

# The Spiritual Path



**Aaron Mangal of LOVEolution  
talks with  
Peter Shepherd of Trans4mind.com**

**Love is the question here today, so tell me Peter, how would you define love? And is there a difference between the love between people in relationships and spiritual Love with a capital L?**

It is put most simply and beautifully, I feel, in the words of Joni Mitchell: "Love is touching souls." As we all know, the feeling we have from loving and being loved, brings a warmth and richness to life in a way that that nothing else can.

Love, in its purest sense, is unconditional acceptance. Unconditional acceptance of someone or something, the way they are, without judgment. That's Love with a capital L. Accompanying that, or substituting for that in many cases when love is felt in personal relations, is desire, caring, attraction and admiration - and of course those qualities are increased if the feeling is mutual. But essentially, love is accepting and welcoming a person just as they actually are, without them having to put on an act or behave according to some hidden standard.

The ultimate lesson all of us have to learn is unconditional love, which includes not only others but ourselves as well.

**When did you first get a major insight about love in your life, and how did that change things for you?**

Well, the first experience of love was in my mother's arms, of course, and not long after I fell in love with the little girl next door. But Love with a capital L took more finding. As a choirboy at the local church, it suddenly dawned on me that all these sermons about our sinful nature and the wrath of God, were being made on a totally misguided agenda. I let go of that belief system and it was a huge relief, a huge burden off my back. Going in quite the opposite direction, I studied Buddhism and found there a validation of each individual as a spark of the universal consciousness. There were meditative methods to help the person attain a higher level of that consciousness for themselves. But again I found the orthodox dogma of that religion stifling as well. I decided to both stay clear of organized religions and also to look for better ways of expanding consciousness that do not take lifetimes to achieve their goal. What I had learned from Christianity was the New Testament message of the power of Love; and from Buddhism I'd learned the importance of acceptance and non-attachment. It was enough for me to perceive of God as the quality of Love, and that when we love (which is to say accept unconditionally) we are part of God. As the saying goes, "When we love, we are the universe and the universe lives in us."

I realized that inner gnosis - intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth - was the way to go, since fundamental truths are simple and graspable when we look inside to our intuitive understanding. I realized that right back then, at eleven years old, though in simpler words perhaps. What

remained complex and a mystery to me was the structure of mind, and the million and one ways that mind sneaks in to obscure or corrupt our natural insight and wellbeing.

### **Do you agree that ego is the primary obstacle to enlightenment and living a life guided by Love?**

This is a piece of harmful New Age dogma. Ego is the personality - your face to the world, as well as your inner thoughts, fears, likes, desires, needs. It's an essential part of being a human being, your everyday conscious thinking self. Without wanting to do well competitively, to play and win at the games of life, the world would be back in the Stone Age, yet we're told how our selfish ego is such a barrier to spiritual growth. This is a misconceived put down of natural instincts; a fear of worldly things, really. Personal growth is about transcending the ego, not weakening it - it's already too weak and afraid, which is why it's immaturely selfish and hateful. The ego should be embraced and loved, like a child growing up, not rejected as imperfect. The stronger and more mature it is, the more transparent it becomes to the spiritual essence that lies behind the personality. The ego then becomes an instrument of Love.

Personal growth is about integrating and loving; it is never about separating and destruction. Ascension is not destruction of the ego, it is integrating and transcending the ego, to be one with God and also with the body-mind, purified by Love. To be one also with all others and All That Is, since there is no separation in truth, in Love. Since if you're one with God and God is everything, then you're also one with everything, at the highest viewpoint of oneself - the Higher Self. The Higher Self may be better described as our connection with God. It is Self. It is God too... our all-knowing, all-loving Source of being.

The more we are aware of our connection with God, the less reason the ego has to fear its awful loss of identity at death. This fear underlies all others and releasing it opens a huge pathway for the illumination of Love to lighten the shadows of our personality. The healing of fears is always Love: unconditional acceptance. A beautiful aspect of love is that it never dies. You live on in all that you love; you live on because you ARE Love.

