



Self-Love
Diet

Free Yourself with a Diet
of Self-Love

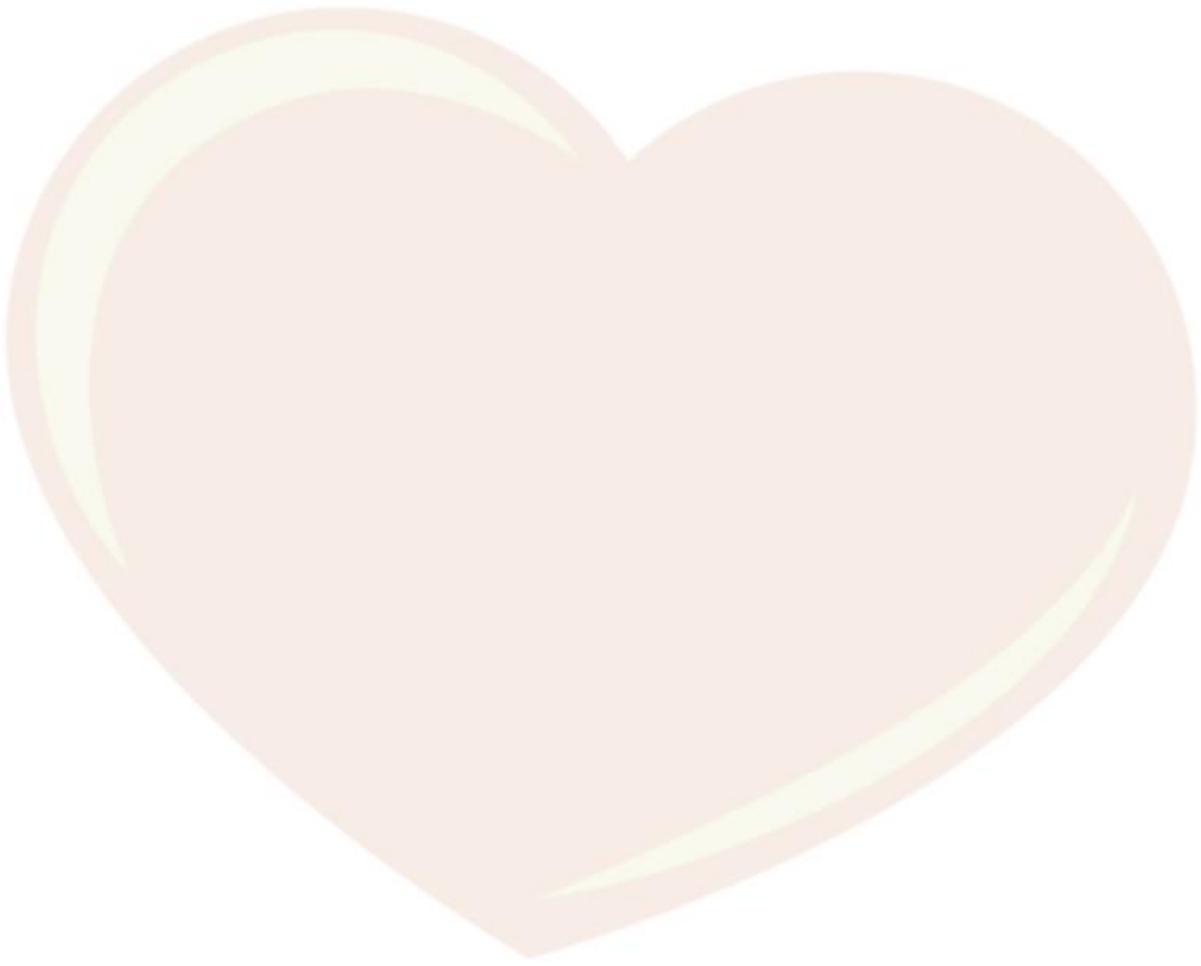
Created with Love by:

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Why Is It So Hard to Love Ourselves?

