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Fredrickson notes is far more ubiquitous than previously thought possible. Her research shows that it requires only connection, not the intimacy or shared history that comes with any special bonds.

Micro-moments of the connected oneness we feel as life-giving reverberations occur via shared smiles or laughter, a common compassion or an engaging story. Humans all hunger for such moments. The prerequisites are perceived safety and authentic sensory connection with another, even if it's fleeting. In Fredrickson's perspective, such neural coupling is a biological manifestation of oneness in which a habitual focus on "me" expands to a life-expanding "we".

LOVING LARGE

Scientists Say We're All Connected

by Linda Sechrist

T rue love is not something reserved exclusively for soulmates, couples, children, friends or family. Observations by sages for millennia and by enlightened scientists more recently are increasingly aligned with the point of view articulated by renowned meditation teacher Jack Kornfield that true love and awareness—a sense of universal connectivity and the idea that divinity, or the sacred, is found in all things—are indistinguishable.

Scientific View

This state of being, generally denoted by strong feelings of love or acceptance toward others, brings us into contact with universal energy which connects all of humanity with the natural world. Clues to our united commonality are explored in two 21st-century books, *Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Feel, Think, Do, and Become*, by Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D., and *A General Theory of Love*, by medical doctors Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon. These authors explore the brain science that's related to love and awareness.

Although trying to grasp love intellectually may be like eating soup with a fork, the authors of *A General Theory of Love* cite feelings as a good starting point. Fredrickson describes love as "the momentary upwelling of three tightly interwoven events: a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; a biochemical synchrony between your and the other person's biochemistry and behaviors; and a reflected motive to invest in each other's well-being that brings mutual care."

Fredrickson, director of the Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Laboratory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, believes love is a complex physiological response; a "positivity resonance." She describes key factors in love's ability to biologically transform us as oxytocin, a hormone active in social bonding and attachments, and the vagus nerve deep within the brain stem that connects with numerous organs, including the lead "character" in this relationship, the heart.

The neural synchrony of positivity resonance between the brains of two individuals is a connected oneness that

Cosmic View

During their 30-year friendship, Bob Staretz collaborated with astronaut Edgar Mitchell, Sc.D., the lunar module pilot on Apollo 14 and founder of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, to research and write "The Quantum Hologram and the Nature of Consciousness," published in the *Journal of Cosmology*. Their scientific theory explains how all of creation learns, self-corrects and evolves as a self-organizing, interconnected holistic system through love.

"Without exception, everything in nature exists and works together in total balance, resonance and harmony, interacting as one. From this perspective, Edgar and I reached the obvious conclusion—the organizing principle of the cosmos is agape love, an ultimate form of unconditional love that accepts all things existing in nature without regard to conditions, expectations, shortcomings, flaws or faults," explains Staretz.

The former executive director of Eternea, an organization focused on spiritually transformative experiences and the study of consciousness, Staretz says individuals that undergo such an experience attest that loving one another and all

of nature, of which we are a part, is the central reason for our existence.

Anita Moorjani's latest book, *What If This Is Heaven?* reiterates the life lesson she learned from her dramatic near-death experience in which she identified herself as a state of pure consciousness connected with everything in the cosmos. She clearly heard: "Your only work is to love yourself, value yourself and embody this truth of self-worth and self-love so that you can be love in action. That is true service, to yourself and to those who surround you."

This message continues with her, and she explains that by not loving ourselves, we are denying the part of God that expresses itself through us. An overarching insight from her life-changing journey is, "Unconditional love is a state of being, not an emotion. It's not just one side of the coin—it's the whole coin."

