



There is a Spanish proverb, which says very justly, tell me whom you live with and I will tell you who you are.

- Earl of Chesterfield, 1747, letter to his son

RELATIONSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL – PART 1

Dr. Dean Ornish states in his book, *LOVE & SURVIVAL*, that the way we perceive the relationships we're in has a definite affect on our health and well-being. He goes on to say that anything that promotes a sense of isolation for an indefinite period of time leads to illness and suffering. Anything that sustains a sense of love and intimacy, connection, and community leads to healing.

At Yale, scientists studied 119 men and 40 women who were undergoing coronary angioplasty, a test showing the degree of blockages in coronary arteries. Those who felt the most cared about and supported had substantially less blockage in the arteries of their hearts. The researchers found that feelings of being loved and emotionally connected were more important predictors of the severity of coronary artery blockages than was the number of relationships a person has. Equally important, this effect was independent of diet, smoking, exercise, cholesterol, family history (genetics), and other standard risk factors. Though diet, blood pressure, and other risk factors play an important role in developing heart disease and angina, these factors can be significantly moderated by feelings of being loved, respected, and appreciated.

People are much more likely to choose life-enhancing behaviors rather than self-destructive ones when they feel loved and connected. It is the perception and experience of loneliness that seems to determine its effects on our health and well-being. Also, it has been shown that poor health in adulthood, often the result of childhood adversity and parental deprivation, can be offset through strong, loving, trusting, and respectful relationships. In conclusion, each of us is responsible for finding, creating, and maintaining relationships that are good for us, because our health and well-being depends on it.

RELATIONSHIPS MEDITATION

- With each exhalation relax your body, releasing tension from your body. Breathe easily, and rest softly.
- When breathing is gentle and rhythmic, bring your attention to the center of your chest, your heart. Feel your heart warm and relaxed as you think about sending those you love as much compassion, joy, and kindness as possible. Feel any areas of tension, constriction, and tightness in your body disappearing as you shower those persons with love. Now, feel their love coming back to you. Feel your heart smile.
- Continue breathing gently as you relax your mind, body, and spirit with this loving kindness meditation. Namaste.

Give gratitude for those you find easy to love. Similarly, give gratitude for those you find challenging and difficult to love because they need love too. Namaste.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:

**Marcie Hintz
SoleYogaCA@gmail.com
760-803-3173**