Speaking of dogma, we should beware the cultural influence of orthodox religions too. There's a line in the Flatlanders where Butch Hancock says, "Life in Lubbock, Texas, taught me two things: One is that God loves you and you're going to burn in hell. The other is that sex is the most awful, filthy thing on earth and you should save it for someone you love." This way of manipulation is called a "double bind." It depends on acceptance of the lies of high authority (Hell and Original Sin in this case). It makes people neurotic and therefore unable to trust their own thoughts and feelings, and enslaves them to the religion that caused the damage.

The real enemy is dogma, per se. Like the Trans4mind motto says, "Minds, like parachutes, function better when open." We each need to discover our own truth, not have it dictated to us by authorities. Truth is inevitably simple in essence but the network of defenses we erect to deny our own truth (driven by fears) and the sophistication of the conditioning we receive to imprint the status quo (much of it misinformation) - these are complex.

The full solution is something like [The Insight Project](#), the advanced course that Trans4mind runs for spiritual development. Insight uses biofeedback monitoring to "open up" the subconscious and access inner knowing. It's needed because the truth is so often being obscured by the mental defenses we have created, to protect the rightness of our current ways of being. The armor around our ego is too heavy and restricting to turn around and see that the war is long since over!

What is truth? In psychology, whole books don't begin to describe the complex tapestry of the mind. Really it's a labyrinth of fears and separation. But in spiritual matters, it's quite the opposite. Fundamental truth is so simple that words are inadequate... truth is a state of being, it simply is what IS, perceived with perfect communication, understanding and empathy. Using the Insight techniques, we see again and again that when the underlying truth is revealed, always it is a message of love, of unconditional acceptance, of oneness with what is.

The Insight Project's great, but anyone can make a lot of headway by applying some simple principles and disciplines. Firstly, to always be guided by Love, since love is the creative force, the intent, the quality, that is your essential nature. It always leads to truth... it IS truth. So whenever you act, ask "Am I doing this through love?" This is the best way to get in touch with inner guidance, to start to know your true self.

Secondly, be mindful before reacting emotionally. Take time to breathe, to get into the present moment - pull yourself in from attention trapped in the past and the future and be grounded and centered in your body. Here and now. Then respond, from love and not from fear.

And thirdly, remember that communication is the solvent of problems. When in doubt, or you're anxious, or you feel stranded: communicate. That means to express your feelings and safeguard your rights - but equally to ask questions and listen intently, not just to spout off yourself.

So primarily, become mindful.

## **What is the difference between personality and the core essence of a person?**

Love is much more fundamental than any kind of thinking or believing. It is the root and basis of who you are, at the most fundamental level. This means that anything other than love as an expression of your being is artificial and unnatural and is a result of not knowing who you are - it is the result of the distorting power of mind, a mind that is not in peace. The Dalai Lama says that, "The greatest obstacles to inner peace are disturbing emotions such as anger, attachment, fear and suspicion, while love and compassion and a sense of universal responsibility are the sources of peace and happiness."

Our personality is a combination of influences... our core essence is sometimes awake enough to be of influence; we have years of learned behaviors and habitual ways of thinking; we have many solutions to the problems and rigors of life and each of these makes up, in a way, its own identity or sub-personality, when we play out its prescribed way of being. We have these social faces and we have the view of ourselves as perceived from inside, with its fears and secrets that are hidden from others. And we have fears and secrets that we don't even admit to ourselves.

The only healing force to break down these barriers of fear and isolation is the healing power of love, of unconditional acceptance of ourselves just the way we are. To stop resisting the truth, to accept and fully experience our fears... in that way we can shine the light of love upon them, so they may dissolve and be released.

## **Why is a broken heart the most painful experience in the world?**

One of the most empowering things we can do in our lives is to connect with another person, who complements you very well, in a truly connected loving experience - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically. We become more than twice the person. Life is automatically then more than worthwhile. We know instinctively that this state of being is a possibility for everyone in this world, so when it goes wrong, and the relationship does not connect on all levels as we had hoped, it is deeply disappointing and we feel we have lost what could have been - an invaluable prize.

