



***Loving Yourself***



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***“It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.”***

–E. E. Cummings

**T**o love yourself means to wholly accept yourself just as you are. Loving yourself involves knowing that you deserve your own time, patience, and effort.

***When you love yourself, you tend to yourself emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.***

Of course, all of these parts of you are interdependent. Therefore, although they can be addressed individually, you'll find that you feel most loved when you attend to all of them.

In this book, you'll find suggestions for how to care for yourself in all four of these areas of your life: physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

***“The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely, to You.”***

—Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

# YOUR PHYSICAL SELF: LOOKING AFTER YOUR BODY

Your physical appearance and condition reveal so much regarding how you feel about yourself.

Do you make special efforts to care for your body each day? When was the last time you spent extra time to improve your personal appearance? In regard to your health, do you regularly visit your doctor and take all medication as prescribed?

Hopefully, the answer to all of these questions is a resounding, “Yes!” If you’re on a road of personal growth and healing, you probably work to change unhealthy lifestyle patterns each day.

**Here are some ways you can show self-love by tending to your physical body:**

1. **Take more time with your appearance.** Most of us could easily spend a few additional minutes during our shower, shave, makeup application, or hair styling.
  - ▶ ***Ask yourself:*** do you notice the condition of your skin each day? Or do you spend your brief minutes in the mirror thinking unkind things about your body? Maybe you could use the time you spend in self-critique doing nice things for yourself instead: a touch more make-up or a bit closer shave can go a long way toward feeling good about yourself.
  - ▶ ***If you want to demonstrate to the world that you love yourself, spend more time on the physical you.*** Take pride in yourself and in your appearance. You’ll be glad of your efforts and others will notice too.

2. **Make a change.** Occasionally, do something different with your appearance.

- ▶ Shave off your mustache or beard and see how you look.
- ▶ Get a haircut and style it into that sassy hairdo picture you saved.
- ▶ Change the color of your hair.
- ▶ Consider trying out a new style of clothing.
- ▶ You can even change your eye makeup. YouTube has lots of video tutorials for different looks.

When you alter something about your appearance, you demonstrate you're worth the time and effort it takes to try something new. Plus, it's refreshing. Even if you decide not to stick with a new look, trying one out for a day or a week can bring new zest to your life.

3. **Put energy into yourself.** Knowing you're worthy of your own energy is an important aspect of loving yourself. When you direct your attention toward something that's just for you, even if only for ten minutes a day, the message you send to yourself is that you're worth it.

- ▶ Having a partner and a family can be a huge drain on your energy in an average day. ***Conserving at least some of your energy for yourself shows you care about you as much as you do your family.***

4. **Notice your physical "positives."** Take a good, honest look in the mirror. Instead of focusing on what you'd change, draw your attention to what you like. Maybe it's your handsome chiseled chin or how you smile with your eyes.

- ▶ Acknowledge to yourself what you're proud of physically. Maybe you've got long legs or a really strong core. Perhaps you like of the curve of

your waist or your 6-pack abs.

- ▶ Take plenty of time to do your physical inventory to find attributes to love about yourself. To feel even better, think about how you can enhance your best features. As you learn more about and augment your positive physical attributes, you'll discover self-acceptance, and be well on your way toward self-love.

5. **Sleep more.** Unless you're one of the lucky ones, you're most likely on the short end of getting enough sleep. Strive for seven to eight hours each night to show love to yourself.

- ▶ Acknowledge that obtaining proper rest and sleep is on your priority list. And related to item #3, above, the more sleep you get the more energy you'll have. And that means more enthusiasm and love to give to your family and to yourself.

6. **Brighten up.** Wear a color you've never worn before. Something as simple as stepping up your wardrobe a bit indicates that you love yourself. Whether it's a blazer in that new dark teal shade or a print shirt that looks fresh, break into a new color scheme to show you're worth the effort to experiment with new ideas.

