



8 Simple Steps to Limitless Self-Love

with Zach Beach, www.zachbeach.com

*Kiss your own fingertips
and hug your own curves.
You are made of waves and honey
and spicy peppers when it is necessary.
You are a goddess,
I hope you haven't forgotten.
Emery Allen*

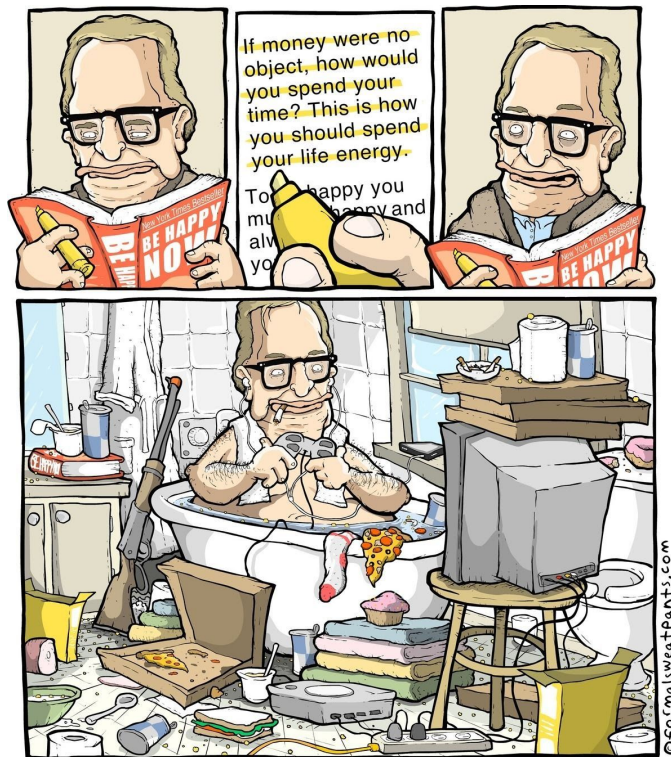
Extending love to ourselves is often the most challenging task. From self-blame to self-judgement, to self-hatred, our relationship to ourselves needs repair.

We can so easily become our own worst critic. We often not only put ourselves at a higher standard than we put others, but will also say things to ourselves we would never say to other people because it would be far too cruel.

Even worse, we are fed all sorts of cliches about the importance of self love (how many times have you been told you cannot love others until you love yourself?) with very few actual guides or role-models for what that self love looks like.

I offer the following eight steps to bring you on the path of loving yourself fully and unconditionally. Like any skill in life, self-love takes time and it takes practice.

Fortunately, we can all get better at it over time. Be patient and enjoy the journey as you learn to love yourself again.



Is this self love?

Step 1: Acceptance

Psychological inquiry and meditation practice teach us that much of our emotional suffering is caused by our desire for things to be other than they are. This also applies to ourselves. Our first step on the path of self-love is to accept ourselves, in all of our imperfections. There is nothing wrong with you or who you are, no matter what.

Exercise: Mindfulness of the body meditation

Step 2: Compassion

Our next step is to extend compassion to ourselves by recognizing that our lack of self-love causes suffering. We can recognize that our self-blame and judgement creates emotional distress, and encircle our experience in a sphere of loving compassion.

Kristin Neff offers the following mantra: *“This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment. May I give myself the compassion I need.”*

Exercise: Exploring Self-Compassion Through Letter-Writing

The following is an exercise in self-compassion. It is designed to help you recognize what self-compassion might look or feel like when you experience suffering of any kind – from relatively insignificant stress to strong emotional upheavals which have the power to throw any of us completely off-center, color our perceptions or overwhelm us.

You are asked to write a letter to yourself (in the second person) from the perspective of a good friend, someone who is unconditionally kind and compassionate, loving and accepting of you.