We came into the world innately Loving and accepting ourselves and our bodies. But sadly, for most of us, that changed. What happened?



What negative messages were you given...

♥ about being proud of yourself?

Empty rectangular box for writing answers to the question about pride.

♥ about taking care of your needs and desires ahead of others'?

Empty rectangular box for writing answers to the question about self-care.



Here's What Happened

As part of our upbringing and socialisation, we were taught that being proud of ourselves and taking care of our needs (especially before others') are bad traits, i.e., egotistical and selfish. And if we show any sign of these traits, then we are bad.

At best, our loving, yet misguided caregivers¹ taught us to deny and diminish ourselves so that others wouldn't feel less-than in our presence and, therefore, they would like and accept us.

At worst, accusing someone of being selfish is a method used to control the person, so they'll do what the accuser wants. Think about it. In essence, the accuser is saying:

"Stop being so selfish and fulfill *my* selfish needs."

But answer this:

Why are your needs and desires, your opinions and preferences any less valuable, any less important, or any less significant than anyone else's?

I'll give you a moment to really consider this.

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No good answer, eh?

(I said *good* answer. 😊)

I didn't think so.

¹ A wee note about blaming—and it really is a small note on a very BIG topic. (I have an entire workshop, *Put a Cork in Your Whine and Live a Champagne Life* that addresses the suffering that we inflict upon ourselves when we over-imbibe in blaming, complaining, shaming, and defaming. So, here's the wee note:

Those who had a hand in our upbringing and shaping us, were doing what they were taught. And now we're living what we were taught. Bottom line: **We're all doing the best we can in every given moment.** Really. It's True. Pinky swear.



Furthermore, why are other people's needs and desires, or their opinions and preferences any less valuable, any less important, or any less significant than ours?

Are you starting to see what's going on here?

We've not only been trained and shamed into abandoning our needs in exchange for the kindness and approval of others, but also as a way to control their emotions. This training is insidious and starts very early in life: *"Eat your peas, Susie, or mommy will be mad."* Even worse, we're made responsible for how people feel and behave. And we 'manage' this responsibility by what we say and do: *I want mommy to Love me, so I don't want to make her mad, so I will do what she wants and eat my peas.*

Simply put, **most of us are not taking care of our own needs and emotions because we've been socialised to expect others to do this for us (by them being self-less).**

We've been 'giving' to others to get what we're not giving ourselves.

But here's the kicker; there is no guarantee that others will—or are even able to—give us what we need OR that we'll even accept it when it's given. It's no wonder we feel empty! We've been looking for Love in all the wrong faces. And no amount of food, shopping, social media, or any other obsession will soothe or fill this kind of emptiness, because ...

**What we're really hungry for is Love, care, and acceptance
FOR and FROM OURSELVES**

How to Set Ourselves (and Others) Free

Whoa! That's a lot to take in, isn't it? So, knowing all of this, how do we proceed?

1) Well, first, we recognise this *game* we've been playing and consciously opt out of it—with tremendous Love, understanding, and compassion for everyone who continues to play it (including ourselves 😊) because they don't know any better (just like we didn't know any better). And now, even though we know better, old habits die hard—especially since the 'rules' have been so deeply entrenched in us.

2) Next, we understand that *everyone* is designed to be selfish and self-centred—on purpose. We are meant to bring our, unique, one-of-a-kind self and our talents to life. It's why we're here! But, when we're being *otherish* and *other-centred*, doing what *they* want or wearing a false mask to be acceptable in *their* eyes, we rob the world of our true, authentic self **and like a missing puzzle piece, the world isn't whole. And neither are we.**



3) We acknowledge that we can Love, accept, appreciate, value, and respect ourselves AND, at the very same time, Love, accept, appreciate, value, and respect others. In fact, we can more *authentically* and unconditionally extend this to others when we first give it to ourselves because you can't give what you don't have.

