

The ABCs of Love: Healing the Violence of Modern Society

Introduction – Preparing Ourselves to Participate in Healing the Wounds of Violence

Q: Why read this book? A: Because it will help you make more sense out of your life, welcome love more readily and make more coherent decisions in the best interests of you and others as you learn to participate in healing the wounds of violence modern society has inflicted on us all.

Why might it be important to read and take to heart what I write here? Why might you want to master the ABCs of love by making these ideas and their principled, self-disciplined practice a core part of your life? If you are asking these questions, you are on the right track. You want to find answers to life's most difficult questions, the "Why" questions that parents of toddlers sometimes wish their toddlers would quit asking. I'm glad you are asking the "Why" questions. In asking them myself, I entered into a quest that changed my life. I share here my discoveries so that you might build upon them in your own quest for answers. I built upon the discoveries of authors who shared their ideas. Now you can build upon the ideas I author here. That's the learning process I hope you'll undertake. Please don't accept my ideas as the end of your quest. Instead receive them as an archway through which you walk in your own endless quest for deeper, broader and more enriching insight, understanding and wisdom about what and how and why life is. In many ways, we are all still toddlers in wrestling with life's "Why's."

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan - to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Abraham Lincoln

If you take seriously what I share and allow it to sink into your heart and mind, it will show you a perspective on life you may have not openly adopted but may have silently hoped might be true. These materials will help you hear validation for what your own heart has long desired – more complete and deeply satisfying experiences with love. You'll discover more resources within yourself to "see the right" for

you as you move forward in your own quest for love. You'll find encouragement to stop "looking for love in all the wrong places" and discover it where it's been waiting for you all along. Your capacity to "see" along your path to truth for yourself will grow. That's your natural capacity. It has too long been denied and left underdeveloped – leaving you impaired as a lover/loved one.

Your investment in reading and pondering what you find in these pages will pay off. It will help you discover more fruitful ways to invest your time and energies in prospecting for meaning, purpose and direction in your life – and help you to let go of the futility that you pursued in your past with such disappointing results. If you desire to live in a more caring,

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart."

Helen Keller

peaceful and just world and do your part to co-create such a world for everyone to share, *The ABCs of Love* will set you on a more promising path than your current path may be. Even if your current path seems bright with promise to give you all your heart desires, these materials will help shed even greater light upon your path and validate how well you may be progressing.

I share a quote from Lincoln's second inaugural address because his inspiring words apply to us today. All of us, in one way or another, have "borne the battle" and carry wounds suffered amid modern society's civil war of violence affecting our families and neighbors near and far. Our ongoing internal strife spills out across the globe as we attempt to quell abroad what we've not yet fully recognized that we must and can address at home as our first priority. The fears that terrorize us hide within our civilized thoughts as surely as terrorists hide among civilians. The first step in rooting out the terrors of errors that have wounded us emotionally and continue to fester in our wounds is to discover them hiding in our hearts and minds and resolve to no longer play host to them. Our fears are holding us hostage to the way of violence. *The ABCs of Love* invites us to discover and exercise the courage we have to no longer be held hostage to fear and instead to move forward together not cyclically into more battlefields but rather into fields of lasting peace where our hoped-for destiny of love awaits us to be embraced and celebrated.

The ABCs of Love addresses how power may be shared equitably among all members of the human race so that peace, liberty and justice may be shared by all. From that perspective, it is another how-to book. Yet, if learning how to do something happens only when a person is motivated to learn, then this book must also be a motivational book by which readers are motivated to master the ABCs of love. Let's continue looking at our possible motivations.

Why is it important to learn to share power equitably with everyone else? The answer presents itself in the violent interactions and harmful outcomes of the society all around us. To not share power at all – or to do so inequitably – perpetuates violence and human suffering as a social norm because inequities in power motivate many individuals to fight in some manner for more power than social norms of inequitable power distribution otherwise allot to them or to cling to whatever power has already been acquired as if fearful it may soon be snatched away. Both choices preserve the status quo of violence. Competing for power in any manner perpetuates suffering as it produces winners and losers, sore feelings and excuses to avenge losses and prevail next time. It also causes collateral harm and suffering to bystanders, even bystanders whose welfare is asserted to justify the fighting. *The ABCs of Love* is about putting a permanent end to this nonsense by creating an alternative that works for everyone's benefit as power is shared equitably. When people witness love in operation as we can free it to operate by implementing the ABCs of love, they will see the sense in co-creating this alternative and join in

sharing in it. Experimentations in collaborations and win-win dynamics tiptoe in the direction in which the ABCs of love leap. It is a leap of faith undertaken wisely with adequate preparation.

