



## **Choose Love Every Day of the Year**

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Choose love.

We have all witnessed the devastating effects of the pandemic, political division, and climate change. Each of us has probably experienced profound losses during this period and it is represented in what we read and what we watch. Yet, the tide has to turn so that we are hearing words of love, and witnessing acts of love. And the catalyst for that must come from our commitment to live and breathe love. There must be an inner desire....a deeply profound yearning....within each of us if we are to transform our lives and the lives of others.

During the month of February, we are particularly reminded to love, but it is usually a romantic love we are nurturing. Loving must be a value that we inhabit and practice every day, of every month, of every year. When I was thinking about the way to describe the process of loving the words seeding, feeding, and breeding came to mind.

We seed love through the words that we speak and the way that we show up for each other time and time again. We feed love through our consistency of word, thought, and action and by loving when it is most difficult to love such as when someone has failed or disappointed us. We breed love through inhabiting love. We do this by asking ourselves when we wake up each morning "What can I say to another to express my love?" and "What can I do for another to show my love?" And when we awake with those thoughts in our hearts a joy abounds. A joy that comes from the knowledge that we have another opportunity to love.

The wonderful and exciting component of loving is that no two people experience love in the same way. That means each moment is a new opportunity to uncover how each of the people in our life want and need to be loved. It can take a lifetime to hone those skills as we continue to uncover new ways of loving the human race.

You might think you have lost too much in the last couple years and you are just too tired. The way we revive our nation is by beginning to love again. You might think I must have had an easy life, one without pain, with all of my fluffy words of love and you would be erroneous in this thinking. I have known the depths of pain, the greatest of despair. I have known pain through the loss of two baby brothers, and a father at a young age. I have known pain through experiencing almost 30 years of crushing, and at times suicidal depression that caused me to be hospitalized at length on 2 occasions. I have sat in an exorbitant number of psychiatrist and counselor chairs, and spent hours, days, weeks, and years healing from loss and trauma. Yet, there comes a time when we must take our pain and transform it, use it, to love and heal others.

I remember fondly as a young child, while living on James Street in Utica, the way the community looked after one another. Each of us sat on our porches at night and moved from porch to porch inquiring about each other's lives and families, and when someone was in need there was a coalition of neighbors that cooked meals, looked after each other's children, and checked in on one another.

We must begin to build a sense of community once again through the simple words we speak and the simple actions we take.

Choose love.

