- Health self-care

WellBeing | special report
SELF-LOVE



Love Yourself: a guide to practicing self-love

"You love yourself" was a common childhood taunt aimed at shrinking us back to short poppy status. But self-love is a feat, not a flaw. Genuine self-love can take you anywhere you want, so step aboard the self-love express for an awesome life journey

BY CAROLINE ROBERTSON
PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES & BIGSTOCK

Nobody else in eternity will ever look, talk, walk, think or act the way you do. You are special. You are rare. Like anything that's rare, you're valuable. Loving yourself and others is your ultimate life lesson.

It's said that self-love is the shortcut to enlightenment. Self-love is the root from which all growth flourishes. Success, serenity and satisfaction blossom when you nourish yourself with love. As psychologist Tim Sharp (drhappy.com.au) shares, "It's virtually impossible to be happy if you're not happy with yourself; it's also virtually impossible to love and be loved by others if you can't love yourself.

"So self-love is one of the cornerstones of good mental health and living a good life."

Do you want to be happy? Well, you have to uproot self-loathing and cultivate self-love. Self-hatred and happiness can't coexist. Self-esteem empowers you to experience a limitless life.

"Low self-esteem is like driving through life with your hand brake on," wrote Maxwell Maltz, author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*. Maltz believed that if your self-image is unhealthy all of your efforts will fail to bring fulfilment. Filling yourself with feelings of self-love feeds your deepest needs. Cultivating self-love requires constant self-awareness and conscious choices. You'll find self-love is the most positive and productive state while self-loathing is the most destructive state. Understanding yourself, love and your attitude to self-love is the first step on your ongoing adventure.



As Voltaire said, "Self-love is the instrument of our preservation."

What is self-love?

The self is our eternal essence that, when thwarted, farts toxic gases and when appreciated effuses fragrant self-love. Just as electricity manifests itself through machines, our immortal energy expresses itself through our body, mind and actions. Our perfect soul-self dances through fallible forms with designated genders, relationship roles and status. However, our true identity isn't defined by our transient body, possessions or positions. Our changeless self is an infallible life force, a perfect player in a harmonious, unified field.

Eckhart Tolle had this enlightening epiphany when he despaired, "I can't live with myself," leading him to question who the "I" is that he can't live with. The real "I" is this energy that

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flows freely when you're tuned to station self-love. Your energy is static and self-destructive when you're on a faulty frequency. So, just as an expert conductor creates magical music, your mind creates a lovely life by synchronising your vibration with self-love, your supreme state.

So what is love?

Love is a feeling. It's a sentiment stemming from the perception that something is lovable and valuable to you. Are you lovable and valuable? Are you enough and worthy of love? Do you deserve love because you do certain things or are a certain way? No. There are no conditions on sincere self-love. It's unconditional. Only from this pure-hearted place can you sustain self-love through all circumstances. Feeling secure that you're lovable irrespective of external validation is true self-love. This is a steady, unshakable sense of self that sees you through all storms.

You may say you love yourself and others but the proof is in the practice. True love is a verb, a doing word. You must show yourself love through the way you talk to and treat yourself.

Self-love comes from connecting with your inner energy, not from outer appraisal. If you base self-worth on your appearance, achievements, relationships, possessions or status, then it vacillates wildly. The poignant Robbie Williams documentary *Nobody, Someday* illustrated that we can hate ourselves even when millions love us. The singer was suffering from suicidal self-loathing and depression; fortunately, he shifted his state, illustrating that we can make or break ourselves.

Your self-esteem determines whether you enjoy or endure life. You're worthy of love simply by your existence: there are no other criteria. You are worth loving because you exist. You deserve affection, appreciation, attention because you are you. As the Love Guru preached, "G-U-R-U!" Be your own cheerleader, pamperer, personal trainer, bragging boss or proud parent. See self-love as the oxygen that sustains your spirit. You were born from love, you'll thrive in love and you'll return to love.

Your love types

Tick off which love types you lack and resolve to practise them:

1. Self-awareness and honesty. Are you aware of your emotions, attitudes and needs? Do you know yourself and stay true to what you want?

2. Self-acceptance. Can you embrace all aspects of yourself? Vulnerabilities, strengths, quirks and preferences? Can you accept where you are and what you're doing as perfect to learn what you need to?

