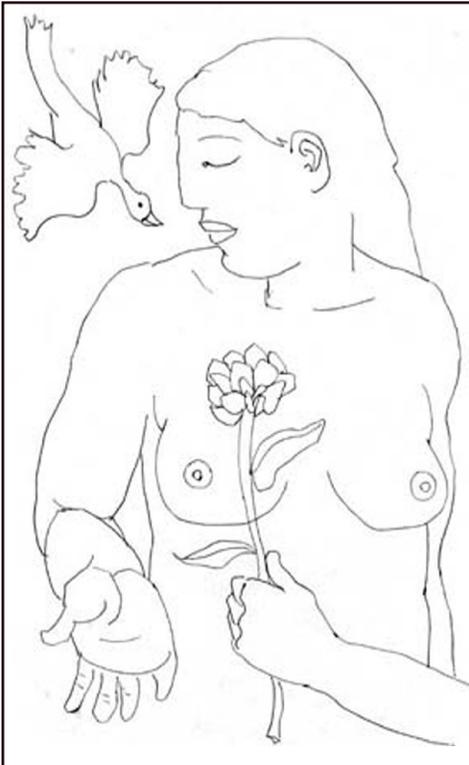




## LESSON 5: Unconditional Love



Unconditional love is love without conditions. Picture a happy dog wagging her tail when you come home. She doesn't know anything about your skin color, hair style, body mass index, health, marital or financial status. She loves you without conditions. Her love is clear, constant, available day and night. This is unconditional love.

When you draw, it is very beneficial to know something about giving yourself unconditional love. Loving yourself exactly as you are helps you make progress much faster when you are just beginning to practice drawing in a serious way. I'm sure you know that mistakes are extremely important! It's how you learn and grow! We have to make it okay to make mistakes. When you realize that you made a mistake, simply draw the line correctly. No beating yourself up. No ripping up your paper.

I remember when I first realized the value of unconditional love while drawing. I was at my Friday night Life Drawing Session. After about 20 minutes into one drawing, I saw the error on my paper. My first response was a sudden drop into depression. I wanted to rip up the drawing and start over. Immediately I made a new decision. I tempered my feelings and said to myself, *"oh, just draw the line where it is supposed to be."* I did that rather forcefully and continued drawing. At the end of the session I saw that the extra lines (some errors, some ok, some right on) made the overall drawing much richer, more alive and exciting. Really! This was a Wow!

I looked at drawings by Michaelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael and countless other Masters. They must have said this same statement to themselves when they were drawing. Look at their drawings and you will see ten lines for the knee, seven for the shoulder. All lines drawn are accepted, none erased. Master artists are explorers. Their lines compose dynamic, alive, exciting, stories of their journey exploring a form with Unconditional Love. Drawing and accepting. Drawing and accepting.

So, I advise my students to draw simple things that you see in your world. When you look at a cup on a shelf, for example, open yourself to accept the basic shapes, shadows, collisions and transitions and constellations of the form. You will see that your drawing will gradually unfold a beauty and a feeling of a loving, living presence. Accept yourself and accept the "other"—be it a cup, a cat, a tree, a person, a memory, a feeling or a dream. Drawing is a safe way to practice Unconditional Love. Notice how good you feel, how relaxed, peaceful, safe, gentle, and balanced after ten or twenty minutes of drawing and consciously accepting yourself.

Also, draw feelings that you feel during your day. Bad feelings are especially good to draw because we get them out of ourselves so we can look at them and re-balance ourselves, make changes if necessary, learn, and grow. For example, draw anxiety, anger, emotional overwhelm, even fear and depression. Accept your feelings. It is the way to move beyond them.

Make friends with yourself. One of the first qualities that defines a good friend is that he or she accepts you exactly as you are. Too many people believe they cannot accept themselves because they are not quite perfect. Well, no one is perfect and being perfect is NOT the goal in life nor is it the goal of drawing.