

The Mastery of Love

What's in it for me? Spiritual guidance for navigating the relationships in your life.

The Toltecs were an ancient Mesoamerican people who believed that the whole world is a dream. Each of us, they believed, has our own personal dream. And most people are living in what the Toltecs call the dream of hell, characterized by fear, suffering, violence, and injustice. This dream teaches us to become masters of negative emotions. As children, we might learn that anger helps us get what we want. Then, we practice anger over and over until we become masters of it. In the same way, we become masters of jealousy, sadness, and so on – and these feelings come to control our lives and relationships. But this is not the best dream. Instead, we must become masters of love. Let these blinks be a guide. In these blinks, you'll learn

how an emotional poison infects us all; why your dog is the perfect dog; and what scalpel you need to heal your emotional wounds.

We begin accumulating emotional wounds in childhood.

Imagine you live on a planet where all people are affected by the same disease. Their skin is covered in open, painful, infected wounds. The disease starts when people are around three or four years old, and everyone believes that having it is completely normal. Sound awful? Well, this situation is actually the current state of humanity. Most people's skin isn't covered in wounds, of course. But the human mind, which Don Miguel refers to as the emotional body, is full of wounds. And those wounds are infected by an emotional poison we call fear. All other negative emotions – anger, sadness, envy, and so on – stem from fear. When children are born, they're free of emotional poison, but it doesn't take long to start accumulating. The key message here is: We begin accumulating emotional wounds in childhood. Our emotional wounds start to appear when we're around three or four years old. Before that, we're completely healthy. Two- and three-year-old children are unafraid to express love – most of their time is spent laughing and playing. Of course, when they experience pain or something bad happens to them, they react. But it's usually not long before they return to playing. This way of being is actually the normal, healthy state of the human mind. But as children grow older, they begin to learn from adults who have long been infected by emotional poison. They learn to fear punishment and seek reward. They fear not being accepted, or they fear that who they are isn't good enough. These fears are all emotional poison. As a result of these feelings, children begin to create images of themselves that fit what they think other people want. They create images to project at school, at home, and eventually at work. Then, when one of these images is inevitably challenged, they feel immense pain. For instance, picture a teenage boy whose self-image includes the notion that he's very intelligent. One day, he participates in a debate – but another student outperforms him. Suddenly, the boy begins to feel stupid and worthless. He feels pain because there's now a discrepancy between his internal image of himself and the image he's trying to project. Each of us develops these relationships between ourselves and the world in childhood – and then the rest of our lives are ruled by them, causing us to

suffer.

Emotional poison causes people to have poor and abusive relationships.

Think back to your childhood for a moment. You're two or three years old, playing in your living room. You spot your dad's guitar, so you pick it up and start playing with it. Then your dad gets home and sees you. He's had a bad day at work and gets angry at you for touching the guitar. He even spansks you. From your perspective, the guitar was just a toy, and your dad has done you a great injustice. He was someone you trusted and expected to protect you, but now you see that he can hurt you. Without realizing it, you start to fear your father a little bit. Over time, you learn that it isn't safe to express yourself and your desires fully, and you become shy. Here's the key message: Emotional poison causes people to have poor and abusive relationships. As we get older, we continue to accumulate emotional poison in response to things we consider injustices. Then, once we're full of that emotional poison, we feel the need to release it. And how do we do that? Usually, by trying to pass along our poison to someone else. Consider a husband and wife. The wife is holding on to a lot of emotional poison from an injustice she feels her husband has done her. When she next faces her husband, she immediately begins attacking him. She shouts that he's terrible, stupid, unfair. He gets angry, and she starts to feel better because she's passed along her poison. But now the husband has his wife's poison in addition to his own. The two keep transferring it back and forth – and, over time, the amount of emotional poison grows. Sometimes, this desire to transfer emotional poison results in abusive relationships. Perhaps a person has received his emotional poison from someone much more powerful than he is, so he can't easily transfer it back. He then searches for someone he can transfer it to – someone weaker or more defenseless. Abusive people's emotional bodies are sick – infected with emotional poison – which causes them to lash out. We can't rid other people of their emotional poison, but we can start to overcome our own by being aware of the problem. Acknowledge the poison inside of you and all around you. That's all it takes.

Your happiness can't depend on other people.

There once was a man who didn't believe in love. He went around preaching his idea that love is little more than a drug – it can make you feel amazing, but it's also addictive. To secure your daily doses, you become controlling and possessive of the person who provides them. One day, the man who didn't believe in love was walking in the park. He came across a woman sitting and crying. She told him she was upset because love didn't exist. The man understood her troubles perfectly and began to comfort her. They quickly became best friends. The man and the woman were completely happy whenever they were together. They were never envious or jealous of one another; there was no possessiveness, and neither one felt responsible for the other. The key message is this: Your happiness can't depend on other people. One night, the man experienced what he thought was a wonderful miracle. He was gazing at the stars, when, suddenly, the most beautiful one came down and dropped into his hands. As he held it, the star merged with his body. Immediately, he went to the woman and put the star in her hands to prove his love for her. But the woman felt a moment of doubt. She