Loving Ourselves and Loving Others are NOT Mutually Exclusive.



This is a HUGE distinction: Don't confuse being kind or Loving with doing what others want you to do. We can still be kind and Love them while honouring our needs, which may be contrary to what they want.

4) We take *full responsibility* for ourselves—**first and foremost**. AND we make others responsible for themselves and their feelings. When we take care of our needs and tend to our emotions, we let everyone else off the hook. **It's the greatest gift of Love and freedom you can give!**

*"My happiness depends on me,
so you're off the hook."
~ Abraham-Hicks*

I've been practicing living by this tenet for many years now, and my life has taken a 180 degree turn for the better ever since.

Okay, I hear you: *This is all good and well, Sue. But how do we actually do it?*

My answer?

A Diet of Self-Love

When I looked up the definition of diet, along with the typical meaning of "*eating and drinking sparingly so as to reduce one's weight,*" Merriam-Webster.com also identified:

♥ **habitual nourishment** (Don't you just Love that, rather than habitual restriction and deprivation?)

and

♥ something **provided and experienced repeatedly.**

The second point is extremely important because nourishing ourselves with Love is not a one-time achievement. In the same way that we don't eat breakfast and say, "That's it, I'm forever satisfied," liberal servings of Self-Love are required consistently and often in order for us to flourish and live full-filled lives.



Being someone who adores and understands the power of words, I Loved learning that the Greek origin of diet literally means **manner of living**, which comes from *diataishai*: **to lead one's life**. Mmm, what a delicious thought:

Letting Self-Love Lead Our Life

After years of being on a steady diet of self-deprecation and self-deprivation, sprinkled with a bit of depression and heaps of self-loathing, I longed for a better *manner of living*. And after years of seeking *better*, I've come to know that it's my birthright—as it is everyone's—to feel good and to enJOY life as much as we possibly can. In fact, we are designed to Love (it's Who We Truly Are) and to feel good as a built-in survival and species perpetuating mechanism.



So, with all that in mind, a Self-Love Diet is letting Love (not fear) lead our lives. In other words, it's checking in with the compass of our heart and asking it,

“What would you have me think, say, and do?”

What is Self-Love?

Regardless of what others might think, say, or do, and no matter what, Self-Love is:

- ♥ Being kind and gentle with ourselves.
- ♥ Having our back and staying with ourselves—at ALL times, NO MATTER WHAT.
- ♥ Fully accepting, appreciating, valuing, and respecting our bodies and ourselves exactly as we are.
- ♥ Having boundless, unspeakable compassion and understanding for ourselves and our bodies.
- ♥ Knowing, and therefore feeling, that we are innately good, enough, worthy, and deserving. Just as we are. In every moment. No matter what. Period.
- ♥ Knowing, and therefore feeling, that we have nothing to earn, prove, improve, justify, or explain regarding who we are and where we are on our path because we are inherently good, enough, worthy, and deserving (It sooo warrants repeating 😊).
- ♥ Knowing we are Love in human form (i.e., we are far more than our body, our thoughts, and our feelings) and aligning with this Love again and again and again.... and letting it guide our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

“She learned to stop walking out on herself. To stop letting herself down. So she stayed when it got hard. She believed in her own capacity to rise and she saw it happen.”

~ Rebecca Ray



Why Self-Love is Our Superpower

Well, if all of that isn't enough to let Love take the lead in your life, Love is our superpower. Let's see why.

When we Love ourselves *unconditionally*:

♥ We are physically healthier.

Even more exciting, as evidenced by Evy McDonald's story²:

Self-Love has the potential to heal our body!