It is also leap frogs beyond burgeoning complexities to land in a field of simplicity. *The ABCs of Love* envisions a path of sane steps away from seductive insanities that plague modern society. It is not too grand to claim that the ABCs of love, when practiced diligently by heart, aid in recovery from all of the forms of insanity that we've developed as ways to hide from truth. Whether you

label these as forms addictions or dependencies such as alcoholism or addiction to drugs, sex, emotions, food or another source of temporary pain relief and forgetfulness or label them by any of the diagnostic categories used by mental health professionals, the ABCs of love have the potential to be helpful if used wisely and fully as a supplement to other processes of recovery.

The ABCs of love is a companion for all forms of relief from stress and recovery of health because learning to love the one in need of healing aids the healing process. If it is you who are in need of healing, learn to love yourself. If you believe that it is another or the whole world that is in need of healing, learn to love yourself so that you can more effectively love the other and the world. Love aids healing. It begins with you.

If the prevailing power distribution that is inequitable (and inevitably hierarchical) favors me with greater power, then I am likely to be more content than the person who is not favored, more inclined to use my level of power to maintain the “establishment” or status quo and more hopeful of moving up the ladder of power as opportunities arise. The less favored person who wants more power for any reason – to serve himself/herself or others – will work to some degree to identify how to gain more power, exploit those opportunities and experience the perceived benefits of increased power on whichever ladder(s) of power he or she chooses to climb. So long as the less favored person seeks to climb upward on a ladder irrelevant to my power, I can safely ignore that person. To the extent that the disfavored person strives to gain more power within a ladder of power relevant to my power status, such strivings are likely to set up a tension that causes me to be concerned that his or her increase in power will come at the expense of my level of power, perhaps causing me to decline in power, at least in relationship to the striver's rising power. I am likely to respond to the other person's efforts to gain more power by identifying ways to retain my level of power and, perhaps, to increase my power just to make sure to protect my power. To this jockeying for power there is no end so long as power distribution is inequitable or people continue to expect it to be inequitable even once it happens to become equitable temporarily without intention and resolve on the part of all that it remain so.

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I will meet you there.
When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about language, ideas, even the phrase ‘each other’ doesn’t make sense.” Rumi

Within these competitive social dynamics, often the purpose of having and wielding power devolves to the mere retention of power and acquisition of more. When the purpose of power is retention and acquisition of power, the cycles of competition for power become increasingly intense to the point of gridlock. The struggle's intensity may convince a participant that he or she is powerless to assure lasting success on the competitive system's terms. In their desperation to "win," some competitors for power may violate the system's terms and operate unlawfully and without integrity. Such is the corrupting power of intensely escalating competition within which each competitor subjectively feels powerless to win utter security permanently no matter how objectively powerful he or she may be on the system's terms. It is a feature of such ladder-like systems that no person can ever acquire enough power to provide lasting, deep reassurance of freedom from fear. This ironic outcome demonstrates the fundamental error in perpetuating multi-runged systems of inequitably distributed power. All of them are futility personified, harmfully distressing to all participants. And they're inevitably dehumanizing. It is inhumane to ourselves and our children to perpetuate such terrifying nonsense.

"Power corrupts,
and absolute
power corrupts
absolutely."
Lord Acton

The uncertainties and insecurities inherent in the inequitable distribution of power reflect the instability of every social system of that nature. Since humans naturally decline in their capacities to struggle for, hold and wield power and eventually give up power when they become incapacitated or die, submerged chronic power struggles often focus and surface most acutely around the transfer of power from one person to another due to such unavoidable human developments as ill-health, injuries, aging and death. Moreover, power seekers whose scruples have been corrupted may manipulate these natural developments to shape a transfer of power to suit their timing or other preferences. For example, a person hungry for power can artificially accelerate a more powerful person's decline in capacity to hold and wield power, thereby opening up an opportunity to acquire that power. When a person fails to hold and wield power according to prevailing social standards, he or she risks loss of power. Every system of inequitable distribution of power has a code or set of standards by which participants qualify as power-wielders. This code may be variously disclosed and explicit or undisclosed and implicit, but it exists in all cases. Knowing the code is vital to success in struggles for power. Insiders know. Insiders strive to keep outsiders from knowing or qualifying to participate. Ergo elitism.

