

Self-Love: What Does It Mean to Love One's Self?



“When you are compassionate with yourself, you trust in your soul, which you let guide your life. Your soul knows the geography of your destiny better than you do.”— John O’Donohue.

I was chatting with my friend, Susan one day when the topic of self-love came up. I had once believed that to love oneself was being narcissistic, that it was to be self-indulgent. But I have since released that notion as I have come to understand the true meaning of loving one’s self.

Self-love is not about the narcissistic love that predominates from the ego, where the ‘I’ is a dominant factor that rules one’s actions. Self-love comes from connecting with the soul, that is with one’s true self. It is about honoring and allowing our inner light to shine and to generate a radiance that attracts a deep and powerful connection with other human beings. We create authentic relationships with ourselves and with others when we can wholeheartedly love ourselves. With self-love comes self-acceptance of every facet of ourselves and acceptance of others as they are. This is often the most challenging aspect of growth for most of us, embracing and loving those aspects of ourselves or of others that we do not love or care for.

It is important for us to realize that how we love and treat ourselves is exactly how others are going to love and treat us because the relationship we have with another person mirrors the relationship we have with ourselves. If we are unforgiving, critical and hard on ourselves, we will project what is within us onto others and by the universal law of attraction, we will invite the same kind of energy from others: we will repeatedly encounter people who are intolerant of our weaknesses or failures.

There are four aspects of self-love. They are self-acceptance, self-respect, self-esteem and self-responsibility. The first step to self-love is self-acceptance. It means that we learn to be happy with who we are, with our personality and physical appearance. It means accepting our strengths and weaknesses without feeling guilty. With self-acceptance comes self-respect, which requires us to have a positive attitude towards our right to live with dignity and happiness. It means having a right relationship with ourselves: that we live by our truth and do not fear social pressure; nor do we live in denial or make sacrifices that will compromise our integrity. Self-esteem develops naturally when we love, accept and respect ourselves. It is essential in how we view ourselves as being worthy of happiness, love and consideration. Self-responsibility is a natural progression of all the other aspects of self-love. It is an important aspect of

loving ourselves as it means taking responsibility for the choices we make in our life, for the quality of our life and thus for our existence.

Adapted from: "Transcending Abuse & Betrayal."

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