7. **Ask yourself what your body requires.** Perhaps for the first time in your life, seriously ask yourself what type of nourishment your body really needs. If you don't know, see a nutritionist. It's worth the cost of one or two office visits to find out what your body requires to be as healthy as possible.

- ▶ ***If you already know what your physical self needs, apply your knowledge.*** Feed your body what it requires. Making your body a priority is a wonderful and important way to show love to yourself.

8. **Consistently focus on your physical self.** As long as your doctor approves, exercise in some form at least five days a week. ***Your body will feel better and better over time.*** Take some time to familiarize yourself with the flexibility of your limbs, the strength of your body's core, and the shape and efficiency of your muscles.

- ▶ Strive to perform well physically in some specific way, whether it's doing calisthenics, yoga, weight-lifting, or jogging. Experiment with dance or try training for a triathlon. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the feelings of pride, confidence, and care you feel for yourself when you consistently focus on your physical body.

9. **Acknowledge what your body does for you.** One aspect of loving yourself is realizing everything your body allows you to do. Your mobility, your ability to use your hands to manipulate objects, and the energy that sustains you through a challenging day are all thanks to your body.

- ▶ Your physical self holds up for you under plenty of pressure on any given day. ***Cultivate gratitude for how your body does pretty much everything you require.*** Love your body.

10. **Show commitment to loving yourself.** Through your behaviors every single day, be dedicated to fully accepting yourself. The level at which you ensure that you meet all of your physical requirements helps illustrate how you feel about yourself. Commit to your own self-care.

Tending to your body is one of the primary ways of showing how much you love yourself. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to demonstrate that you love your body, and there's no need to do all of them in any given day, though you'll feel great if you do.

***“We must be our own before we can be another’s.”***

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **YOUR INTELLECTUAL SELF: FEEDING YOUR MIND**

Loving yourself also involves providing your brain with plenty of intellectual stimulation. Here are some effective ways to demonstrate self-love by giving your mind a workout.

1. **Do something you’ve longed to do.** Loved art class in high school? Always wanted to pick up that paint brush again? Now’s the time to go for it. Exploring a new or long-loved subject might feel like a delicious indulgence. ***You deserve to feast your mind on subjects that are intellectually stimulating to you.***
  - ▶ The internet offers an abundance of fascinating information. Dive into a search on a topic that arouses your interests.
2. **Write down your life priorities.** What’s important to you? Next, jot down your life goals. What do you really seek to accomplish in life? Finally, take note of how you spend most of your time. Your three lists should all be similar or closely connected.
  - ▶ Do you now spend most of your time achieving that thing you’ve desired for so long?



- ▶ If you want more training to excel at work, do you make sure you follow through to attain it?
  - ▶ If travel is a dream of yours, do you do something every single day related to it? You'll be intellectually stimulated if you make efforts to achieve your greatest desires.
  - ▶ ***When you spend your time and thoughts on working toward your goals, your mind will be at its happiest and most fit.*** Plus, this sort of work shows that you care enough about yourself to have your priorities in good order.
3. **Foster your passions and dreams.** Ask yourself, "What do I care intensely about?" Then, delve into that subject. Learn everything you can about it. Practice it. Study it. Live it. If an idea, topic, or endeavor excites you, chase after it. The same goes for your dreams. Once you know what your hearts' desires are, do everything you can to achieve them.
- ▶ ***Stay engaged on a daily basis with your life's passions and dreams.*** There's no better way to express self-love than to strive to give yourself what you truly want in life.
4. **Ensure you've got a real life with real people.** When you love yourself, you'll have close friends and family with whom you regularly spend time. Spend this time with your loved ones "in person" rather than with their Facebook pages.
- ▶ Connecting with people in the physical world gives you many kinds of opportunities to keep your mind sharp. You'll engage in interesting discussions, be exposed to what's going on in the world, and have a forum to formulate and share your own opinions and intellectual ideas.

