

Learning to Love Your Authentic Self

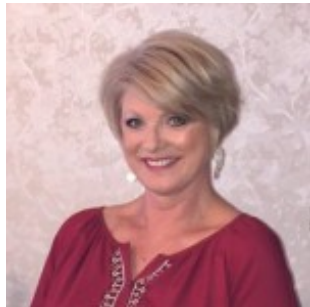
Above all, remember you are capable and worthy

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*“The closer you come to your authentic self, the simpler everything becomes.
Listen to your intuition. It will tell you who you are.”*

—[Vironika Tugaleva](#)



In our personal development-focused, life coach-dependent world, it's all too easy to think you need to change. Not just the things you *do*, but who you *are*.

It's one thing to invite transformation for the sake of growth, improvement, and new possibilities. It's another thing to feel so dissatisfied with yourself that no amount of change could possibly convince you that you're worthy and lovable. This type of deep-rooted self-loathing formed the basis of my adolescence and some of my twenties. It was like I was constantly trying to gut myself so I could replace myself with someone better.

Ironically, in my 40's, I was the one giving advice on loving yourself—yet I hadn't learned to love myself. I didn't know the greatest love, or any love, really, feeling about as closed off as a scab.

On most days, I kept a running mental tally of all the ways I messed up—all the dumb things I said, the stupid ideas I suggested, and the inevitably unsuccessful attempts I made to make people like me. How could they when I wasn't willing to lead the way?

I tell you this not as an *after* picture who can't even remember that girl from before, but as someone who has lived this past decade taking two steps forward and one step back. For my willingness to give you this honesty, I am proud.

People are more apt to share their struggles once they feel like they're on the other side. It's a lot less scary so say, "This is who I used to be" than

“This is what I struggle with sometimes.”

But this is my truth, and I give it to you, wholeheartedly and uncensored. On a primal level, I really want to be loved and accepted, but I learn a little more every day that my own self-respect is the foundation of lasting joy.

I know that I am not so different from most people. Who doesn't want to feel that people understand them, *get* them, and at the end of the day, love them anyway? I think we all want to believe it's perfectly okay, and maybe even wonderful, to be exactly who we are.

Of course, that has to start with us. People can only love us if we believe we're lovable. You may not fully believe it if you:

- **Constantly compensate for who you are** with apologies, hedging words, or clarifications for your actions, like you always owe other people explanations.
- **Beat yourself up when you make even the slightest mistake.**
- **Think about your flaws** and feel overwhelming disgust or anger.
- **Cling to people who see the best in you** and find it hard to maintain those positive feelings when they walk away.
- **Tell yourself that you're being selfish** whenever you consider meeting your own needs.
- **Repeatedly do self-destructive things**, or make choices that show you don't respect or value yourself.
- **Don't consider your needs a priority.**
- **Always find a reason to talk yourself out of your dreams** as if perhaps you don't deserve to have them.

I have done every last one of these things at some point. I suspect we all have. Sometimes it's challenging to love ourselves, particularly in a world where change generates a substantial amount of revenue.

There are always going to be products and ideas for us to get better; and it's a beautiful thing to embrace life-long growth.

Life *is* transformation; staying stagnant is a kind of death. But it's important that we all realize we are beautiful and wonderful just as we are—light and dark, in our complete authentic selves.

1. Know that you are not your worst mistakes.

Our past actions shaped today, but we are not what we've been. We don't need to carry around labels or mistakes from yesterday as if they define us. Whatever you've done, it's over. It doesn't have to brand you, particularly not if you're making the conscious choice to do things differently now.

We can judge ourselves by the weakest moments *or* the strongest—that's our choice. Choose to focus on the strongest, and then leverage that pride for more of those moments. Every time you feel good about what you do, it's one more reminder to love who you are.

2. Know that you have nothing to prove.

I don't care how esteemed or successful someone is; there are things they're proud of and things they're ashamed of, and inside they wish people would see more of the former and less of the latter.

