

The Recovery Process for Inner Child Healing - Through the Fear

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Emotional Balance - through the fear

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"Recovery is not a dance of right and wrong, of black and white - it is a dance of integration and balance. The questions in Recovery are: Is it working for you? Is the way you live your life working to meet your needs? Is the way you are living your life bringing you some happiness?"

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Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

"Codependence and recovery are both multi-leveled, multi-dimensional phenomena. . . . I am going to make a brief point about two dimensions of this phenomena in relationship to empowerment. These two dimensions are the horizontal and the vertical. In this context the horizontal is about being human and relating to other humans and our environment."

"On a horizontal level empowerment is about choices. Being victimized is about not having choices - about feeling trapped. In order to start becoming empowered in life it is absolutely vital to start owning our choices."

Codependence involves feeling trapped; feeling victimized; feeling like we don't have any choices.

On a very core level, codependence is about buying into the belief that we are trapped. Trapped in relationships, in being abused by a parent, in jobs, in a geographic area, in having someone else's belief system define us, etc. Feeling trapped is a function of believing that we do not have any choices. That is never the Truth. We always have a choice as I talk about on my page about Empowerment and Victimization.

The most insidious and powerful level of victimization that codependents have to overcome in recovery is the level of feeling victimized by our self - by who we think we are, our false image of ourselves. We have a core relationship with ourselves in which we feel that there is something inherently wrong with our being - that we are unlovable and unworthy, somehow shameful. (See inner child healing section.) Because of that, we learned to try to do things "right" in order to overcome our defective self and earn the love of others - or we went to the other extreme, and tried to convince our self that we didn't need others. These are the two extremes of the disease of codependency - classic codependent behavior and counterdependent behavior. (See Codependent Relationships Dynamics part 3 - Codependent & Counterdependent Behavior)

Anytime we say something to the effect of "I can't help it, that is just how I am" or "That is the way I have always been" or "That is just me." or that type of statement, we are being the victim of the false self image we built up to protect ourselves. We are empowering our codependence. "I can't" is almost never a true statement. The true statement is "I choose not to."

But we can not make choices until we realize that we have the right to make choices. Growing up in environments that taught us that life was about right and wrong, was black and white, caused us to be afraid of making choices for fear of doing it "wrong." We were powerless to make choices as long as we thought the only choice was between right and wrong - because as long as we believed that we were in reaction to old tapes.

We grew up in societies that were emotionally dishonest. In societies that taught us to do things "right" in order to feel valued and loved. In societies that taught us that life was about destinations and that when we got "there" we would feel fulfilled and happy.

It is not about getting "there" - not about destination. It is about learning and growing on our journey - it is about making enough progress to have the capacity to enjoy "here" as much of the time as possible. Balance is a shifting, changing, constantly fluctuating dance that we are learning to relax into - it cannot be forced, it cannot be restricted by some arbitrary and rigid beliefs about right and wrong. It is about each of us following our own path, our own Truth, in learning to align with the Truth that is Love.

Life, and recovery, are multi-leveled dynamics. There are multiple levels within the horizontal level. There are multiple layers to our wounding. Part of the reason it is so important to start to learn how to have internal boundaries is so that we can start seeing the different levels - start sifting through the layers. As long as we are reacting to old wounds and old tapes then we have no choices - and our perspective is all messed up.

"Our "self" is made up of a myriad of relationships. We have a relationship with our own mind, our body, our emotions, our soul, our gender, our sexuality, our concept of a Higher Power. We learned to relate to ourselves according to how our father, our mother, our siblings, our classmates, our teachers, our relatives, etc. related to us. The events of our life added dimensions and flavors to our relationship with our self. . . . The ways in which we experienced our self in those early years were through what we felt and the reflections we saw in the eyes of the people around us - in the ways in which people reacted to/behaved toward us. We had to learn to define and defend ourselves in the best ways we could because the reflections we saw, the behaviors we experienced, were coming from people who were wounded and reactive, angry and scared, hurt and ashamed. We learned to relate to ourselves, to other people, and to the life process, in early childhood - and then had more experiences growing up (and as adults) that reinforced in different ways the original experiences.