So yes, that is the most painful experience in the world, along with losing a child, or seeing a terrible injustice that one is powerless to prevent. It's part of life, like night and day. We inevitably suffer during our lives, and we get through it by the natural process of grieving. We suffer more the greater our resistance to the truth of what is; we suffer less the sooner we flow with the grieving process and come to accept the reality of things and remember our gratitude for what we had, for the incredible richness of life that remains and the love that in truth, once expressed never dies.

But we shouldn't get attached too quickly and perhaps we shouldn't be attached, as such, at all. Attachment to something really means the fear of losing it. When fear comes into the picture, our mind distorts the truth.

Of course, when we are dating, we need as many as it takes to find right person, so does the other person, so we can understand if our partner says, unfortunately you're not the one for me. First time it happens, of course it's hard. But it's better for the breakup to happen than to continue a relationship that is not completely fulfilling for both partners.

Indeed, you are better off on your own than in a mis-matched relationship but much better off to be in a relationship based on true love than to be on your own. If true love between soul mates hasn't arrived yet in your life, don't give up. I had many ups and downs in my life, and many lessons to learn. I'm glad I didn't meet my soul mate before 50 because I wouldn't have been ready, my wife Nicole and I probably wouldn't have recognized each other as soul mates. We met when the time was right and our time together has been just wonderful.

But if you have been rejected too many times, or you reject others in a hurtful way, or you use relationships purely for your personal pleasure without any real loving connection, or if you have caused or suffered abuse within relationship... these things can destroy your openness and sensitivity to love. Love is what you need to heal but love has become a barrier. Nevertheless it is the only way forward, to start to love yourself by rediscovering the love that resides always in your heart in abundance, and shining that love on yourself and others. Then things will heal and new possibilities will emerge.

With fear, however, possessiveness can enter the picture, and then jealousy rears its ugly head. Jealousy is an immature emotion. Adults should have learned better but in many cases they haven't. Jealousy is less than love, since it resents the other's freedom to choose, to be themselves. Jealousy is to consider another person as an object of possession, a person who has no right to make their own choices.

Yes, we all feel the sting of jealousy sometimes and we need to acknowledge and accept the emotion, and then release it as something that is simply not rational nor helpful to us. We need to put ourselves in the other person's shoes and consider whether we would appreciate the lack of trust that a person jealous of us is demonstrating, and their desire to manipulate and control our choices. Probably we wouldn't. And most importantly, we need to spot the fears that underlie our jealous feelings and release them as well.

I'd like to quote a beautiful piece from Kahlil Gibran's book *The Prophet* that was included in my own wedding ceremony. It really sums up a true loving relationship...

And what of marriage, Master?

And he answered saying:

You were born together, and together you shall be for evermore.

You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.

Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness.

And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone even though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

And stand together yet not too near together:

For the pillars of the temple stand apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

### **Is love more than an emotion, is it actually the fabric of the entire universe?**

I would say, yes. Love is a state of being and intention, spiritual qualities that are above the level of energy. Love when expressed becomes a creative force, an energy of imagination, that manifests physically in the space and time of a dimension. In the human sphere, love expresses our dreams and vision, and our ability to creatively manifest our vision is empowered by the emotion of love.

**Does loving yourself help you love others? When others love and accept you for the way you are can you love yourself more? When you love others more than yourself does that bring more love into your life?**

Yes, loving yourself does help you love others, but one needn't be dependent on others to love yourself more and bring love into your life. So how do you go about loving yourself more and more?

When you are needing to find the love within, I invite you to sit down and write 3 things you love about yourself. And then meditate on the qualities you have written down. Allow yourself to feel how it feels in your body to have this quality - even if it's something simple (but still beautiful and important) like "I love to pet kittens." What we praise increases, and when we are in a state of gratitude, we instantly propel ourselves into the vibration of love and safety.

