

Ninth Class
University Essays

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CLASS OF NONVIOLENCE

The Art of Loving

By Erich Fromm

Is love an art? Then it requires knowledge and effort. Or is love a pleasant sensation, which to experience is a matter of chance, something one “falls into” if one is lucky? This little book is based on the former premise, while undoubtedly the majority of people today believe in the latter.

Not that people think that love is not important. They are starved for it; they watch endless numbers of films about happy and unhappy love stories, they listen to hundreds of trashy songs about love - yet hardly anyone thinks that there is anything that needs to be learned about love.

This peculiar attitude is based on several premises which either singly or combined tend to uphold it. Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love. Hence, the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable. In pursuit of this aim, they follow several paths. One, which is especially used by men, is to be successful, to be as powerful and rich as the social margin of one's position permits. Another, used especially by women, is to make oneself attractive, by cultivating one's body, dress, etc. Other ways of making oneself attractive, used both by men and women, are to develop pleasant manners, interesting conversation, to be helpful, modest, and inoffensive. Many of the ways to make oneself lovable are the same as those used to make oneself successful, “to win friends and influence people.” As a matter of fact, what most people in our culture mean by being lovable is essentially a mixture between being popular and having sex appeal.

If two people who have been strangers, as all of us are, suddenly let the wall between them break down and feel close, feel one: this moment of oneness is one of the most exhilarating, most exciting experiences in life. It is all the more wonderful and miraculous for persons who have been shut off, isolated, without love. This miracle of sudden intimacy is often facilitated if it is combined with, or initiated by, sexual attraction and consummation. However, this type of love is, by its very nature, not lasting. The two persons become well-acquainted, their intimacy loses more and more of its miraculous character, until their antagonism, their disappointments, their mutual boredom kill whatever is left of the initial excitement.

Yet, in the beginning, they do not know all this: in fact, they take the intensity of the infatuation, this being “crazy” about each other, for proof of the intensity of their love, while it may only prove the degree of their preceding loneliness.

This attitude — that nothing is easier than to love — has continued to be the prevalent idea about love in spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. There is hardly any activity, any enterprise, which is started with such tremendous hopes and expectations and, yet, which fails so regularly, as love. If this were the case with any other activity, people would be eager to know the reasons for the failure and to learn how one could do better — or they would give up the activity. Since the latter is impossible in the case of love, there seems to be only one adequate way to overcome the failure of love — to examine the reasons for this failure and to proceed to study the meaning of love.

The first step to take is to become aware that love is an art, just as living is an art; if we want to learn how to love, we must proceed in the same way we have to proceed if we want to learn any other art, say music, painting, carpentry, or the art of medicine or engineering.

What are the necessary steps in learning any art?

The process of learning an art can be divided conveniently into two parts: one, the mastery of the theory; the other, the mastery of the practice. If I want to learn the art of medicine, I must first know the facts about the human body and about various diseases.

When I have all this theoretical knowledge, I am by no means competent in the art of medicine. I shall become a master in this art only after a great deal of practice, until, eventually, the results of my theoretical knowledge and the results of my practice are blended into one — my intuition, the essence of the mastery of any art. But, aside from learning the theory and practice, there is a third factor necessary to becoming a master in any art — the mastery of the art must be a matter of ultimate concern; there must be nothing else in the world more important than the art. This holds true for music, for medicine, for carpentry— and for love. And, maybe, here lies the answer to the question of why people in our culture try so rarely to learn this art, in spite of their obvious failures; in spite of the deep-seated craving for love, almost everything else is considered to be more important than love: success, prestige, money, power — almost all our energy is used for the learning of how to achieve these aims, and almost none to learn the art of loving.

Could it be that only those things are considered worthy of being learned with which one can earn money or prestige, and that love,

which “only” profits the soul, but is profitless in the modern sense, is a luxury we have no right to spend much energy on? However true this may be, the following discussion will treat the art of loving in the sense of the foregoing divisions: First, I shall discuss the theory of love — and this will comprise the greater part of the book; and, secondly, I shall discuss the practice of love.