Begin by imagining yourself in a situation where you feel vulnerable or in circumstances that bring up in you feelings of shame or insecurity, or feelings of just not being good enough. Try to bring to mind a situation or a specific incident that tends to evoke a sense of dread in you, perhaps associated with feelings of inadequacy. This could be an issue at work or in a relationship or perhaps something you think is flawed in your physical appearance. When you imagine yourself in this situation, how do you feel inside? What is the somatic bodily felt- sense like for you? What kinds of thoughts are triggered about this? What emotions arise? Do you feel fear or anger? Do you feel insecure or sad or depressed? Be honest. Don't repress your feelings. Just try to become aware of your emotions exactly as they are, without adding to them or turning away from them.

Now think about how a good friend, someone who truly cares about you, might talk to you. How might this friend like this offer you comfort and guidance to help you get through this difficulty? Consider that this friend knows your history, all your human imperfections, the inadequacies you perceive about yourself, which are conditioned by so many things that you didn't necessarily choose: your genetic makeup, your family history and life circumstances, the countless numbers of things that have influenced and shaped your life and brought you to this very moment of experience. What would that friend say to you about your 'flaws,' from the perspective of unconditional compassion, especially around any of your harsh self- critical judgments?

Infuse your letter with a strong sense of acceptance, kindness and the wish for you, too, to be happy and free from suffering. Try to recognize that your suffering is part of being human. It doesn't separate you from others but in fact connects you to others. We all know what it's like to suffer. Try to be authentically encouraging and supportive. Rather than running or hiding from the self-critical inner-voice that judges you harshly or raging against it, try instead to mentor yourself with kindness and caring, like a good friend would.

My self compassion letter

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Name:

Mailing Address:

Step 3: Friendliness

If compassion is the desire for us to be alleviated of our suffering, friendliness is the desire for us to be happy and succeed in life. The difference between self-nurturance and self-indulgence is friendliness. Self-nurturance is helping ourselves up when we are down, recognizing we have emotional needs and taking the initiative to meet them. Self-nurturance is caring, respectful, and comes in to assist when needed, just like a good friend would.

Exercise: Create your self-love cheat sheet

Things I can do that are **grounding**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things I can do that are **nourishing**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things I can do that are **uplifting**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 4: Worthiness

Our next step towards self-love is to claim our own worthiness of love. If we do not think that we are deserving of love, then we won't extend love to ourselves nor ask it of others.

Exercise: Write your worthiness mantra.

Examples of worthiness mantras:

“No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.” - Brene Browne

“I am worthy. I am loved. I am cared for. I care for others. I choose only good for myself. I choose only good for others. I love myself. I love others. I open my heart. My heart is open.” - James Doty

“My existence is a miracle in this gift of life. To be here and to be me is more than enough. No matter what happens, I am lovable, loving, and loved. My heart is open to this world of possibility. I am forgiven, I am eternal. I am me.” - Zach Beach

My worthiness mantra:

Step 5: Boundaries

Once we know our own worthiness, there are certain behaviors we will not tolerate in our lives. This means setting up appropriate and empowering boundaries. Boundaries are the walls in our cup of self-love. We cannot fill our cup if there is a hole in the cup or the sides are flimsy.

Exercise: Boundary Inquiry

What do I want?

What boundary do I need to set to get it?

What's missing in my life?

Why don't I have it?

What causes me suffering?

What low standards have I put up with for this being in my life?

Step 6: Expectations

If boundaries are designed to keep the bad out of our lives, expectations are our way of bringing the good in. Although expectations have a bad rep, research shows that people in relationships who have higher expectations have higher quality relationships

Questions for inquiry:

What do I expect my relationships to be?

How do I expect to be treated in my job or in my home?

What would I do if I knew I would not fail?

Step 7: Purpose

There are two important times in a person's life: the day they are born, and the day they discover why. Discovering, cultivating, and expanding our purpose is one of the truest ways to love ourselves. To really love ourselves, we must quiet the mind, listen deeply to the heart and follow what it says.

Questions for Inquiry:

Who am I?

What is my Purpose?

If money were no object, how would I spend my life?

What am I passionate about?

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