Here's what's going on inside our brain and our body:

When we think unloving thoughts—which causes us to feel negative emotions—our brain releases neurotransmitters such as epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisol, and adrenaline. In turn, this triggers a host of physiological reactions such as a surge in glucose (sugar), and an increase in our blood pressure and heart rate—just to name a few. This chain of events prepares us to fight or flee from whatever is causing the stressful, negative emotion. Now, this is a good thing if we need to lift a car trapping a child beneath it, but in this example, we're merely *thinking unkind thoughts* about ourselves. And marinating in these negative, thought-induced chemical cocktails over a prolonged period can produce all kinds of maladies³—weight gain being one of the more minor ones.

On the other happy hand, when we entertain Loving, kind, optimistic thoughts, causing us to feel positive emotions, body responds by flooding our system with healing chemicals like oxytocin, dopamine, nitric oxide, endorphins, and so on. Dr. Lissa Rankin⁴ calls these hormones “medicine for the body” because they counteract the stress response and actually heal our body!

² Evy McDonald's story, found on the American Holistic Health Association's website, is only one example of healing with Self-Love: <http://ahha.org/articles.asp?id=55>. In 1993, the Institute of Noetic Sciences published *Spontaneous Remission: An Annotated Bibliography*, assembling the largest database of medically reported cases of spontaneous remission in the world: <http://noetic.org/library/publication-books/spontaneous-remission-annotated-bibliography/>

³ A few fabulous books citing tons of research about the power of our thoughts and how they affect our body are: *You Are the Placebo: Making Your Mind Matter* by Dr. Joe Dispenza, *The Biology of Belief* by Dr. Bruce Lipton, and *It's the Thought that Counts: Why Mind Over Matter Really Works* by Dr. David Hamilton.

⁴ I recommend Lissa Rankin M.D. Tedx Talk <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Lissa-Rankin-MD-Is-There-Scientist> and her book, *Mind Over Medicine: Scientific Proof That You Can Heal Yourself*



- ♥ We stop (unknowingly) resenting the very people we've been sacrificing ourselves for and start Loving them whole-heartedly with *no strings attached*—regardless of how they may react to our Self-Loving ways. We do this for our sake as much as for them because who feels the feelings of Love when we Love? We do, of course. And the opposite is true. We feel the feeling of resentment when we resent.
- ♥ We free ourselves from striving for (and failing to be) something we're not but think we *should* be... perfect. Bleh! Just think of all the energy that we've been putting into trying to be 'acceptable' that could be re-directed to more fun, full-filling, life-giving endeavours.
- ♥ We stop sailing the deadly *C's* of criticising, comparing, competing, condemning, and complaining about ourselves and our bodies, and *allow* ourselves to be happy—just the way we are.

The best and greatest gift you can give
to the people you Love (and the world at large) is
A HAPPY, HEALTHY YOU!

- ♥ We no longer keep score to ensure we're on top, never owing anyone for anything. This is a symptom of feeling unworthy and, therefore, feeling that we need to *earn* Love from others. How this tends to play out is: we over-give and always do more than our fair share. This leads to exhaustion and eventually burnout, anger, and resentment because “clearly, others are not pulling their weight.” But we're the ones who set the game up this way so they could never win—and nor do we ☹️. When we Love ourselves, we naturally feel worthy and deserving, and we're able to fully receive from others without taking score.
- ♥ We clearly and directly ask for what we want because we feel worthy and deserving of having our needs and desires met. It's unkind to expect people to read our mind to know what we want—only to blame them for our disappointment and anger when they don't—because they can't. And even if they could read our mind, there are times when we don't even know what we want. It's much more Loving to ourselves and others to make a direct request, allowing them to oblige us—or not. And should they not, we're okay with it since we recognise that they're merely taking care of their needs. And besides, we don't want others to deny or sacrifice themselves because we no longer sacrifice and deny ourselves.



Most people are happy to accommodate our requests when asked in a direct, verbal, no-mind-reading-required, non-demanding, and non-begging manner.



