

What does it mean to deserve my love? As a partner, a friend, or just a fellow human. What does it mean to deserve my own love? It's deceptively hard to love your partner, it's the most intense love there is, and it's built on the foundation of all other loves.

Love at its foremost, begins with the love of yourself, wholly. I think of bell hooks thoughts on integrity and compartementalization. The partial love of self, or compartmentalizing the parts you don't love out, allows you to discriminate your love for others. When we look at certain parts of ourselves and feel that part doesn't deserve love, it permits us to cut off the love for others who are also in that situation. We see this a lot in the queer community, often the most outspoken members against the queer community are fighting their own internal battle with their sexuality or gender expression. This self-hate to outward hate is also seen in other groups. Incels, insecure about their masculinity and worthiness as a partner, take it out on women. This makes me curious about people who are heavily anti-immigrant. When they feel like they don't belong in their own community, they don't let others in as a way to feel unity in a society where they often feel left behind and forgotten.

Ingrained in us, especially in America, is the notion that "I worked really hard, so I deserve this food, water, and shelter." This is scary when we look at its antithesis. "There are things I can do to not deserve my rights to food, water, and shelter." What saddens me, is a lot of the things that take away someone's deservedness or right to these basic human rights, is not the willingness or the want, it's the access and situation. This manifests in our society as a reward system that does not value someone's worthiness of love, it values their production. With production being a loose term, not related to the benefit of society, but to the absolute increase of transactions. This system is not an accident, people with power, often born into power, don't want to lose it. Keeping the status quo is only beneficial to them. If we prioritized benefits to humanity, what would happen when we looked at their wealth, looked at their impact on humanity. It is important that no one, even the most evil person, is excluded from human rights. Once you allow someone to be excluded, the next, and more consequential question is: Who gets to determine that.

I mentioned the love for a friend, but tribe is a better word for it. The people who you're close to and are important to you, if you're lucky it's a good mix of friends and family. This love builds on the foundations they deserve as a human, and develops into the love of someone you rely on. A tribe is your support system. There are not winners and losers in a tribe, they win together and lose together. This is especially important in harsh environments where wins are harder to come by. A win you share today is a loss mitigated tomorrow. This is the very reason humans are social creatures. This is more than a physical manifestation, there's another side. The tribe is just as important for the emotional camaraderie. In the same way you can share food, you can share joy, sadness and fear. Unique to emotional camaraderie is it's a non-zero sum game. A happy person and sad person hang out, they leave muted, they grow their complex relationship further happier and healthier than they were before.

This brings me to the final and most special love, love of a partner. For emphasis, the love of a partner is built, most importantly, on the love of yourself. Then the love of them as a human, then as a member of your tribe, and then finally the love of your partner. This love is piercing. Try as you may, there is no hiding. To experience this love, you must see them, and love them, wholly. You only deserve as much love from them as you give them. But when you give them 100% and get 100% back from them it is a beautiful thing. It's ok to guard your love. Who deserves your love? It depends what kind of love? If I love you, it's because I think you are truly special and deserving of my love.