We have layer upon layer of attitudes, definitions, and beliefs that are a factor in how we relate to ourselves. Until we become aware of how those events, traumas, experiences, etc., have effected us we cannot change how we react in the situations that stimulate memories of those incidents - cannot defuse and disempower the reactive buttons that have been running our lives."

Wounded Souls Dancing in The Light

It is vitally important to start sifting through the layers in order to see life as it really is - and to learn how to be honest with ourselves. We have lived our adult lives in reactions to our childhood wounds and programming. Our patterns in relationships (all relationships - with other people, with money, with work, with our own bodies, etc.) are symptoms of our childhood wounding. As long as we are focusing on the experiences of our adult life without looking for how it is connected to our childhood, we are not seeing reality clearly. As long as you are looking at your last relationship from the perspective of blaming your self or the other person for your problems, you are not being honest with your self - you are reacting from old black and white perspectives.

In order to change our experience of life we need to heal the causes - not keep focusing on the symptoms. In order to do that it is vital to start practicing discernment - start practicing picking the baby out of the bath water instead of swinging between reactive extremes.

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"Learning discernment is vital - not just in terms of the choices we make about who to trust, but also in terms of our perspective, our attitudes.

We learned about life as children and it is necessary to change the way we intellectually view life in order to stop being the victim of the old tapes. By looking at, becoming conscious of, our attitudes, definitions, and perspectives, we can start discerning what works for us and what does not work. We can then start making choices about whether our intellectual view of life is serving us - or if it is setting us up to be victims because we are expecting life to be something which it is not.

One of the core characteristics of this disease of Codependence is intellectual polarization - black and white thinking. Rigid extremes - good or bad, right or wrong, love it or leave it, one or ten. Codependence does not allow any gray area - only black and white extremes.

Life is not black and white. Life involves the interplay of black and white. In other words, the gray area is where life takes place. A big part of the healing process is learning the numbers two through nine - recognizing that life is not black and white."

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Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

Clarity comes from changing our perspectives so that we can see the different levels involved in the life dynamic and not buy into the black and white perspective of the disease. The disease of codependence, as I define it, is centered in the ego - which was damaged, traumatized, and programmed very dysfunctionally in early childhood.

In recovery we are reprogramming our ego-defenses to help us open up to the Truth of who we really are instead of buying into the lie that we are defective, shameful beings. We are changing our tool box for dealing with life from one that is full of dysfunctional, self-destructive tools to tools that actually work to help us get free of the old programming and open up to having moments of Joy and happiness in our life experience.

Changing our relationship with Fear

The number one tool of the ego is fear. Anytime we feel fear, there are multiple levels involved - multiple perspectives from which that fear is originating. And, like all the other emotions we experience, fear has a purpose and needs to be honored as a gift. Emotions do not have value in and of themselves - they just are. What give emotions a positive or negative value is how we react to them. Most of us learned to have negative reactions to emotions because our perspective of our own emotions was all messed up in childhood. (Due to the messages and role modeling of the adults around us.)

Fear is an important tool in living. It is there to protect us, to help us avoid situations and people who will do us harm. It is our relationship to fear that is dysfunctional because of our childhood experiences.

There is a level of fear that is unavoidable in being human - that is fear of the unknown.

"This human experience is a process that involves inherent conflict between the continuously changing nature of life and the human ego's need to survive. In order to insure survival (which is the ego's appointed task) the human ego needs to define things. What is food? What is friend or enemy? Who am I and how do I relate to them? What can hurt me and what brings me pleasure? It also learned that it is healthy to have a fear of the unknown (it was important to check an unknown cave for saber toothed tigers before strolling into it.) As a result, the ego fears change and craves security and stability. But because life is constantly changing, security and stability can only be temporary."

Loving and Nurturing self

Fear of the unknown is a natural, normal part of being human. It has a purpose - and deserves to be honored as something which serves us. But, like our relationship with all the aspects of our being, our relationship with that fear is dysfunctional.

The damaged ego responds to it's programming by generating fear of the things we learned to fear as a child: making mistakes; doing it wrong; being emotional; speaking our Truth; taking risks; being alone; not being alone; whatever. We then empower the fear by focusing on it, magnifying it, and generally giving it the power to define us and our life - or by denying it, which also gives it power because in denying our fear we are denying our self and reality. Going to either extreme results in the inability to see the situation clearly.