5. **Avoid doing things just because “it’s always been this way.”** Know and connect with your own consciousness. Perform behaviors deliberately and with great forethought. Living consciously shows that you use your mind to think through what you do because you care about what’s going on in your life.
  - ▶ When you live intentionally, you intellectually consider the ramifications of the choices you make. You recognize how precious time is and judiciously spend the twenty-four hours you get in a day on what’s most important to you. Now that’s real self-love.
  
6. **Take a personal inventory of your life.** Make a list of your personal characteristics. Then take a piece of paper. Draw a line down the middle. On the left side, write down what’s working. On the right side, write down what’s not working. Then, make some decisions about the things you want to change. And then work on them.
  - ▶ This exercise will help you determine what your “thinking self” requires. Figuring out what you need to be intellectually challenged and move forward in life demonstrates that you’re worth the time and effort to be happy.
  
7. **Consider the bigger picture.** As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” ***Use your mind to ponder how you want your life and the lives of others to be.*** Strive to behave the way that you hope others will behave. Consciously decide to make the changes that you hope other people will make. Set an excellent example to the world.
  - ▶ You may wonder how this can be considered self-love, since these actions may seem so intent on affecting other people. But how can

you not feel good about yourself when you're focused on making the planet a better place?

8. **Tell yourself you're worthy. *Recognize that you deserve to be loved, not only by yourself, but by those around you.*** Mentally prepare yourself for the love you receive from others and yourself. Know that you're worth of all the love you give to yourself. With the proper mindset, your possibilities in life are limitless.
  - ▶ Working with your belief in yourself will help pave the way to more self-acceptance and self-love in other areas. You'll find loving yourself to be much easier when you're confident that you're worth the effort.
  
9. **Find your power.** When you see that you have control over your own mind, you'll be provided with opportunities to do as you wish with your life. In other words, you'll get to exercise the power you have in ways that enrich your existence.
  - ▶ Closely related to finding your power is infusing knowledge into your daily life. ***When you gain knowledge, you gain power.*** Accessing the power you have in your mind means you'll experience self-confidence and feel love for yourself each day.

Loving yourself means you seek, find and experience all types of mental stimulation. You look into topics of interest, maintain real friendships with real people, live consciously each day, consider the bigger picture, and find power within you.

Express your self-love by feeding your mind with intriguing thoughts, ideas and activities.

***“At this very moment, you may be saying to yourself that you have any number of admirable qualities. You are a loyal friend, a caring person, someone who is smart, dependable, fun to be around. That’s wonderful, and I’m happy for you, but let me ask you this: are you being any of those things to yourself?”***

–Phillip C. McGraw, *The Ultimate Weight Loss Solution: The 7 Keys to Weight Loss Freedom*

## **YOUR EMOTIONAL SELF: UNDERSTANDING & RESPECTING YOUR OWN FEELINGS**

Possibly the single most important facet of loving yourself is taking great care of your emotional self. ***What you believe to be true about yourself illustrates the degree to which you love and accept yourself.***

**Try these tips to love yourself more by taking care of your emotional being:**

1. **Accept yourself.** Realize that you’re as important, special and worthy as every other human being on earth. Connect deeply with this reality.
  - ▶ Use this as an affirmation: ***“I am important, special and worthy.”*** Try saying the affirmation out loud. Repeat it. Write it down. Then, read it to yourself. Do this twice per day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Watch for subtle shifts in the way you view yourself.

2. **Journal.** Write in a journal about what you really like about yourself.
  - ▶ ***Journaling helps you connect with all of your strengths.*** The time you spend writing down your thoughts is an opportunity to cultivate positivity about all of your best qualities. On an emotional level, you can most easily relate to positive feelings about yourself when you recognize your own strengths.
  
3. **Claim responsibility for your own life.** Often we try to find external reasons for why something happened, such as, “Why does he keep hurting me?” or, “What makes her think I deserve this treatment?” Instead, take responsibility.
  - ▶ Ask yourself, “Since I’m responsible for myself, what do I need to do right now to remedy this situation for me?”
  
  - ▶ Once you claim responsibility for your own life, you’ll fully consider the ramifications of your choices to stay in less than ideal situations. Over time, you’ll begin to make decisions to disconnect from people, places and things that consistently harm you in some way.
  
  - ▶ ***Take the time to consider what’s best for you in life. This is an enormous expression of the love you have for your own self.***
  
4. **Avoid negativity toward yourself.** A person who loves herself avoids sending herself negative messages.
  - ▶ You can practice avoiding negativity and still acknowledge that no one is perfect. Being human doesn’t mean that you deserve scorn, shame, or ridicule. Instead of beating yourself up emotionally, direct your energies toward turning any situation into something positive.



5. **Forgive others.** You'll feel less burdened by unwanted negative feelings when you cultivate forgiveness.
  - ▶ Of course, it's also okay to decide that even though you forgive someone, continuing to be involved with that person isn't healthy for you. When you forgive them first, however, you can move on without the extra emotional baggage of hurt and angry feelings.
  
6. **Send out positive vibes to others. *Show other people how loving, caring and kind you are.*** Often, we get immersed in our daily grind and don't notice all the opportunities we have to make someone's day. Showing positivity and kindness toward everyone can be intensely refreshing. When you do this, you make it obvious to others that you love yourself.
  
7. **Say you're sorry if you are.** Notice within yourself when you've made an error or had a misstep. Then, openly acknowledge it. This shows you're a genuine, caring human being.
  - ▶ You'll ultimately feel very good about apologizing when it's required. Saying you're sorry is a deeply satisfying experience that will help you to love and respect yourself even more.
  
8. **Let go of any negative feelings you hold toward others. *Cleansing yourself of as much negativity as possible sets you up for success in life.*** You feel better emotionally and physically, act more openly toward others, and demonstrate love to yourself. Lighten your emotional load by letting go of negativity.
  
9. **Have self-respect.** Refuse to allow anyone to emotionally harm you. Set guidelines within yourself about tolerating unsavory treatment from others. Having limits and boundaries is healthy and shows that you protect and respect yourself in all situations.

**10. If you dislike the way someone treats you, leave their presence, if possible.**

Doing so will be the gateway toward re-claiming your self-respect and self-love.

- ▶ Exit negative relationships, regardless of how scary that may feel. Ultimately, your love for yourself will be stronger than for someone who's less than positive toward you.

***In essence, understanding and acknowledging your own feelings validates your existence.*** By being honest with yourself about your feelings and taking action in accordance with them, you honor and show love to yourself.

***“You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”***

–The Buddha

# YOUR SPIRITUAL SELF: CARING FOR YOUR SOUL

Filling your spirit with genuine joy is a must if you love yourself. Give yourself time to do only what you love to do. Try refreshing your living space even in small ways from time to time, disengaging from technology periodically, and doing other activities that bring adventure and joy into your life.

**Check out these strategies and be inspired to think of still more ways to demonstrate how you care about yourself:**

1. **Make it a good morning.** Take a little time in the morning to do something you really like to do. It might be 45 minutes of yoga to start your day off right. Maybe you'd like to read your favorite novel for 15 minutes before the kids get up. Or perhaps 10 minutes to practice meditation would give you the restful start you need to have a good day.
  - ▶ ***Give yourself the gift of the first few minutes of each morning.*** Your whole day will be better and your soul will thank you for that little bit of "me time" when you first arise.
2. **Indulge.** Do a little something special for yourself each and every day. You'll enjoy life more when you put in the effort to do just that one thing that makes your heart sing. Go ahead and do those activities you think are special, fun or self-indulgent.
  - ▶ You can afford 30 minutes to 1 hour every day just for yourself, can't you? Knowing you deserve it translates into loving yourself.

3. **Change your personal space.** *Making small but meaningful changes in your home truly invigorates your soul.* Nothing says “I love myself” like renewing your cherished space in your house.
  - ▶ Clean something deeply and well.
  - ▶ Throw some things away that weigh you down.
  - ▶ Rearrange the furniture in your living room. If you don’t spend much time in your living room, try this in your favorite room, the one in which you hang out the most.
  - ▶ Paint.
3. **Turn on the tunes.** Listen to your music each day for at least 15 minutes. Most phones today have MP3 players or iPods in them.
4. **Turn off the gadgets.** One day every other week, or even once a month, turn off your cell phone, television and computer.
  - ▶ *Disconnecting from your technology is a great way to re-connect with your soul.*
  - ▶ Consider how you might spend a whole day away from all your gadgets. Will you take a walk, bake bread from scratch, or have a relaxing afternoon out in your yard? Maybe you’ll spend the day with your father or your niece. Whatever you do with your unplugged time, you’ll feel relaxed and rejuvenated.
5. **Allow yourself to feel love from others.** *Experiencing the loving messages given to you by your family members and cherished friends is good for the soul.* For example, when you go out to lunch with your sisters, savor

their presence. Take in how they smile and make eye contact with you, or revel in that special silent communication you have.

- ▶ Soak up the love that your cherished friends and family provide by staying emotionally in touch with their compliments or by their presence. Although we are often taught not to accept compliments or take them to heart, they're good for you, and are given with love. Accepting them is a way of loving yourself.

6. **Worship.** If you enjoy attending a church, temple, or other place of worship, doing so regularly is good for your soul. If you prefer to pray at home alone, that method of worship will also bring you soulful comfort and demonstrate self-love.

- ▶ Perhaps you seek to discover the “right” place of worship for you. That’s okay, too. Finding your spiritual “home” can be a great adventure in self-love. People who want to worship and are successful in finding the place that fits for them re-fill their souls every time they attend the services or events that are meaningful to them.
- ▶ ***If you have religion or spirituality that’s meaningful in your life, practice it.*** Many people report that worshipping simply makes them feel better.
- ▶ If you don’t have a spiritual “home,” and feel like something’s missing in your life, visit various kinds of churches or temples to see if you can fill the void and discover what your soul seeks. Whether you go alone or with friends, you’ll have fascinating experiences. And even if you don’t find a place for you, you’ll learn a lot about yourself.

7. **Immerse yourself in nature.** Make special efforts to experience the joys and beauties of nature. If you’ve ever walked through a pine tree forest, you



know the awesome spiritual power inherent in the great outdoors.

- ▶ Whether you put on your snowshoes and tromp off through piles of lovely white fluff or walk along a sandy beach somewhere collecting seashells, find a way to stay involved with nature.
8. **Be adventurous.** Find that part of you that seeks the unknown and strives for the yet-experienced adventure. Maybe you want to climb a mountain, run a sprint triathlon, or visit the pyramids in Egypt. Whatever your adventuresome spirit seeks, make an effort to provide it in some way. You'll feel deeply alive and loved when you do.
  9. **Recognize that time is of the essence.** Spend your hours and minutes in ways that demonstrate your self-love. Consider time as precious, golden moments meant to be spent doing the things you love and working toward your life's goals. ***Decide to love yourself every single minute of every single day by making each of those moments count.***

Taking care of your spiritual self can be done by practicing one or many of the above strategies. Anything that brings joy to your soul ultimately demonstrates self-love.

***“Your soul is all that you possess.  
Take it in hand and make something of it!”***

–Martin H. Fischer

# SUMMARY

If you want to live a rich, full life, learn now to love yourself. ***Take care of all of your different kinds of needs. This shows that you have great affection and love for yourself.***

When you love yourself, you're more likely to be loved by others and to be able to truly care for another person. Love yourself first and you'll experience the incredible joys that life can bring.

***“It's important to talk about loving yourself and looking at your tragedies and the stuff that makes you grow.”***

–Anne Heche