

Saying YES to Who You Really Are!



What is it all about? Why do we starve ourselves and exercise furiously? Why do we make ourselves feel so guilty? Why do we stand in front of mirrors to become critical of that stomach bulge that is genetically endowed to be there?

Our society and its expectations fostered by advertising with its drive for profits continues to do us all a great injustice. Are we really that superficial that we must all have tight butts, firm, full breasts, well-defined muscles, thighs so firm that they deny their natural capacity to spread when we sit down, have soft, supple skin, silent bowels, be 6'2", mold perfectly into every pair of jeans or swim suit, perform incredibly every time, and have fresh breath? What quality of life is this fostering? In the face of plenty, so many are down right miserable. Statistics show that generally only 50% of the people we meet like us, so why do we still become upset and critical when not everyone we meet likes us? Until society matures and grows out of these crazy and very harmful ideals, we must overcome these "norms" on an individual basis. It is incredibly hard to go against such a wave of popular beliefs, but a leap into that vast unknown called self-love is essential for our mental health.

Self-love cannot be conquered in one shot. As Scott Peck put it, self-love involves the "will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own spiritual growth". It is an ongoing process with use of certain principles that help us accept ourselves. Alan Loy McGinnis, author of Confidence gives some basic principles:

1. Determine to know the truth about yourself. Remember when we came rushing into the house as small children exploding with excitement and suddenly someone says, "Be quiet! What's wrong with you?". We learned quickly to button our lips. Unfortunately, to some degree, socialization has taught us to reject our inner selves. This is especially true if we were surrounded by people who infected us with the notion that our thoughts and emotions were "terrible". We concluded that feelings should be controlled and eliminated if possible. Some ways to get back in touch with ourselves would be to keep a journal, spend some time alone, and look for someone you can confide in.

2. Focus on your potential instead of your limitations. How many times after we gave a presentation or speech did we say to ourselves, "I didn't speak loud enough." or "I didn't communicate well." and so on with out looking at any of our positive points? Get yourself away from comparisons!

3. Distinguish between who you are and what you do. Somewhere along the line we learned it wasn't good enough to be a person we also had to do a lot to be accepted. The problem with this is that many of us go overboard. This can be seen in the Superwoman Syndrome or Workaholic Syndrome. Some ways to avoid these syndromes would be to leave time for play, become flexible in your schedule, take time out for honest appraisal of your work patterns, and examine your ethical and spiritual priorities.

Other ways we can develop self-love would include:

- Goal setting. Set realistic goals that encourage finding out what we are actually capable of.
- Risk taking helps us attain goals. An important risk would be to open up to other people.
- Patience with ourselves is a virtue. Like the flower that blooms, we too need time to bloom and that can only be decided by our own time frame.

Life is not a quest to become another "beautiful" and "perfect" cardboard cutout!

By Karma Winick

FROM THE HIP

INSIDE

- * DEPRESSION
- * CREATIVITY
- * STRESS

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