

MASCULINITY:  
UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION

# BOOK CLUB

All about love

New visions

by bell hooks

April 25, 7pm - 9pm



# Who are you (please let us know your pronouns)?

## What are your expectations / needs?

Excited to share thoughts, meet new folks

**Gather ideas**

Chemistry of the group, new ideas

What resonated most with others, curious to format

Community

Juicy intimate stories and vulnerability

Good conversations

Different take - what is right and how can I nurture it?

What lenses do people use to reading a book

# Group contract

**Monitor your  
use of time  
(step up and  
step down)**

**Direct  
observation vs  
book - be  
explicit**

**Connect  
your  
points to  
the book**

**Build  
together**



# Loving in our oppressive world

## Accountability in love

Widespread cultural acceptance of lying is a primary reason many of us will never know love.

Love is as love does... that we respect and uphold their rights... Without justice there can be no love.

While men who dominate others can and do experience ongoing care, they place a barrier between themselves and the experience of love.

When men lie to women, presenting a false self, the terrible price they pay to maintain "power over" us is the loss of their capacity to give and receive love.

**We do not have to love. We choose to love**

Ultimately, they choose power over love. To know and keep true love we have to be willing to surrender the will to power.

The masculine identity offered men as the ideal in patriarchal culture is one that requires all males to invent and invest in a false self.

Women are often comfortable lying to men in order to manipulate them to give us things we feel we want or deserve. We may lie to bolster a male's self-esteem.

women who embrace patriarchal femininity, the insistence that females should act as though they are weak, incapable of rational thought, dumb, silly, are also socialized to wear a mask—to lie.

## Masculinity

Many men, especially, often turn away from true love and choose relationships in which they can be emotionally withholding when they feel like it but still receive love

The wounded child inside many males is a boy who, when he first spoke his truths, was silenced by paternal sadism, by a patriarchal world that did not want him to claim his true feelings.

The privilege of power is at the heart of patriarchal thinking. Girls and boys, women and men who have been taught to think this way almost always believe love is not important

or if it is, it is never as important as being powerful, dominant, in control, on top—being right.

Heterosexual women are often schooled by other women in the art of lying to men as a way to manipulate.

## Femininity

The wounded child inside many females is a girl who was taught that she must become something other than herself, deny her true feelings, in order to attract and please others

# Learning how to love

My inner life experience will not be my child's inner life experience

An overwhelming majority of us come from dysfunctional families in which we were taught we were not okay

We are not born knowing how to love anyone, either ourselves or somebody else. However, we are born able to respond to care.

**Born**

From the moment little boys are taught they should not cry or express hurt, feelings of loneliness, or pain, that they must be tough, they are learning how to mask true feelings.

most people who think they are not lovable have this perception because at some point in their lives they were socialized to see themselves as unlovable

Too many of us need to cling to a notion of love that either makes abuse acceptable or at least makes it seem that whatever happened was not that bad.

