

Learning Self Acceptance

By Gayle North

"If our self -vision is no more than a reflection of the social mirror, we have no connection with our inner selves, with our uniqueness and capacity to contribute. We are living from scripts handed to us by others – family, associates, friends, enemies, the media. Is it any wonder that many of us feel disconnected and at odds with ourselves?"

- Steven Covey

Until recent times, it was thought to be sinful to appreciate yourself. If you weren't berating yourself for your weaknesses and imperfections, you were obviously missing an opportunity on the royal road to self improvement. In this old paradigm it was thought that if you applied enough self-loathing you might motivate yourself to change.

Today, however, we regard self-hate as neurotic – a block on the path to reaching our full potential in life. We have begun to understand that self-acceptance is an ingredient that can help us create permanent and positive improvements in our life. In fact, I find in my practice as a Positive Change Coach the unwanted emotional patterns, low performance in school, relationships, and life in general stem from a lack of self acceptance. All aspects of life work better for us when we have a high level of self acceptance.

Yet, because the old paradigm was in place for many generations and was such a foundational part of our parents' programming, we are still dealing with the consciousness it created in our culture. In addition, over 60% of us are unplanned and over 45% of us are unwanted from conception. Developing a sense of self-love and acceptance is difficult enough under ideal conditions, but it is even harder if we grew up in an atmosphere where our very existence was not appreciated as individuals.

For many of us the love we did receive was conditional. Love was metered out depending on how well we threw the ball, or how we looked or on the grades we received. Expectations were high, and we often failed to meet them. Most of us internalized this conditional love and we apply it to ourselves as adults. We continue to set impossible goals and feel bad much of the time because we fail to meet them. Love and self acceptance become rewards, something we give ourselves only if we have done well. "Most of us have created numerous ways to feel bad about ourselves, and only a few ways to feel good." *Anthony Robbins author of "Awaken the Giant Within"*

True self-acceptance is not conditional. If we wait to accept ourselves until we have performed well, we are using love like a dolphin trainer uses sardines. True self-love is an ongoing celebration of who we are no matter how well we perform. It is an ability to greet the dark part of ourselves with the same gracious embrace as we meet the light. An underlying acceptance is there, whether we are being "good" or "bad", whether we are performing up to par or falling on our faces.

"Love draws no distinctions. It is. Love exists outside the normal constraints of time and space. That is why love can heal something in a second that has been bothering you for a decade. If you are angry or afraid, for example, and have never loved yourself for feeling that way, one moment of loving yourself for having those feelings can set you free." *Kathlyn and Gay Hendricks, Ph.D., co-authors of "Conscious Loving"*

It is a paradox in the realm of love that we can truly love others only when we can love our self. If we cannot love our self, we try to fill the void with the love of others. We attempt to demand from others what we cannot give our self and our relationships will suffer from the pressure we put on others. The same is true when we try to love someone whose lacks self-love. We can do everything in our power to love them and it will not seem to make a difference. When we learn to love ourselves fully, other people can love us and it will feel satisfying because it is not filling a void. It becomes love dancing with itself.

It is a curious thing that we have to *learn* to love ourselves – that self-love isn't basic to this human experience. It is helpful to set the goal to learn to love and accept ourselves more as we think of making any positive changes for ourselves or as we begin transforming our relationships. The time and energy it takes results in more success in every part of our life. As we approach life as an expanding series of opportunities to grow in love toward ourselves and others, we have a much smoother journey and experience more joy along the way

Gayle North offers Personal Coaching for Positive Change using recently developed empowerment technologies to clear mental and emotional blocks that keep people stuck in unhealthy habits and prevent them from performing at their highest potential in school, sports, relationships, work and finance. Call 406-837-1214 to learn how you can STOP SMOKING IN ONE HOUR and for coaching in person or by phone.

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