dropped the star; it fell and shattered into pieces. Now, both the man and the woman are far away from each other. The man once again swears that love doesn't exist, and the woman weeps over the star that dropped from her hands. Think about what happened to the couple. Who really made the mistake? It wasn't the woman - rather, it was the man, who believed he could give the woman his star. The star represented his happiness, and giving it to her signified his attempt to make her responsible for his happiness. In real life, we don't give each other stars - but we do exchange wedding rings. In doing so, we signify our expectation that our partner will make us happy, and vice versa. But this is an impossible dream because we can never completely know our partner's mind, expectations, or dreams. And this means that, sooner or later, our partner will disappoint us and break our happiness. In reality, only you can be responsible for your happiness. Let's explore this idea a bit more in the next blink.

Every relationship follows either the track of love or the track of fear.

Every relationship you have is between you and one other person. And each of you is responsible for one half of the relationship. However, all too often, people act as if they're responsible for the other person's half in addition to their own. They try to control their partners' behavior, telling them to do this or not do that. But if you're participating in this war of control, you don't actually love your partner. You're just being selfish - and fear is dictating your actions. In fact, we can think about our relationships as traveling down one of two tracks: the track of love or the track of fear. Most people's relationships exist on the track of fear; instead, we need to choose the track of love consciously. The key message here is: Every relationship follows either the track of love or the track of fear. What characterizes the track of fear? Two major things are obligations and expectations. On the track of fear, everything is done out of a sense of obligation. But whenever we feel we have to do something, we begin to resent and resist that thing. Ultimately, this causes us to suffer - and then we try to escape it. At the same time, we also have expectations of other people when we're on the track of fear. Then, when those people shirk their obligations, we feel pain. We think it's unfair, and we start to blame them. So, as you can see, expectations can only lead to suffering. With the track of love, on the other hand, there are no obligations or expectations at all. We only do the things we want to do - and the same goes for other people. You don't see another person's actions - or inactions - as a personal attack on you. And, as a result, they can't cause you pain. In order to master a relationship, you must be aware of these two tracks. With that awareness, you'll be able to catch yourself when you're on the track of fear - and shift onto the track of love. By practicing that shift again and again, you'll be able to master your half of every relationship. You'll no longer feel the need to control your partner because you'll understand that you're only responsible for your own half. You'll be free to share, enjoy, and create together.

Choose a partner you don't feel the need to change at all.

Do you own a dog, a cat, or perhaps some other pet? If you do, consider your relationship with it. Your pet - say it's a dog - might wait for you to come home each day. When you do, it barks or wags its tail. It manages its half of the relationship - just

being a dog – perfectly. And you love your dog unconditionally. You believe it's the perfect dog, and you feel no need to transform it into a different animal. So, then, when you're in a relationship with another human, why do you try to turn him into someone he isn't? Just like your dog, every person is already perfect. The only catch is that some people may not be perfect for you – and that's OK. Here's the key message: Choose a partner you don't feel the need to change at all. It's not always easy to find someone you don't feel the need to change. But it's very important to do so. Finding the right person begins with knowing exactly what you want. You need to have a high awareness of all the needs of your body and mind – and you need to be perfectly honest with yourself about those needs. Imagine you're in a market, and you're going to “sell” yourself. To do that, you need to show other people your true nature. While at the market, you're also going to “buy” another person. If the person isn't exactly what you want, you won't buy him. Be wary of lying to yourself; many people pretend that some “merchandise” fits their needs when they know, deep inside, that it doesn't. But what if you've already invested in a relationship? Well, if your problems don't involve abuse, you can choose to keep it going. How? By first accepting and loving yourself the way you are, which will in turn allow you to express your true self. After that, you can love and accept your partner the way he is, too. If the relationship just isn't working, walking away will do both you and your partner a favor. Staying in a dysfunctional relationship is ultimately selfish because you're preventing your partner from finding what he really wants. Someone else will be able to love him exactly as he is – even if you can't.

To have healthy relationships with others, you must love yourself.

Picture this: You're on a date with the woman of your dreams, and you're ready to tell her that you love her. You finally summon up the courage to do so. But she responds in what you feel is the worst possible way: “Well, I don't love you.” Her response probably causes you a lot of suffering. She's rejected you, so you start to reject yourself too. But is that really a logical response? Just because one person doesn't love you doesn't mean another person won't. And you shouldn't base your sense of self-worth on how much others feel about you, anyway! Instead, focus on the most wonderful and important relationship you can have: your relationship with yourself. The key message is this: To have healthy relationships with others, you must love yourself. Our beliefs often get in the way of self-love. Take beauty, for instance. Beauty is a belief about the quality of something. But it doesn't describe that thing's intrinsic nature – it's just a concept someone gave you to make you think certain things are good and others are bad. In reality, everything that exists is already beautiful and perfect. You probably have a set of beliefs about your own beauty, and these beliefs cause an untold amount of suffering. If you believe you aren't beautiful, for instance, you'll accept any amount of abuse from someone who tells you that you are beautiful. You'll let that person control you in exchange for those words because you mistakenly think you need that opinion in order to be happy. But you don't – all you need is self-love. You're already beautiful! A great way to foster self-love is with a daily puja, or ritual. In India, people perform pujas to honor gods and goddesses by putting flowers near an idol. But you can perform a puja for your body. When you eat, for instance, chew very slowly. Take a bite, close your eyes, and imagine the food as an offering to the temple of your body. With daily practice, your love for your body will grow stronger and stronger. Self-love and self-acceptance are so important because once you have them, you'll begin to live your life in a different way. You'll no longer accept abuse from others or from yourself. And you'll attract others who

accept themselves in the same way you do.

