

## Reflections on Love in Our Lives

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Because love comes in many forms, and people experience those forms in diverse ways. Scholars who write about love, have identified at least eight forms: *philia* (affectionate love), *pragma* (enduring love), *storge* (unconditional familial love), *eros* (romantic love), *ludus* (playful love), *mania* (obsessive love), *philautia* (self-love), and *agape* (selfless love for others). The word “philosophy” literally means “love of knowledge or wisdom,” which explains why one kind of graduate degree is called “doctor of philosophy.” In this workshop, we will discuss some forms of love that each of us has experienced. Then we will write and share our writing.

### Some Quotations about Love (There are thousands to choose from.)

(We could spend the whole session discussing them, but we won't.)

1. “Love consists in this—that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.” –Rainer Maria Rilke, author
2. “There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love.” –Thornton Wilder, playwright
3. “Where there is love there is life.” – Mahatma Gandhi
4. “Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.” – Dalai Lama
5. “Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”—Lao Tzu
6. “Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.” –Mother Teresa
7. “The first duty of love is to listen.”—Paul Tillich
8. “It is easier to love humanity as a whole than to love one's neighbor.”—Eric Hoffer
9. “Love is a friendship set to music.”—Joseph Campbell
10. “A loving heart is the truest wisdom.” – Charles Dickens
11. “I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.” --Vincent Van Gogh
12. “Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.” – Zora Neale Hurston
13. “Have enough courage to trust love one more time and always one more time.”—Maya Angelou
14. “Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”— Oprah Winfrey
15. “The giving of love is an education in itself.”— Eleanor Roosevelt
16. “Life is the flower for which love is the honey.”— Victor Hugo
17. “The only thing we never get enough of is love; and the only thing we never give enough of is love.”—Henry Miller
18. “To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead.”--Bertrand Russell
19. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” –Leviticus 19:18
20. “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 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.”— Khalil Gibran, from *The Prophet*

## Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Which of the quotations above resonates most with you?
2. Do you have another quotation about love that you especially like?
3. In general, why is love important?
4. Why do we love?
5. Which forms of love from the list above do you think are most important? Why?
6. How do you define any of the forms of love listed above?
7. What counts as an expression of love? What kinds of expression do you value the most?
8. Can love exist without empathy?
9. When love is absent, what fills the void?
10. Do you have an early memory of a family member or friend explaining love to you?
11. How have you explained love to family members or friends? To a child?
12. How does the word “love” apply to your relationships with friends?
13. Who among your family and friends are models for how we should or can love? Why?
14. Would you describe any of your relationships with non-human animals as loving? Why?
15. Would you describe any of your relationships with inanimate objects—e.g. dolls and stuffed animals—as loving? Why?
16. Which public figures—past or present—are models for how we should or can love? Why?
17. What literary characters are models for how we should or can love? Why?
18. What is your favorite love song? Why?
19. What is your favorite song about love (not the same as love song)? Why?
20. What is your favorite movie about love? Why?
21. What is your favorite poem about love? Why?
22. What is your favorite play about love? Why?
23. What is your favorite short story or novel about love? Why?
24. What is your favorite nonfiction book about love? Why?
25. What advice would you give to someone who wants to learn how to love better?
26. Why do you think that it is important to love yourself? How does one do that?
27. Why do you think that love is part of the human experience?
28. Activity: Draw a web. Start by writing the word “love” in the middle of the page. Draw a circle around it. Now draw lines that radiate from that circle. At the end of each line, write a word that comes to mind when you think of the word “love.” Circle each. Continue the process for some of the words that radiate from the word “love.” You will end up with an elaborate web.