

Self-Love

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Self-Love. Without self-love as a foundation, your life can be a real mess. If you lack self-love, you usually also lack, self-confidence, self-esteem and the biggie... strong boundaries. The key to self-love and all of the other “selfies” (self-confidence, self-esteem and even self-control) is having strong boundaries.

How do I know this? Well I learned in the school of hard knocks. I spent 30 years in an abusive marriage. I was put down, demoralized, neglected, abused, raped, told what to do and how to live my life. Even my day to day living choices were regulated, what I could wear, when I could bathe, what I should eat, who could be my friend, where I could go. I wasn't allowed to drive a car, brush or floss my teeth or wear deodorant. I couldn't even style or cut my hair! My abuser beat me down emotionally and mentally so I was

too scared to go against him or escape. But I did escape, finally! I can tell how far I've come by how amazingly strange the above story of my life sounds now. I went from being broken, to surviving and now I am thriving and having a great time while I thrive!

The two things that allowed my abuser to control me were my lack of self-love and lack of strong boundaries. Once my self-esteem and self-confidence were gone, there was nothing left but a scared shell of a person, too filled with fear to do anything. It's hard to say which comes first, self-love or strong boundaries, they are pretty entwined. Without good boundaries, self-esteem and self-confidence plummet. Every time you allow someone to cross your boundaries, you are not loving yourself.

In my opinion, if you don't have any self-love left, you have allowed your boundaries to be breached. If that has happened, you need to take your power back... and quit giving it away!

I started with learning about good boundaries, once I had them (and it took work), self-love followed. Then as I loved myself more, I was able to build stronger boundaries. So let's talk about boundaries.



*B*oundaries



***B**oundaries are a path to self-love. Boundaries are where I end and something else begins. That might be society, my friends, my child, significant other or even my work. I have a right to my own desires, thoughts, actions and beliefs. Whenever something outside of me wants me to change, then that something is stepping on or pushing my boundary. NO ONE has the right to tell me what to wear, eat, how to style my hair or even when to have sex. If I allow someone to step on and violate my boundaries, I will lose my self-respect, my self-esteem and my self-confidence. All of these selfies add up to loving myself or “self-love.” Now I am talking to adults here, it goes without saying that children have boundaries too, but their boundaries are subject to their maturity and their parents loving care.*

When someone steps on or violates your boundaries, you know it. It makes you feel bad, diminished, unloved and uncared for.

After I was married and pregnant, my abuser demanded I get up out of bed and make his breakfast, because he "didn't get married to have to make his own breakfast." I was sick and told him so, but he didn't care. He forced me to get up and make his breakfast. If I had good boundaries, I would have told him, "No, I am sick, I will not get up to make your breakfast and if you don't like it, you can leave." ("...and on your way out make me some tea!")

I not only did not have good boundaries, I didn't even know boundaries existed. I was taught I should be submissive and obedient in a marriage. Being submissive and obedient does not mean taking abuse though. Since I allowed him to treat me with disrespect and step on my boundaries, he continued to treat me with disrespect and my treatment got worse as time went on and my self-esteem and self-confidence plummeted. Think of it, any loving partner would have said, "You feel sick? Oh I am sorry, can I get YOU something?"

Fear

***F**ear is what keeps you from defending your boundaries. Once you give into fear and allow your boundaries to be violated, your fear grows stronger in proportion to your loss of self-love. It is a vicious circle. You don't love yourself enough to protect your boundaries, so you lose self-esteem and self-respect. You become fearful (filled with fear) and then you cannot protect your boundaries because you are afraid to which make you hate and despise yourself even more.*

After I left the abusive marriage, I dated a few times. One man I cared about tried to make me feel guilty about my boundaries having to do with sex. I did not feel honored, I felt pressured. I also felt his displeasure over my diet choices and my religious beliefs.

I spent so many decades giving in to other people's demands that I thought about giving into him. It was what I was used to. However, when I thought about it, it did not make me feel good about myself. I realized I was just setting myself up to be disrespected by someone else. It was time for me to honor and love myself, so I broke up with him.