To accept our sexuality, we need to reconcile our bodily and mental needs.

The human body is a biological organism, and it's designed for sex. Yet our minds have created a massive set of misguided and false beliefs around it. We have guidelines for men's and women's sexual behavior, how their bodies should look, and what they must do to be considered properly masculine or feminine. Because of all these lies, we're unable to enjoy sex, we may feel it's evil or a sin, or we become ashamed of our sexual desires. To understand how none of these beliefs is true, we need to acknowledge and accept the difference between our bodily needs and our mental needs – when these don't match, internal conflicts about sex arise. The key message here is: To accept our sexuality, we need to reconcile our bodily and mental needs. Say you were raised Catholic. As part of your upbringing, you were taught that you need to be married before it's OK to have sex with someone. So you get married, but one day you're walking down the street and you see an attractive man. You feel sexual desire for him, and you immediately start to judge yourself for those feelings. You feel like they make you a terrible person, so you try to repress them – but that just makes them grow stronger and stronger. Eventually, you cheat on your spouse. Now, what would have happened if you'd never judged yourself for those feelings? If you had just let go of the judgment and understood that your body simply has a need, you might have forgotten your attraction to that stranger very quickly. And that's the issue – your body has needs, but your mind is in control of how you think about them. Consider another example – the need to cover your body. Your body needs to be protected from heat, wind, and cold. But you can have a closet full of clothes at home and still think, I have nothing to wear. Your mind creates these needs you can never satisfy. So what can you do about this? Stop confusing the needs of your body with the needs of your mind. Recognize, for instance, that your body wants sex, and that that desire isn't evil – it's completely normal. Eventually, you'll start to understand that you're neither your body nor your mind. Instead, you're life itself – a force you share with everything else in the universe.

Heal your emotional wounds using truth, forgiveness, and self-love.

How does a doctor treat an infected wound? Most likely, she starts by using a scalpel to open it up. Then she cleans it, applies some kind of medication, and asks us to keep the wound clean while it heals. When it comes to healing our emotional wounds, the process isn't much different. In this case, the scalpel is truth, and we can use it to open our wounds and reveal lies. Then, we clean out the poison with forgiveness. And, finally, we keep the wound clean until it's fully healed – using love. Here's the key message: Heal your emotional wounds using truth, forgiveness, and self-love. The world is full of lies and illusions, which can make the truth pretty difficult to come by. Additionally, the truth is often uncomfortable. Consider the following example. Say that, ten years ago, someone raped you. It is perfectly true that you were raped. But it is no longer true right now. You are potentially still suffering because of it, and that suffering may take years of therapy to overcome. Nevertheless, the injustice currently causing you to suffer is no longer true. This is how you use truth as a scalpel to open up your emotional

wounds and see them from a different perspective. Once you've done that, you can start clearing away the poison, using forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't easy, but it's necessary. You need to extend it to everyone who has ever hurt you – not because such a person deserves to be forgiven, but because you don't deserve to continue suffering from the memory of the things that person did. So, first, make a list of all the people you feel you must ask for forgiveness. Call them up and ask for it. If you can't do that, ask for their forgiveness in a prayer. Next, make a list of all those who have hurt you – and then forgive them. This will take time, and it won't be easy – but remember that everything those people did was not your fault. It was a reaction to their emotional poison. Finally, keep your emotional wounds clean using love. Practice looking at everything in the world through eyes of love, seeing the beauty in everything. This will make you a master of love. That, in turn, will inspire others to become masters of love – until the whole world is free of emotional poison.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks: Everyone in the world is covered in emotional wounds that are infected with emotional poison. These wounds cause us to relate to each other in painful ways, and they cause our relationships to be characterized by neediness, jealousy, and possessiveness. We're responsible for healing our emotional wounds using a combination of truth, forgiveness, and self-love. When we do that, we can form relationships in which we accept and love one another unconditionally. Actionable advice: Pray for awareness. Sit down, close your eyes, and take a moment to engage in this prayer for awareness. First, focus all your attention on your lungs – pretend they're the only thing that exists. Feel the pleasure of bringing air into your lungs. Notice the connection between the air and your body. Exhale the air, then inhale and feel the pleasure again – the pleasure of being alive and fulfilling the needs of your body. Then, ask the Creator to open your heart and eyes so you can fully perceive everything you see, hear, and feel. Got feedback? We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to with The Mastery of Love as the subject line, and share your thoughts!