

Will my GPS get me to Summerland?

Today I'm responding to reader questions about my last article on Summerland. In that article, I discussed the afterlife and recommendations for preparation during this lifetime: unconditional love and forgiveness. None of our technology will help us navigate our way to our eternal life!

This topic is serious and important but not devoid of humor or happiness. Laughter is one of the pleasant parts of life and happiness is an intrinsic part of these two great virtues: unconditional love and forgiveness. You will all experience a self-review of the success of your lifetime in deciding upon your path in the afterlife. There are no secrets, and falsehoods or deceptions or blaming others is impossible. Religious and spiritual sources all highlight the importance of these virtues.

Okay, you ask, but how can I actually live according to these virtues? I'm so busy that I don't even have time to think about these virtues much less try to put them into practice. Even more devastating is the amount of negativity and anger endemic in modern society. The news is replete with stress, hostility and blaming. Commentators choose their sides pro or con, us or them, all judging good versus bad. If all you want to do is survive and be an adrenaline junkie in the middle of conflict, so be it. If you want to follow your heart to live in peace and joy, let's decide to put aside conflict.

Unconditional love and forgiveness both involve avoiding judgment. Unconditional love is given freely, everywhere. In contrast, conditional love is only given to others who I decide/judge are giving love or rewards to me and whom I decide/judge I want to favor with my positive feelings. Forgiveness involves letting go of negativity while anger and revenge feelings are always based on negative judgments about others.

Another important premise in understanding these virtues is that they must be directed toward self as well as others. The Golden Rule is a beautiful guidepost for us in making decisions about virtues which influence both current and eternal life. We must love ourselves and forgive ourselves unconditionally.

Advice Line

By Dr. Betty Phillips



Perfection in achieving these goals is not possible. Don't give up now. We can practice these values until they become habits, and research shows that habits can be established in several months of practice. Our hearts are a great ally in helping our heads work toward these goals. I've discussed heart-based ways of positive living as well as the virtues of kindness and compassion in many other articles. Consult also two books by Dr. Dacher Keltner, Norton Press, "Born to Be Good," 2009, and "The Compassionate Instinct," 2010.

We must learn to eliminate negative judgments in our daily thinking. Our brains cannot help but make decisions which feel like judgments. We do need to inhibit the tendency to go on to the next step of assigning blame to our observations. When our brains do take a next step toward negativity, put up a mental stop sign: "Who am I to judge?" Sometimes we are hurt in these interactions and find it difficult to put aside negative judgments. You will find articles about forgiveness on my website to help you deal with personal animosity.

Unconditional love is a beautiful concept which involves reaching out to the entire universe with positive acceptance. We feel unconditional love toward mankind as well as all other inhabitants of our planet, trees, flowers, animals. Philosophers tell us we're all one and must care for each other. This wonderful concept will often break down in human life when we are a victim of personal abuse. In these cases we will have to struggle to put aside our personal vindictiveness, knowing that the outside world or afterlife will take care of judgment against those whose behavior requires punishment. We must protect ourselves against victimizers, then we can let go of personal hurt and bitterness.

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It's important to realize that love is not just a feeling; it's a way of being in this world. Love is demonstrated by kindness and compassionate behavior to all. Good works are a wonderful way to show love!

Another very important point. We must preserve our personal boundaries in this process. Forgiving does not mean letting people walk all over you or becoming such a people pleaser that you do not take care of yourself.

Please relax and enjoy the benefits of your present life and projected afterlife. When you practice unconditional love and forgiveness you will begin to feel uplifted in your heart, energized and optimistic while the stresses of modern life retreat into the background. I want you to live your lives in this positive space!

Need Advice? Send questions to BettyPhillips@BellSouth.net or 466 Eagle Point Road, Pittsboro 27312. Questions can be anonymous. Betty looks forward to hearing from you! Visit her website: www.bettyphillipspsychology.com.



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