Love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a “standing in,” not a “falling for.” In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving.

What is giving? Simple as the answer to this question seems to be, it is actually full of ambiguities and complexities. The most widespread misunderstanding is that which assumes that giving is “giving up” something, being deprived of, sacrificing. The person whose character has not developed beyond the stage of the receptive, exploitative, or hoarding orientation, experiences the act of giving in this way. The marketing character is willing to give, but only in exchange for receiving; giving without receiving for him is being cheated. People whose main orientation is a nonproductive one feel giving as an impoverishment. Most individuals of this type therefore refuse to give. Some make a virtue out of giving in the sense of a sacrifice. They feel that just because it is painful to give, one should give; the virtue of giving to them lies in the very act of acceptance of the sacrifice. For them, the norm that it is better to give than to receive means that it is better to suffer deprivation than to experience joy.

For the productive character, giving has an entirely different meaning. Giving is the mightiest expression of potency. In the very act of giving, I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. This experience of heightened vitality

and potency fills me with joy. I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness.

It is not difficult to recognize the validity of this principle by applying it to various specific phenomena.

The most elementary example lies in the sphere of sex. The culmination of the male sexual function lies in the act of giving; the man gives himself, his sexual organ, to the woman. At the moment of orgasm, he gives his semen to her. He cannot help giving it if he is potent. If he cannot give, he is impotent. For the woman, the process is not different although somewhat more complex. She gives herself too; she opens the gates to her feminine center; in the act of receiving, she gives. If she is incapable of this act of giving, if she can only receive, she is frigid. With her, the act of giving occurs again, not in her function as a lover, but in that as a mother. She gives of herself to the growing child within her, she gives her milk to the infant, she gives her bodily warmth. Not to give would be painful.

In the sphere of material things, giving means being rich. Not he who has much is rich, but he who gives much. The hoarder who is anxiously worried about losing something is, psychologically speaking, the poor, impoverished man, regardless of how much he has. Whoever is capable of giving of himself is rich. He experiences himself as one who can confer of himself to others. Only one who is deprived of all that goes beyond the barest necessities for subsistence would be incapable of enjoying the act of giving material things. But daily experience shows that what a person considers the minimal necessities depends as much on his character as

it depends on his actual possessions. It is well-known that the poor are more willing to give than the rich. Nevertheless, poverty beyond a certain point may make it impossible to give, and is so degrading, not only because of the suffering it causes directly, but because of the fact that it deprives the poor of the joy of giving.

The most important sphere of giving, however, is not that of material things, but lies in the specifically human realm. What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other - but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness — of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness.

He does not give in order to receive; giving is in itself exquisite joy. But, in giving, he cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help receiving that which is given back to him. Giving implies to make the other person a giver also and they both share in the joys of what they have brought to life. In the act of giving, something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them.

Specifically with regard to love, this means: love is a power which produces love; impotence is the inability to produce love. This thought has been beautifully expressed by Marx: "Assume," he says, "man as man, and his relation to the world as a human one, and you can exchange love only for love, confidence for

confidence, etc. If you wish to enjoy art, you must be an artistically-trained person; if you wish to have influence on other people, you must be a person who has a really stimulating and furthering influence on other people. Every one of your relationships to man and to nature must be a definite expression of your real, individual life corresponding to the object of your will.

If you love without calling forth love, that is, if your love as such does not produce love, if by means of an expression of life as a loving person you do not make of yourself a loved person, then your love is impotent, a misfortune. But not only in love does giving mean receiving. The teacher is taught by his students, the actor is stimulated by his audience, the psychoanalyst is cured by his patient — provided they do not treat each other as objects, but are related to each other genuinely and productively.

It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character development of the person. It presupposes the attainment of a predominantly productive orientation; in this orientation, the person has overcome dependency, narcissistic omnipotence, the wish to exploit others, or to hoard, and has acquired faith in his own human powers, courage to rely on his powers in the attainment of his goals. To the degree that these qualities are lacking, he is afraid of giving himself — hence of loving.

