



NEWSLETTER

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For busy professional women and small business owners wanting more success and fulfillment in their careers and more time, balance, and joy in their personal lives.

Give Yourself the Gift of Love this Valentines Day

Last month's newsletter focused on New Year's Resolutions and now it's already Valentines Day! It was very odd to find myself writing about resolutions because I don't believe that we're empowered or fulfilled when we resolve ourselves against anything. Yet, I found that resolving to exercise brought me to a whole new place where real change happens.

I began to look at the energy and intention behind that resolution. Originally, I was exercising because I was resolved to do something about my weight. Admittedly, that's not a very empowering stance. As the month evolved, however, I began to exercise because I was consciously choosing it as a way to love, nurture, and care for myself. Whoa! That's a different place indeed! This change in perspective led me to a dedicated inquiry into the concept of self- love.

Self-love sounds like a worthy goal, one that would certainly enhance the quality of my life and the lives of the people I care about. But HOW do we get there?

Let's start with what it means to love yourself. *Simply put, it's being loving to yourself and happy with who you are. To feel, in the core of your being, that you're worthy of happiness.* Not for any particular reason. Not because you do this well or did that right. Not because you're the smartest, the thinnest, or the prettiest. If you base your love on what you DO or on having particular qualities, then what happens when someone smarter or prettier shows up, you gain ten pounds, or you begin to age?

As strange as it may sound, self-love is actually a *decision* that you make to appreciate, accept, honor, and support who you are... *even those aspects you'd like to eventually shift or change.* Self-love starts with self-acceptance of who you are – exactly as you are – with no conditions or reservations.

So, if loving and accepting ourselves feels so good, then why do we struggle against it? As I've listened to my clients and observed my own behavior, I've found that we use our lack of acceptance as motivation to do and be what we think we should.

We judge ourselves unfavorably with the hope that if we feel bad enough, it'll motivate us to change. Does it work? Sometimes. Usually only in the short term.

One thing that's pretty much guaranteed is that this kind of motivation causes us to feel BAD. Feeling bad saps our energy. Energy that's necessary to make the changes you want. Energy that's necessary to *attract* the things you want!

When my coach suggested that I love and accept my body just as it was, I was appalled! Even with all my experience and training, I found myself ferociously hanging on to the idea of not accepting my body as it is. Afraid that if I accepted it, I'd never change it.

As I began to delve into this idea further, I found that you don't have to be unhappy with yourself to actively change those things you'd like to change. ***In fact, research shows that acceptance is actually the very first step in the process of change!***

So how do we get to a place of acceptance?

1. Identify all the things you don't accept about yourself. In other words, what conditions are you forcing yourself to meet before you'll love and accept yourself? (I have to lose 30 pounds. I must stop procrastinating. I have to curb my temper, be kinder, and more patient.)
2. Examine and question the validity of the beliefs and fears that are stopping you from loving and accepting yourself.
3. Seriously consider whether you would withhold your love from someone, a child perhaps, until they met the conditions you specified. Distinguish between being worthy of love – just because you are – from what you do or don't do.
4. Develop healthy daily practices that focus on self-love and acceptance.

The famous psychoanalyst Eric Fromm, in the classic book, *The Art of Loving*, described love as an art that requires patience, confidence, discipline, concentration, faith, and *daily practice*.

Have you noticed how often it comes down to *practices* that support what you want? That's because we have to interrupt the old "default" that's been running amuck on our internal computers and replace it with happier, healthier programs. Here are specific practices to help you. Choose a couple that speak to you and work with them consistently.

- Notice your tendency to measure yourself by other people's expectations. Refuse to do that anymore.
- Allow yourself to fully accept compliments and praise from others. Trust that what they're saying is true.
- Compliment yourself often. Before you go to sleep at night, get present to three things that you are proud of or appreciate about yourself.
- Be aware of the negative chatter in your mind. Realize that your inner dialogue has a positive intention to keep you safe and protected. Acknowledge that fully and then consciously choose to change your self-talk.
- Focus on your strengths and on the positives. Turn your attention away from anything you deem a weakness.
- Make a habit of catching yourself doing things "right," instead of always noticing when you do things "wrong."
- Forgive yourself for any mistakes or shortcomings as quickly as possible. Recognize that if you were perfect you wouldn't be on this planet!
- Imagine a future where you totally love and accept yourself. Connect to that vision routinely.
- Write a love letter to yourself, describing what you really like and admire about you!
- Schedule time regularly for self-care, fun, and spiritually uplifting activities.
- "Act as if" you love yourself. In other words, "fake it until you make it." As you do, you'll notice that your choices and behaviors begin to change.

And the biggest one of all... true love and acceptance comes from knowing who you are at the very core of you, not from anything you do. Know in your heart of hearts that you are a child of God. You are God energy made manifest in physical form. Doesn't it almost seem sinful not to love and respect God's glorious creation? Self-love honors our spiritual Source.

You are miracle of creation and a creative miracle worker. When you live your life from that tenet you create and cause miracles and love all around you.

A Quick Note From Denise

I want to take a moment to express my appreciation to all of you who responded last month with your commitments for the coming year. Your overwhelming response held me steadfastly in my commitment. How could I not follow through when you were right there... loving, encouraging, and supporting me? And look how it led to a whole discovery of self-love.

You produced incredible results for yourselves! An amazing number of pounds were lost and hours of exercise logged. Some of you began to open your heart to love again, while others addressed long- term, nagging financial concerns, or let creative expression and gratitude flow. Hearing your stories and sharing a part of your lives inspires me and brings me immeasurable joy! Thank you.

All my love,
Denise

Quotes to Live By

The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely. - Carl Jung

"You can explore the universe looking for somebody who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and you will not find that person anywhere."- Anonymous

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