

An Experience of Big Love

Timothy Freke, bestselling author and internationally respected authority on world spirituality, explains what Big Love is and describes how to experience the FEELING OF LOVE any time you want.

What is love?

That is such a big question and so important. For me, my understanding of love is that love is how one must feel when we see through the veneer of separation that seems to divide us and connect with somebody (or with some thing or place or activity) as one with that person or thing. We experience this in our body - there's chemicals, there's good feelings, it's an embodied thing - and it comes from this recognition of oneness.

I have a child, a little girl of 8 years old, and I love her to bits. Although she's separate from me and she has her own life and is a different person, and that's important, I also connect with her as one. So her joys are my joys, her suffering is my suffering, her dreams are my dreams... I love her. And that's what it's like for everyone that I feel that love with. So for me, love is how one must feel, and where it comes out - particularly with my work as a philosopher - is around a big sense of oneness one can have with life itself. You can come into a state where fundamentally you recognize that we are all one, we are all one with this moment and with the mystery of life itself.

When you find yourself at one with All, you find yourself in love with All. Suddenly the teachings, that you'll find at the heart of every spiritual tradition from the beginning of time, around oneness and love, start to make sense.

What the message is, is that if we can see who we really are, we can come into a state in which we are one with everything, and we find ourselves in love with everything. And then that expresses itself through our individual personalities in the way we live, because we live with love. Which means we feel connected with life, we feel embodied, we feel a love of what happens, but we also feel we want to be of service and ameliorate the suffering of life. Because love is much more than just a good feeling. Love is also suffering with others.

In my own experience, this has made me want to step out and work with people who are dying, and to try and find areas where people are suffering and you can reach out and touch. So for me, love is oneness. "Oneness" on its own can sound dry - but it's not because when it's embodied, when it's a real realization, it comes with a feeling, and it's that feeling that makes it worthwhile. I call it Big Love. That's the word I use, because I love the word love so much. Big Love unites us with everyone and everything. And that completely changes the way that you live your life.

How can we go about getting that feeling? Maybe some practices or some techniques?

Well, there's lots of things you can do to wake up to oneness and Big Love. One that is coming in through Love itself, is a technique that I use with people when we have our seminars, which is:

1. Come into a stillness, come into a state with meditation, and focus on where you do feel that love quite easily.

I mentioned my little girl, I could also mention my boy or my wife or my friends - people that when I focus on them, and I think about times that my love of them has been very obvious, I can focus in on those particular thoughts. And then the feelings start to arise from that and I can begin to recognize that feeling of love, that is so sweet and so powerful. I would go into Hell for this person because of that! That's how much I love them.

2. That's a very powerful experience and as you focus in on it, you start to invoke it, as it were. And

then having done that for a little while, once you start getting those feelings, then it become interesting to play... what if you try and expand that. Don't just stay where it's easy but start with somebody I have no feelings about. What about the postman, somebody like that. Someone I walk past in the street. A colleague at work I never speak to. Someone I'm completely different to because I don't have a relationship with them. Could it be that I can extend that feeling of love to embrace them also? I think it's possible.

If you look at a person, here's a human being, they are full of joy and suffering just like me, they've got a journey just like me, and they are essentially the same mysterious being, their essence is also our one shared essence. If I connect through that, I can start allowing that sense of love to arrive. Now, it's a different sort of love because it's not personal, I don't know them as a person, it's a kind of impersonal compassion, but it's love nevertheless, and it's powerful and very beautiful.

3. Now if you allow that to arise for a little while you can ask: what happens if we take this another step? What happens if we try something much more difficult which is to say, could I embrace with that impersonal compassion, that Big Love, somebody that I really find quite difficult, or even someone that I've exiled from my heart, somebody who's hurt me or I've fallen out with? This is a difficult part of the practice but very rewarding - to look at what's holding me separate from this person, really. And I can see that everyone has their side of the story, this person has had an experience of life which has lead them to behave in ways which I may find offensive or difficult. But you can reach back into the person - to the little child that's inside everyone, who could be innocent, who's gone on this life journey and ended up in this mess, perhaps.

I don't have to approve of them and what they've done or any of that, I just need to connect through everything which is in-between us, in love. And then you can love your enemies, as is said in the Christian tradition. Which is an incredible thing to say, a beautiful thing to say, "Love others as yourself," even to your enemies, because we're all one Self. That's the Oneness. So you can see through it now.

