

LOVE LESSON 2

“Messages of Love”

RECOMMENDED LISTENING:

“Turn the Beat Around” by Gloria Estefan
“I Want to Hold Your Hand” by The Beatles

THE LESSON:

I imagine if you're drawn to music as I am, music was an important part of your growing up years. I came from a musical family. No, we didn't play music, but my parents listened to a lot of it!

In fact, music was always playing in our home. When my parents built their dream house in 1963, they installed "surround sound." Each room in the house was wired into a central sound system, a speaker in the ceiling, a small volume control dial on the wall. No matter where you were in the house, even outside on the patio, you could listen to music.

I grew up listening to what my parents enjoyed: Show tunes, smooth jazz, and "crooners" like Andy Williams, or romantic, instrumental music like that of Andre Prévin.

Today, I realize that my parent's music choices greatly influenced my own. I was a "romantic" from early on and still am. I still love a good Broadway musical. We often cook, eat, and entertain to smooth jazz. When I work at home, music is always playing; mostly, mellow stuff so I can write. When I'm in the car or just relaxing I enjoy Classic Rock.

Each of us was shaped by our earliest musical experiences. It makes sense that our understanding of LOVE may have also been shaped by this earliest listening.

Listen to “Turn the Beat Around” to get your groove on, then, take a look at what your earliest musical influences were.

Consider this:

- What is the first music you remember hearing as a child?
- How did this "first listening" impact you and your musical values?

Now, consider this:

- What was the first music you recall that sent specific messages to you about love?
- What were those early messages about love? What human love could or should be?

Truth be told, these early messages about Love may have shaped your life-long understanding and experiences of Love—for *the better and for the worse*.

LESSON 2 REFLECTION QUESTIONS & PRACTICE

Take some time to reflect on the earliest messages you heard about human love. Cultivate curiosity about how they may have informed your current attitudes about love and relationship. This is a very important step in getting to know yourself as a partner, lover, friend, or family member, and what you *really* believe about Love. Be compassionate with yourself about what you discover.

INSPIRATION

“The thinking mind is extinguished in love.”

~ Ram Dass

LOVE LESSON 5

Mining for a Heart of Gold

RECOMMENDED LISTENING:

“Heart of Gold” by Neil Young

THE LESSON:

Singer/songwriter, Neal Young, expresses our search for Real Love in a most thought-provoking way. It appears he might be singing about his desire to find just the right partner to love—someone with a "heart of gold." Yet, as our listening deepens, he could be referring to himself; his relationship with himself, uncovering his own "heart of gold."

Young describes the many things he's done in life, the places he's been, and how each has not provided him with the Love he had hoped. Is it Love for an ideal other of which he speaks? Or has he traveled far and wide enough to connect with his own good, loving heart?

Without asking him, we might never know, yet Young raises a powerful point when it comes to Love. How can we hope to experience the Love we desire without being connected with our own "heart of gold"? To be able to receive Love, we must be able to wholeheartedly give it. We must have the ability to be fully present and unconditional with ourselves before we can be fully present and unconditionally loving to others.

I invite you to listen to this song in two ways: First, as a song of longing to have deep and profound Love in one's life. Second, as a song of desire to connect with one's innate goodness, one's true identity; to live with self-acceptance and self-love.

I wonder which version resonates with you in relation to where you find yourself in life right now.

What does it mean to you when someone has a "heart of gold"? Have you had the privilege of being in relationship with someone like this? What did they bring to the relationship?

So often we get trapped into thinking that a relationship with "the other" is the treasure to be mined, when, actually the relationship with ourself is the one that deserves our utmost attention and efforts. This really is the crux of the spiritual journey into Love, isn't it? Mining for our "heart of gold" may be the work of our lifetime and also the one that offers the most dazzling results.

Young's song ends on a poignant note. He is aware of his aging and time running out. His longing to be connected to that which matters most runs deep like a river. It is a river, when followed with faithfulness and hope, leads to the only Source that can quench his spiritual thirst—unconditional Love. The same can be true for any of us.

LESSON 5 REFLECTION QUESTIONS & PRACTICE

How are you doing on your personal journey mining your own "heart of gold"? Reflect on your relationship with yourself, first and foremost. Is it accepting, compassionate and generous? Do you have a sense how your relationships with others could be enhanced, more loving, by caring for yourself first, then giving from the overflow?

INSPIRATION:

*" ... just a tender sense of my own inner process,
that holds something of my connection with the divine."*

~ Percy Blythe Shelley