3. Self-care. Do you prioritise your mental, physical and spiritual needs?

4. Self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Do you build yourself up or beat yourself down?

5. Self-trust. Do you follow your instincts or allow others' opinions to override it?

6. Self-esteem. Do you recognise the unique abilities and achievements that you offer the world?

7. Self-expression. Are you open to express yourself through communication and creativity?

8. Self-empowerment. Can you accept that you're the co-creator of your life, responsible for your choices without apology or need for approval?

9. Self-respect and self-honour. Do you act in your best interest and maintain boundaries that nurture respectful relationships?

10. Self-pleasure. Do you enjoy fun, pleasure and joy?

11. Self-worth. Do you value yourself as well as your time, worth and contribution?

Vain or sane?

Ever encountered someone who is all about themselves? Always admiring their reflection, only talking about themselves and going for what they want oblivious to others? Is this what self-love looks like?

No. This is self-centredness, self-obsession, narcissism, conceit or selfishness. Dr Sharp agrees: "Self-love is different from being self-centred or selfish or hedonistic because we

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know the happiest people are none of these things. Instead, the happiest people love themselves for all they are, including their shortcomings, so they can love others and be loved, so they can feel good and do good, and so they can give all of themselves to bettering life for themselves and their loved ones."

Ironically, attention- and approval-seeking behaviour compensating for low self-worth drives others away in droves. Obsessing over yourself while narcissistically neglecting others is just as damaging to yourself as it is to others. You miss out on the richness of a reciprocal relationship with its joys of connecting, caring and sharing. Selfish people shouldn't be judged but pitied for the growth opportunities they forego.

Some religions condemn selfish behaviour to the point where only selfless, self-sacrificing martyrs are stamped spiritual and all others are condemned as guilty, selfish sinners. Even Buddhism slams self-cherishing as the root cause of all suffering. Yoga considers surrendered service or karma

Low Love Sign	Need
1. Overwhelmed and stressed	self-care, self-worth
2. Unhealthy relationships	self-honour, honesty, self-respect
3. All work and no play	self-pleasure
4. Doubt yourself, settle for less	self-empowerment, self-expression
5. Compare and criticise self	self-acceptance, self-compassion
6. Abuse or hate mind/body	self-acceptance
7. Say sorry or shrink in situations	self-esteem, self-worth, self-empowerment
8. Anxious, obsessive, self-conscious	self-trust, self-empowerment
9. No boundaries	self-trust, self-care, self-worth
10. Directionless and pessimistic	self-empowerment, self-awareness, self-expression
11. Feel unlovable	self-worth, self-honour, self-esteem
12. Unrealistic expectations, ignore achievements	self-acceptance, self-compassion, self-pleasure, self-care, self-worth

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yoga as offering ourselves to a higher purpose to enjoy higher pleasures. This sense of pleasure from giving feeds self-love.

However, self-love is evident by how you feel, not how you appear. If you give while feeling abused, used, unappreciated, disrespected or suppressed, the service you're offering is bound to be tainted with negative feelings such as resentment, depression and denial, which eventually overshadow exalted feelings.

If you're to "love your neighbour as you love yourself", then you must first love yourself. Many doctrines believe we're created in the image of God, are one with sublime creation and are divine sparks with the pure qualities of our perfect origin. In the film *The Footprint of the Buddha*, narrator Ronald Eyre asks a Buddhist monk, "Can a person who does not love himself love another?" The sagacious monk replies emphatically, "It is impossible!"



Self-love signifies sanity, not vanity. It's not selfish to show yourself love; it's essential for survival. Treating yourself with love and respect is treasuring your exceptional existence. It's ungrateful to take the gift of life for granted. As Voltaire said, "Self-love is the instrument of our preservation."

When we take care of ourselves, we're less likely to have to depend on others to take care of us. Neglecting yourself to please others may serve others but denies you what you deserve. So Shakespeare believed: "Self-love is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting."

We may see self-love as ego but ego is the opposite of self-love. Psychologist Erich Fromm wrote that loving yourself is different from being arrogant, conceited or egocentric. Ego is loving the false self based on external approval. Ironically, people with big egos are driven to prove their worth through wealth, status and fame because they lack self-worth. This is like building a house on sand, where the slightest wave washes away self-worth.

