

Unconditional Love, Entry #1 of 2

...many of us have looked up and seen unconditional love in the eyes of the person hearing our Fifth Step (*It Works, Step Five*).

From addict to addict, sponsor to sponsor, sponsee to sponsee, there's nothing in NA that all of us experience the same way. There's the popularized, or even idealized, notion of how things should go, and there's how they actually happen. Many of us resist Step Four because of Step Five. Being that vulnerable with someone can be intimidating, especially when we hear those wonderful stories of members reading their inventories to their sponsors and immediately feeling relief and acceptance. Many of us do have sponsors whose eyes reflect unconditional love and who say all the right things. But what about tomorrow?

Like all the spiritual principles, unconditional love takes work. It's not a snap-your-fingers moment, a switch we turn for at the perfect moment that stays bright without fail. As addicts who want to recover, NA provides a place for us. We deserve the love of the Fellowship, yet that requires the individual effort of members. Unconditional love is more than merely loving someone for who they are regardless of...

In the sponsor-sponsee relationship, loving is more than just accepting. A sponsor shared, "Unconditional love says that I will invest in your growth, no matter what. I intentionally decide to invest in someone regardless of who you are or what you've done. We all deserve that. I also have to be working on myself to loosen and remove the conditions on love that my life experiences have placed there." We don't do it perfectly, and how we express unconditional love isn't uniform, from addict to addict, or from day to day.

Accepting the unconditional love that's offered also takes work. For many of us, the Fifth Step is an opportunity to do just that. Perhaps even more so, it's the day after, when we call our sponsor and they're there for us, just like yesterday.

Love is a decision that needs to be made over and over again. I'm willing to take action about that decision today regarding a fellow member and unconditionally express love as best I can.

Unconditional Love, Entry #2 of 2

We greet each other with the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. This shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere of unconditional love in our meetings (*It Works*, Step Twelve).

Most of us were pretty far from unconditional with our efforts to love when we first got here. One member shared, "When I first started using, drugs helped me connect with people. I would get high with anyone! I started cutting out people who got in the way of my disease, and soon I was all alone."

The members who welcome us to NA know the look of loss and alienation on our faces; they endured the same feelings we did. We empathize. For many of us, that's our first practice of unconditional love—We know each other's pain, so we offer relief no matter what differences we might have, real or perceived. Different political stance? Different football team? Different definition of "football"? We look past these differences to see the addict, and we do our best to offer hope. The hope we offer is a form of love. In Narcotics Anonymous, we offer this love unconditionally to addicts seeking recovery.

Step Twelve in the Basic Text mentions that, "Many of us believe that a spiritual awakening is meaningless unless accompanied by an increase in peace of mind and a concern for others." The empathy we feel for other addicts is the first taste of "a concern for others" many of us get. Working Steps expands the reach of our compassion, continually allowing us to clear out the conditions we put on our willingness to love as we're ready to do so. We aspire to love unconditionally and, even when we fall short, the practice does us good.

*Though the journey toward unconditional love is never ending,
compassion helps pave the way. I will embrace the journey
enthusiastically today.*