

MAKING ROOM FOR LOVE

If you don't like something change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.

—Maya Angelou

Do you know what most people wish for, what most people love and cherish? Happiness, inner peace, creative work, and fulfilling relationships. Despite the focus on manifesting more "stuff," most of us desire what's real—something that fulfills our heart and soul and meaningful relationships are right up there, at the top of the list. Yet, many of us have relationships with others—children, siblings, parents, partners, friends—that lack understanding. We tend to focus on what's wrong with the personality or the behavior. We've shut down a part of our hearts so love can't reside. Our challenge, then, is to make that space available, to make room for love. It's difficult, if not impossible to experience genuine love when there's no room for it. Love gets crowded out, and the best relationships suffer, when we make judgments, complain, criticize, blame and gossip. I've witnessed spiritual organizations with the best of intentions wither and crumble under the negative weight of blame and gossip. When we focus on the negative in others, we create tension, barriers and a loveless connection.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and one of the best known Buddhist teachers in the West, once wrote, "When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look for reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like the lettuce. Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade, using reason and argument."

Complaining creates negativity, and negativity causes the following experience:

- * Lowers your energy
- * Takes you out of your heart
- * Puts others on the defense
- * Pushes people away
- * Prevents you from being able to appreciate and love yourself (because you get what you give).

Often, we are completely unconscious of how often we complain. I've been practicing not complaining and believe me, it's easier said than done. However, when we stop complaining, we create a space for positive energy. Others change when we change, others soften when we soften, others love us when we choose to love them. It's very easy to be negative. It takes much more inner strength to stop complaining and verbalize only the positive. Just imagine the amount of happiness, inner peace, and fulfillment you would experience if you stopped complaining, criticizing and blaming!

So here's your chance. Today, I invite you to begin a "21-day complaint fast." You can be part of a movement that is contributing to a complaint-free world. Currently a Unity church in Missouri is inviting their congregation to stop complaining—about *anything and everything*—for 21 days. I was so inspired by this aspiration that I contacted the minister of this church. He said that the average time it takes to reach 21 consecutive complaint free days is 4-6 months.

At first, you may be shocked at how often you complain, but think about the amount of happiness, abundance and peace you will experience from letting it go. I believe in the positive power of such a commitment so much, that as the Spiritual Leader of the Circle of Spiritual Enlightenment in San Luis Obispo, CA, I am inviting all of our congregants to join me in a "21-day complaint fast."

A stone dropped into a pond creates a ripple that touches all the shores of the pond. You becoming complaint free will have a powerful, transforming and positive impact on everyone around you which will continue to spread. Remember, you are a creation of Love. You can clog your life with criticisms and complaints, but over time, the negativity gnaws away at your self-esteem, relationships, abundance, and health. So, today, be willing to open to the good that was yours all along. Let go of your resistance. Love is greater and more powerful than your judgments, complaints and criticisms. Are you ready to make room for it?