Doc Childre, founder of Heartmath Institute (heartmath.org), shares his insights on self-love in *Heart Intelligence*: "Years ago, the term self-love put me off, as it sounded too self-centred. My perception changed as I realised that loving myself was simply practising natural heart qualities such as gratitude, patience, being kinder and more compassionate with myself, including my heart more in decisions and choices, being mindful and non-judgemental of my inner and external environment, releasing the vanity around failing to get everything perfect, etc.

"These practices bring forth the essence of our true self. Our true self is already perfect;

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"We need to work on finding happiness within."

it doesn't require fixing — it's like a perfect orange that's full of sunshine but we have to take the peel off to free up the juice. We advance as we peel off the old perceptions and behaviours that no longer benefit us. Doing this reveals the light from our true being."

Self-love panacea

Have you felt complete unconditional love for someone or something such as a child or an animal? Didn't it feel good to fully embrace them with an open heart? Didn't they thrive under your adoring attention?

Imagine how good it would feel to have a lifelong love affair with yourself — to cherish yourself like you really matter. You do matter. Your life matters. Make the most of it by making the most positive choices for happiness, health, growth and abundance.

Unlike external love, inner self-love can't be taken from us as we continually cultivate it. And as we shine with self-love it inspires others to love themselves. Meeting someone with self-love is infectious. Because they're beyond external approval, they're often unashamedly eccentric. Being comfortable with themselves, they make others comfortable. Their centred stability makes them more self-sufficient and able to empathise. They're impervious to criticism or slights as inner belief bolsters them against outer botherations.

Perpetual praise becomes impotent and makes a child constantly expect external recognition.

In the wise words of Lao-Tzu, "Because one believes in oneself, one doesn't try to convince others. Because

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one is content with oneself, one doesn't need others' approval. Because one accepts oneself, the whole world accepts him or her." It's the paradigm "I'm OK, you're OK", or I'm love and so are you.

Self-love is the first step to enduring success, a panacea for all problems. Research reveals that those with high self-compassion are happier and overcome difficulties such as divorce and disease with more resilience. Self-love decreases perfectionism, anxiety, addictions, bad relationships, depression and discontent. It outshines criticism, suppression, guilt, anger, shame and blame.

The ability to care for yourself also increases your ability to care for others. As self-love expert Louise Hay says, "I found that there is only one thing that heals every problem, and that is: to know how to love yourself. When people start to love themselves more each day, it's amazing how their lives get better. They feel better. They get the jobs they want. They have the money they need. Their relationships either improve, or the negative ones dissolve and new ones begin."

Do you love yourself?

You need to replenish your self-love stores if you answer yes to the following statements:

1. I say negative things about myself silently or aloud.
2. I neglect my needs for sleep, food, exercise, security and pleasure.
3. I often do things I don't want to and delay doing what I want.
4. I allow others to treat me badly.
5. Criticism crushes me.
6. I don't feel I deserve what I desire.
7. I never feel like I'm enough or I do enough.
8. I envy and criticise others.
9. I find it hard to request help.
10. I often doubt myself.
11. I find it hard to treat myself.
12. I wonder how anyone could love the real me.

Sometimes we resist self-care but are forced to show ourselves love to survive. Remember when you were sick or sad and the only thing that pulled you out of it was a big dose of self-love and attention? Before you get to that stage, take stock of which type of self-love you're lacking. There are 11 types of self-love according to Christine Arylo, acclaimed "Queen of Self-Love", founder of international day of self-love and author of *Madly in Love with Me*. Arylo says, "Self-love isn't something you have, it's something you choose. Choose love over criticism, stress, neglect and doubt for yourself."

Love well

How can you give something you haven't got? You can't give love if you don't have it. Can you receive love if you can't recognise, feel or accept it? Maya Angelou said, "I don't trust people who don't love themselves and tell me, 'I love you.' ... There is an African saying: 'Be careful when a naked person offers you a shirt.'"

