

# Dirty Love

Source: [Life Without a Centre](#)  
by Jeff Foster

Waking up doesn't mean simply believing that you are 'no-one' and 'nothing' and detaching yourself from the relative realities of life – hunger, pain, bliss, loss – or losing compassion for others in their pain and struggle, but it does mean rediscovering yourself as the unlimited, unidentified vastness in which every thought, sensation and feeling has a home.

It doesn't mean 'being okay' with everything all the time, or 'being fearless' all the time, or 'being relaxed' all the time, or being anything 'all the time' for that matter, for why would you put conditions on the unconditional, and whose conditions would they be anyway? Why would you place such heavy demands on present experience? Why would you want to live up to a second-hand, time-bound image?

Thankfully, who you are never has to live up to any image of how awakening 'should' look. The myriad, ever-moving waves in the ocean of you can't be anything 'all the time' since they are alive – they love to dance, to play, to arise and dissolve as spontaneously as they arose, leaving no trace – and this recognition is the beginning of such cosmic relief for the exhausted seeker of 'the next experience'. Life never has to match up to your idea of 'life' and that's why life is so restful at its very core. There is simply no demand for present experience to be anything other than what it is. There is simply THIS – present, complete, empty and full.

But, intelligent and discerning reader, this inherent perfection does not equate to detachment and apathy. Quite the opposite! It's not 'just letting things be' or doing 'doing nothing' or preaching 'there is no me' to anyone who will

listen. It's not a mental conclusion or second-hand belief, or a way to block out pain. Its more of a living attitude, a way of being, a seeing that, no matter what arises in present experience – a thought, a sensation, a feeling – no matter how intense or unexpected, these visitors have a home in you, they are welcome as beloved and inseparable waves of yourself. Love is no longer a fancy notion but a living, breathing, real-time reality. The poets and sages were right. The end of violence is here within you. And from this creative and compassionate place we become more engaged with life than ever, more alive than ever, even as all stories and dreams of 'my life' and 'how it should be' fall away.

This love, this deep and ever-present silence that you are, is so vast it swallows everything. It pays no heed to images of how it should be. It does not try to impress, it is not looking for awards, acceptance or validation. It is not pretending to be transcendent, or fearless, or beyond pain, it has no use of the word 'spiritual' or 'enlightened', it does not act as if it's above everything. It knows no bypassing, no clever tricks, no ways to numb itself to itself. It gets its hands dirty.

Yes, this is a dirty love. The unloved and unwanted and unmet get stuck under its fingernails. It wants all of its children, not just the pretty ones. It is the mother, the father, the lover, the guru we have always longed for. It loves because that's all it knows. It would work its knuckles to the bone just to be here.

We pretend to be fearless and beyond human concerns only because we are afraid. We act at being peaceful and undisturbed only because there is a tumult inside. We strain to show others how far beyond anger we have gone, only because anger still rages in us, longing to be met. We show off our perfect spiritual knowledge in public to mask our perfect private doubt. It's a perfect balance.

Who will stop pretending? Who will meet the 'shadow', the misunderstood 'dark side' of life, those waves of ourselves that are not inherently negative or sinful or dark, just neglected and abandoned and longing for home? Who will meet life's orphaned children? Who will sacrifice the image for the delight of not knowing?

It is such a relief to no longer have to pretend to be anything – not 'the awakened one', nor 'the one who knows', nor 'the blissed-out experiencer', nor 'the spiritual expert' – and instead to know ourselves on a deeper level as the home for those homeless parts of experience that we always thought 'should' disappear.

Our unwanted children cannot disappear until they are truly free to appear in us. And when they are truly free, who would ever want them to disappear? When they are no longer unwanted, is there any problem? Even the unwanted are wanted here in the vastness that we are. There is plenty of space here.

Beyond awakening, there is this grace, this inexplicable and heartbreaking timeless welcoming of everything as it arises. By dirtying itself until it cannot dirty itself any more, this love purifies itself.