According to what I said about the nature of love, the main conditions for this achievement of love is the overcoming of one's narcissism. The narcissistic orientation is one in which one experiences as real only that which exists within oneself, while the phenomena in the outside world have no reality in themselves, but are experienced only from the viewpoint

of their being useful or dangerous to one. The opposite pole to narcissism is objectivity; it is the faculty to see people and things as they are, objectively, and to be able to separate this objective picture from a picture which is formed by one's desires and fears. All forms of psychosis show the inability to be objective, to an extreme degree. For the insane person, the only reality that exists is that within him, that of his fears and desires. He sees the world outside as symbols of his inner world, as his creation. All of us do the same when we dream. In the dream, we produce events, we stage dramas, which are the expression of our wishes and fears (although sometimes also of our insights and judgment) and, while we are asleep, we are convinced that the product of our dreams is as real as the reality which we perceive in our waking state.

Less extreme — or perhaps only less obvious — are the distortions which are commonplace in interpersonal relations. How many parents experience the child's reactions in terms of his being obedient, of giving them pleasure, of being a credit to them and so forth, instead of perceiving or even being interested in what the child feels for and by himself?

How many husbands have a picture of their wives as being domineering, because their own attachment to mother makes them interpret any demand as a restriction of their freedom? How many wives think their husbands are ineffective or stupid because they do not live up to a fantasy picture of a shining knight which they might have built up as children?

The lack of objectivity, as far as foreign nations are concerned, is notorious. From one day to another, another nation is made out to be utterly depraved and fiendish, while one's own nation stands for everything that is good and noble. Every action of the enemy is judged by one standard — every action of oneself by

another. Even good deeds by the enemy are considered a sign of particular devilishness, meant to deceive us and the world, while our bad deeds are necessary and justified by our noble goals which they serve. Indeed, if one examines the relationship between nations, as well as between individuals, one comes to the conclusion that objectivity is the exception, and a greater or lesser degree of narcissistic distortion is the rule.

To have acquired the capacity for objectivity and reason is half the road to achieving the art of loving, but it must be acquired with regard to everybody with whom one comes in contact. If someone would want to reserve his objectivity for the loved person, and thinks he can dispense with it in his relationship to the rest of the world, he will soon discover that he fails both here and there.

The ability to love depends on one's capacity to emerge from narcissism and from the incestuous fixation to mother and clan; it depends on our capacity to grow, to develop a productive orientation in our relationship toward the world and ourselves. This process of emergence, of birth, of waking up, requires one quality as a necessary condition: faith. The practice of the art of loving requires the practice of faith.

What is faith? Is faith necessarily a matter of belief in God, or in religious doctrines? Is faith by necessity in contrast to, or divorced from, reason and rational thinking? Even to begin to understand the problem of faith one must differentiate between rational and irrational faith. By irrational faith, I understand the belief (in a person or an idea) which is based on one's submission to irrational authority. In contrast, rational faith is a conviction which is rooted in one's own experience of thought or feeling. Rational faith is not primarily belief

in something, but the quality of certainty and firmness which our convictions have. Faith is a character trait pervading the whole personality, rather a specific belief.

Some Men Are More Important Than Others

By Merle Shain

Our times are obsessed with finding fulfillment, so there are times when some people try too hard, and there are people who want to have the newest feelings just as there are those who want to have the latest model car. You can't play at love any more than you can be proud of your humility, or add water to your perfume and have it smell the same, but men and women both have been known to try.

Love is an infusion of intense feeling, a fine madness that makes you drunk, and when one is in love, life can be a succession of freefalls while working without a net. Love permits the lover to savor rare emotions and dangerous sensations and, because one is never so alive as when one is in love, and never so full of power, there are people hooked on love who wouldn't consider taking drugs.

The energy that runs from lover to lover is an electromagnetic ray that pierces through insensate anesthetized layers, expanding one's perimeters and making one young. Once wounded by love, we are open, so all our defenses escape, making it possible for us to see ourselves. And although that makes us terribly and gloriously vulnerable, it breaks our spirit's fast.