Because our ego was programmed to react to life from fear, negativity, scarcity, and lack (again due to emotional trauma we experienced, and the messages and role modeling of the adults around us) the disease focuses on and magnifies fear - and then it scrambles around trying to find something to cover up and repress the very fear it is generating. The disease blows the fear way out of proportion and then leads us to addictive and/or compulsive behavior as a way of stuffing the fear.

This is the essence of the dysfunction. We live our life reacting to fear, and the shame, that the disease empowers and then "helps" us avoid by causing us to focus on something outside of ourselves as the cause and/or the cure for the core place within us where we feel empty - where we feel unlovable and unworthy.

We are afraid of our own emotions - of all the repressed feelings and unresolved grief that we are carrying. We learned to be afraid of our own anger and pain and fear. We feel afraid of our fear of our own emotions. It is this fear once (or twice) removed that is paralyzing. That is, the fear of our own fear is our greatest block to healing. We are afraid of our own pain and anger - and then we are afraid of our fear of our own pain and anger.

In order to start finding some balance in recovery, it is important to learn how to take power away from the fear. In order to do that, it is very important to clear up our relationship with fear. And to look at all the different levels involved in our reaction.

The first step is to stop judging ourselves for our fear (or anger, or pain, or loneliness, etc.) - or denying to ourselves that we even have fear.

"So the resistance to growth and to feeling my feelings, which I feel, is not just some kind of a 'character defect'. It consists of ages old adaptations of behaviors and attitudes which the human species found necessary for survival. It was important for me to start understanding this so that I could stop judging myself for my fear and resistance. I had to learn to accept, and honor, my fears and my resistance - in order to stop fighting the growth process so much. Then I could start to align myself with the growth process and make my experience of life easier and more enjoyable. Then I could start to understand that faith is not the absence of fear - faith is having the courage to face my fears and walk through them so that I can reach the next level of growth."

The Dance of the Wounded Souls Trilogy Book 1, Chapter 4

We need to take the shame and judgment out of our internal process. That is why a spiritual belief system is so important - so that we can start seeing ourselves more clearly, start seeing realistically instead of through the shame filter of the disease.

Once we have started integrating a Spiritual belief into our process - or a spiritual philosophy that allows us to start looking clearly at cause and effect - then we can start to be detached enough from our own process to see it more clearly.

Taking power away from the fear

In order to start finding some balance in recovery, it is important to learn how to take power away from the fear. In order to do that, it is very important to look at all the different levels involved in our reaction so that we can start to clear up our relationship with own fear.

Anytime we have a strong reaction to someone or something, it means there is old stuff involved - old wounds, unresolved grief. One of the first steps to taking the power away from the fear is to detach from the feeling a little and take an honest look at reality. It may feel terrifying, may feel life threatening - but is that the truth?

There is a tool that comes out of Transactional Analysis that can be very helpful in taking some power away from fear. It is called a fear slide. The way it works is that you write down what your fear is - say, I am afraid I will be alone on Valentine's Day, or I am afraid he won't be my friend any more, or I am afraid I won't get the job, etc. Then on the next line you write the answer to this question: "If that happens, then what?" Then I will feel hurt, or whatever. On the next line you write the answer to that same question, "then what?" And you keep doing this down the page. Eventually, you will come to: "I will die." or "I will cease to exist."

I am afraid _____

If that happens, then what?

If that happens, then what?

If that happens, then what?

If that happens, then what?

Then you go back to the original fear, and ask yourself, "Will I die if I am alone on Valentine's Day? The answer is, of course, no you won't die.

As mentioned the ego is focused on survival. That translates into avoidance of pain. In order to help us avoid what it perceives as survival threatening pain the ego generates fear and then magnifies it - turning it into a huge monster. It is very helpful to force ourselves to take a realistic look at the monster in order to stop giving our emotional reactions all the power.

In our disease, the fear of being alone on Valentine's Day feels life threatening. It feels like a big monster. If we give power to that fear, what happens is we get so uncomfortable living with the fear that we try to find some way to repress it. The ways we find are usually self destructive - alcohol, drugs, food, whatever.