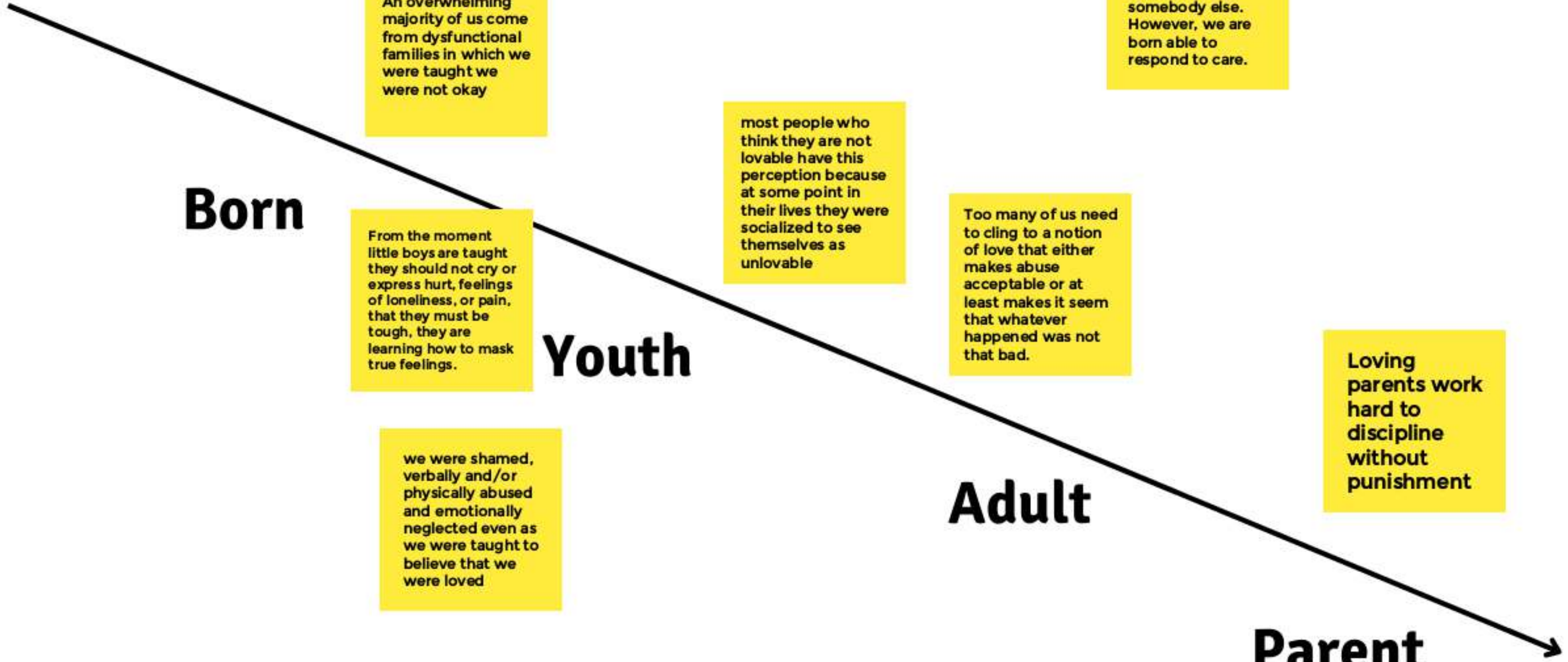
**Youth**

we were shamed, verbally and/or physically abused and emotionally neglected even as we were taught to believe that we were loved

**Adult**

Loving parents work hard to discipline without punishment

**Parent**



# How can we love?

The willingness to sacrifice is a necessary dimension of loving practice and living in community. None of us can have things our way all the time.

This is the most precious gift true love offers—the experience of knowing we always belong.

Awakening to love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination

When we value the delaying of gratification and take responsibility for our actions, we simplify our emotional universe.

A commitment to spiritual life necessarily means we embrace the eternal principle that love is all, everything, our true destiny.

It appears that our nation has gone so far down the road of secular individualism, worshiping the twin gods of money and power, that there seems to be no place for spiritual life

## With ourselves

Learning how to face our fears is one way we embrace love. Our fear may not go away, but it will not stand in the way.

Living simply makes loving simple. The choice to live simply necessarily enhances our capacity to love.

Trust is the foundation of intimacy.

To know and keep true love we have to be willing to surrender the will to power.

## Spiritual

Whether we learn how to love ourselves and others will depend on the presence of a loving environment.

friendship is the place in which a great majority of us have our first glimpse of redemptive love and caring community.

All awakening to love is spiritual awakening.

Spiritual life is first and foremost about commitment to a way of thinking and behaving that honors principles of inter-being and interconnectedness.

## Social

The love we make in community stays with us wherever we go. With this knowledge as our guide, we make any place we go a place where we return to love.

# Becoming whole

Power of vulnerability  
- and  
permitting/encouraging others to be vulnerable

As long as we feel shame, we can never believe ourselves worthy of love

While forgiveness is essential to spiritual growth, it does not make everything immediately wonderful or fine.

To know love we have to tell the truth to ourselves and to others.

We have all heard the maxim "If you do not love yourself, you will be unable to love anyone else." (not true)

Domination cannot exist in any social situation where a love ethic prevails.

We are not born knowing how to love anyone, either ourselves or somebody else. However, we are born able to respond to care.

## Healing to love

Wounded hearts turn away from love because they do not want to do the work of healing necessary to sustain and nurture love

Working as caregivers to young children, many men are able to experience for the first time the joy that comes from service.

Awakening to love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination.

To live our lives based on the principles of a love ethic (showing care, respect, knowledge, integrity, and the will to cooperate), we have to be courageous.

When small communities organize their lives around a love ethic, every aspect of daily life can be affirming for everyone.

## Loving to heal

As we love, fear necessarily leaves. Contrary to the notion that one must work to attain perfection, this outcome does not have to be struggled for—it just happens.

To be loving we willingly hear each other's truth and, most important, we affirm the value of truth telling.

## Grief

Love is the only force that allows us to hold one another close beyond the grave.

Accepting death with love means we embrace the reality of the unexpected, of experiences over which we have no control. Love empowers us to surrender.

Love within the context of romantic bonding offers us the unique chance to be transformed in a welcoming celebratory atmosphere.



# Closing



What are you  
thinking?

What are you  
feeling?