Loving yourself doesn't mean you love others less. It actually enables you to sustain love because it's coming from an inexhaustible reservoir of self-love. When you show yourself love, you can give it to others from a full heart. We're all interconnected so, when we love ourselves, it flows freely like breathing. Just as when a plane plummets and we take oxygen before sharing it, we need to fuel up on self-love to extend it.

Self-love is the source of all other loves, the air beneath the wings of all relationships. John Lennon recognised this formula for love: "There are two basic motivating forces: fear and love. We need to learn to love ourselves first, in all our glory and our imperfections. If we cannot love ourselves, we cannot fully open to our ability to love others."

How many times have you heard people say, "I only met the love of my life once I loved myself." Awakening love inside empowers us to manifest

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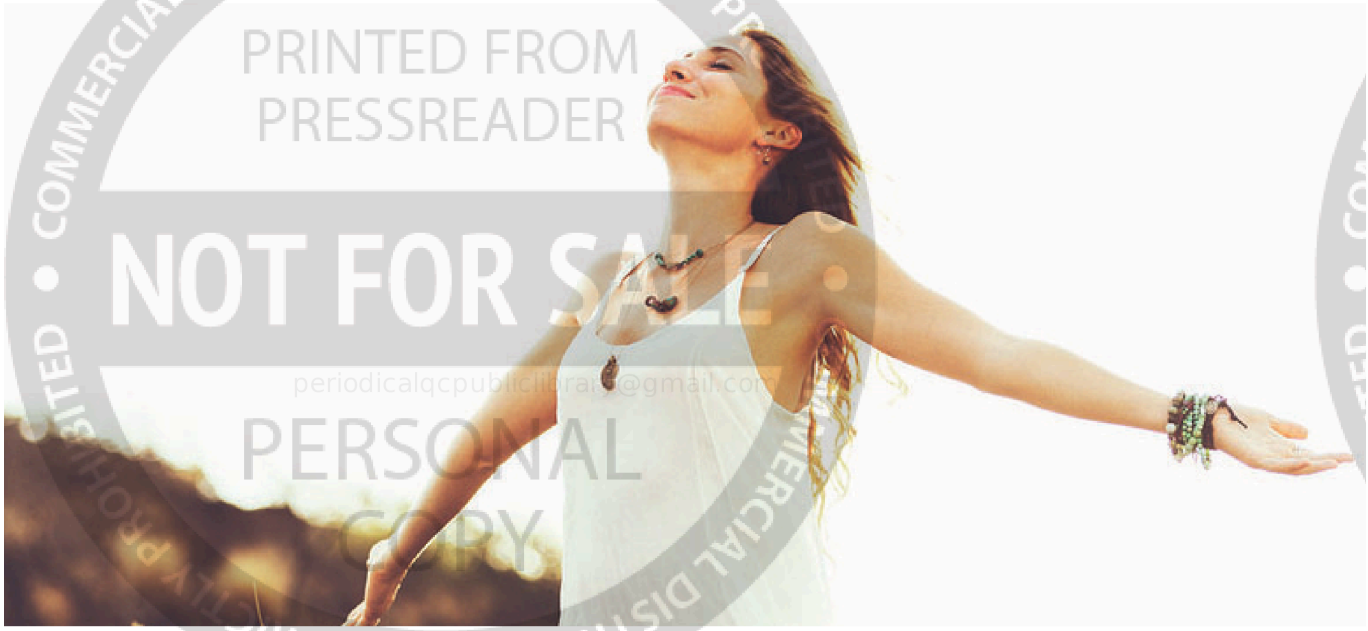

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love outside. Conversely, if you don't feel love, it's hard to give and get it. Barbara De Angelis says, "If you aren't good at loving yourself, you will have a difficult time loving anyone, since you'll resent the time and energy you give another person that you aren't even giving to yourself."

Just as inner peace ripples out to others, inner war catches others in the crossfire. Clearing beliefs that we're unworthy or unable to love is essential for a loving connection with others. Self-loathing blocks our ability to accept love, often attracting relationships that reinforce our negative beliefs. What beliefs are inhibiting your self-love? Write them down and examine if they're really eternal truths.

The love you receive is a reflection of the love you feel for yourself.

