

40 Days of Self Love

A journey of no distance...week two

Seva means service. In Sikhism, Seva refers to selfless service for altruistic purposes on behalf of, and for the betterment of a Community. Sikhs have a tradition of Seva. A Sevadar is one who performs Seva through philanthropic, voluntary, selfless, service.

Being of Service is one of the best actions I have found to remember who I am and why I am here. This week you are asked to commit to Seva; take action in service. The most important piece for this week is to continue your Self Love practice while experiencing the joys of Seva. It is mentioned above that Seva is “selfless service” this means that you *are being of service without attachment to the result*. However your rewards are quite often greater than the receivers. In other words; don’t get in a victim role of doing for others and not doing for yourself. You will automatically feel joy when you serve someone else or the greater good.

We all have “bad days”. Whether it’s a disagreement, physical pain, or just a cranky morning; ego moves in when it sees any opportunity to bring us down. So far you have received four tools (that make up the Foundation) that can support a shift in the “bad day” experience. The gratitude journal is key. As you experiment with Seva you will see that it creates even more space for our Divine Self to shine through. Changing the pattern of egoist thoughts is a rewarding side effect of being of service.

We spend so many hours a week seeking good service, at a restaurant, a shop, on the phone with customer service...and yet when do we take the time to offer good service? My experience is the universal truth *you get what you give*. If you don’t believe this, you have a great opportunity to try it out this week.

Being of service by being present, being helpful and being kind, is simple and healthy. What if you took a few minutes everyday to see where you could be the most useful? What if you opened your heart to the possibilities of service and asked the Divine to show you how to be of service today? What if you gave 10% of your time to a cause that moved you?

Below are some ideas. Some are big and some are small, but really there is no measure of Seva. You have to know what you can “afford” based on how “full” you are. Try the simple acts of kindness first, then offer a little more. And if you feel called to look into a charity or a non-profit, great! But know that no matter what form your service/giving takes; you will quickly see how this conscious choice is related to Self Love.

You could start in your own town, at your kids school, at your church, synagogue, or spiritual center at the animal shelter...or just go pick up trash in your neighborhood or on the beach or at the creek. It could be as simple as helping someone reach something at the grocery store, or reading something on a label for someone who forgot their glasses, or answering a question, it is all being of service.

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There are soup kitchens, food banks, hospitals, long term care facilities, children's programs, women's shelters, homeless shelters, organizations that clean up, help out, and give to those in need. One of the best things to give away is a smile. We all have an elderly neighbor, a new-mom neighbor, and an ill neighbor. Maybe they aren't next door but they are out there.

Find the way you want to be of service or "give". One of my favorite quotes by Kahlil Gibran: "They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish." This cracks my heart wide open every time I read it. I have included the entire poem below. It is so true "...for to withhold is to perish." I have seen this in our world: the death of a soul from not sharing, not giving. There are those who cannot connect to that part of themselves that wants to be of service. It is Divine to give. I have been accused of giving too many things away: clothes, necklaces, money, time. I say "accused" because it wasn't a compliment. It was a critical comment coming from someone who struggles with giving.

There *is* such a thing as over-giving. This is one of the reasons we practice Self Love. In order to have enough of anything to give we must "fill up". In order to "fill up" we must begin with Self Love. You're probably seeing the connection by now. Self Love fills us up, we become full with love and then we have "enough" to share. And, one of the best ways to "fill up" with love is to give. So, it is a cycle of giving and receiving. We must be able to receive as well. Every time we receive we have given someone an opportunity to give. So, we are also giving when we are receiving. Make sense?

Take a deep breath and open up to a whole new journey...many people find their calling in service, some find sheer joy and some find deep gratitude. Being of service/giving will be different for everyone but it will be rewarding for sure.

Being of service *centers our souls* in the bigger picture, it brings clarity to our perspective and it shines a light on where we are on our path. Don't make it a big task...try asking the Divine for a little help...here is a prayer similar to the one I say each morning:

"Beloved Mother Father God...please show me how to serve today, where to go, who to meet and what to say. I am open to serve however needed. I trust the opportunities will present themselves as I walk into my day with gratitude for all I have to offer. So it is..."

Say this prayer every morning and be gentle with yourself, take the risk to offer your help, be of service everyday in some way...Seva

It's also great to begin the process of Seva by serving your Authentic Self. Allow the ego to rest while you ask authentically what it is that you truly need in your life. Begin by giving yourself

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something you have needed or desired; then receive it honestly and lovingly. Maybe a back rub, a date-night, a movie, a break from your to-do list. Starting Seva with a gift to yourself is a nice beginning to fill up and have plenty to offer. But don't forget the same is true when you give you receive. So you decide. Here's the breakdown for week two:

1. Continue to give to yourself by practicing Self Love through the Foundation. Make your commitment solid and steady. Do not be hard on yourself when you miss something, just recommit and do it as soon as you can.
2. Set the intention each day with the prayer written above (or in your own words). Ask how you can be of service through the Divine. You will be offered options throughout the day. Be conscious of them and take action.
3. Be present. Watch for the opportunities. Listen to the words and the silence of others. Pretend you are a super hero and your power is Seva!
4. Enjoy. Allow your Miracles and write about your experiences.

Gabby Bernstein tells a story in one of her talks about a big storm that hit NYC. She was evacuated from her apartment, and was "feeling sorry for herself" in the hotel room in Times Square. At a particularly low point, her friend Marianne Williams called her and listened to her "painful" situation. Marianne told Gabby to "Go to ground zero." Go to where the storm is the worst and people need the most help and BE OF SERVICE. Not only did Gabby go and give of herself but she was rewarded with a shift in perspective. She no longer felt "pain" she was giving and receiving and joyous.

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

--Rabindranath Tagore

On Giving

Kahlil Gibran

You give but little when you give of your possessions.

It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

For what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow?

And tomorrow, what shall tomorrow bring to the over prudent dog burying bones in the trackless sand as he follows the pilgrims to the holy city?

And what is fear of need but need itself?

Is not dread of thirst when your well is full, the thirst that is unquenchable?

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There are those who give little of the much which they have--and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome.

And there are those who have little and give it all.

These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.

There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward.

And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism.

And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue;

They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space.

Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;

And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.

And is there aught you would withhold?

All you have shall some day be given;

Therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors.

You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving."

The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture.

They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish.

Surely he who is worthy to receive his days and his nights, is worthy of all else from you.

And he who has deserved to drink from the ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from your little stream.

And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity, of receiving?

And who are you that men should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that you may see their worth naked and their pride unabashed?

See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving.

For in truth it is life that gives unto life while you, who deem yourself a giver, are but a witness.

And you receivers... and you are all receivers... assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives.

Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings;

For to be over mindful of your debt, is to doubt his generosity who has the freehearted earth for mother, and God for father.

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Notes on your experience of Seva: