Barbara Koeth
1-925-682-6456   1-925-899-2383 mobile
barbara@confidentlifechoices.com

Be Good to Yourself: 10 Powerful Ways to Practice Self-Love
By Maria Stenvinkel, in Tiny Buddha

"Self-love, self-respect, self-worth: There's a reason they all start with 'self.' You can't find them in anyone else." ~Unknown

It was one of those nights.

I was in a busy New York bar, having fun and enjoying myself. That was, until someone asked me: "*So, what do you do?*"

Within a few seconds my fun, happy, playful side vanished and in entered a girl full of doubts and insecurity.

The truth was… I had no freaking idea about what I was doing! I had just left my corporate job and now I was on a journey to discover what I truly wanted to do in life.

That question stripped me down to feeling naked and exposed. Because I didn't have a job title. (Unless "I-don't-know-what-I'm-doing-with-my-life" works?) I had nothing externally to "prove" my worthiness with.

I've always been pretty confident. My dad used to give me incentives for challenging myself. "*Climb up that wall and I'll buy you an ice cream.*" "*Be Santa Claus for your siblings and you'll get that nail polish you really want*."

So, I never had a problem saying yes to things, such as taking job offers abroad and accepting challenging positions and demanding projects. Of course I had moments of doubt, but even when I doubted myself, I always said yes and found a solution one way or another.

Until that moment in the bar, I had (unconsciously, of course) proved my worth through my achievements. I had thought of myself as someone who valued herself no matter the job title, relationship status, or bank account condition.

But, when I left my job and other external things fell apart, so did my value. Or at least, that's what it felt like.

In short, I had confused self-confidence with self-esteem. Oops!

Here's what I mean by this:

Self-confidence is about trusting yourself and your abilities. For example, you can be confident in one area, such as cooking, dancing, or communicating, but then insecure in another, such as dancing or public speaking.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, is about how you see yourself. It's about your perception of your worth. No matter what happens on the outside, do you treat yourself with love, care, and respect or not?

As a high-achiever, it's easy to trick yourself and think you have self-esteem. I mean, as long as you perform and do well, it's all good, right?

Yeah, until you don't. That's when the stuff hits the fan…

When I realized that I saw myself as less worthy, cool, and interesting because of my external circumstances, I decided this wasn't good enough for me. And it shouldn't be good enough for you either, if this resonates. As they say, your biggest breakdowns often become your greatest breakthroughs.

So, I got to work. This time, not by proving my value, but by practicing self-love. Below are some of the most powerful ways I've discovered to do just that:

1. Focus on being someone who loves.
If you're in a place today where you don't love yourself, it's hard to take a quantum leap and become someone who does. Just like when you're building muscles, self-love takes consistent practice.

Instead of loving yourself, focus on being someone who loves. That is, allow love to flow through you as often as possible. Focus on what you love about the people you meet. Focus on what you appreciate while going to the store, sitting in a meeting, or while speaking to someone. Simply, adjust your body to positive emotions by finding as many things to love and appreciate as possible.

2. Tap into what it looks and feels like to be loved.

It's easy to be loving toward ourselves when things go as planned, when we succeed and people like us. Not so much when stuff falls apart, we screw up or get rejected. When we struggle the most, that's also when we tend to be hardest on ourselves.

In those moments, ask yourself what someone who loves you deeply you would act. What would they say? What would they do? How would they behave? Odds are, they wouldn't criticize, judge, and berate you. They'd offer you kindness, compassion, and acceptance. If you can't think about a specific person or memory, imagine how the most loving human on this planet would be toward you. Then practice being that toward yourself.

3. Stop comparing yourself.
Comparison is a killer to self-love. And we aren't usually very nice when it comes to comparisons, right? Instead, we take our greatest flaws and compare them to someone else's greatest success. In short, you're doomed to fail.

Instead, realize that you write your story. Realize that you can't compare your life to someone else's because no matter how well you know them, you never know how they feel or how they perceive their life. Instead, spend your time and energy to nourish and build your path.

4. Take baby steps to create the life you long for.
Desires are powerful. And so, to take action turn those dreams into reality is to honor and care for yourself. By taking daily actions, you signal that you're worthy of living the life you desire.

It doesn't have to be big action—just small and consistent steps in the direction that stirs joy, care, and excitement. This demonstrates that you care and respect your dreams and thus yourself. Has there ever been a better time to do that than now?

5. Ask your guidance system for help.
Imagine that your emotions are guiding you. When you feel good about yourself, it means that what you're thinking is aligned with how your soul/higher self sees you. When you feel bad about yourself, it's a red flag telling you that a change of perspective is needed.

If you think a thought such as "*I am [something you don't like about yourself]*," how does that feel? Probably not so good, right? Then it's a sign to think a different thought. Try to replace that with something kinder. For example, "*I'm just so lost and confused*" can be replaced with "*I'm doing the best I can to move forward*."

6. Surround yourself with people you feel good with.

Oh, this is an important one! You may have heard Jim Rohn's famous quote before: "*You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with*." Think about who those people currently are. Do they inspire, fill you up, and want what's best for you?

Just because you've been friends doesn't mean you need to keep spending time together. Just because you're taking a break from someone, doesn't mean you won't be close again. Be picky about who you spend your time with—don't give it away in the spirit of mercy. (That's not nice, neither to you or the other person). Be there because you want to; otherwise, don't.

7. Be compassionate when stuff hits the fan.
So many of us (myself included) tend to beat ourselves down when we need our love the most. When we fail or screw up or someone rejects us, that's the time we often get even more down on ourselves. Beating someone who's lying down, sounds fair? Um, nope.

So instead, choose to be most loving and forgiving with yourself when things don't go as planned. When you stumble and fall. When you say the wrong things. When someone rejects you or a project fails. Ask yourself what you need and then spray that all over yourself.

8. Make room for healthy habits.
Yep yep! Start truly caring for yourself by mirroring that in what you eat, how you exercise, and what you spend time doing. Do stuff, not to "get it done" or because you "have to," but because you care about you.

Don't feel like going to the gym? Then maybe put on a soul-soothing podcast and go for a walk. Create habits that are healthy, not just mentally but also emotionally.

9. Postpone your worry and negative thoughts.
Are you ready for a really great tip? If so, then get excited. A very powerful technique I recently discovered is called a "worry-free month" (named it myself). Think about how much of your worry that actually serves you. Sure, some of the worry has a purpose, as it tends to give us a little kick when we need to get our stuff together and start acting.

But, my guess is that 97 percent of it is useless. Whenever those thoughts enter your mind, tell them, "*Thanks, but I'll deal with this next month.*" By telling your mind that you'll deal with it later (plus saying when), you stop feeding negative thoughts and thus decrease its momentum. Then, you simply do this month after month.

10. Accept what you cannot love.

This might have been the greatest game-changer for me. Because let's face it: It's easy to love what you love about yourself and not so easy with the things you don't. So, instead of even aiming to love those parts, which will probably just make your mind go "*Are you kidding me?*" focus on accepting them.

One thing I've had a hard time accepting about myself is that at times, and for no real reason, I can get very nervous. Simple things, such as going to the supermarket can feel very difficult. Instead of rejecting or trying to love this nervous side of myself, I'm reminding myself to accept it. When it happens, I'll tell myself something along the lines of "It's okay, I can be nervous going to the supermarket today. It's not the end of the world."

You don't need to love everything about yourself to develop self-love; all you need is acceptance. Next time something happens that makes you want to get down on yourself, see this as your practice to accept what is.

Care for the World by Caring for Yourself'
Life is full of ups and down. Health can transfer into disease. Successes can be turned into collapses. Romantic love can be transformed into coldness. But, no matter what happens on the outside, we can still have a solid foundation built on self-love.

Self-love isn't a luxury; it's a necessity in today's society. So, start implementing some of the practices above and most of all, have compassion with yourself when you fall short. Then simply brush yourself off and get back into it again. As they say, practice makes perfect.

Finally, realize that by caring for yourself, you care for this world. Your actions have a ripple effect on others.