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Nurturing Love That Bonds Humanity

Let's Begin

The Two Sisters

Grace and Eva loved their parents very much. They were especially close to their father, Shawn. Their father, was a highly experienced firefighter and he loved his daughters immensely.

One day a wildfire broke out at East Coast Park, requiring dozens of firefighters to bring the blaze under control. All volunteers were called to help and render their service. This meant that Shawn had to miss his daughters' end of year celebrations at school, for which the girls had been preparing for weeks and looking forward to. The girls were upset however, Grace reconciled. The situation with this thought: Our dad is also a really experienced firefighter. He will be able to contribute to the cause in a big way and save lives and houses. He must be finding it difficult to leave us as well and go to work in such tough conditions. Let me make it easier for him. She told her dad not to worry about them at all and save the lives of people in danger.

Love and compassion are necessities , not luxuries.

Without them Humanity cannot survive

- Dalai Lama

However, Eva could not bear the thought of her dad leaving her even for a few days. She was very attached to him and was even possessive about him. She thought to herself, "Why should MY Father have to go? Let someone else go. I have practised so hard for the celebrations and its such a special time, he should be there to see it. What if I need him for something? I really can't handle him being away for so long." So Eva decided to pretend to be ill to try and prevent her dad from doing his job on that day. As a result, the Shawn only volunteered for a couple of hours and returned back early. He felt he should have stayed on longer to help. The firefighting team was already short of manpower and they struggled to control the fires that time. Once he found out Eva was not truly ill, he was feeling disappointed and felt he let his fire crew down.



Think about the contrasting ways in which the two sisters expressed their love for their father. Write a comparison of the effects and consequences of their actions on their father, the people and members of the firefighting team

Effect of Grace’s Actions:

On her Father	On firefighting team	On Grace

Effect of Eva’s Actions:

On her father	On firefighting team	On Eva

What is love?

If we were to look for the meaning of the word ‘love’ in a dictionary, we would find the following definition or something similar, “Love is a strong and deep feeling of affection for another.”

But if we were to search for the true meaning of ‘love’ as applicable in day-to-day life, we would discover that love means different things to different people.

Ask those close to you and you would hear some of the following answers:

Love is when you want to be near someone all the time.

Love is when you care for someone deeply.

You love someone when they make you happy.

When you love someone you want to make them happy.

Love is when you place someone’s well-being above your own.

Love in Action

When we express our love as pure deeds and words, we feel a joy within ourselves and create the same joy in the other. It is love in action that binds us together as a family, a community, a society, and humanity as a whole. As each person understands love from their own unique perspective, they show their love in their own ways too.

Expressions of love are mostly beautiful and joyous, but sometimes love can get expressed in unhealthy and toxic (harmful) ways. This is most undesirable and must be avoided. Let us look at some healthy and unhealthy expressions of love.

Healthy Expressions of Love

Love is a pure and joyful feeling that creates bliss and harmony when expressed and shared with friends, family and the community. It has many different forms and is often shown in many different ways. The expression is different between

different relationships—like parent and child, husband and wife, friends, towards pets, and for God.

Here are the common ways in which love can be translated into action for the good of humanity as well as that of the individual.

Service: This is the highest form of love in action where we render selfless service in the form of offering our work, time or resources without expecting anything in return.

Sacrifice: Sacrifice is when you give up something for the sake of another, even though that thing may be dear to you.

Compassion: A feeling of empathy and concern for others as you would feel for yourself is called compassion or kindness.

Patience: The ability to act in a loving and gracious manner despite delay or provocation is called patience.

Tolerance: Tolerance is the ability to not react negatively to different opinions or behaviour, even if we disagree with or dislike them.

Acceptance: To accept someone, their behaviour or viewpoint means to understand them and not judge them or hold any ill will against them.

Appreciation: To acknowledge someone or their actions is a beautiful expression of love. It acts as encouragement to others and makes them feel joyful.

Sharing: When you share your material resources or your feelings, it is also an expression of your love for them.

Unhealthy Expressions of Love

Sometimes, due to a lack of understanding about love, we can express it in unhealthy ways. This is very unfortunate as the purity and joy of this feeling can get destroyed and cause hurt to the ones we love. At some point in everyone's life, one of the

following toxic expressions of love can surface if we do not guard against them. It is important that we recognise them and correct them at the right time before they cause any damage.

Possessiveness: We are possessive about someone if we are unwilling to share them with anyone else. We consider them our sole property and do not give them the freedom to be anyone other than what their relationship with us is. This can restrict other aspects and relationships of their life and is unfair to them.

Attachment: An excessive fondness for someone can become attachment. As a result, we become dependent on our loved one's availability and affection at all times. We feel upset if they are away physically or distant in their behaviour.

Jealousy: Jealousy causes us to react negatively if we feel that our loved one is sharing their time or affection with another person. It comes from a false sense of ownership over them and often creates bad feelings.

Control: When we want the other person to act and think according to what we think is right, it is a controlling expression of love. It takes away their right to be themselves and can affect their personality adversely.

Insecurity: A fear of being abandoned or unloved by our loved one can create insecurity, causing irrational behaviour.

Ingratitude: Taking someone's love for granted can cause ungracious behaviour. Like in the case of parent-child/guardian-child relationship, children often do not realise or appreciate their parents'/guardians' sacrifices till very late in life.

