How to Love Yourself No Matter What

Do you frequently put yourself down, feel critical of your body, or fear that other people will “find you out?” Your reactions may be so automatic that you don’t even question them. You may quickly move into self-recrimination without a second thought. Self-acceptance means accepting your whole self without judgment. That includes your weaknesses and your quirky, difficult parts, the ones that you probably try to deny or suppress.

Self-acceptance is more often than not a matter of what you are thinking. We all have dominant thought patterns, some positive, many negative. The path to self-acceptance means becoming aware of what you are thinking and roots out the “weeds” that strangle your self-acceptance. If you slow down a bit and become aware of what’s occurring in your mind, you can begin to ask important questions like these:

- Is this a healthy way to relate to myself?
- Will what I am thinking lead to happiness or keep me in a cycle of distress?
- Is this what I truly want?

When self-acceptance is an issue, Mindfulness of Thought is absolutely essential. You must begin to become deeply aware of what you are thinking about yourself realizing that just because you think it, does not mean it is true.

11 Reasons Self-Acceptance Can Be Difficult and the Antidotes

There are many reasons why it may be difficult to accept yourself. Just hearing one that resonates for you can bring relief because you realize you are not alone - someone else understands.

Here are some of the reasons why self-acceptance can be hard and the antidotes you can practice when learning how to accept yourself more and more.

1. **You think you are at fault.** You may blame yourself for something that happened in your life, especially events that may have occurred in your early years. For example, you may believe you're the cause of conflict in your parents’ relationship or even their divorce.
   **Antidote:** Give the responsibility back. It was never yours to own. You can do this through prayer, visualization or by writing a letter to the other people involved. Claim your freedom and redeem your self-acceptance.

2. **You think you're not worthy.** You began to feel inadequate as a child and carried that belief into your adult life. Through your life experiences you “found” evidence that supported the belief in unworthiness. Perhaps the most damaging influence was “Critic” constantly whispering in your mind reinforcing the false beliefs and validating the unworthiness.
Antidote: Everyone has fundamental goodness beneath the crusty stuff, including you. Instead of focusing on your failings, start to believe in and accentuate your positives. You can do this by celebrating your victories, and by reminding yourself of the good you have achieved for yourself or done for others.

3. **You did not have positive roles models.** If one of your parents or primary caregivers did not accept themselves, you may be inadvertently modeling their behavior instead of accepting yourself. All children model themselves after what they see and hear. Although you have grown up, there could be a little one inside of you that feels they cannot or should not be better than what they saw growing up.
   
   Antidote: Find 4 or 5 positive affirmations and feed them to yourself daily. The best affirmations to use when building self-acceptance are “I Am” affirmations. The words attached to the phrase I am can literally alter the cellular energy of the brain. You can also find positive roles models now, people who inspire and motivate you. Identify what it is that you recognize in them and grow it in yourself.

4. **You have made self-acceptance conditional.** You believe you need to achieve something before you can fully accept yourself. You’re waiting to complete your education, earn a specific amount of money, or get a promotion at your job. You believe that you cannot accept yourself or be acceptable until you do or have, this or that. This is a false belief and an unloving expectation
   
   Antidote: Take the conditions off and accept your whole self now. Try the Naked Mirror Exercise. Standing naked in front of a full-length mirror, look yourself dead in the eye and say, “I love you and accept you as you are.” Beginning at your face, touch every part of your body repeating the affirmation, “I love you and accept you as you are.” You may laugh. You may cry. You may turn away. Just don’t give up. Repeat the exercise until you can say it, feel it and believe it. You will know you are there if you totally break down remembering all the ways you have rejected and judged yourself. That is a sign that the healing has begun.

5. **You are trying to live up to societal norms.** There’s so much pressure to live up to societal norms in families, at school, and in the marketing, you see all around you. You may not accept who you are because you think you should be someone else. More than half of the adults on the planet spend the better part of their lives trying to be someone they are not, in order to live up to the rules of the society. Trying to live up to family and social norms can lead to an addiction to “external validation.” This means you cannot accept yourself until and unless others accept you.
   
   Antidote: Break the rules! Make new rules for yourself! Live beyond family patterns and traditions! Dare to be different! Honor your values and invite others to join you.

6. **Your circle, tribe or village is not supportive.** It’s difficult to feel good about yourself if your parents, siblings, partner, friends, or employer are constantly putting you down. I know this one well. I had a critical mother and a harsh boss both of whom eroded my self-confidence. Sometimes, we unconsciously engage in relationships that reinforce our false beliefs about who we are and who we cannot be in life. Don’t blame yourself for this, it is
not intentional. However, once you realize that the people around you do not support you or make you feel good, you can begin to make new choices.

**Antidote:** Your parents will always be your parents. This is something you cannot change, nor can you change how they “be” with you. What you can do is craft and create how you interact with them. Know how to “suit up” and guard yourself whenever you are around family members who do not encourage the best within you. Limit your contact as much as possible and, if they ever ask you why, be willing to stand in your Warrior Truth and share how they make you feel. Don’t expect them to change, just share your truth. Other than your family, you have the right and the power to change partners, jobs, friends and anything else that does not lift your mind, heart and spirit. Surround yourself with people who love, appreciate, and support you, one person at a time. In other words, build a new tribe or village where you feel good about being who you are.

7. **You have experienced trauma.** We are all in some type of shock because we have all experience some level of trauma. The experience of shock or developmental trauma can trigger shame or the mistaken belief that you were somehow responsible for what has happened in your life. Very often, the most difficult part of overcoming trauma is recognizing that our pain, hurt and fear, must have a witness. This means you must identify the traumatic event; acknowledge that was traumatic and be with it without denying, avoiding or trying to change it. Once you can do this, you can separate the past from the present and realize that the event is over.