If we can take a realistic and honest look at the monster, and say to ourselves, "No, I won't die if I am alone on Valentines. But I will be sad." Bingo! The reason we are afraid is because we have a lot of unresolved grief over lonely holidays, pain over failed relationships, etc., - all going back to the core wound of the little child who felt alone and unlovable.

If we can start to be emotionally honest with ourselves, by owning our grief, it will help us to take power away from the fear.

Learning to be emotionally honest with ourselves, is a whole other aspect of the processing dynamic that I am not going to talk about in this article - I will get into that in another article in this series and there are other articles on my web site about that. What I will say about it, is that it is very important to do some of our processing verbally or through writing. We do not get in touch with our feelings through thinking. It is when we start talking about or writing about what is going

on internally that we start actually feeling and releasing the emotional energy.

There are certain other things that can help us to get in touch with emotional energy - including through various types of art, drawing, painting, collage, etc.; movement and music; body work; etc. - but the primary processing tools are writing or talking.

Writing about fear

In the update announcement that sparked this article, I was processing through some levels of fear in order to become clearer on where the fear was coming from. I was having resistance to finishing an article, and since I knew that resistance comes primarily from fear, I was processing.

First I looked at the reason that my head was telling me I was procrastinating. Fear about stating a controversial Truth in public. Almost as soon as I wrote that, I knew that was not the main level. I have been speaking and writing my controversial take on Truth for many years now and that one does not have any real power anymore.

I then went on to a different level, that of fear of saying things in a way that a reader could use to beat themselves up with. Ultimately I am powerless over how someone reacts, but it is something that I give some power to because I want to communicate as clearly and cleanly as possible. By touching on that level of fear, I could put some effort into clear communication and then let go of the outcome. By focusing on a level and then surrendering to my ultimate powerlessness over others, I can take a little of the fear that is out of balance out of the equation.

The next level I touched on was that of the "out-of-control" feeling that I get with my writing. This is jumping off the diving board kind of fear that is just inherent in the process for me. That there is a basis to feeling not in control of my writing process is proven by the reality that writing about my fear in that update has led to at least five other articles so far. I was afraid of where the writing was going because I had a picture of what was supposed to be written next - of what my priorities were for my writing time and energy. By acknowledging that certain things cause me to feel afraid because they feel out-of-control, I can take a little more fear out of the process.

Through writing about that fear, I could get in touch with what attitudes of mine were magnifying the fear. That is, how my picture of where I needed to focus my time and energy was causing me to resist going where the writing was taking me. I am responsible for how my perspective, my attitudes, set me up to have emotional responses. When I am not open to events unfolding in way different than I had planned, then I am setting myself up for feelings.

When I think that things have to go a certain way for me to be OK, then I am setting myself up to be a victim when they do not unfold the way I think they need to unfold. I am making a choice to see life in a certain way. That choice, that attitude, then sets me up to be afraid if things go differently than I want them to go. I am responsible for that fear. I am creating that fear out of the intellectual paradigm, the expectations, that I am choosing to empower.

If I have a picture, an expectation, of how I want life to look today and you do something that messes up that picture, my codependent reaction is to get angry at you and blame you for messing up my day. This is doubly dishonest. First of all, I am getting angry in response to my fear that I will not be OK if things do not work out as I had planned. That is emotionally dishonest. Secondly, I am blaming you for the feelings that are being caused by my attitudes, my expectations. That is codependency.

In regard to the situation I have been talking about, there was no other person involved - so I was getting angry at, and blaming, my self. I was having a hard time finishing the article I was writing. I had a self imposed deadline for finishing that article that was part of my agenda for how I saw the immediate future unfolding. I felt that I needed to finish that article so that I could send out my update announcement so that I could get on to whatever the next important thing I thought I needed to get done. I was trying to control my life by forcing an outcome.

I was trying to control my life because I was afraid that I wouldn't get the things done that I thought I needed to get done to take care of myself, to meet my needs. I was afraid of the unknown future, so I had designed my own agenda, and then was getting angry and frustrated that I could not meet my own agenda.