How-to Resources

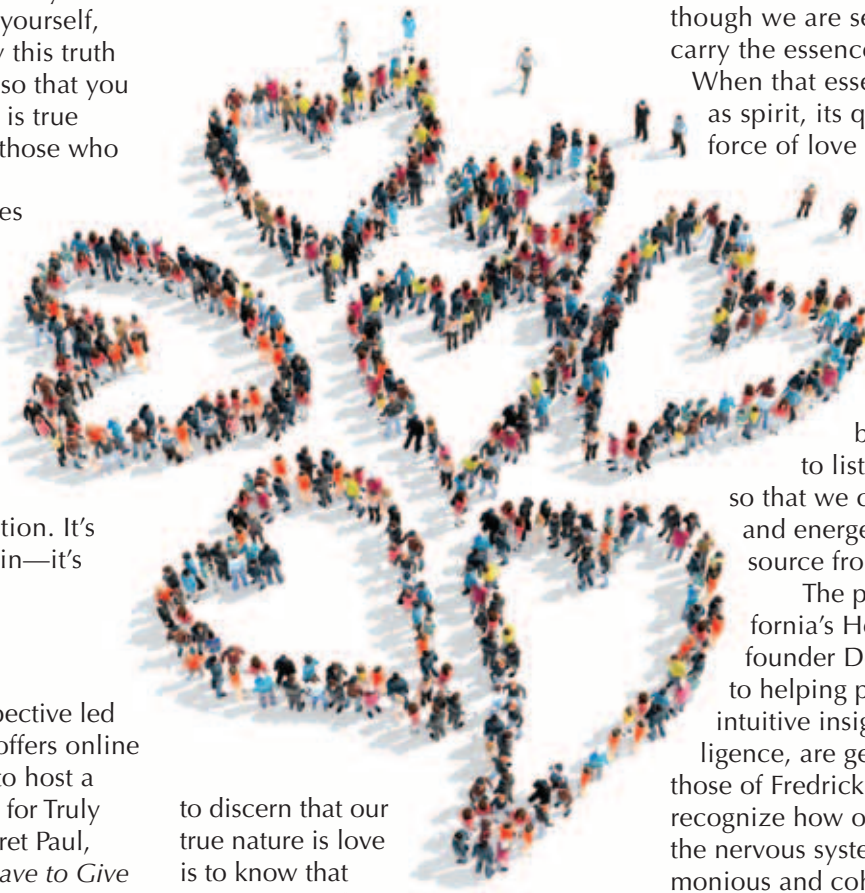
Interest in this deeper perspective led The Shift Network, which offers online transformative education, to host a recent *Advanced Teachings for Truly Loving Yourself* with Margaret Paul, Ph.D., co-author of *Do I Have to Give Up Me to Be Loved By You?*

Many others are working to spread the word about a larger sense of life-giving love, including Cleveland, Ohio, intuitive psychologist Debra L. Reble, Ph.D., author of *Being Love: How Loving Yourself Creates Ripples of Transformation in Your Relationships and the World*. She says, "Our soul's purpose is to be and express love. We dream of love, yearn for love and make love, but rarely do we realize that we are love, a source of divine energy."

Reba Linker, a New York City life coach and author, hosts a *Leaders in Self-Love* Facebook page and the *Paint Yourself into The Picture* online coaching show. Linker's philosophy on love resembles that of New Thought leader Michael Beckwith, minister, author and founder of the Agape International Spiritual Center, in Culver City, California—

If the doors of perception
were cleansed, everything
would appear to man as
it is, infinite.

~William Blake



to discern that our true nature is love is to know that we are created in the very image and likeness of love, the essence of life itself.

Gary Sinclair, author of *Healing Memories in Seconds*, views his life from an altitude of oceanic oneness. His 35 years of study in a field that uses energy to heal spirit, mind and body led him to develop Soul Link, a memory energy therapy. His work is changing the face of therapy for those with post-traumatic stress disorder and led to the revelation, "Love pulls whatever it touches to its highest potential."

Teaching what he knows "beyond a shadow of a doubt" helps to shift his students' worldview. "All of creation is made up of electromagnetic energy vibrating at different frequencies. We are energy beings who can learn to manage our energy to heal ourselves. We are all connected by omnipres-

ence, the energy of love, a heart connection of life. Consciously choosing this awareness allows us to be 'love living life.'"

Kamini Desai, director of education for the Amrit Yoga Institute, in Salt Springs, Florida, lends her yogic perspective to love. "We are each a wave on the ocean of existence. Even though we are separate waves, we carry the essence of the same ocean.

When that essence manifests in us as spirit, its quality is a healing force of love surrounding our cells,

causing our heart to beat and regenerating our organs. This intelligence guides and directs the universe in the same manner that it heals and maintains our body. In yoga, we learn

to listen to its subtle voice

so that we can follow its urges and energetic impulses to the source from which it springs."

The perceptions of California's HeartMath Institute founder Doc Childre, dedicated to helping people access their intuitive insight and heart intelligence, are generally aligned with those of Fredrickson. Both approaches recognize how order and balance in the nervous system and smooth, harmonious and coherent heart rhythms enhance our ability to clearly perceive a far larger universe of experience.

The ensuing connections widen the windows of perception to view ourselves as no longer separate, but part of a unified whole. Accumulated micro-moments of love communicated through synchronized gazes, touches and vocalizations forge a shared subjective appreciation of connection and oneness. We feel ourselves embodying positive resonance and experience easier and more immediate rapport in familial, familiar and even new relationships. We discover abundant opportunities to feel love, loved and loving as we make ourselves available to them.

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