

**LOVE IS A DECISION** by SUSIE ITZSTEIN

Greetings! It's an early Winter morning in the Hills as I sit at my desk in front of the window, looking out over a newly awakening day.....heavy with the welcome rains of the last days.....yet everywhere I look there are raindrop jewels on the leaves which feel so light and precious.....and as well the opening buds of jonquils and wattles here and there.....and now, the jewels sparkle as glimpses of sun filter through the trees. I give thanks for such Beauty and Aliveness and Blessings.....

Wintertime is for snuggling up with your favourite "cuppa".....in a comfy chair in a cozy corner in front of a warm fire.....and being nourished as you devour the latest edition of our Hills Magazine..

Winter's message is one of Replenishment.....Taking Time for Yourself - to Nurture yourself, to Receive, to welcome in the Blessings.....Take some time to notice Mother Earth changing through her cycles - to notice that in the moment everything we need is there - to receive that metaphor into our consciousness to replace the ones of lack and scarcity and disadvantage and imperfection and "not being good enough" and worry..... and fear.

One of my teachers made a joke recently and said: Do you know that almost everyone in our culture has D.D.D.? What's that?... you ask.....It's Delight Deficit Disorder! Don't you think that's a great concept?.....I am going to invite you to look at yourself and life in a completely new way today. My invitation is for you to let yourself be touched more deeply than ever before.....let yourself experience delight.....just as an experiment, just for today.....(or everyday, if you wish). Look at your partner or someone you love with new eyes as if you've never seen them before. Find something in them that delights you.....Go ahead,.....if that feels too hard just imagine, it's International Take a Big Risk Day.

And one of things that delights me is the topic I want to talk with you about...and that is Love and Relationships.....and if you know me you'll know they're two of my favourite topics. My belief is that it is only through relationship that we go deeper into ourselves, deeper into being more of who we truly are. There is so much learning and healing and "jewels" for us to discover.

Wow.....let me digress.....this very moment as I write this I am being given the most amazing gift and delight! Outside my window about 5 metres away is a huge Lilypily tree and a gorgeous little robin red breast keeps flying from there to my window and tapping on it which is a metre away. How beautiful and special!

Back to the topic.....Remember when you fell in love...it was like all your dreams had come true. Like you imagined it would last forever. What I want to tell you about is that love can last forever and about a new way to love. And this new way is based in the concept that Love is a DECISION. It is not just a feeling. Here's another invitation to look at yourself and life in a completely new way today. **It is a decision we make** and we make it every day, every minute, in the way that we behave with one another. "Love is a verb", a doing word, says motivational and management specialist Stephen Covey. When asked at one of his seminars by a participant: what do you do when you don't love your wife anymore? He answered: "Go home and love her" And the guy said...but I just told you I don't love her anymore. He replied. "Love is a verb." It is something that you do. It sounds so simple and yet it's so hard to change behaviour - our behaviour. And do you know that your greatest growth and life changes will come from stretching into doing the very things that will make your partner feel loved and cared for. What does your partner ask you to do that is important to them that you don't do very well? It might be listening, or talking, or spending time doing things together, or feeling, or touching, or cuddling, or making love, .....or a million and one things. What does your partner ask you to do that you continually reject. This, believe it or not is your greatest growth edge and opportunity for you to grow into being more of who you truly are.

Furthermore, our behaviours often don't get our needs met. But we keep repeating these behaviours over and over, hoping that somehow they will result in our life changing for the better.....and getting the love we want..... I offer you a favourite quote of mine from "Keeping The Love You Find" by Dr Harville Hendrix

.....*"In order for change to occur, insight must be translated into action.... and corrected by experience, rather than mere analysis" Change "demands clear intention, sustained attention, and the conscientious day-by-day practice of new skills and unfamiliar, uncomfortable behaviours".*

I recommend Hendrix's - Chapter 14: From Insight to Integration: Basic Strategies for Change. It may feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. And remember to be kind to yourself as change takes time and practice. And it is good to start with baby steps and give yourself "L" plates. Remember the Chinese proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step".

I briefly want to report and share my excitement of having the privilege of attending the wonderful first Imago Relationships International Global Summit as the Australian Representative. This took place at the home of Harville Hendrix and his wife Helen LaKelly Hunt in their beautiful hacienda in New Mexico, USA (named El Sueno del Corazon meaning The Dream of the Heart) from April 2 - 6th, 2003. The Summit brought together therapists from around the world to explore how to expand and develop conscious relationships and families. Our mission is to heal and transform the world one relationship at a time and create a new model for marriage. 60 Representatives came from countries including Austria, Croatia, South Africa, New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovenia, Israel, Canada and regions from around the USA. Each representative presented a report about their region and we felt honoured to "walk around each other's worlds" We were inspired as we learnt of all the wonderful programs and projects people are putting into place all over the world.

We were constantly brought back to Peace is Listening and Connecting and the importance of "cleaning up/healing" all our relationships. Each culture has so much to offer and we need to truly respect and honour international difference. What wonderful variety! What an awesome challenge it is to blend our energies into a powerful loving agent for healing and growth across the world.

And for all that you are daily doing in your life to create more loving in the world many deep Thanks from a very full place in my heart. Every appreciation, smile, gentle touch, kiss, hug, acts of kindness, sensitivity, being vulnerable, offers of thanks, gratitude, warm fuzzies, acknowledgements, acts of respect, listening, speaking from your heart, honouring, loving.....all these and more add fullness, joy and healing to others and our world. I respect you for making the decision to explore all your relationships in a new way. What a gift you give yourselves and all your loved ones in being willing to choose to live your life and all your relationships in a more loving, alive, conscious and intentional way.