Because I was judging myself and impatient with myself, the rebel within me was rebelling through procrastinating. I was then judging myself for my procrastination - and then turning around and shaming myself for judging myself for my procrastination. (I stopped judging and shaming myself in gross ways years ago - i.e. I don't call myself names like stupid or loser or whatever - but the disease dynamic still kicks in on much subtler levels. As we make progress in treating ourselves better in recovery, the disease gets more subtle and cunning. This recent judgment/shame upheaval would be like a 3.0 earthquake vs what used to be a 9.0 earthquake.)

This is the disease of codependence working in it's most insidious, malevolent, treacherous, and powerful expression.

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"If I am feeling like a "failure" and giving power to the "critical parent" voice within that is telling me that I am a failure - then I can get stuck in a very painful place where I am shaming myself for being me. In this dynamic I am being the victim of myself and also being my own perpetrator - and the next step is to rescue myself by using one of the old tools to go unconscious (food, alcohol, sex, etc.) Thus the disease has me running around in a squirrel cage of suffering and shame, a dance of pain, blame, and self-abuse."{/xtypo_info}

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

An innocent little child

And it all goes back to being afraid that if I do it wrong I will not survive the shame and pain of being imperfect. It all goes back to a little child who was terrified of his own father and could not count on his mother to defend him from his father. The little child whose higher powers were wounded and were reacting to life out of their fear and shame.

That fear is not rational. It is not logical. It is not conscious. It is an emotional reaction caused by early childhood trauma.

If I am alone on Valentine's Day I will die. If I do not get this article finished on time I will not survive.

These fears are not stupid, they are not ridiculous. They are the result of the emotional experience of a little child. That child deserves, and needs, compassion - not judgment and shame. When we judge ourselves we are abusing that little child inside of us. When we are impatient with ourselves, we are dragging that child behind us as we run to get "there" - to the outcome, the destination that will make us OK.

I heard Claudia Black in a workshop many years ago, talking about going for a walk on the beach with a 4 year old child. She asked something to the effect of, "What pace do you walk at, the child's pace - or do you drag the child along behind you at your pace?"

We have spent our lives either dragging the child along, or running away from the child within us. Working real hard on getting "there" - and/or doing whatever we could to go unconscious to our own feelings. We locked the child up in a dark place within us, at the same time we let the child's emotional wounds run our life. We were powerless to do life any differently until we got into recovery. Just as our parents were powerless to do life any differently because of the wounded children within them.

In early recovery I learned to catch myself every time I heard myself calling myself stupid. I would change it to silly. I couldn't go from calling myself stupid to calling myself a blessed child of the Goddess in one step. So, I substituted silly in order to be less abusive to myself. In order to start decreasing the shame and judgment I was laying on myself and the innocent child within me.

It was not stupid, or wrong, that I fell into the judging-resisting-shaming running around the hamster cage cycle of the disease dynamic. It was a little silly - and entirely human. It was a natural, normal part of being a recovering codependent. It was a perfect part of the process of learning/teaching, remembering/reminding.

I was afraid. Fear is part of this human adventure we are experiencing. It is through changing our relationship with our own fear that we transform being human from an ordeal to an adventure.

Fear is Primal

Fear is an innate, genetically ingrained, emotional impulse in human beings. It is a programmed response to survival instincts. Fear is an emotion that can serve us. It is a necessary tool for survival in a hostile environment.

I get really angry when I hear some old timer in an AA meeting say, "Fear is the absence of faith." That is bull. If we did

not have fear, we would not need faith. Faith is what gives us the courage to walk through our fears.

It is important to accept fear as part of our reality. It is important to clear up our relationship with our fear. The disease of codependence, our damaged ego, is programmed to react to life out of fear of what caused us pain in our childhood. Our ego is fighting for survival based on programming from early childhood - that is what is dysfunctional.

It is important to learn new tools to counteract the powerful programming of the disease / condition of codependency. It is important to change our relationship with our own fear by changing our perspective of our fear.

Denying our fear is dysfunctional. Relating to our fear as if it only comes from one place - is only about one thing - is dishonest. There are multiple levels to our fears. A few of those levels may be right on - most of them are dysfunctional. There are some levels that are about False Evidence Appearing Real - to use a 12 step acronym - based on assumptions, mind reading, and fortune telling, our fantasies/nightmares that we project onto others and life. Some of the levels are reactions to our childhood wounds: 'if I am alone I will die;' 'if I take the risk of loving someone and they don't love me back, I will die;' 'if I don't have security, I will die;' etc.