We all want validation. It's a natural human need to feel connected to other people; and oftentimes, when we feel alone, it's because we believe we haven't proven how good we are or can be.

You don't have to show the world you're good. You don't have to try to hide the things you've done that might not seem flattering. You just need to forgive and accept yourself and trust that other people will, as well.

Being authentic means being vulnerable—letting people see all your different facets, trusting they won't judge you, and knowing that if they do, that's completely on them.

I don't know about you, but I'd rather be real with people, and know the ones who accept me accept me fully, than pretend and then have to maintain the illusion that I am something I'm not. Who has time for that?

3. Know the dark is valuable.

So you've made mistakes—who hasn't? The beauty of having faltered is that you can help the world with your experiences.

Because we err and hurt, we can empathize when other people are hurting. We can reach out of ourselves, forget our own pains, and hold other people up when they need it.

Having strengths and weaknesses is human. If I didn't have less flattering traits and stories, this site would likely not exist.

When you realize your flaws can help the world and bring us closer together, suddenly they seem less like liabilities and more like assets.

4. Know that you matter.

When I was a little girl, one morning I rushed to the front door as my daddy was getting ready to leave for work. I asked him for a kiss and he said to me, "Why should I give *you* a kiss?" Even though he didn't mean it seriously and he was only teasing me, that stuck with me.

I held onto this for years—that given the choice, most people wouldn't like me. As I got older, a lot of people appeared to feel uncomfortable around me, and for good reason. I was like a leech on them, desperately hoping they'd un-say that one comment that my daddy teasingly spoke years ago.

I couldn't believe I mattered until someone said it to me. Well, now I know differently—I know I *do* matter, and that how my life matters is dependent on what I do from day to day.

Know that you touch countless people's lives every day, even if someone isn't commenting on Facebook or tweeting about it. Just like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, you do kind things that have a ripple effect you can't possibly measure.

Even if not everyone has recognized it, you make a positive difference in the world. Your positive self-regard may feel stronger at some times than others, but even the smallest seed of love is valuable because it can grow.

5. Know that positive feelings and actions breed more.

All these warm fuzzy feelings mean very little if you sit alone, wishing you could experience the world differently. Once we accept that we're worthy of love and our dreams, the natural next step is to actually create those things—not what we think we should do; what we really want to do.

Get out into the world. Do that thing that scares and excites you. Recognize you're awesome for doing it, even if in just one small step. Give yourself permission to not be perfect, and instead focus on progress.

Love in action every day. Do something kind for you. Do something kind for others. Do something kind for the world.

Acknowledge your weaknesses, work to improve them, but say loud and proud that they will not define you, EVER. If you start worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, remember you deserve to enjoy the present, but only you can make it happen.

I haven't always done this. I've let a lot of moments slip away while I curled up in my head, wishing I were someone better. But those moments have passed, and in this moment, I am happy with me. I may not know you, but I know I want that love for you too. I know you deserve it. WE ALL DO!

This has been a little uncomfortable for me, to be honest. I've yet again split myself open. But this time I'm not trying to change what's inside. I'm just here telling you that I am flawed, like we all are, and that's not only okay, but also beautiful.

Much love and light to you from someone ever learning what love really means.



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Mastery for Women is a division of Successful
Thinkers Network™, where building
relationships is the key. Our groups are
designed to foster a sense of community where

we, as women, can grow.

It is a call to action, a movement, a safe place where women can support each other to reach their goals and desires that tug at their hearts and souls.

It is more than just socializing – we provide a blueprint for making the lives of others better and in the process enriching our own lives. We have just begun!

We can serve one another best by putting our egos aside, by listening to one another and by supporting one another. We are a sisterhood sharing together.

Mastery for Women is dedicated to providing the tools necessary to help reach out and welcome more women into our family. We are a family of supporting, building and mentoring. We are all beautiful, intelligent and all have something to contribute.