

12 Ways to Accept Yourself

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For many people self-acceptance is hard to come by on a good day. It's tenuous, a glass with tiny cracks, at best. On a bad day, when you've made a mistake or two, don't like how you look or feel absolutely miserable, your self-acceptance is in shards.

Fortunately, self-acceptance is something we can nurture. Look at it as a skill that you can practice versus an innate trait that you either have or don't.

Below, clinicians reveal 12 ways we can cultivate self-acceptance.

1. Set an intention.

"Self-acceptance begins with intention," according to psychotherapist Jeffrey Sumber, MA. *"It is vital that we set an intention for ourselves that we are willing to shift paradigms from a world of blame, doubt and shame to a world of allowance, tolerance, acceptance and trust,"* he said. This intention acknowledges that self-loathing simply doesn't lead to a satisfying life. According to Sumber; *"If I set my intention that a life with self-acceptance is far better than a life of self-hatred then I begin a chain reaction within my being geared to a life of peace."*

2. Celebrate your strengths.

"We are much better collectors of our shortcomings than our strengths," according to Ryan Howes, Ph.D., a psychologist in Pasadena, California. Psychologist John Duffy, PsyD, agrees. *"Many people] fail to see their strengths and cling to antique scripts they carry about their lack of worth."*

Duffy helps his clients hone in on their strengths and abilities by writing them down. If you're having a tough time coming up with your list, name one strength each day, he said. Start with something basic like; *"I'm a kind person,"* said Duffy, also author of *The Available Parent*. *"Typically, a list will evolve as the old script loses its strength, and people recognize they are intelligent, and creative, and powerful, and articulate, and so on. Sometimes, we can't see ourselves until we clear the weeds."*

Howes suggested making a similar list: *"Make a list of all the hardships you've overcome, all the goals you've accomplished, all the connections you've made, and all the lives you've touched for the better. Keep it close by, review it frequently, and add to it often."*

3. Consider the People Around You.

What kinds of people do you surround yourself with? Jeffrey Sumber suggests asking yourself these questions about the people in your life:

- *Who speaks negatively to me?*
- *Who reinforces negative self-talk?*
- *Why do I allow such people to hurt me?*
- *Are they just doing my own dirty work because I'm not willing to choose a different reality?*

4. Create A Healthy Support System

“Distance yourself from people who bring you down.” says psychotherapist Joyce Marter, LCPC. Instead, *“Surround yourself with people who accept you and believe in you.”*

5. Forgive Yourself.

Past regrets can prevent us from practicing self-acceptance. Forgive yourself and move on. Ryan Howes encourages his patients; *“Whether it’s about something you’ve done or a personality quirk that resulted in a social faux pas, it’s important to learn from the mistake, make efforts to grow, and accept that you can’t change the past.”*

When the tinges of remorse resurface, remember these words; *“I made the best decision with information I had at the time.”* *“The behavior or decision might not seem correct in hindsight, but at the time it seemed like the best choice.”*

6. Shutdown the Inner Critic

Many people equate their inner critic with a voice of reason. They think their inner critic is simply speaking the truth. But if you would not say it to someone you love, it is not honesty or sincerity. It’s unwarranted — and harsh — judgment.

According to Joyce Marter, it is possible to quiet your inner critic by choosing a realistic mantra. *“I believe in the power of affirmation or mantra and encourage clients to select a mantra that is normalizing, calming and encouraging during times when the inner critic rears its ugly head.”* For example, you could use; *“I am only human, I am doing the best that I can and that is all I can do.”*

Marter also says; *“Our mistakes and our imperfections are not bad or wrong or failures— they are the fingerprints of humanity and opportunities for learning, healing and growth.”*

7. Grieve the Loss of Unrealized Dreams.

According to Howes, many of our problems with self-acceptance come from our inability to reconcile who we are as compared with the idealized dreams of our youth. *“Maybe you dreamed about becoming an Olympic athlete or a multi-millionaire or staying married forever or having a big family. Whatever your dreams or goals, mourn that they didn’t come to pass, then, get back to becoming the best you possible.”*

8. Perform Charitable Acts.

All of the clinicians agree that; *“When you give to others, you see how your deeds are a positive influence on other lives. It becomes more and more difficult to maintain the idea that you are no good when you see how your deeds help other people.”*

9. Realize That Acceptance Is Not Resignation.

Joyce Marter described acceptance as letting go of the past and the things we cannot control. This way; *“. . . you can focus your energy on that which you can [control], which is empowering.”* For some people accepting that they have a problem is the first step to

making positive changes. Acceptance opens the mind and the heart to the possibilities for growth, learning and healing. Without acceptance there is resistance which is often at the root of remaining “*stuck.*”

10. Speak to Your Highest Self.

Try the following activity that includes imagining and interacting with your Higher, Divine or Best self. You may call it your Spirit or Guardian Angel, what you call it does not matter. What matters is that you realize there is a part of you that transcends all human limitations.

Imagine your Higher Self/Spirit stepping outside of you and looking at you and your current life circumstance or situation. Take time to breathe deeply and ask this part of you to advise you what to do. Listen inwardly and trust what you hear.

This process of visualizing a separation or detachment from the current [or] suffering self can help you tap into the wisdom that already lies within. Your Higher Self knows the path and will always support you in growth and healing. it to promote healing.

This exercise you will support you in learning how to be your own best support system. It will also support the development and demonstration of empathy, compassion and love towards the self. It is best to take a few minutes to meditate and practice this visualization whenever you are in crisis [or] need some direction or guidance. This process also supports the development of self-trust as it lessens the attachment to external validation.

11. Be Kind to Yourself.

Many people are hesitant to show even a shred of self-kindness because they see it as selfish or undeserved. According to Deborah Serani, PsyD, a psychologist and author of *Living with Depression*, the key to self-compassion is to; “*understand that weakness and frailty are part of the human experience.*” When something has gone wrong, when there’s been a mistake made, no matter how small, many people are all too quick to point the finger at themselves. This self-blame often leads to the self-judgment that fuels self-rejection.

Kindness toward self, self-forgiveness and compassion are essential keys to self-acceptance.

12. Fake It ‘Til You Make It.

If you’re unconvinced that you’re a worthy person, keep the faith and keep at it. Keep practicing self-compassion, and self-forgiveness. Use affirmations as though they are the food required to keep your soul alive. “*Most of us do not know that we have direct communication to and from our deity of choice, yet we take the leap and trust that the God of our understanding is true and real.*” The same is true about our quest toward our self-acceptance. You first must think and feel before you can or will absolutely know.”