When you fall in love, you feel wiser than others, and larger than life, and the things that happen when you are in love seem too important to be measured by ordinary standards, so lovers often risk everything on an emotional longshot that outsiders are sure can't pay off. The person you can't live without often is one you couldn't live with either, and because it is just as true that reality is what you believe it to be, sometimes a person who wants to believe his beloved beautiful and courageous causes

them to be so by believing, making wishes fact.

Love often has more to do with the lover than it has to do with the beloved, and because it does, there are people who prefer to fall in love with someone they hardly know. It can be more exciting to bounce love off an object than to deal with the reality of another whole human being. A fantasy lover has a mystery that can be fleshed out with your own creativity, and you can make it do what you want it to, when you want it to, which isn't true of most real loves, at least not the ones I've known.

There is loving, of course, and being in love, and they are different again which is why one will accept qualities in a lover one wouldn't accept in a spouse. Day-to-day contact has a way of causing the intensity of romantic love to dissipate and sometimes when you get the somebody you have yearned for, most of the magic vanishes with the pain. It's easy to want what you don't have, when you don't have it, and hard not to want something else when you do, so the big love in a lot of lives is the one that got away.

Perhaps the most important thing in any relationship is keeping the lines of communication open. Though this sounds simple, it can be difficult at the pace of life most of us keep, and lots of people who have lived together for years have to make an appointment with each other if they want to talk. There are lots of ways of communicating, of course, and you can sometimes say as much with the laying on of hands as with a three-page letter sent in triplicate and doubled-spaced. But letters are nice, too, and so are fireside chats, and a half hour in bed when the lights are out can make everything right with the world.

Some of us have trouble finding words for what we mean, or we speak in cryptic messages hoping the other person will figure out what we want and rush in to save us from ourselves, and when they miss the message, we feel isolated and alone. It's very important to decode your own messages, like saying "I feel angry" instead of kicking the cat, and people who learn to do this find they are misunderstood less often and, as a fringe benefit, are clawed by fewer cats.

The best men are those who put their cards on the table when something is bothering them, and if possible do it quietly, not blaming anyone, and if they're faced with a hysterical partner, who is not herself, identify with what she feels even when they can't make heads or tails out of what she says.

Women find it very hard to express anger, feeling perhaps that men will lose their love for them the moment they are anything but sweet. But men can usually deal with anger more easily than they can deal with guilt, and women who shout a lot can be shouted back at, which is hard to do with one who weeps.

A man once did something terrible to a girl I know that made her feel awful for a while but, when she pulled herself together, she wrote him a long, very definitely worded letter telling him just what she thought. It was a letter in which she tried to make things clear but at the same time not to whine, and it likely did the trick because he sent her back a note that read, "I thought I'd lost you for all time. Was awfully glad to find you were just pissed off."

If you never get angry, you never know where you stand, and it is also possible that you provoke people into worse and worse behavior just to get your attention or to make sure that you care. People who are loving tell each other what they feel, even when they don't expect the other to share their point of view, and if they

don't always get what they want, at least they know what they can expect, and that, while it isn't everything, is at least a start.

One of the problems of the new morality ushered in by "the pill" is that it doesn't have an equivalent for being in the man's tent the next morning chewing on his moccasins — or whatever used to be done - so while, "the pill" has made women freer, it has also freed them to look after their psychosexual needs on their own. And many women who aspired to be "great ladies" found it wasn't so great to be one after all.

Sex deepens love and love deepens sex, so physical intimacy transforms everything and playing with it is playing with fire. Men try to ignore the fact that making love creates bonds, creating dependencies where there were none before, and women who try to ignore it with them deny their basic needs.

I'm not sure there can be loving without commitment, although commitment takes all kinds of forms, and there can be commitment for the moment as well as commitment for all time. The kind that is essential for loving marriages — and love affairs, as well — is a commitment to preserving the essential quality of your partner's soul, adding to them as a person rather than taking away. And if you haven't got that, you haven't got loving, although you might have something else. You could have adventure or a postgraduate course, you might have rehabilitation, or a bit of gossamer to highlight an otherwise somber life, but you don't have loving, and of that you should be sure.

Since the problem is with our expectations rather than with marriage itself, a lot of people are living together today hoping that way they can start fresh. If no one says the word "marriage," it's easier to evolve a plan of your own. There isn't any single formula for

marriage which all couples should find right, and attempting to run your life by your parents' standards or your neighbors' is bound to run aground. Marriages should be as diverse as the people in them are, which means some will be of one kind, and some totally different still. And those who don't want to love, honor and obey, should be able to promise each other anything they choose, without having to ask anyone what they think of that, particularly themselves.

There are many fringe benefits to being alone. You tend to have far more real, intense friendships when you are single, perhaps because you can be more honest when you do not have the marriage or someone else's feelings to protect. That means friends can share a larger part of you, and you of them as well, and friendships can be really intimate rather than activity-oriented associations that only meet to do some special thing.

If one of the problems of marriage is that safety can lead to complacency, then one of the advantages of being single is that one is never safe enough to grow complacent, and constantly having to prove oneself often leads to growth. Being alone means swimming in many waters and that can mean a more interesting life. And, if it is true that a single woman hasn't got one man she can count on, it is also true that, by living on the fringe of many men's lives, she is privy to many ideas and interests denied most married women — and, indeed, most men. Men tell women to whom they are not married truths they cannot tell their wives and fear to tell to men, and what one learns one day from one man makes you more interesting the next day for another — as well as for yourself.

There were women in the golden age of Greece, called hetaerae, who were celebrated by Socrates and philosophers of his time.

Although they existed solely for their own pleasure and that of men, they were respected for their independence of mind and spirit and thought of highly by the Greeks. Single women in today's world can function like hetaerae, learning from many and giving back to whom they will, and for the woman who enjoys such a life, it can be a good one, and one both she and society can be the better for.

While married women must adapt to the perimeters of their marriages, single women can expand in all directions, developing as they will. Women who have realized themselves make good companions, and women as well as men find associations with them rewarding and fun — not only because they are more often interesting but because they haven't grown neurotic making a virtue of doing what they most dislike. And time with them is generally given freely, little asked in return.

I remember when I was first married how important it was to me that my husband find me beautiful, talented, womanly and bright. And when he didn't always, I was not these things — as if he'd turned off my light. After we parted and went on to other lives, from time to time a man thought me beautiful and occasionally another found me bright. Until, in time, I was those things even when no one was around and, today, because they are mine, I can give them to whomever I choose. Women who have had a chance to find out who they are don't need as much reassurance from men, having come to terms with themselves, and while it is always nicer to be around people who see you as you want to see yourself, you can't be done in as easily by ones who don't.

There is a lot to be said for being single — and more today than ever before. It is a new world we are living in now and, although there are rules for virginal females under eighteen

and for married ones twenty to eighty-five, there are no rules for single women, so we are able to make our own.

Many a superior woman spends her lifetime looking for a man who is more superior instead of for one she likes, not realizing that demanding that a man be superior isn't much different from demanding that he be rich. Men who are required to be superior will always be insecure, and a man who feels his wife should get her identify from his success rather than from her own finds himself having to run all day just to keep up with her demands. Impotence for one is always impotence for both, and men and women who don't recognize this inadvertently become the killers of their own best dreams.

A man who insists that his woman lay her head on his shoulder and lean on him doesn't realize that if she takes her feet off the ground in this position and hangs on, she will be a drag. Psychiatrists are plagued by men who want to know what to do with dependent wives who can't make a move without them, and rising young copywriters are plagued by men who call them after dinner parties to confess that they wish their wives were as interesting and ask if they might have time to meet for a drink. Many marriages between two people become marriages between one and a half very quickly, and people who fear invested the "his and hers" towel culture and are now thrashing around inside.

Women who suffer loud and lengthily and weep copious tears make men feel guilty, beleaguered and anxious to get to the door, and little-girl acts of coyness get them somewhere in the short run but cost them dear in the long. Not only do women despise the men they catch with them and turn them into Jiggs, but men who are manipulated and patronized long enough declare emotional bankruptcy and give

up the store.

