

The Center for Above the Line Living--Monthly Musings, June 2007

Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

—Michael Pritchard

A Few Thoughts on Love and Fear

In the April, 2007 Monthly Musings (www.centerforall.com), I wrote that the two basic energies of life are love and fear. But why is the opposite of love fear, and not hate? Can all negative emotions really be traced to fear? And if so, so what?

On one level, it doesn't really matter. Call it Heavy and Light, call it High and Low, even A and B. What is helpful is understanding that there are two basic energies to life, and everything else is just variations on a theme. There is a place "above the line" of peacefulness, power, and joy, and one "below the line" of sadness, anger and fear.

But on a more fundamental level, the origins of the positive emotions have their roots in love; while the negative emotions stem from fear, a dichotomy that many spiritual teachers have recognized.

When I feel frustrated or impatient, for example, a closer look reveals a fear of not being in control. Sadness? A fear of losing something, or of the emptiness stemming from loss. And hatred itself, the seeming opposite of love? The truth is, as exemplified by racism and bigotry, hatred is nothing more than fear of the other, the unknown, or of losing one's place in the world.

The list goes on—for each heavy emotion I can always find a fear. In fact, the fear is actually the deeper truth.

Until we recognize the real source of our emotions, it's difficult to get a handle on what is really going on. Yes, I may be feeling jealous, but the deeper truth is that I am actually afraid someone else is better than me, or, even more frightening, that I am not good enough.

This is the place we feel most vulnerable, where our own feelings of inadequacy are exposed. And yet, recognizing that it all stems from fear allows us to view ourselves—and others—with compassion. It may be difficult to comprehend someone's irrational hatred, but we all understand fear.

Just as the negative emotions can be traced to fear, above the line emotions flow from love. For me, feelings of excitement come from a love of possibility, of sheer potential; compassion, from unconditional love of others; and peacefulness, from being in touch with love for myself.

You can try this out yourself. The next time you are feeling "below the line," ask yourself: "What am I afraid of right now?" While your fears may not be the same as mine, you will always find some fear underlying your negative emotions.

And when you are feeling light and positive, you can just switch the question around, asking "what is it I am feeling love for right now?" You may notice that it is often yourself.

Stay tuned for much more in future Monthly Musings, including how to identify and move yourself out of fear, no matter how deep it is.

Ann and her partner, Ursula Pottinga, are leading a six-day retreat in Minnesota this fall, designed to help participants live more fully above the line by mastering five powerful universal laws. For more information, see Workshops at www.centerforall.com.

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