We may attract abusive, absent or incompatible relationships because they match our self-beliefs. It's impossible to fill an inner love deficit with outer love. Focus first on self-love to naturally attract love from others; being real will attract real love. Accept your authentic self rather than hiding aspects to attract others. Your nature will be revealed eventually and, when the façade falls, we may sabotage a relationship to avoid anticipated rejection.

Taking responsibility for your relationships, mind, body, finances and health shows self-love. Relish this self-sufficient, secure state as inner love can't be taken away from you unless you allow it.

Inner enemy

"Your problem is you're ... too busy holding onto your unworthiness." ~ Ram Dass

Though every person is a precious gift to the planet, we often undervalue ourselves. Dragging yourself down when you could uplift yourself thwarts your true potential. Low self-esteem causes shame, inferiority, perfectionism, fear, anxiety, sabotage, self-doubt, depression, emptiness, anger and confusion.

The origin of self-loathing is often childhood. Were you ever treated with neglect, abuse, criticism, mistrust and deception? This can darken and disable your life if you interpret it negatively. However, with greater awareness, you

can shine light on trials and make them positive lessons. You can see obstacles as opportunities for growth or ditches to dwindle in.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Most of the shadows of this life are caused by standing in one's own sunshine."

You may learn low self-love from the example of others, such as people who constantly denigrate themselves or denigrate others. You may feel unworthy because you can't match up to society's or your own expectations. You may take temporary failures as proof you will always fail because you're permanently cursed or incapable.

Let's dispel these destructive delusions. Recall a time when you felt unlovable. Write down who was involved, the dialogue, the actions and reactions. Did this really mean you were unlovable? What did you gain from this? Talk to your past self and offer acceptance, support and a hug. Smile to yourself as though you're an adorable animal or perfect baby. Acknowledge how this revealed and moulded your character. Forgive and thank all involved for helping you evolve.

From now on, trust your own opinions, instincts and approval above others. Pleasing yourself is paramount. If people try to pull you down, look at their motives. Dismiss or accept it as impetus to grow. Above all, accept yourself. As Byron Katie put it, "It's not your job to like me; it's mine."

Christine Arylo highlights the 12 signs of low self-love and the corresponding need in the box above. Circle any you feel and resolve to meet your needs.

Count the ways

"All self-worth issues stem from one thought. That thought is, 'I am not enough,'" writes Teal Swan, author of *Shadows Before Dawn: Finding the Light of Self-Love Through Your Darkest Times*. "You need to ask yourself, 'How am I enough?' By focusing on and accepting what we are, we can cultivate self-worth and self-love."

Hunching over with humility doesn't make you or anybody better. Stand tall and celebrate your strengths, skills and idiosyncrasies. Reinforce that you are enough, you are doing enough and you have enough.

Write down your accomplishments, qualities, ambitions and abilities. If you get stuck, ask others what they admire about you. Write down all you love in your life now. Remember all the times you've triumphed and thrived through



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life. Recall all you've shared with others. Stay positive and censor what you say to yourself. Whenever you say something negative about yourself, be conscious of how you feel and counter it with a positive statement. When uncertain say, "I choose the most loving choice for me!"



Self-love steps

"There are days I drop words of comfort on myself like falling leaves and remember that it is enough to be taken care of by myself."
~ Brian Andreas, author of StoryPeople

A modest mate's response to the topic of self-love was, "Oh, that's easier said than done." However, it's just as hard to hate yourself as it is to love yourself. You're engaging the same energy, only opposite polarities. How you direct your energy comes down to moment-by-moment beliefs and decisions. Self-love isn't a static state; it fluctuates. Self-love is essentially attained by always asking two questions: what do I need now and what would I do if I loved myself?

Being aware of your emotions, words and actions enables you to catch yourself when you're steering off self-love street. Try these tips to top up your love tank and skyrocket your self-esteem:

- Appreciate all you are and have now.
- Be aware of negative beliefs, feelings, assumptions, stories and self-talk.
- Listen to a self-love guided meditation regularly.
- Journal to explore feelings and understand yourself deeply.
- See everything as a lesson, everyone as a lecturer and every experience as a test towards graduation.
- Try the HeartMath Quick Coherence Technique (heartmath.org).
- Lie with a large rose quartz over your heart and inhale love, exhale love with a soft smile for five minutes or more.
- As often as possible, let your attention rest on your heart centre. Say, "My heart is my home," and relax into it.
- Identify your needs and prioritise them. Include eating, exercise, work, rest and recreation.
- Enjoy your own company, being your best friend.
- Surround yourself with loving people or animals.
- Accept compliments.
- Lovingly share and care for others.
- Do what you want without justifying, explaining or hiding in shame.
- Enjoy pleasure and play.
- Enjoy creative or expressive pursuits such as music, art or dancing.
- Pursue your passion irrespective of others' opinions and possible outcomes.
- Flex your confidence by tackling a fresh challenge.
- Practise regular self-love rituals such as massage and manicures.
- Clear things you don't love from your life:

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habits, professions, people, places and possessions.

- Transform comparison into inspiration.
- Forgive yourself; there are no failures, only steps to success.
- Sit somewhere serene and soak it up.
- Do something you love and are good at.
- Regularly look at your reflection and say nice things to yourself.
- See Louise Hay's mirror work (youtube.com/watch?v=VZFcN5qB8yM).
- Set boundaries, saying no if something doesn't serve you.
- Think loving thoughts about self, life and others.
- Accept your perceived imperfections and have courage to be real.
- Speak up for yourself and express your truth.
- Celebrate yourself, your triumphs and your efforts.
- Surrender. The universe is teaching you and taking you where you need to go.
- Accept uncertainty as well as change and criticism.
- Trust yourself and your intuition.
- Have a "love-me" day doing whatever you want.
- Consider counselling or assistance.
- If you feel judged by others or yourself, say, "I'm the best I can be. I love me!"

Confident kids

Self-esteem is instilled in us from childhood. Our psychological foundation is formed from genetic tendencies, experiences and observations. Growing up presents kids with constant tests. Clinical psychologist Dr Siham Yahya explains the difficulties: "Each time a child is faced with a challenge, they can worry that they're not good enough or able to cope. Unpleasant peers may say nasty things to a child making them feel more incompetent, such

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as, 'You're stupid!' Sometimes teachers feed the feeling of unworthiness, saying things like, 'Everybody else has finished; we're just waiting on Johnny.' This further erodes a child's self-esteem."

Yahya suggests giving a child praise, nurturing, affection, love and tangible rewards. "This has the magical power to create positive self-regard, which is the feeling of self-worth, positive self-image and high self-esteem. It provides them with strong armour, protecting them from the arrows that life shoots at them."

Don't only compliment kids but set them challenges and responsibilities, as Richard Branson's parents did. In his autobiography, he recounts that at four years old his mother made him get out of the car miles from home and insisted he found his way back solo. He never forgot the sense of accomplishment and the proud expression on his mother's face. The adrenalin of adventure has since spurred him on to great success.

Perpetual praise becomes impotent and makes a child constantly expect external recognition. Save it for special moments so they feel it's genuine. Encourage kids to expand by trying new things and taking calculated risks. Let them explore answers themselves instead of jumping in to solve issues. Nurture their uniqueness so they feel free to grow and go where their bliss beckons. As Dr Seuss said, "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

Berating kids for making mistakes only discourages them and closes down communication. Instead, discuss what they learned so they can do better next time. Being a present parent forges a strong connection so a child can openly express issues.

"A child needs 15–30 minutes with each parent daily to fill up their 'Parental Attention Thermometer'," advises Yahya. "Be curious about their day, friends, games and likes. Always greet your children with a smile and a warm embrace. Say, 'I love you.' Be a role model by loving yourself, showing them how self-love looks and acts."

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Parental pressure

Constant caregivers have less time and energy to care for themselves. Showing yourself and others love simultaneously is all about balance, time management and asking for assistance. Nancy Mattos, family worker, celebrant and mother of five, shares her experience: "When my cup is full, I seem to have many skills to draw upon such as abundance of love, understanding, compassion, fun and laughter. But, when my cup's empty, the ability to draw from all of these amazing qualities [is] very limited; therefore my parenting ability is also limited. Self-care and self-love as a mum takes a lot of awareness and dedication — and it should be a priority."