4. So you play with that for a while, then finally (and this one is often even more difficult for people) do the same with yourself. What happens if I include myself in that big, spacious unconditional love? OK, there's a whole load of things about myself that I find really difficult, that I don't like and give myself a hard time about, but to reach deep within myself to that innocent child inside, to the essence of a pure being, and say there it is. Connect as one with it and hold "myself," just as I am, in a warm embrace... in that feeling of Love.

That simple, four-part exercise, starting with something you find easy, then something which is a stranger, then someone who may be exiled from your heart, and then yourself. I find that a very powerful way to open from the love that we find easy to this Big Love.

Actually each step is like a relief. Anything which you're pushing away, anything that you can't love - the barrier breaks down. And let me make it clear here, I don't mean like - liking and disliking is a different thing altogether - but love, in the sense that I mean the word, which is that which embraces everything just as it is. It's just unconditionally embracing things, because they are, or because a person is.

The Greek philosopher Socrates said it way, way back. He said you come through personal love, through individual instances of love, until you expand and expand, and eventually you come to Love itself. And I think that is one way of describing the spiritual journey of awakening.

Is that something you can do every day?

You can do it any time you like! I'm a great believer in integrating these things into your real life. So it's not something you necessarily have to make a practice of, although you can and I have done that, but it's something that if it's part of you, when you need it there it is. And the more you do it the easier it gets. But the key to all of this is that you're constantly moving beyond your separate identity to this deeper Self.

I had my first awakening experience when I was 12 years old, and I'm now nearly fifty. During that time, my understanding of spirituality and awakening has changed completely - but the one thing that has stayed the same is that I know it's all about Love. That to me is the center.

If the love isn't there, it's not right. When love's there it will be. It's as simple as that. It's the most important thing and it's the thing that everyone can get. Old and young... yeah, it's love. There's a lovely line in John Lennon's song Mind Games, "Love is the answer and you know that for sure." It's so audacious to say to people, "you know it for sure," but there's something in me that says, yes we do know that for sure. Actually it's the one thing we know. If we are connected to ourselves, then the one thing we know for sure is that this journey is about love. So how we can move into that, is such an important question.

"Love is the answer," is an old message, it's been there since the beginning of time - people have been saying it, "Love is the answer, love is the answer," and it is, but also though, love is the problem, in a sense. It's important to get that too because so many of the terrible things we do to each other, in our everyday lives and around the world on a global scale, we do because of love. We love our family and want to defend our family and so we're willing to hurt somebody else's. We love our tribe so we're willing to hurt somebody else's. We love our religion so we're willing to hurt somebody else's.

A love which binds us to separateness can actually limit love. There's something about love that must keep expanding and have no limits, because when it becomes caught in separateness it can actually become it's opposite and it starts to be destructive. There's so many examples but one which pops into my mind right now is the gentleman who was in a wheelchair, Amas in Palestine. He was loved by the people of Palestine and the Israelis bombed him and killed him. He was loved because he set up schools, he cared for the homeless, he cared for the disadvantaged, he loved his people and gave his life selflessly to serve his people. But he also killed Israeli babies and was able to do that because of how much he loved his people.

That's the contradiction we get stuck in with love: when we limit it there are problems. The love of self, when limited, is selfishness. It all comes down to the question, is our love limited, or is our sense of who we are so expansive and so open that we can love everything and everyone, even with our enemies? Then, Love is the answer.

So I'd say, Big Love is the answer because it frees us from a limiting, self-orientated attachment that could actually stand in the way of what Love truly is.

This interview with Timothy Freke is part of an exciting new program called *The Love Experience: Feel More Love and Bliss within 3 Weeks*, which comes out in late January. *The Love Experience* is a collaborative project from over a dozen experts in personal development and spirituality. It was created for people who know how powerful the force of Love is and want to learn simple ways to experience more love in all areas of their lives.

You can pre-order [*The Love Experience*](#) for only \$19 (a 35% discount) if you order before December 31st. As a bonus, you'll get 2 guided meditations to help you experience a loving and blissful feeling right now. What a great gift to yourself, over Christmas and New Year!