Examining your relationships is a powerful way to speed up the process of learning to love yourself and that is because the other person acts as a mirror for everything that is in you. Whatever you see in someone that you don't like, or want to change, the trick is to say: "That's ME!! I do that, or I have done that at some point in my life, and I'm STILL carrying a judgment, or emotional charge about it." It's NEVER about another person, place or thing. It's ALWAYS you seeing YOURSELF in the mirror. Because you are constantly seeing yourself, if you realize that that is what is actually going on, it is a fast way to clear things up, and thus speed you on your spiritual path. You can drop being the victim of other people's ways of being and realize you're the one creating it all, whatever is going on.

Many of us feel that we need love and warmth from others on the outside, so that we can reflect that energy back to everyone. But discovering true Self Love is realizing that love is not coming from outside you, but its source is inside - it is you that is shining your light onto everyone and everything. When you turn your attention to where the source of love is right now, you simply find out that you always were the Source of love in your life.

When you are being a friend to yourself, all of life is seen as a friend, all of it feels that way to you - it's a reflection of YOU. You're feeling so good about having love inside of you that you naturally feel in love with everything. That's how it works. Like sunshine... when the sun shines its warmth permeates everything.

**How do we get past our resistance to allowing in love? Even if we know we deserve it, even if we believe that we want our lives transformed by its power, how do we get out of our comfort zones and allow it in? For some of us it has become comfortable to keep a distance between us and emotional intimacy.**

To surrender means giving up attachment to things that make us feel safe. To allow love into our life is to let down the barriers that have been keeping us safe and immune from disappointment and loss; albeit a deeply unhappy and unfulfilling state of security. Surrender is the process of emptying the mind, to feel the fear and do it anyway. It is a choice to trust the inner knowing of our Higher Self to take care of things. Which is not to say, without understanding and recognition of the difference between one person and another; on the contrary, it means a heightened awareness empowered by our intuition and not distorted by our fears and prejudices. It is opening the gates of possibility... a choice really between life and death of our soul. Yes, it is a choice that takes a lot of courage, but one that we certainly are capable of taking, if we want a better life.

**How do you keep a loveful attitude if you encounter behaviors in other people that are annoying you? Is this a contradiction: keeping a loveful attitude AND feeling annoyed?**

Loving is not the same as liking. Acceptance does not imply agreement any more than it implies disagreement, it says that the reality is recognized and is not being resisted - there is no judgment. Annoyance, though, is more than disagreement - it is resistance. Resistance against a quality that you perceive in another is really a projection of the resistance you feel about the same quality within yourself, even if it is a quality that you suppress from yourself. That's the button that gets pressed. If we can understand that the other is like ourselves, that is the beginning of empathy and the restoration of a loving relationship.

**In relationships is love created or does it just come about naturally? Is it not something that we must create daily in our lives or is it a force that truly takes us over. Is love, therefore practical, or almost 'irrational'?**

Love is always there. We block it with our minds, with fears, resistance, attachment, but if we clear those blocks we see that Love is already in place. We have Love in abundance; it is who we are. Relationships, however, do need to be continually created using the elements of communication, understanding and empathy.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery stated that, "Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction." We are independent persons and relationship can only develop if we respect each other's uniqueness and freedom of choice.

A satisfying relationship with another person requires good communication, mutual understanding and empathy. If there is a significant drop in one of these factors, e.g. we disagree and have an argument, then an upset ensues. An upset occurs when there is a sudden departure from what is wanted or expected. Such upsets inevitably have emotional consequences: ranging from less enthusiasm, through boredom and hostility, to fear and eventually to apathy. So the effect of upsets is cumulative; a small upset may be easily forgotten but many such instances, or a particularly painful experience, will likely never be forgiven - unless the upset is resolved in the present time by new and effective two-way communication.

Misunderstandings between people are very often due to poor communication skills. When couples are unable to effectively discuss their feelings and ideas together, their relationship may eventually break down. Issues such as financial arrangements, family visits, pressures at work and contribution to home maintenance are common 'hot spots' in which failure to disclose feelings, or when those feelings are not genuinely listened to and understood, can lead to tension or serious upsets. Perhaps the 'hottest' issue is sexual response, since sex is such an integral aspect of a loving relationship.

