

# Drenched in Yes

The Art of Receptivity

BY CARRIE GROSSMAN

A few years ago, I woke up in the middle of the night with a heavy heart. For no apparent reason, everything felt cold and empty—like all of the love had been sucked out of my life. Even though my boyfriend at the time was sound asleep beside me, I felt disconnected from him and lost in a sea of self-pity. Unable to relax, I decided to get up and check my email.

Shortly after sitting down, I heard a voice from the bedroom. “Carrie, what are you doing?”

“Checking my email,” I said with an edge.

“Hey, are you OK?” he asked, making his way into the living room. I didn’t respond. “What’s wrong?”

I felt too pathetic to look at him, but he knew my habits of closure all too well. Walking over to the desk where I sat, slumped over like a pouting child, he took my face in his hands. “I love you,” he said with unwavering clarity. I resisted and stared down at the floor, too afraid to let him in. But he repeated the words until I burst into tears, my defenses penetrated by the strength of his loving presence.

Sometimes, paradox rules in the human drama. Although most of us long for love, oftentimes we work hard to keep it at bay. Why in the world do we do this? Well, opening up and receiving can be scary. When we really let love in, it leaves us naked and defenseless; it burns up the false beliefs we have about ourselves—beliefs like *I’m unworthy, undeserving, undesirable, unimportant*. Stories like these simply can’t survive love’s inferno, and the ego doesn’t like that very much. This may be why Rumi said, “Love comes with a knife, not some shy question, and not with fears for its reputation!” When we receive, in a sense we lose control. Like a wave of sweetness, love washes away our contraction and exposes our vulnerable heart. We can’t protect ourselves anymore

or stay inside our little cage of separateness—once the window of the soul opens, light comes pouring in.

But receptivity is a skill that few are taught. Although we’re trained to give and share, many of us aren’t educated about the value of receiving. For some, even accepting a compliment or gift can feel torturous. Perhaps we don’t want to appear proud, so we deflect the goodness that comes our way. Or perhaps we just feel plain old pitiable and prefer to hide out in our safe closet of shame. Either way, because the dominant cultural paradigm in the West esteems doing over being, many of us believe that we have to *earn* love. This attitude turns love into a kind of commerce—something we have to work for—and leads us to believe that we must manipulate others into loving us. We forget that babies don’t bust out of the womb and blurt, “Here’s my resume, mom!” No. They



come into the world empty-handed and are loved for their pure being, nothing more.

Often, receptivity is seen as a kind of weakness, but in actuality it is a well of great spiritual and creative power—a deeply feminine quality. Only when we truly receive can we truly give. Whether we wish to make art or design a new invention, we must receive inspiration and guidance before taking skillful action. When this beautiful flow occurs, the feminine energy of receptivity gives birth to its opposite—masculine direction. Much like Taoist philosophy refers to yin and yang as contrary yet interdependent forces, receptivity and action give rise

to each other. For balance and wholeness, both are needed. If we only emphasize the active, fiery, yang energy and deny the yin, our lives will always be lopsided and empty.

Generally, our capacity to receive is conditioned by our level of openness. If it’s true that like attracts like, then the amount of love we take in depends on how loveable we think we are; after all, most of us only accept that which validates our limited self-concept. Resisting love is really just another trick of the ego to keep us feeling separate and alone. We only need to look at the lives of spiritual masters to see how they embody receptivity; their lives are a perfect balance between giving and receiving. Beings like Jesus and Buddha allowed their disciples to venerate them, knowing how beneficial it would be. They didn’t say, “Thanks for the devotion, beloveds, but I can’t accept it!” They fully embraced the love that was given to them with gratitude. They understood that to push away our devotion is to reject us—and no true master rejects anything.

We can think about this quite easily in the context of intimate relationship. When we give to our partner—whether materially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way—we long to have him or her receive our offering. We want our partner to drink us in, to feel us, enjoy us, be with us—not to say no. We want to hear our lover speak one word: *yes*. Yes, I want you. Yes, I see you. Yes, I love you. *Yes* is a word of total receptivity. It says, “I accept and embrace everything.” All great masters who have true equanimity live in the spirit of *yes*. They love all beings, regardless of their persona or prestige. This is true receptivity, and true feminine wisdom in action.

To let love penetrate, we must be brave, for receptivity is a kind of death. The “me” that keeps things boxed up and separate can’t hold onto anything in that groundless space, but in the end we have nothing to lose by letting go and breaking open.

Ultimately, all of the goodness we can ever receive already exists within us—we just need to give permission for this goodness to surface from the depths of our being. How can we do this? Perhaps by noticing all of the ways that we habitually push love away—from the smallest compliment to the sweetest affection. As Rumi advises, “Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” Indeed. May we all embrace these barriers with kindness, and thus become unlimited love itself. ♡

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