**Antidote:** Fight, flight or freeze are common reactions to trauma that keep us stuck in the originating event. In severe cases, you may a trauma therapist who can help you heal the trauma and transform these incorrect beliefs. If you know you have trauma and have learned how to manage it, you may also be ready to release it. Energy work such as deep breathing, Mindful Meditation, Mandala coloring, and hands on body work such as Reiki are self-loving ways to release trauma from your mind and body. Establishing a strong relationship with your body, bonding with nature, identifying the lessons and blessings of the traumatic experience are also helpful way to move and live beyond trauma. In any case, you will need to do the inner work to identify the best approach for yourself. And, do not be afraid or hesitant to reach out for help.

8. **You feel there's something wrong with you, even though you can’t put your finger on it.** You may have missed out on healthy parenting at a pre-verbal age leaving you in this vague, undetermined state. Emotionally absent parents, unstable or volatile home environment, abject poverty, physical or sexual abuse can all lead to the undertone of something not being quite right about you. Any of the previous offerings, including “I Am” affirmations will begin to address these feelings and beliefs.

**Antidote:** Learning to parent yourself now in soothing, loving, and empowering ways is an important path to self-acceptance. Radical self-care, doing the things that soothe, relax and nurture yourself are absolutely essential to correcting whatever you believe is wrong with you,
9. **The inner critic constantly finds fault.** We tend to assimilate the parenting style of our caregivers. If one or both of your parents were loving, it’s probably easier for you to love yourself. If one of them was critical, you may have taken on her fault-finding style and continue to direct criticism toward yourself. Another fuel that feeds the inner critic is comparing yourself to others. This is an act of self-violence that must be eliminated.

**Antidote:** You must become ruthlessly diligent about when the voice of your inner critic is triggered or speaking. However, rather than being angry or upset learn how to gently, firmly consistently challenge him or her with a positive message. Love is the best way to silence the inner critic. Gentle, consistent love will buckle the critic’s knees.

10. **You feel you have unacceptable qualities, urgings, or dark secrets.** You’re not alone, everyone has things they would rather not have or know about themselves. Often this is our shadow, the parts of ourselves that we deny at work. So much healing can come when you embrace your shadow instead of avoiding or denying it. Know that no one is perfect. Self-acceptance grows when we learn to have more humor and spaciousness about dealing with our difficult aspects when they pop up.

**Antidote:** Mindfulness Meditation settles and calms your mind, so that you feel more relaxed and more in charge of yourself. Loving-Kindness Meditation, which begins by sending love to yourself, fosters a healthy appreciation for who you really are. Gratitude fortifies contentment, lowers stress, and changes the way you view your life. Having clear boundaries increases self-respect, and keeps you alert to your most important priorities.

11. **There might not be an obvious reason it could just be a lesson you need to learn.** What if you had great parents, grew up in a loving environment, never had a traumatic experience, have been able to accomplish most of your goals, dreams, desires and still, cannot seem to accept or be happy with who you are, as you are? What if self-acceptance is just be what you’ve been given to work on in this life. If this is your case, guess what? The first step to learning is self-acceptance is . . . self-acceptance.

**Antidote:** In addition to the antidotes above, make a list of all of the things you have determined are “wrong” with you or about you. Once your list is complete, use the following mental prompt to begin dismantling your false notions:

Even though I ____________ *(fill in the blank)*, I completely love and accept myself.

Here’s some examples:
- Even though I’m a sensitive person, I completely love and accept myself.
- Even though I have trouble sticking to my healthy diet, I completely love and accept myself.
- Even though I’m sometimes overcritical, I completely love and accept myself.

The ability to change your beliefs or reframe your negative self-talk depends upon your awareness. You can spend you mental and emotional energy denying, ignoring or avoiding what you think and feel about yourself; or you can commit to doing the work required to heal and grow beyond the false beliefs. It begins with the practice of noticing when one of
the self-rejecting tendencies appears. Once you become aware, you must apply a self-acceptance affirmation or another antidote, right on the spot.

The Cost When You Don't Accept Yourself

Feeling bad about yourself comes at a great cost: Your happiness, your peace of mind, your vitality, and your ability to achieve your mission in life are in jeopardy. An excellent journal exercise is to reflect on: *What is the cost I pay when I fall into self-rejection or self-disparagement?*

Accepting your whole self - the good, the bad, and the ugly, does not give you license to bet beat yourself up, stay stagnant, indulge in negativity or become addicted to self-help practices. Nor does it mean you get to give up on yourself and stay the same because you cannot find the right thing to do. Diligence, discipline and commitment as the self toward positive change. Each of these begins with accepting who you are as you are right now and then, taking the steps toward healing. It is much easier to effect positive personal change from a place of self-acceptance rather than it is when you dislike, judge or avoid the truth about yourself.

Positive Repetition Is the Key

You cannot and will not grow from pushing away parts of yourself to accepting your whole self-overnight. Nor does it require 55 workshops, 10 years of therapy and a legion of self-help books or classes. It may not be easy and there may be many instances of start and stop but positive repetition will work over a period of time. It will actually change your brain.

Sometimes the harm and hurt is so deep it takes years, but you can still feel better as you incorporate more self-acceptance into your life. When these critical voices come up, you have to know with certainty that they are lies. The more consist you become in your spiritual practices, the faster you will begin to feel better. The more consistent you are in your commitment to do the work, the faster you will see change. Your mind, your voice, your capacity to love every part of yourself will respond to your intentions and your prayers.

And please, do not hesitate to seek the help of a therapist or counselor if you feel you cannot make these changes alone. However, make sure you do some work on yourself before you expect someone to be able to work it out for you.