It was one of the most empowering things that I had done in my life to that point and it made my self-esteem and self-confidence soar. I had no idea that holding strongly to my boundaries would be so liberating and feel so good. After that, it was easier and easier to hold to the boundaries that define who I am and what I believe.

Everyone in my life has noticed my new self-confidence. Self-confidence is appealing to everyone. It is a force that makes you stand out and gives you personal power. I have another booklet dealing with fear and what I did to get my fear under control. It is called, "Loving Your Fear."

Who Are You?

Y*ou must decide who you are, what you believe and what you want. You can also decide who to allow inside your boundaries and to what degree you will allow them in. Like for instance, you might allow your sister to tell you what she thinks you should wear and how to style your hair, but you might not want a casual friend to cross that boundary. It might be okay for a lover to lay on your lap, but not your next door neighbor.*

Your beliefs, desires and wants are what make you an individual. You have religious (or lack thereof), political and other types of beliefs. You also have desires, like who you love, who you want in your life and who you dislike. And don't forget wants. You might want chocolate ice cream not vanilla. Maybe you don't want to smoke cigarettes or eat leafy greens. You might like to living in the west not the east. You also have emotions and a mind and they have boundaries too. You can choose what to feel and what to think.

Your boundaries and what you want, desire and believe in life are flexible and changeable. What shouldn't be changeable is that YOU are in control of your boundaries. If someone else is in control of your boundaries, you have a problem and your life is a mess. If someone else is in charge of your boundaries, you are most likely sad, depressed, angry, despise yourself and are scared, not to mention you probably lack in the "selfies." There are a lot of "selfies" that go along with self-love. Self-control, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-sufficient, self-determination, self-assured, self-respect... you get the idea, they are a part of self-love.

To be successful in life, you need self-confidence. To lose weight and be your most beautiful self, you need self-control and self-esteem. To have self-determination means you have to let go of fear and believe in yourself. If you find yourself too weak to be a success at your job, lose weight, or escape an abusive situation, you need to work on good strong boundaries.

When people at work know you are confident and self-assured, you will move forward in your career, maybe get that promotion you've been wanting. Confidence is a seductive attribute to have, it magnetizes people to you. It makes them want to be like you.

When you love yourself enough to have self-control and self-esteem, you will go out for a walk more often and quit eating the junk. How could you not, if you love yourself?

Fear is a hard one to overcome, but it is the same, you have to start by having good boundaries. If you are in an abusive situation, don't start working on your boundaries until you are out of the situation and PLEASE do what you have to do to get free. It is NOT worth staying in an abusive situation, no matter how much fear you have to face.

Trying to strengthen your boundaries while in the middle of a war with an abuser will just make your abuser angry and they will try to destroy your boundaries even more. You can however, do things in your life that will build up your self-love whenever you are able. Like, clean and de-clutter your living space, buy yourself some flowers, buy some new clothes or take a long hot bath with bath oil. Even patting yourself on the back can help you feel better. Sometimes, I pat myself on the back or leg and tell myself that I am proud of me; I'm doing a good job.

So jumpstart your new life by thinking about WHO you are, WHAT you want and WHO you want in your life. Start small and hold strong to a boundary that is important to you. Hold fast to one small boundary, show someone you mean business, that you mean what you say.

Ideas for some small boundaries:

- *When you say "No" mean no. Stick to it.*
- *When you don't want to eat the dessert, say no and don't allow the person to make you feel guilty.*
- *If a co-worker asks you to do something you don't feel comfortable about, decline and don't give an excuse.*
- *Don't say that you like something when you don't. If you don't like that political candidate, don't pretend you do.*

- *If an acquaintance drops their kids off without notice and you don't want to care for them, say so and keep your boundary strong. They didn't give you notice, they are not treating you with respect.*

You train people to treat you by what you allow. So don't allow. With strong boundaries you will have strong self-love. With self-love come all of the other "selfies" and your transformation to your new life.



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