strategy, we give up on attempting to feel lovable by either mastery or people-pleasing. Instead, we pretend we don’t care about having the love or admiration of others. We pretend we don’t need to be loved, to be accepted, or to belong. We pretend we are free of these needs. We attempt to live life being wantless and needless. Then we work to ease the pain of feeling unlovable with drugs and distractions. Their false self does not allow for either the parts that would be vulnerable with others or for being assertive.

Some of us may employ a little of all three of these strategies in different circumstances. **With all these strategies, we deny parts of ourselves and live a false self** designed to solve the problem of feeling unlovable and to ease the tremendous anxiety of not feeling loved, accepted and of not belonging. We work to be someone we aren’t to feel secure and lovable. We also unconsciously create expectations that others will love us and undo the traumatic wounding experiences of the past. We create an “engineered self” designed to ensure that we are loved.

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Unfortunately, these strategies may work temporarily, but they don't work long term. The irony and paradox of it all is that **you can't restore a sense of unconditional goodness through conditional things** like getting other people's love. If you look closely at your own experience, you'll see that all these strategies for easing the pain of the Love Wound and feeling lovable work for only a little while at best. The strategy of restoring our lovability through getting others to either love or admire us just doesn't work. It becomes an addiction that provides temporary gratification or relief but doesn't actually heal the Love Wound.

WE CAN HEAL OUR LOVE WOUND

Fortunately, there is a solution. And that solution is the **practice of the 3 A's of Awakening to Love**. In this practice, we psycho-spiritually reparent ourselves. We cultivate loving awareness. It is we who must heal our Love Wound; no one else can do this for us, though others can support and guide us in our efforts. It is we who must first love ourselves and accept ourselves. It is we who must establish a sense of belonging not by getting others to love us, but by loving others.

It is the cultivation of loving awareness that ultimately heals the Love Wound and restores our experience of our original, unconditioned, innate goodness. Through the cultivation of loving awareness, we lift the veil of our conditioning to reveal our sacredness. Since loving awareness is universal, we also rediscover the sacredness of all things and all people. **This practice is truly an awakening to what was always already there, right before our eyes.**

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Inspired by the reverence of loving awareness, we then take very good care of ourselves and others. At first, we do this with the help of wise, loving people. When we are wounded, we need the love, guidance, and support of those who have developed their own loving awareness and who know how to love wisely and skillfully. You will heal, grow, and transform with the help of the WellMind community and the loving people you will begin to seek out in your life.

As we begin to love ourselves, so we also begin to **love others more fully and wholeheartedly**, with less fear and self-preoccupation. With time and practice, the separation between “me” and “we” begins to dissolve as we awaken to oneness. We are left living for the “We” that contains the “me.” Our view of life shifts from being “egocentric” to “unicentric.” You might say that the “ego” transforms from the “meego” into the “weego.”

With the realities of hatred, war, trauma, exploitation, and injustice, love is essential for healing the wounds of the world. We live in a violent, judging society that infects us with the delusion that our worth is tied to our status, traits, talents, and achievements.

Luckily, **love is more powerful than any of these painful realities**. If there were only evil and hatred, Life would quickly disappear. It’s because of love that Life sustains itself from generation to generation.

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With the cultivation of Loving Awareness, we begin to liberate ourselves from the “tyranny of the shoulds” dictated by the false, idealized self we felt we had to take on in order to feel lovable. Loving Awareness gives us the freedom to see, know, and be all of who we are, even the pasts of ourselves that we or others judged in the past to be unlovable. Loving awareness enables us to be a whole, integrated, authentic person with multiple parts. Loving awareness allows for a psychological death of the false self and rebirth or awakening of the true self, grounded in the rigorous self-honesty cultivated by appreciative attending. This is because self-awareness is curative if it is loving awareness.

