



Come Home to Love, by Rick Hanson

Take a breath right now, and notice how abundant the air is, full of life-giving oxygen offered freely by trees and other green growing things. You can't see air, but it's always available for you.

Love is a lot like the air. It may be hard to see - but it's in you and all around you.

In the press of life - dealing with hassles in personal relationships and bombarded with news of war and other conflicts - it's easy to lose sight of love, and feel you can't place your faith in it. But in fact, to summarize a comment from Gandhi, daily life is saturated with moments of cooperation and generosity - between complete strangers! Let alone with one's friends and family.

Love is woven into your day because it's woven into your DNA: as our ancestors evolved over the last several million years, many scientists believe that love, broadly defined, has been the primary driving force behind the evolution of the brain. Bands of early humans that were particularly good at understanding and caring for each other out-competed less cooperative and loving bands, and thereby passed on the genes of empathy, bonding, friendship, altruism, romance, compassion, and kindness - the genes, in a word, of love.

Nonetheless, even though the resting state of your brain - its "home base" when you are not stressed, in pain, or feeling threatened - is grounded in love, it's all too easy to be driven from home by something as small as a critical comment in a business meeting or a frown across a dinner table. Then we go off to a kind of inner homelessness, exiled for a time from our natural abode, caught up in the fear or anger that makes love seem like a mostly-forgotten dream. After a while, this can become the new normal, so we call homelessness home - like becoming habituated to breathing shallowly and forgetting the richness of air that would be available if we would only breathe deeply.

So we need to come home to love. To recognize and have confidence in the love in your own heart - which will energize and protect you, even when you must also be assertive with others. To see and have faith in the love in others - even when it is veiled or it comes out in problematic ways. To trust in love that's as present as air, to trust in loving that's as natural as breathing.

