

Loving - living in those 'and' spaces ...

One of my teachers, John Savage, often recalled the story of being part of a group 'sitting at the feet' of one of his mentors Dr. Elton Trueblood. By this time, the aging Dr. Trueblood, author, educator, philosopher, and theologian was in his 90s, an age when the question posed by one of the group was entirely appropriate!

Elton Trueblood was asked "What is the secret of life?" His response was enigmatic. "The secret of life", he replied, "is and." You can well imagine the puzzled looks that were exchanged in that moment, until this further explanation was given.

This wise man went on to talk about life being composed of polarities - beginnings and endings, joy and sadness, darkness and light, coming and going - and that our human tendency to want the security of 'know for sure', of 'having one right answer', of thinking 'OK! This is it! I've finally found the way that works!' is not just an illusion, but an impossibility. What 'works,' or 'is the answer', or the 'sure thing' at THIS time of my life, will not necessarily be appropriate at another stage. Eldon Trueblood believed that the sign or mark of maturity for us as human beings was that ability to live flexibly in the tension of the both/ands of our lives.

So what has this to do with loving? For me, loving is living and flowing between the two polarities of the comfort of absolute acceptance of the loved one - just as they show up in this moment, AND the excitement of recognizing, naming and 'calling out' of them unique, essential qualities that are as yet latent in their lives; encouraging in them, authenticity in new arenas.

Today, when I say, or am told "I love you" my almost instinctive internal (and sometimes voiced!) response is to wonder about what's precipitating the statement. NOT QUESTIONING it! Rather, wondering what's prompting those wonderful words. For instance, is what's REALLY being said "I just glow inside when I watch you share your poetry!", or "I smile when I see you treat the cashier, or the bus driver with the same interest and respect as you would the CEO", OR something like "I am so thankful that even though you are afraid, you are willing to take the risk of being vulnerable to me", or "I wish you could see yourself and the gift you are to other peoples' lives, and know how much you are noticed and appreciated." All of these are simply (more specific and detailed!) ways of saying "I love you!"

The challenge of course is one of timing! ... Of responding and being sensitive to the heart of the lover in THIS space, in THIS moment in time! Wondering about and playing with this question - where along the polarity is the most life giving point of emphasis right now? Is this a time for acceptance and affirmation? Or a time of appreciation that comes with a 'call' to our loved one to be even MORE truly him/herself? The outcome is a heightened sense of aliveness that's well worth the effort!!