One of the reasons men fear loving is that they don't want to take responsibility for another total human being. The kind of woman who loves out of need and desperation frightens even the best men off, and women who want someone around they can count on won't feel better until they can count on themselves. The whole superiority-inferiority, passive-submissive business is a bum steer. Women who don't expect the men in their life to give them fulfillment on a silver platter aren't as likely to hold them responsible when it isn't so easy to come by. And men who are not expected to be superior, only human, generally accomplish both more of the time.

Loving someone means helping them to be more themselves, which can be different from being what you'd like them to be, although often they turn out the same. When you ask someone to live through you and for you, they warp like a Japanese tree to suit the relationship which you are, and cease to be what you chose them for, that is, cease to be themselves. So men who are loving like as they love, and somehow they find the courage to let their partners grow in the direction they need to grow, even if that contains the risk that they might grow away.

Good people can't be possessed and those who can, one never wants for long. No one gives you security — you have to do that for yourself. Love can't buy happiness, marriage can't buy happiness, only happiness can buy happiness, so it is also unwise to think of finding happiness in terms of roles.

Being someone's wife or being someone's mother or even being the best plumber or the best brain surgeon may give you some security for a while, even for a long while, but you always have to be ready to find it somewhere else when the time comes, and

it tends to come oftener than one would have thought.

Santayana wrote in an essay entitled “Cloud Castles” about the virtue of impermanence, pointing out that clouds are all different and that, as well as there not being two clouds the same, the clouds themselves keep changing and, hence, are never the same for very long. Marriages work best when both the people in them allow each other to be like those clouds, delighting in each other’s changes. And those who attempt to find security by eliminating inconsistencies eliminate the miraculous with the same deft hand.

There is no security in a relationship that tries to hold on to what was, nor is there security in the one that dreads what might be. There is only security when we accept what is here now, with its limits and its surprises and, when it goes, in accepting what comes, as we would turn over the pages of a book.

There is a difference between needing and wanting and a difference between wanting and needing and loving, and both partners have a right to what they need, although not always to what they want. Each partner has a right to one life and to that life he has the sole right. He hasn’t a right to his spouse’s life, and he hasn’t a right to his child’s, but he has a right to his life, and no one should interfere with that.

It is not possible for one person to meet all of another’s needs, and marriage partners who expect this soon find each other wanting. When people don’t meet all of our needs, they are not always rejecting us — more often, they are saving themselves — and in a good marriage this is perfectly all right. People who are loving toward each other set up their marriages so that it is possible for both partners to get what they need from life and so that no one is expected to

give up his needs to meet those of his spouse. And when their partner meets one of their needs, they accept it as a gift instead of viewing each unmet one as if it were a betrayal.

Our times are obsessed with finding fulfillment, so they are times of more than the usual strain between men and women and a good deal of that strain is blamed on marriage, although it should not be. There was a movie a season or two back called *Lovers and Other Strangers* which had a scene in which a son tries to tell his Italian father that he and his wife of only a few years have decided to get a divorce because, as he puts it, “We feel there must be something more.” The father, not understanding what that has to do with anything, answers, his eyebrows raised for an explanation, “We all feel there must be something more,” to which his son replies, “Then why don’t you leave Mom and get out and get it, Dad?” And the old man shoots back, “Because there isn’t something more!”

They don’t have romantic love with its emphasis on nostalgia, tragedy, and loss in cultures where children are raised by groups of adults instead of parents, so there are those who think romantic love is oedipal love, with the real love object being the image of the parent — ageless, perfect, and unattainable — that the lover hungered for as a child. Falling in love at first sight is transference then, and well it might be, because romantic love - as in knights who served their ladies, as in people who are married but not to each other, as in star-crossed lovers of every kind — tends to be a love that is thwarted, if just slightly, keeping the lovers like those in Keat’s Grecian urn, “forever panting, forever young.”

There are men who are addicted to the magic of falling in love, and the ego-aggrandizing,

intoxicating splendor of it all, and never learn that loving is better still. For them, there is no help for a love that is losing its excitement but to fall in love again, with someone else - and, when that too loses its intensity, with someone else again. You can't maintain a constant state of falling in love, except through artificial means, but loving can go on forever and get better all the time.

