

Self-Love

Self-Love: A Definition

By **Connie Barrett** <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Barrett1.html>

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When asked to consider the question of self-love, many people ask, "Does loving myself unconditionally mean I have to love everything I've ever done?"

No. Like you, I've done things of which I have been ashamed. However, when we love ourselves unconditionally we don't dwell on these past events. We don't make them the focus of how we see ourselves. When we can we correct them. We call them mistakes and learn from them so that we don't do them again.

When we can be kind and forgiving in this way to ourselves we are better able to be that with others. Unconditional and forgiving self-love fosters unconditional and forgiving love of others.

The Vibration of Self-Love

How you feel about yourself has a lot to do with how others feel about you. Sometimes how people feel about themselves is obvious in their appearance. We may feel that someone who walks with a severe slump, or doesn't meet our eyes, or speaks in a barely audible voice has a low opinion of herself.

Some people speak their opinions of themselves. A person may say, "Well, I could never do that." or "I've never expected much from life" or "I gave up on relationships."

Often, though, it's not that clear. Many of us are good at presenting a positive persona (mask) to the world. Inside, though, we may be riddled with doubts about ourselves. We may be nervous about how our remarks or appearance are received. We may meet someone to whom we're attracted and silently affirm that (s)he would never, NEVER be interested in us. This way we avoid the fear of rejection by not taking a risk.

When I was a child, a popular (although cruel) April Fool's joke was to put a sign which read "Kick Me" on someone's back. The emotions and beliefs we have about our lack of lovability are subtle signs which others read as "Don't Love Me" or "Reject Me" or "Treat Me Badly."

Loving Yourself Is the Foundation

In order to have loving relationships with others we must have loving relationships with ourselves. That's the first step towards answering the questions in the meditation I've given you to use:

What would you do if you believed you were completely responsible for the presence of love in your life? What relationships would you heal? How would you act if you believed you were the source of love in any encounter? How would you change the way you treated yourself?

Is Self-Love Egotism?

Many of us have the fear that the line between self-love and being considered a raving egomaniac is a very fine one.

We don't like people who boast about themselves.

We are very careful to be modest and self-effacing at every possible opportunity.

We minimize our accomplishments.

We believe people should love us for who we are, not for what we do.

The difference between self-love and egotism can be made more clear if we take a deeper look at so-called egotism. The person who is constantly talking about himself is not someone who is filled with self-love. He is more likely someone whose inner well of self-love and self-esteem is empty. He feels the need to replenish it from outside sources.

Ego operates on the basis of fear. Ego says, "I am alone; I am separate from others. I am the only one who cares about me. There isn't enough love in the world, and I will probably never have the love I need. I have a right to be angry, judgmental, and impatient. If I can't have love I will take whatever substitutes are available: money, sex, drugs, power."

In a very real sense the "egotist" is an addict. An addict to chemical substances attempts to substitute artificial means of feeling happy, peaceful, excited about life for the authentic sense of well-being which comes from knowing oneself and seeking inner harmony on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. An ego addict seeks approval from others as a substitute for doing the inner work needed for true self-acceptance and self-love.

The ego addict is trying to escape her own painful lack of self love, and asking others to say she's lovable. Sadly, this kind of attempt usually backfires. Instead of earning approval, the person who must always talk about herself ultimately finds herself rejected. This makes her only more frantic for approval, and a cycle which is already self-defeating may become self-destructive.

There are also closet egotists, and I was one for many years. Finally I realized I was resisting the urge to talk about myself, that in my heart I was as much an egotist as those loud-mouthed people I avoided. I was just very quiet about it, and bolstered my own sense of self-love and self-esteem with a feeling of superiority that I had the strength and good sense to resist offensive behavior.

Essentially, I was as dependent on the opinion of others as were the so-called egotists who advertised their need for attention and love.

A Spiritual Perspective on Self-Love

Ultimately, we can spring free of the ego trap by understanding who we are as spiritual beings, by knowing we are both unique and part of a greater One.

Seth (as channeled by the late Jane Roberts) and other nonphysical guides offer an interpretation of what could be called the divine energy source (or divine love), describing it as the source of all consciousness, an energy which contains within itself every possibility for creative expression. This being appreciates its creations for their uniqueness, and knows that they in order to realize their full potential must be allowed to manifest as independent forms of consciousness.

All living things are here to manifest our gifts in the realm of material existence. We are the children of a loving energy which desires only that we fulfill the dreams it has dreamed of us.

A crystal wouldn't hide its rainbows, a flower wouldn't refuse to blossom, and a cat wouldn't halt in the midst of an acrobatic leap out of concern that others of its species might think it a showoff. When we humans are clear about the source of our own gifts, when we know that our purpose in expressing them isn't ego gratification, but the manifestation of our soul's purpose, we can be as free in our expression as any other creature.

When we are in full appreciation of ourselves we can respond more compassionately to those who are not. We can recognize the insecurity which lies beneath the words of people who must praise themselves, and feel the effort they are making to convince themselves that they're worthy through convincing us. Instead of either judging them negatively for their way of being or feeding their habit through praise we can find ways of expressing appreciation for them for who they are, not for what they do.

When we recognize that self-love honors ourselves and our spiritual source, we also realize that exercising our gifts is a generous act of sharing. We also discover that with this perspective we can honor the uniqueness of others and our connection to them.

Just as a lack of self-love has a vibration, so does unconditional self-love. It has a quiet, steady radiance which draws others to its light.