Through our work together, you’ll discover that **love is a skill you can learn through daily practice**. Through the practices we’ll study, you can gradually increase your capacity to love. Habits take effort to develop, but once they’re ingrained, they become natural and automatic. So the habit of loving will no doubt become easier for you with practice.

It may seem that severe trauma would leave us too broken to heal, but love gives us the strength and courage to face and bear the pain of our brokenness, knowing that our trauma wasn’t personal to us. Love creates a crucible in which we can hold our pain so that we can discover that no feeling lasts forever. Through love, we cultivate compassion for ourselves in our woundedness and see our wholeness amidst our brokenness. Love neutralizes the harmful shame and harsh self-criticism that victims of trauma so often feel.

Love is patient, kind, supportive, and encouraging. It reminds us that we’re good and whole even as we still feel unworthy and broken. It gives us the faith and courage to accept the truth of what happened to us and how our trauma has shaped us. We become our own ideal parent and tend to our well-being as if we were our own cherished child.

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Helping us alleviate our isolation, love helps us to trust ourselves, our family, our friends, and professionals to support us in our healing, as well as trust in the healing process itself.

It's the power of love that transforms anger into forgiveness, even when the perpetrator isn't sorry. When we choose love, we choose to heal by releasing ourselves from the bondage of our pain.

The most difficult person to forgive, however, is ourselves. It's only through the mercy of love that we can find our way to self-forgiveness. Love allows us to humble ourselves as we make amends and forgive others. It delivers us from shame because love is greater than our worst misdeeds. Through forgiveness, we can get up once again when we fall and are given the grace to move on.

Love is the antidote to the ego, when pain and the mandates of survival threaten to take us into a vortex of negativity and hatred.

Love helps us transition from being ruled by fear to being informed by fear. It helps us discern between fears that enhance our well-being and fears that hold us back, and it gives us the courage to do what must be done even though we're afraid. Love helps us endure the distress of doing what's scary to accomplish something important.

If you fear failure, love will help you learn from failure. If you fear distress, love will help you endure it. If you fear loss, love will help you bear it with a grateful heart for what you've had. If you fear rejection, love will sustain you through it by offering you relief from self-rejection.

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Love can also heal addiction, which compulsively numbs our pain but causes even more pain. Love eases our suffering, which reduces compulsive cravings for substances; it helps us change and find relief.

When Life becomes hard, love helps us appreciate that our blessings far outnumber our difficulties. With gratitude, love helps us continue to thrive in adversity, and it helps us learn from our past rather than run from it.

Of course, life is messy, and we are all imperfect. Though we are all broken and crooked, **love turns imperfection into grace**. It's a force for change unlike any other. It liberates us, while condemnation only oppresses us. Love is a healing balm to counter the poisonous effects of judgment. Through love, we learn from our mistakes, make amends, and move on, the better for it. So healing takes time, but again, it's love that enables us to persist, trusting that it will get better.

For healing to work, however, we must create time for it to arise out of the stillness of prayer and meditation. And **we need to create play time for the spontaneity of love to emerge** in the savoring of Life.

In this world of impermanence, **everything but love quickly returns to dust**. Love helps us see that 10,000 years from now, all that will matter is the legacy of love that we leave behind when we die. It's love that makes all of us the rightful beneficiaries of mercy.

In the end, the meaning and purpose of Life boil down to one word—**love**.

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IN OUR NEXT SESSION

In our next session we'll explore the first of the 3 A's, Attending. This is the foundational practice that results in a life of love. **In the meantime, between now and then, reflect on the following:**

1. What were the messages you received and believed that conditioned in you the delusion of unlovability?
2. What is the nature of your love wound? How is it that you do not feel completely lovable and sacred? What are the things you don't like about yourself? Do you experience shame? What is that like?
3. What would your life be like if you were to one day wake up and experience yourself to be completely loveable despite your faults and flaws?

Please take some time to share your reflections with your fellow members of the WellMind community and to read what others have to say as well. **Let us share and support each other in our exploration of love!**