Not looking at our fears keeps us in the dark and gives them power. It is only by bringing them out of the darkness into the light that we can take the power away from them.

Once we bring them into the light of consciousness, then we can filter, sift through, get clearer on what is causing them. We can discern what part of the fears are being caused by our own attitudes - so that we can own the responsibility, and make choices to change our intellectual paradigm into something that will work better. We can get in touch with the inner child wounds that are being triggered so that we can have some compassion for those wounds and set whatever Loving boundaries we need to set. We can get conscious of the outcome we are trying to control so that we can take some action to let go of that outcome.

By taking the action of processing through our reaction, we can get in touch with what other actions we can take to lessen and let go of our fears.

Clarity through processing

So, by writing about my procrastination, I was able to see the causes of that procrastination more clearly. In processing through the resistance I was having, I could get clear that what I thought was the reason for the procrastination (controversial Truth) really was not the reason at all. I could see that there were several layers of reasons - and that the bottom line was that I was creating much of the resistance because I did not want to let go of my preconceived idea of the outcome.

I diminished some of the fear by speaking it out loud (in this case, writing it.) And I got in touch with how my attitudes were adding to the fear. Then I could take some action to let go of the attitudes that were amplifying the resistance. I could do some work to surrender my way of doing things so that I could stop creating emotional resistance by trying to

control the outcome.

Acknowledging fear, actually speaking my fears out loud or writing about them, often diminishes them. I can own the fear and then accept it and move through it.

And the ironic thing, the silly part of it, was that the real - right on - reason for my resistance was not even in the areas I was looking at directly. The real reason for my resistance was that the article I was writing was not working in the structure I was trying to force it into. What would have been the best thing to do, would have been to walk away from that article completely for a period of days so I could come back to it with a fresh perspective.

It turned out that I surrendered the "wrong" thing. I surrendered to just publishing the article to meet my deadline, instead of shifting my paradigm to a completely new perspective - such as going ahead with that update without that article. But it wasn't the wrong thing at all, because the way the whole thing unfolded was perfect to set me up to write this series of articles about the inner child healing process. Thus the Universe has forced me to write about emotional honesty and balance, about internal boundaries and clarity, in a little bit different way than I had previously. It is different because I am growing and learning, my perspective is shifting and changing.

The adventure of recovery keeps getting different. The dance of balance is continuously changing, shifting, expanding. One of the most important things we can do for ourselves, is to not take it all so seriously, not take ourselves so seriously. Don't worry be silly, is a motto my Higher Self communicated to me many years ago. Instead of worrying about doing it right, instead of empowering our fear of consequences, instead of trying to force outcomes - it is much better to lighten up (dark to Light, heavy to light) because that helps us see with more clarity.

The inner child healing process is a journey from dark to Light, from serious to silly.

As long as we are denying our fear, it has power to drive us to compulsive or addictive behavior. If we are not seeing the multiple levels of our fear clearly, then we are not being honest with ourselves. The only way to take power away from the fear is to own it, honor it, and take action to dissolve the levels of it that are codependent. When we are seeing our fear more clearly, we can see that a lot of it is pretty silly.

Fear is not bad or wrong. It is not the absence of love, as some spiritual teachers and authors would tell you. (Except in the metaphysical sense that the illusion is caused by an absence of/separation from LOVE.) It is integral part of being human. It is because we are afraid that we need to learn to Love ourselves. The more we learn to Love our self the less power the fear will have to define our reality. The more recovery tools we have, the sooner we will catch ourselves when we get caught up in the disease dynamics. The less we are reacting to life out of black and white, right and wrong; the less we are judging and shaming ourself; the less fear we experience. We can learn to feel Love and compassion for our inner child wounds - instead of fear, instead of shame and judgment.

Your fears are the places within you that await your Love. Your fears are the teachers that will help you uncover your wounds. Uncover, discover, recover. Progress, not perfection. It is through the fear that we find our way home to Love.