My position is that the only way to reduce power struggles to the minimum is to establish a system of equitable distribution of power in which all human beings are insiders and the code is explicitly disclosed with clarity and transparency. I also believe that the only way to establish such an open and transparent system of equitably shared power – and to sustain it with lasting stability – is to have that system managed by a powerful pro-human Being who is not dependent

upon humans for power and is not subject to the various forms of incapacity common to humans. For these reasons, to fulfill such a management role competently, I defer to an eternal Divine Being of Grace – who can suffer no form of incapacity or incompetence in wielding power and is benevolent in attitude towards all humans and supportive of our universal mastery of sharing power. I see no other solution than to trust God (by whatever name She/He/It may be called) to serve in this key capacity as the Authoritative Manager in charge of the steadfastly sustainable paradigm of equitable power distribution among human beings. If such a competent and benevolent Supreme Being does not exist, then humanity does not have a prayer of evading the bull whose multiplying horns of unresolvable dilemmas sustain power struggles. Bullying in all its forms and contexts locally and globally will continue until we decide that the paradigm of power that perpetuates it must cease and be replaced. As we sacrifice this bull on the altar of love, peace will prevail within every heart and across all lands.

In this book, I will refer to the Divine Supreme Being who serves humanity in the role of Authoritative Manager by the initials “A.M.” or AM. This reference is based on this Being’s function and is in no way meant to discredit any name assigned to the Divinely Benevolent Supreme Being by any religion or other system of thought. In fact, by using a short name not associated with any particular prevailing system of thought about the Divine, I intend to avoid showing favoritism or sidetracking this book into discussing the identity of such a Being. I also intend the reference “AM” to declare my position quite firmly that such a Divine Being does in fact exist and is competent to serve as Authoritative Manager. As the first person singular present tense of the English verb “to be,” AM is an appropriate designation to affirm my position about the eternal existence of such an entity. By using capital letters I intend to express my reverence for this Being as far superior in qualities to any alternative form of life.

(Should anyone complain that this label favors Judaism, Islam and Christianity on account of the conversation Moses is reported to have had at the burning bush, let me say that I’m doing my best to refer as well to Atman and All Manifestations of the Creator included in many paths of faith. If I were to explore the identity of this Being and not merely focus on Her/Its/His function as manager of the power distribution paradigm within which the ABCs of love operate, I’d likely consider identifying this Being as AM in the sense of “Abiding Mystery” and “Altruistic Master.” But that’s a topic for another book – perhaps yours! And if you are familiar with computer terms and prefer to call the Authoritative Manager “USB,” that’s up to you. Universal Supreme Being or Universal System Boss is as good a term as any.)

I propose that our primary motivation for mastering the ABCs of love is to end suffering and dissolve the culture of violence that perpetuates it. By claiming that mastery of the ABCs of love

will end suffering, I do not mean that it will eliminate all pain or that it will bring an instant end to all suffering. I mean that the more people master the ABCs of love, the fewer people there will be who 1) cause pain to themselves and others and 2) hold onto pain that they have endured and turn it into suffering. In my definitions, pain is a natural part of the human experience and arises for a variety of reasons while suffering is the human tendency to retain pain within one's memory and institutionalize it within one's beliefs, attitudes and social orientation. Suffering is often passed along generation to generation as a legacy of past suffering to be avenged by inflicting more future suffering which in turn becomes past suffering to spin the cycle once again. Under this definition of suffering, the degree of an individual's suffering is determined by that person's choice about how to respond to pain, in both the short run and the long. When I distinguish suffering from pain, I mean that suffering is the holding onto pain as if pain must be endured forever once it is experienced – as if pain must become a permanent and ever accumulating condition for each person who feels pain and for the whole human race.

I believe that endless suffering is unnecessary and offer the ABCs of love as proof that we can, by choice, experience extensive relief from suffering instead. Our free will is the key to whether we perpetuate suffering or gain relief from it for ourselves and others. In my quest for answers, I discovered the widely held but not typically fully implemented wisdom that we cause much of our own pain and suffering and can choose no longer to do so. As *The ABCs of Love* sets forth, there is much wisdom in having faith in AM and forgiving our fellow travelers on this earth when we fall short of living up to AM's standards of excellence and grace. As people increasingly master the ABCs of love, cycles that generate pain and suffering will gradually cease to spin as the rage and resentments of fewer and fewer people fuel them. Primary systems of power will incrementally shift from inequitable to equitable distribution – and do so to everyone's relief.

The ABCs of love have been available in many forms throughout the ages. Humanity's failure to master them has generated a variety of social systems of inequitable distribution of power by which pain is inflicted within struggles for power and then internalized as suffering. Such internalized suffering becomes motivation to continue in the power struggles with the hope of eventually prevailing at whatever cost in greater pain and suffering to oneself and others. In systemized struggles for power, one's capacity to endure pain and to suffer in silence is as highly valued as one's capacity to inflict pain on others. In this manner, hard-heartedness, callous disregard for one's own humanity and that of others and lack of conscience become not merely norms but vaunted virtues, signs of ultimate utility to those currently wielding power.