A helpful way to recognise desirable and undesirable behaviour coming from love is to imagine yourself in the other's place. They should feel happiness and freedom to be themselves. If not, you need to change your way of showing love, or else it will lose its essence.

Activity A: Love Expression

Look at the following situations and identify the love expression being shown. Is it a healthy or an unhealthy expression? If it is unhealthy, how would you like to correct it?

1. Yvonne's best friend Anna spends a lot of time with the new girl in class to make her feel comfortable. Yvonne feels angry about it and decides to ignore Anna during lunchtime.

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2. Alex takes out time every week to visit his old aunt who lives across town and helps her with any odd jobs or shopping.

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3. Suling sees an injured cat on the street, takes it to a vet and nurses it back to health by feeding and caring for it.

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4. Dr. Liew expects his son to study hard for medical school, while his son has difficulty coping with academic education.

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5. Lítua postpones her goal for higher studies and gets a job to support her younger sibling's education after her father's untimely death.

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6. Gwen fights with her mother because she hasn't ironed her dress yet. Mother is tired but remains calm and irons it. She speaks to Gwen about her behaviour later when both parties are calm and asks what is going on.

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8. Salíma loves her elder sister so much that the thought of her going away to college in another country depresses her. She wants her sister to study in the same country so that she is always near to her.

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Activity B: Appreciation

Take a blank sheet of paper and write your name on top. Pass this paper to the student next to you. They have to write one nice thing they appreciate in or about you and pass it to the next student till every classmate of yours has written in it. You have to do the same for all your classmates. Do not read what others have written about your classmates when you fill out their sheets.

**In the practice of Tolerance,
one's enemy is the best teacher
- Dalai Lama**

When we feel love for someone, it is easy for us to act in a loving manner. But there are times when we are agitated or annoyed with someone's behaviour. In those times we may even react in an angry or defensive manner. It is for moments like these that we need to cultivate the virtues of tolerance and acceptance.

What is Tolerance?

We define tolerance as the ability or willingness to put up with the existence of opinions or behaviour that one dislikes or disagrees with. It is incorrect to expect everyone we meet in life

to share our beliefs and opinions or always act in ways that are agreeable to us. Does this mean that we reserve our good behaviour only for those who agree with us? Or only for those whom we love dearly? It is important for us to understand that though we may feel a special bond of love and affection for our family and close friends only, we must include all humanity and creation in our fold of love. Real love is not selective or biased, it sees all persons and creatures as equal and deserving of love and affection.

So, even strangers, or those who are disagreeable to us, deserve to be treated with tolerance and respect. We must act with kindness and politeness to different viewpoints of others.

What is Acceptance?

Acceptance goes deeper than tolerance. It means that we truly understand and accept the others, and do not feel threatened or upset by their behaviour or beliefs. When you accept someone, you do not judge them, and you forgive them for their harsh words or actions. Acceptance is born out of genuine love. More than tolerance, we must aim for acceptance. But while real acceptance comes with great maturity and wisdom, tolerance can be practised by anyone.

As an example, a community where families of different faiths live together without any fear or hostility is a tolerant community. But a community in which families of different faiths celebrate their festivals together and support each other in grief and happiness is an accepting community.

Activity C: Acceptance and Tolerance

Divide yourself in groups. Read through the following scenarios and enact how you would respond in a tolerant as well as an accepting way. Bring out the difference in the two approaches.

Example: Joyce's father is transferred to the island. Joyce, who is used to city life, finds it hard to adjust. Her new friend Ridima invites her to her house for lunch in her small house where they eat on fold out chairs. Joyce is uncomfortable.

Tolerant response: Joyce politely eats what is offered along with everyone else. She hides her discomfort and thanks Ridima for the invitation.

Accepting response: Joyce appreciates the warm hospitality of Ridima's family and enjoys the meal with everyone genuinely. She thanks Ridima for the invitation and invites her for lunch at her house as well. She makes sure that Ridima feels comfortable when she comes to her house.

1. Your cousin is very irritable whenever you visit him. Today, he is studying for a test and he shouts at you and tells you to leave his house.

Tolerant response:

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Accepting response:

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2. Ryan is from a very rich family and often shows off his wealth. He unknowingly embarrasses his classmate Joel by asking about his family status.

Tolerant response:

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Accepting response:

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3. Charlotte's mother comes back from office in a bad mood and scolds Charlotte for something she did not do.

Tolerant response:

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Accepting response:

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4. Your neighbour is a senior citizen who lives alone. He always complains about children playing or people parking cars in front of his house. Today, he scolds you and your friends for making noise while playing in the nearby park.

Tolerant response:

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Accepting response:

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5. Antonio and his father's employee's son, who is of the same age as Antonio, are good friends. Antonio wants to invite him to his birthday party but this causes a disagreement in his family concerning the social status and their concern about others' perceptions.

Tolerant response:

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Accepting response:

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Let's Remember

Tolerance is a virtue. Acceptance is one step beyond tolerance. You can tolerate something without accepting it, but you can accept something only when you tolerate it.

My Space

What I liked most about this lesson...

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I learnt that

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Engage with Family



Do you think that you or your family members have been intolerant or not accepting of different opinions, faiths or social classes? Discuss with your family the value of acceptance and tolerance in these cases. (Remember to remain polite with your elders and avoid any arguments.)