How to Love Our Children

by James and Kathleen McGinnis

Children learn and use nonviolent conflict resolution skills only when these skills are taught in an environment encouraging their use. Parents and other caregivers promote peacemaking skills when they make their homes places where affirmation and cooperation—rather than constant criticism and individualism—are the norm. Specific nonviolent conflict resolution or problem-solving skills can be taught from the earliest years, especially if adults allow their children to participate in family decision making.

Peacemaking requires a healthy sense of self-esteem. Self-esteem is essential for developing compassion and caring for others. Peacemaking is sometimes a public and even risky undertaking. No one is capable of going public, taking a stand for their convictions, if they do not feel good about themselves. Without self-esteem, we look for acceptance through conformity; we are afraid to stand out. Nurturing children's sense of self-esteem by affirming their efforts and providing them opportunities to develop their talents is an enormously important part of enabling them to become peacemakers.

Specific possibilities include all the ways we encourage children: posting their artwork in the home, attending school sports or music programs, commenting on their strengths and good efforts more than on their weaknesses, listening carefully to their ideas, asking their advice. Hugs and kisses also help a lot! Birthdays can be a special occasion for affirmation.

The more family members are cooperating, the more peace there will be in

the home. Sharing tasks rather than “everyone on their own” helps — whether it is occasional meal preparation, doing dishes, baking holiday goodies, gardening, etc. “Family fix-it nights” when everyone participates in fixing toys, mending clothes, etc., can be occasions for learning new skills and breaking down sex-role stereotypes, as well as teaching cooperation and peace. Encouraging children to share their skills with one another, e.g., helping a younger sibling learn to read, roller-skate, ride a bike, do long division, etc. — is another step. Playing cooperative games as a family and with other families is great fun. Making holiday presents together or writing family letters or making a family greeting card all generate the kind of cooperative spirit essential for being able to resolve family conflicts nonviolently.

Nonviolent conflict resolution skills include listening well, expressing rather than repressing one's feelings and, especially, learning nonhurtful ways to indicate anger, expressing needs and desires in clear terms, weighing a variety of possible solutions to any given conflict, and using negotiating skills. The more that adults can encourage children to use these skills and solve their own problems, rather than always intervene in child/child conflicts with a quick solution, the more opportunities children will have to learn these skills. Thus, the more that parents allow their children to participate in family decision making, the more their children will learn problem-solving skills.

Family meetings are probably the most important single mechanism for promoting peace and cooperation in the home and communicating family values. The more input

children have in family decision making, the more likely they are to internalize the values we adults are trying to share and the less resistance we will encounter in trying to live the values of peace, justice and simplicity of lifestyle. These family discussions and decisions force family members to explain their reasons, providing adults especially with a regular opportunity to communicate their values.

Some key guidelines for effective family meetings:

1. Schedule them regularly, so there is some predictability.
2. Schedule them at the most convenient time for all family members.
3. Make the agenda available to everyone. Having a paper posted where everyone can see it helps considerably; otherwise some may forget what they want.
4. Include agenda items that involve family plans, fun events, and family service opportunities. Do not limit the agenda to problems and conflicts, otherwise the experience is always a “heavy” one. No one likes only difficult items, especially at mealtime.
5. Combine family meetings with things that “taste good” — a special dessert, a family game or a fun night, a trip to the ice cream store. The “good” taste addition increases the willingness of children to participate.
6. Rotate leadership, so children get a chance to develop their skills.
7. Be sure that decisions are clear, tasks are assigned, consequences are identified when necessary, and a “check-in” time has been identified, i.e. a time to evaluate how well a

particular solution is working.

8. Give everyone a chance to speak; help less verbal members of the family to get their points across.
9. Whenever possible, consider the children’s agenda items early in the meeting, so that they experience the process working for them.
10. Do not force the meeting beyond the children’s ability or willingness to continue to participate. Carry over the agenda items to the next meeting if necessary. Quality, not quantity of discussion and decision, is the key.