Rather than measuring yourself against a Florence Nightingale ideal or your parents, it's important to have realistic expectations. Doing your best is all you can do. Shake off self-criticism, "comparisonitis" and doubt. Put yourself in your ward's place and ask, "What would I really require in their situation?" Sharing things like love, affection and attention for allotted times is enough; one person cannot provide 24/7 service.

During her workshops "Emotional Awareness: A Doorway to Healthy Parenting", Mattos sees burnt-out parents who are too tough on themselves. "I regularly see parents who struggle with self-love, guilt, blame and judgement," she says. "Due to life pressures they've taken on immense responsibility. Many of them are single mums who have forgotten what fun is, what play is, and the importance of connecting to the self and their children. This connection only happens when we are able to stop, accept what is, and just be. At times we're on 'auto-pilot', doing and achieving. We need to slow down, take a breath, look around and see our lives, our families, our homes and realise that we could probably be doing it a little easier for ourselves and others."

Tending to your own emotional and physical needs makes you more able to meet others' needs. Our children soak up our sense of self and model it. As Naomi Wolf said, "A mother who radiates self-love vaccinates their daughter against low self-esteem." Show them that life is an amazing adventure where everything unravels for a reason. Caring for others and yourself along the way reaps rewards that enrich your life. Fully focusing on others may be a way to avoid yourself or control others by



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creating dependence. Nurture others' self-sufficiency while nurturing your needs with contemplation, meditation, action.

Suicide to self-love

Nothing is more self-destructive than suicide or more constructive than self-love. Self-love is accepting one's life as worthwhile; suicide is rejecting one's existence as useless.

"Enlightened people accept the meaning in everything as they are one with everything. They feel love for all because they realise all is love. They are *swasthya*, or seated in their true self, and nothing sways them from that blissful state," says Sanskrit scholar and Ayurvedic doctor Rama Prasad.

Until we see everything as valuable, we may want to discard it as rubbish. Throwing yourself away may seem to solve insurmountable issues or at least stop suffering but these feelings are calling you to change your perception and approach.

Sometimes it takes a breakdown to make a breakthrough. Extreme pain can trigger an epiphany of purpose. Yoga teacher and health coach Nikki Ayres learnt this after a suicide attempt. "The lowest moment in my life was a beautiful blessing," she says. "It taught me how I needed to be gentle on myself, it taught me to drop judgement and that our mind has the power to dictate our life."

Ayres posted a video of her story to raise awareness that one in seven Australians dies from suicide. She says, "You need to make yourself your biggest priority and balance out the giving and receiving ratio. If you constantly give love, you become burnt out." Her near-death experience led to a fuller life: "Self-love starts from within, shifting the mindset and turning to compassion. I decided to change my mind and in doing so my whole life shifted in a huge way; it was the moment that my soul passion showed up and it was crystal clear what I have come here to do."

Ayres feels that happiness dependent on anything that can be taken away is a precarious position. "Instead, we need to work on finding happiness within, love ourselves unconditionally, do things that set our souls on fire and be our own best friend. So if areas of our life fall to pieces our foundation of self-love saves us."

Enjoy life by patiently allowing it to unfold organically. Life is frustrating when we worry, micromanage, expect perfection and permanence. Trust there's a plan propelling you to deeper understanding. This is the "wisdom model" as opposed to the "achievement model" of understanding life, according to Greg Neville, author of *The True Cause and Cure of Depression* and founder of Melbourne's Anti Depression Institute. For many, life's purpose is to prove themselves worthy by achieving what they feel is valuable whether it be an image, position, possessions and so on.

The wisdom model states that life is inherently worthwhile because we're always gaining and giving wisdom. Neville explains, "In the wisdom model, you're always valuable because you're always performing your valuable role of serving as data to other people's minds and their consequent development in understanding reality."

The wisdom model goal is to awaken yourself and others, which you are always doing consciously or unconsciously. The achievement model is a rollercoaster of supposed success and failure as you hate or love yourself according to your sense of achievement. In the wisdom model, you're always successful and feeling self-love as you are always teaching and being taught.

So celebrate yourself and your life. Why wait to awaken inner love? Paradise is in the present, as author Alan Cohen says: "To love yourself right now, just as you are, is to give yourself heaven. Don't wait until you die. If you wait, you die now. If you love, you live now."

■ *References available on request.*

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