

## **How to Love You: Five Steps on the Journey of Self-Love**

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Something that keeps people from embracing the idea of self-love is religion. Because religion deals a lot with selflessness, caring for others, being kind and good to others, it can feel like a sin to focus any attention on yourself; including the kindness and compassion religion asks you to extend to others.

So, when Fred Rogers of the “Mister Rogers” PBS television program, who was also an ordained Presbyterian minister, has something positive to say about self-love, I sit up and listen! Maybe you will too, for he had this to say, “You can’t really love someone else unless you really love yourself first.”

The reason that statement is true is because when we love ourselves, we have a reserve of love inside that allows us to give love to others with greater freedom, even abandon. When we do not love ourselves, our inner resources are shallow, even dry, so that extending our love to others makes us feel drained, resentful, even angry.

One of the gifts of religion is that it can make us feel seen and loved by God. In those moments of accepting God’s love for us, our inner reserves of love are filled. Experiencing God’s love, we love ourselves. Over time, though, because we are not taught that it is all right to love ourselves, extending ourselves to love others more than we love ourselves drains us.

Your ability to love others lies in direct proportion to your ability to love yourself. Because the world needs so much love today, learn these five steps to loving you to strengthen and enrich your inner reserves today!

First, practice giving yourself a break from your inner critic. Most of us have inner critics that are harsher and meaner than any critic that exists out there in the real world! Chances are you do not need to beat yourself up as badly as you routinely do. Make a commitment to stop the criticism you level on yourself. Catch yourself about to do it or in the middle of it and instead say, “I love you. I love you, anyway!” Feel the relief, the appreciation for taking a break from your inner critic and allow your love to flow more freely to you.

Second, smile and say, “I love you,” whenever you see your reflection! Do it as if you are happy to see you! Perhaps you did not have a parent or authority figure in your childhood who expressed genuine joy at your presence. Give that to yourself now anyway! Every single time you see your own reflection, smile, look you in the eyes, and say, “I love you.” If you are in a public place, learn how to do it silently. The little grin and raised eyebrow as you talk privately to yourself in public will make people wonder what you have been up to!

Third, quit tolerating meanness directed at you from others. Either do not dignify their taunts with a response or directly tell them to stop. When you hold yourself as someone

worthy of being treated with kindness, compassion, and fairness, you will begin to communicate this expectation of others both with and without words.

Fourth, say no to something at least once a week. It may be that someone routinely makes inconvenient requests of you. Say no next time. It will take courage, especially if you have been in the habit of being his or her doormat. However, it will be worth it to stretch yourself, dig down deep for that courage, and say no. You will probably be surprised at how easily they accept it. Perhaps you have an indulgence in something harmful to you or someone you love that you need to say no to. Get busy saying no. If you need to, ask for support. Create an I-can-say-no buddy, someone you can call up and have them support your following through with saying no.

Finally, quit expecting your parents to give you what you did not get growing up. If they did not have the attention or love or patience or whatever to give to you when you were a child and they were young adults, the chances of you getting it now are slim to none. Hanging on to that story of how they did you wrong or how they didn't do enough or how they abused or neglected you will never, ever correct it. Let it go and do the next best thing: you love you!

You cannot make your parents show you their love the way you have always wanted. Your spouse and children cannot take their place and give you what they could not. The closest to it you can come is by giving it to yourself. Practicing these five tips will set you on a journey of self-love that will build your confidence and open your heart.

You are worth it! It is past time you focused love and nurturing on you. Blessings to you as you get started.

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There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to <http://www.CreateTheLoveYouWant.com> and order your copy right now. With it, you can begin making a difference for yourself tonight!