Occasional family reconciliation events can be important sources of peace in the home. Such events reinforce a forgiving, accepting environment in which family members readily apologize and forgive one another. These healing events can be as simple as a five-minute addition to the family meeting at which each member acknowledges and asks forgiveness for one way they have been unhelpful in promoting peace in the home. More elaborate reconciliation events could include spiritual reading, prayer or symbolic actions — such as writing down the negative behaviors on pieces of paper and burning them in the fireplace as a prayer is said for mutual forgiveness and determination to change behaviors.

*from “Self-Esteem: Teach Your Children Well”,
Peacework, Fort Kamp Publishing Company*

Men, Women and the Art of Friendship

By Colman McCarthy

Someday, I'm going to put aside the day's chaos and take time to report the details of a love story between a woman and man who were not lovers but friends. If sexual love is a dosage of intense feelings, a widening of the veins that lets the emotions pass through unclogged from heart to heart, friendship can permit a rarer sensation: raising affections higher than the passings of the emotional.

Lovers have it easy, which is why so many try it: They can mate but not always bond. Friends, in the harder role, bond without mating. Instead of jumping into bed, they jump into life, and find there privacies of the mind and spirit that don't need glands to be aroused. Some wives and husbands marry as best friends and then, blessed, live as better friends.

The woman and man I would write about were friends because their closeness was based on distance. They could stand back. She functioned best as his critic. His main flaw, to her, was that he didn't think he had any flaws. When the air-pumps of public acclaim inflated his ego—because his latest book pleased reviewers or lecture committees invited him to speak on whatever topic he wished—she held up the cue card of friendship: Come off it, pal.

Off he always came—choiceless, really, because, while she looked up to him, she also saw through him. It was her version of a buddy system, the keeping of a rope tied to the hugeness of her friend's male self-importance, so that when he wandered off into believing his notices she could, with gentle protectiveness, pull him back to reality.

That was where he best flourished. He was happily married to a woman much better than he deserved, with part of that betterness

being his wife's unjealous expansiveness about his friendship with this woman. Nothing was secretive about the friendship. She wasn't a girlfriend, but a friend who happened to be a woman. Were she a man, the relationship would have been the same. The man's wife—also his best friend—was also close to the woman. After 20 years of marriage, she had learned something about physics as well as love: Her husband's woman friend would never fall for him because her loyalty was in standing up to him.

She was no threat to the couple's marriage. By caring about the husband's professional life, as it filtered through in written and spoken words, she was, perhaps unknowingly, bolstering the marriage. She had been helping the husband to grow up, not grow away.

The matching gift to that generosity was the man's being a support group to the woman. Where she was full-hearted, he was lighthearted. His joking and fooleries were the epidermis that kept life's bogs from getting under her skin. They worked for the same company, but on different floors and separate terrains. All he wanted his coworker to know was that he thought her to be as creative, or more so, than any of his male buddies. She wasn't one of the boys. She was one of the best.

With AIDS and herpes now enforcing the one-person one-bed rule, the art of friendship may be about to enjoy a revival. Are Americans too hurried for the slower pace of working up to be a friend? It appears so. Two people can rush off to Las Vegas or Elkton, Md., to become husband and wife but many can go there 10 times and still be only acquaintances,

not friends.

It's impossible to divorce a friend, because friendship means not going away when the other says "go, get lost." It isn't really meant. A friend knows how to decode the message of rejection by going beyond the meaning of words to the words of meaning. Too many of the latter have been said before to be washed away by a moment of anger. Between friends, anger is not harmful because it is a sudden burst of feeling. In marriages, anger can sometimes be the final burst, an eruption of the too-long held back. When friends blow up at each other and retreat for the normal licking of wounds, they can come back scarless: "I'm glad it was nothing serious, that we were only mad at each other."

It was either an Irish mystic or poet, and it's usually one or the other, who said that "a friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and plays back the words when you forget how they go." This weekend, with St. Valentine reminding loved ones to love, some homage is due for friends who befriend. If you have a few someones who can't remember the words of their song, sing them back. It's sweeter than chocolates.

from The Washington Post

