

## Your Self-Love Guide

Let's first establish that loving yourself is not being selfish. We are often taught that prioritizing yourself or your needs is selfish and that you should focus your energies on other people. If your intentions are positive for everyone, including yourself, then you have nothing to fear. Selecting positive activities in which we participate is an act of loving the self. Self-love is exactly what it sounds like, loving yourself. It means loving all aspects of yourself, the good, the bad and the ugly. We all have our flaws and learning to accept those flaws is part of self-love.

Practicing self-care and self-love often just means extending the same respect and care you have for others to yourself. As the saying goes, we are often our own worst enemy. Practicing self-love means moving beyond the negative thoughts and ideas people have projected to you and moving forward. You have the ability to create an environment for yourself in which you can make mistakes, grow and thrive. Adding self-care into your daily life with small steps will increase your self-respect and self-love.

### Steps to Practice Self-Love Everyday

#### Recognizing and Accepting Your Emotional State:

No one is happy all the time. Feel the emotion and reflect on it. You don't have to dwell in it for long periods of time. Notice how your body feels and what it is telling you with that emotion. You may need to hang on to it for a while but learn from it, then let it go. Change your mood when you feel you have lingered with the emotion long enough.

Note: A mood can be changed by changing your thought. Think of what you enjoy, what makes you laugh, what kinds of thoughts make you smile inside and out.

An important part of self-love is holding yourself to reasonable standards. You must acknowledge that some days will be better than others, and that it's totally okay to have an off day, or week or slump period. It's important to check in with your emotional state frequently, so that you can recognize your moods and learn to accept them. In practice, this means not telling yourself everything is alright when you know they aren't. Don't play those same games with yourself. Be honest with yourself. Tune into your emotional state so that you can act and plan accordingly!

#### Take Time for Yourself

Some people naturally gravitate and want to be around other people. Other enjoy their alone time. As great as it is to be around people and to socialize, it's very important to take time for yourself so that you can reflect on how you are feeling. Dedicate some time to self-care. Are you stretching yourself too thin? Can you change that? What actions can you choose to balance yourself between work, school, homework, daily life and social obligations? You may have to juggle your responsibilities or ask someone you trust to lend a hand.

You should allow some time to do things that rejuvenate you. A word of caution (because I know how it is) don't waste your valuable alone time scrolling through your phone or mindlessly watching TV! Take some time (even just a few minutes!) to do some mindfulness activities and whatever else helps you check in with your emotions. Note: See the section on Spiritual Health for some mindfulness activities.

It's not selfish to prioritize alone time so that you can focus on self-love, it's a non-negotiable step of your self-love practice.



## **Get Enough Sleep**

Sleep is SO important, and often SO overlooked. Balancing activities and responsibilities you have on your plate can lead to late nights and early mornings just so you can squeeze everything in. Sacrificing your sleep on a rare occasion is okay but when it becomes the norm, your mental and physical health will be negatively affected.

## **Exercising and Eating Right**

We won't discuss details here, but you know they are important, and you know how to find a good practice to follow.

### **Self-Talk**

This is one of the most important things you can do for yourself. For years you have been listening to everyone and "hearing" their voice in your head. Stop those thoughts. Find your own thoughts about who you are and the positive things about yourself. This will change your self confidence when you look at who you truly are. What are your good qualities, your gifts, things you are good at? Put those thoughts in your head, not what someone else says.

Self-talk is the inner dialogue we have running through our heads most hours of the day. Self-talk is normally something that we do unconsciously, and it is often our subconscious thoughts and feelings. Sometimes our self-talk can be very negative, leading to feelings of self-doubt, self-judgement and even self-loathing. If you find that your self-talk narrative is overwhelmingly negative. An important part of using self-talk to your benefit, is catching yourself when you engage in negative self-talk. If you notice this, try to pinpoint the cause, and move forward in a forgiving way that encourages positivity.

Sometimes if negative self-talk goes on for too long, we start to develop negative narratives about ourselves that can end up being really damaging to our self-esteem. We end up internalizing these negative narratives about ourselves, and all the sudden these stories end up changing our attitudes and even our behaviors. In order to get to the root of the problem, you need to identify the negative stories you're telling yourself about yourself. Where do these negative stories come from? Are they rooted in a single incident? Next you need to figure out why you hold on to these negative stories. If you are able to identify why you are perpetuating these stories, you can help break the negative thought cycle that is perpetuating negative self-talk. To challenge these negative stories

### **Forgiving Yourself**

This means embracing self-compassion. Recognize we all make mistakes – big and small– and while at the time they may seem earth-shattering, they probably aren't. Life moves on and so should you. Embracing self-compassion will allow you to reflect on your actions with kindness, empathy and support, which will allow you to forgive yourself for whatever happened. Recognize you might be holding onto a grudge toward yourself. This can as damage as holding onto a grudge against someone else. Grudges require a huge amount of negative energy, which can be absolutely exhausting. Letting go of the negative feelings you have about yourself or your actions through forgiveness will free up your energy and emotional capacity so that you can embrace more loving behavior.

### **Committing to Self-Love**

Achieving self-love can be a long journey, not something that just happens overnight. It can take a long time to undo the bad habits we pick up along the way that cause us to be unkind to ourselves. It is important to remember that this is a process that can take time and commitment. Self-love is not about instant gratification. Most of us know how to give ourselves a little pick-me-up, whether it's treating yourself to ice cream, buying a cute new top, or bingeing a couple



episodes of your favorite show. And while these things are fun, and you should totally continue to indulge in them, they are not long-term avenues to self-kindness and self-love. While you're on your journey, don't forget about the little things that bring you joy, but remember that mindfulness and dedication are the keys to success.

### **Continue to Explore New Alternatives to Self-Love**

Words like self-love and mindfulness are new buzz words in our environment. These buzz words can remind us to become more introspective and accepting of who we are. For you it means that more research and techniques are coming out all the time. An important part of your self-love journey should be committing to trying new opportunities. We can always learn to show ourselves more compassion and love. Keeping up on the most recent literature and trends on the subject can help you find methods that connect to your way of thinking and practicing self-love. Engaging with new materials will teach you more and more about yourself and how to take care of your mental, physical and emotional state.

Just like any relationship, practicing self-love takes time, patience and a level of commitment.

