



**THE KINDNESS
HANDBOOK**
A Practical Companion

Sharon Salzberg

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EXCERPT: Love Is an Ability

When I went to see the movie *Dan in Real Life*, I gasped loudly in the theater as I heard a good deal of my life's work summed up in one line: "Love is not a feeling, it's an ability."

In teaching lovingkindness meditation, this is something I continually try to emphasize. If we see love as a feeling, it is almost like a commodity — and likely we will judge our notion of that commodity all the time: "I don't have enough, it's not the right feeling, it's not intense enough, it is too intense . . ."

But if love is an ability, there is nothing to judge. As an ability, love isn't destroyed in the ravages of time and loss, insecurity or disappointment. As an ability, love is always there as a potential, ready to flourish and help our lives flourish. As we go up and down in life, as we acquire or lose, as we are showered with praise or unfairly blamed, always within there is the ability of love, recognized or not, given life or not.

This is the kind of wisdom born of going through life's experiences and paying attention instead of being half asleep. It is the kind of wisdom born from allowing life to teach us and move us and open us to truths, like this truth about the rather surprising and heartening nature of love.

CONTACT: Beverly Yates
303-665-3151 ext. 153
publicity@soundstrue.com

Sounds True
413 South Arthur Avenue / Louisville, CO / 80027
www.soundstrue.com