For the body-mind's natural sexual response to function correctly, a relaxed state is necessary. If there is emotional tension between a couple, or if there is internal fear and anxiety about sexual performance, then the nervous system cannot switch into the parasympathetic mode required for sexual arousal. The solution in this situation is better and more open communication between the couple, to let each other know how they are feeling and to have a mutual acceptance of the other without blame or recrimination. After all, that is what a loving relationship is about, and sex as an expression of love is far more exciting.

Another factor is that many men have little clue about their partner's sexual response. This isn't taught in school nor in the movies. Women can become resentful and eventually give up on the matter of receiving sexual pleasure. Sex becomes a cold ritual or is abandoned completely, as the man (who doesn't understand) is simply not in proper communication with his partner on this issue.

As men get older, often the ability to respond sexually is no longer like it was in the teenage years. The man may feel guilt and anxiety about his sexual performance, and even avoid sexual relations as a consequence. To help overcome this barrier, many have turned to Viagra supplements to boost their arousal. But these are expensive and unnatural pharmaceuticals. I would recommend primarily to begin to develop more intimate communication within the couple - this in itself can be a "turn on."

Sexual arousal is only possible when one is feeling relaxed; it is destroyed by fear, anxiety or tension. When one partner is not able or is unwilling to enjoy sexual relations, it is therefore very important to communicate openly, so these negative feelings can be understood and the causes resolved. Couples need to talk honestly with each other, preferably at the first opportunity rather than later when emotions have become overwhelming. Through the lessons learnt, the relationship will only grow stronger. If this sort of communication is not possible then there really is no longer a relationship at all; but even then it is not too late to begin speaking the truth and listening, perhaps for the first time, and recover the empathy that is the spark of love.

Fortunately, you can learn many helpful skills that will allow you to communicate more effectively and also to be more productive at work and in all those situations in everyday life where better communication can make the difference. Here are a couple of practical exercises, to do with your partner...

1. Sit facing your partner and spend some time becoming comfortable in the other's presence. Look each other calmly in the eyes. Be comfortable just being your self, without shrinking away or putting any kind of shield or false personality in between you and the other. Accept the other as he or she is. Accept yourself as you are. With a high degree of empathy and understanding, this acceptance of yourself and another is Love.
2. With your partner, complete the following sentences, with as much honesty and frankness as you can muster. The partner should not make any comment about your reply, but simply acknowledge having heard and understood with a gentle "thank you." Move on to the next sentence when you have uncovered an awareness that you were previously suppressing. (And then be sure to put this self-realization into action in your life!)

Your partner says, "Please complete this..."

One of the things I'd like people to know about me is ...

Sometimes I feel frustrated when ...

If I didn't care what people thought, I would ...

Ever since I was a child, I ...

One of the things I'd like to be valued and appreciated for is ...

I say "be sure to put this self-realization into action in your life" because any amount of information you read in a book, or any number of insights you obtain in meditation or with personal development methods, these amount to nothing if they are not integrated into your way of being, into your daily life. You need to focus on one principle at a time and master it... apply it over and over until you can see that it works for you. And

keep on applying it until it becomes a new, positive habit to replace the old outworn ones, the way you were.

As with learning any new skill (like riding a bike or skateboard), incorporating a personal development insight into your life is a step by step process. To start with you are incompetent; expect this, don't anticipate it will be a click of the fingers. Then through effort and application you acquire some degree of competence; then that will become effortless competence; and finally automatic or unconscious competence, so you no longer need to put any attention on the new skill - it has become part of you.

**Do we not tell the universe what WE want, but wait for the universe to unfold? OR do we put our energy toward what we think we want, thereby co-creating our own future? Should we be active or passive? Receive or create? Which way offers us spiritual evolution?**

I believe in a multi-domain approach. We are not just one with God; nor just angelic beings; nor just a witnessing consciousness; nor just a creative mind; nor just a scheming ego; nor just a social being struggling to survive; nor just a lover, parent or friend; nor just a creature programmed by genes; nor just one with the super energies of the planet and the Universe. We are all of these things at the same time. A unified field.

