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## Summary

This article distinguishes between conventional ideas of love and Buddhist practice of developing and using loving kindness (metta) as the basis of healthy relationships.

# The Love You Are Looking For

by Anita Carter

## CONTENT

1. What is Love
2. Why are you looking for love
3. who are you?
4. how can you get love
5. what is love made from
6. can love be forever?
7. How can we make love last

### **What is love?**

Our everyday notion of love is that love is an emotion, a pleasant feeling of warmth and security, soft, comfortable, safe, generous, deep, overflowing, an inward and outward glow, hugging, embracing.

When one experiences love, either from another or for another, there is less pain in the mind – everything seems better and brighter.

Love often feels like a nutrient. It has a feeling of 'filling you up'. When that love is not there, one often has a feeling of being empty.

There are hundreds and hundreds of poems, songs and storeys written about love. It may well be the most written about topic in human history.

There is a difference between lust and love. Lust does not last and is quickly dissolved after the sexual act. It is desire at its deepest form. We can however lust after colours, smells, foods, .....

Yet, many of us are often lost about love. We have a friendship and give it all we can, we give as much love as we can, and yet it still falls apart. We say "What happened? I thought they loved me and would stay with me no matter what."

We bring up our children in love – give them everything we can, and often find that they do not appreciate our efforts. They complain about what they did not get, or something else.

We have been using what we believe love is, and this is the problem. The love we are using is conditioned – we love and expect something back.

Real love does not expect anything back in return. There are no strings attached.

There is no 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours'

It is freely given with no strings attached.

It is there all the time whether there is love coming back or not.

This is real love that will one day come to you freely.

Using the law of kamma – whatever action one does now, may be experienced in the future. That is how we create our future and ourselves. We lay down the kammic seeds now. These seeds will fruit if the right conditions are created for them to fruit.

Jesus said in the bible – you reap what you sow.

So.... if you want love.... you must give it out and continue to give out without expecting anything back. You just keep giving love. It is only in this way that you can get love back.

You can test yourself for real love:

If someone is mean to you – can you send them love? Can you perform an act of kindness towards them? If you say no, then you do not have real love for that person. If you said yes, then you may have real love.

If they are abusing you to the point of injury and you continue to love them – you could be a masochist – that is, you enjoy being hurt? If this is what you are experiencing, then it is not real love. It is the fact that you enjoy being hurt. It is a type of greed for pleasure from being hurt.

If you leave them, to be kind to oneself, to prevent further injury, without hating them for making you leave them and you continue to have love for them – then this is real love.

You must understand that they are the way they are.

The Buddha described love as a quality of mind. In the Abhidhamma, it is called loving kindness or metta (adosa) and it is a 'cetaseka' that is, a mental factor that arises in the mind.

Loving kindness the Buddha says is a quality of mind that can be developed to become perfect. Loving kindness can be developed through practicing loving kindness as a mental training through meditation and by acts of kindness towards self and others.

### **Why are You Looking For love?**

It seems to be our nature. We seek being liked, wanted and approved of. It is a natural

instinct. It is a need for security. This means that we will not be hurt, destroyed. Our existence will not be threatened. If we are not approved of, there is a chance that we may be destroyed.

So perhaps it is a survival activity. If others want and approve of us, they are likely to not harm us. They will take care of us. They will help us. They will help us meet our needs.

We seek others craving us, desiring us. We make ourselves desirable.