Suffering is a feature of all human societies great and small that assume that inequitable distribution of power is unavoidable. Declining sensitivity to pain and increasing denial of

emotions are also features inherent in such systems. Insensitivity (emotional numbness) and denial are fundamental psychological defenses to which humans resort in the face of perpetual pain and suffering over which we feel powerless to do anything effective. The opportunity to master the ABCs of love offers the efficacy desired by people around the world who yearn for relief from pain, suffering and corresponding perceptions of permanent powerlessness. This yearning is especially acute among those whose hearts go out to children caught in the middle of struggles for power, struggles that seem utterly senseless to the children and inflict both acute and chronic psycho-emotional trauma upon children and their caregivers due to the very senselessness of these meaningless struggles for power for the sake of power. This senselessness confuses children and other tender-hearted people. Seemingly unavoidable as well as impossible to clear up, confusion is another form of psychic pain the perpetuation of which becomes embedded in the collective psyche of families, organizations, societies and cultures intent on preserving inequitable distributions of power.

Within a struggle for power, when I increase your experience of pleasure as a primary reward for your allowing me to have more power and I use pain to punish you when you do not comply with my claim to greater power, then my expertise in dispensing and withdrawing pleasure and in inflicting and relieving pain is essential to maintaining my inequitable distribution of power. As a master manipulator of pleasure and pain, I prosper as a powerbroker in such systems. Fear of pain and of the loss of pleasure eventually becomes enough to control you and persuade you to allow me to maintain the status quo within which I gain, hold and wield power and you do not have access to power except as I allow you to do so for my purposes. In this manner, I may recruit you to cooperate with me to maintain the status quo of my superior power because you have the perception that you have more to gain by preserving it and more to lose by defying it.

For those who already see the wisdom in learning to master the ABCs of love, news that the systems of inequitable distribution of power are collapsing may be irrelevant. But for those still unsure about being motivated enough to gain mastery of love, it may be a supplemental motivation to know that there's no hope for gaining, holding or wielding power within the inequitable distribution systems because they are on their way down and out. They are simply not working and are no longer capable of maintaining an adequate public image of working. Like a house of cards they are collapsing— in freeze-frame slow motion but nevertheless cumulatively downward. The housing market bubble is not the only bubble to burst in recent years. Every bubble generated by the great bubble machine of inequitably distributed power is bursting and the bubble machine itself is irreparably broken. There's no fix adequate to cover its failures. In the past, "fixes" brokered among power elites were undertaken to keep it humming and then hobbling along. No more. Those who yearn to participate in it will be

disappointed. So, we all may as well get on with learning to master the alternative and join together to co-create and participate in the equitable distribution of power. The features and dynamics for this alternative system are organically related to human nature instead of mechanistically related to machines. They are rooted in our origin, our present and our destiny.

The ABCs of Love is based on the thesis that humanity's destiny is to learn how to share power instead of fight over it. In developing this thesis, I explored and clarified the nature of true power, the harmful effects of our deceiving ourselves about power and the manner in which those harmful effects may be not only ended but also healed – with as complete reconciliation and restoration as possible. In my explorations, I discovered that the only true power is "love" as defined and managed under the authority of its Source. The nature of love is the same as the nature of its Source, known to me as God, but named here "AM" for the sake of neutrality in the context of the ego's tendency to generate conflict to derail understandings that lead to peace.

Through my investigation of power-sharing, I came to experience AM personally as having one unflagging intention towards the entire human race: namely, to share all of AM's infinite power of love with all of us according to our ability to expand our capacity to receive it from AM and share it with everyone else. Fear is our only obstacle to such sharing. The fundamental purpose and function of *The ABCs of Love* is to expand each of its student's capacity to receive the power of love from AM and share it with others in the best interests of all of humankind.

By necessity this book addresses fears we have learned to associate with power, love and AM. The words we use to talk about power, love and AM are not as important as our beliefs, emotions, attitudes and habits of thinking, deciding and acting associated with our words. Of primal importance are the past experiences in which our ideas and emotions are entangled and the current experiences through which we can intentionally, with benevolence aforethought, disentangle them by grieving through them. In the present we call "now," we can set ourselves free of our past entanglements and discover our natural capacity to share love in our current lives as we move together into the future we are choosing moment by moment to live today. If, as I believe, our destiny as a race is to unlimitedly share power, love and AM equitably among us without exception or exclusion, then we must learn to set aside our fears associated with these attributes of life as well as our fears associated with trusting each other in our exploration of ways to share our collective burdens of grief and learn to release them so as to no longer be weighed down and incapacitated by them. We have the courage and wisdom to no longer be held captive by our grief. Towards the idealistic goal of nurturing among all of us unqualified mutual trust and appreciation as the soil in which infrastructures of healing and equitably shared power take root I commit this book as I have committed my life.