Manifestation as commonly understood is a spiritually powered process. With the right spiritual, mental and emotion preparation, things seem to "just happen" or fall into our lap. While this may sometimes be how it appears, in practice it's not the whole picture. The other domains of our being play at least an equal part. Just passively waiting to receive does not do the trick. Although opportunities may arise that seem magical - synchronicities, because we are connected beings, the unified field again - and like-minded people will naturally identify with our desire (law of attraction) and share their resources, the primary channel of achievement of what we desire is provided by ourselves, our own actions and communications and mental resources, such as intellect, creativity and intuition.

Good old "goal setting and getting" remains as important as ever. That's practical, "get down to it" psychology. Our knowledge base and cognitive development and social skills (concentration, study, communication, memory, creativity, intuition, leadership, etc) are important as ever. These are our intellectual contribution. Vital if we want to make a difference: to think and live outside of the box of our cultural norm. In addition, to achieve anything meaningful we need to put our heart and soul into the mix too.

The vibration of love is the foundation for manifesting the highest levels of success in this material world. When you completely love and accept all aspects of yourself, you send out such a strong energetic vibration into the Universe that you become a massive manifesting magnet! You'll experience that everyone and everything around you simply wants more of whatever you've got!

When it comes to manifestation of our dreams, it is not a question of what God can do or has done for us, but what we can do for God. For there is no separation involved; we are God; God resides within each of us, in our Higher Self.

We have no need to pray for God to magically grant us what we wish, but we do better to pray giving thanks for all that we can be grateful for. Thanks for being alive, to experience and learn from the world, to have the freedom to make mistakes, to be free to act as we will and to receive the consequences of our actions and non-actions. Instead of being puppets, we are able to create a better world; indeed, to express our divinity.

Feel your inspiring and motivating energy, your INTENTION to manifest your vision. Really put that intention out there into the Universe. Be a joyful and enthusiastic player in the game of manifestation here on Earth. It's not a click of the fingers as in a dream; manifesting in the real world requires your full-blooded participation. So determine your next steps in the game plan, what you can do now to get things moving, and begin.

And then, the magic happens. If you take responsibility for doing whatever is necessary to make this goal come true, using the old-fashioned goal setting and getting, then the magic happens - you find that synchronicities occur, that information and assistance arrives at the right time to help you in the way that you need just at that moment.

Love, when expressed, is the energy of life. Standing behind that is Will or intent. That is not energy, that is pure Spirit unmanifested. Again, however, its essential nature is Love. So loving Source creates by expressing Love energetically in the creation and manifestation of the reality we know; and we as images of God, each of us are essentially loving in nature, and through the guidance of Love our pure intent is expressed in our loving speech and actions, affecting in every way the reality we know in our daily lives.

To summarize, then... Love is unconditional acceptance. It is love of parents for child; also the non-possessive love of partners; also the caring love between all people that enables forgiveness. It's above energy, though it may be expressed energetically. It's our essential nature: Spirit itself, the quality we share with God. And it is the binding force of the Universe, inherent in all that is.

I'd like to end off with **The Great Invocation**, which is an effective world prayer and mantra for the New Age and all humanity. The power of this invocation is that it expresses the existence of a basic creative Will we vaguely give the name of God; the truth that, behind all outer appearances, the motivating power of the universe is Love; the fact that Avatars have periodically come to Earth and embodied that Love so that we could understand; the truth that both love and creative intelligence are expressions - through each of us - of what may be called the Will of God; and finally that only through the evolution of Humanity itself can the divine Plan for Earth be worked out.

**From the point of Light within the mind of God  
Let light stream forth into human minds  
Let Light descend on Earth.**

**From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into human hearts  
May the Coming One return to Earth.**

**From the center where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide all little human wills  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.**

**From the center which we call the human race  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.**

**Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.**

---

**Peter Shepherd** is the founder and producer of the [Trans4mind](#) personal development website. A transformational psychologist by background, Peter supervises [The Insight Project](#), and is author of '[Transforming the Mind](#)' and '[Daring to be Yourself](#).' He edits and publishes the daily [Inspiring Quote of the Day](#) ezine. Get in touch with Peter Shepherd [here](#).