♥ We unapologetically set healthy, Loving boundaries to create a life we Love. Instead of saying a kind, direct “no,” many of us go against ourselves and, in the process, make what I call *back room deals* with other people—without their knowledge of or consent to the deal. These unspoken *agreements of exchange* go something like this: “I’ll do this thing for you that I don’t want to do. But now you’re on the hook to do something for me that you may not want to do.” But then, when the other person doesn’t live up to her end of the deal (since she didn’t even know about the deal) we feel hurt, angry, betrayed, and used, which leads to more unhealthy resentment. Yikes!

“True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don’t need to regularly escape from.”

~ Brianna Wiest

♥ We are the example for how we expect *and allow* others to treat us: with Love, kindness, care, and respect. If this isn’t reason enough to live and, as such model Self-Love, then consider this:

Our children grow up to treat themselves the way they see us treat ourselves.

♥ We stop dieting and punishing our bodies with torturous exercising. Most women think: “When I lose X pounds, then—and only then—will I be able to Love myself and allow myself to feel good.” So, we buy into the latest diet restrictions and brutal exercise regimens. Or, more likely, we feel like failures because we can’t maintain them, causing us to perpetuate our self-soothing cycle of overeating (having a cocktail, shopping, ...or your numbing “drug” of choice). Look, if this self-abuse worked, we’d all be skinny by now.

I believe that fixating on our body size, or any other negative *obsession* that consumes us, is a distraction from what’s *really* going on:

Our Loss of Self

What I’ve personally come to know is that the only thing that will ever fill the gnawing, hollow, not-enough feeling inside us, is to get on with Loving and accepting our bodies and ourselves—exactly as we are, right NOW—and to live our lives *fully*, on our own personal, unique terms.

After all, isn’t that the reason we want to achieve an *acceptable* body (or lifestyle or job title or whatever) in the first place: so that we’ll be able to Love ourselves?





As just listed, there are many benefits that can arise from Loving ourselves, but the moment we use Self-Love to make something happen, such as to lose weight, or to heal an illness, or to get others to like us, we attach strings to that Love—our Love becomes conditional. Consequently, we set ourselves up for disappointment and suffering if those conditions don't materialise. It's what we're already experiencing. We must Love ourselves for the sheer purpose of Loving and allow the outcomes of that pure Love to naturally occur. It's my experience that the magic of unconditional Love far exceeds anything I could've tried to *make* happen.



The Self-Love Diet Process

1. Commit to Loving yourself

... for the pure sake of Loving yourself—NOT as a method to change or improve yourself. It's okay to want to change aspects of ourselves, even our body, but we don't have to withhold Love from ourselves as a means to 'motivate' that change.

Embrace the scientific facts that Self-Love is good...for you, for the health of your body, for those you Love, for everyone you encounter, and for the world at large. **And for no other reason than you deserve Love.**

We've been given life to create who we are and what we experience. So, let's not dabble dabble with this. Go all in with a consistent, steadfast practice of Loving yourself like your life depends on it. **Because it does!**

2. Be on the lookout for ways in which you're not Loving.

This is the hardest step in the Self-Love Diet process because we've been neglectful and unkind to ourselves for so long that we're numb to the suffering it causes us. It's like wallpaper; we don't even see it (or feel it) because the dull ache has become the background of our everyday existence.

The good news is the more we become aware of our unloving ways, the easier they are to see and the more sensitive we become to feeling badly. And with consistent practice, a momentum builds, creating a habit of Self-Love. Yay!





At first, being aware of how we mistreat ourselves can easily turn into yet another reason to berate ourselves: “There I go again! I’m so stupid! When will I get my act together? I should know better!”

However, a Self-Love Diet requires that we eliminate all forms self-deprecation and harsh criticisms and, instead, celebrate our awareness of our unkind, unloving ways, which brings us to step 3...

3. Breakout A BIG Happy Dance

This may seem like a silly, frivolous step, but it’s extremely helpful in getting us off the *beaten path* of our unloving ways more quickly by:

- ♥ physically interrupting the harmful habit.
- ♥ replacing it with a happy celebration, thus creating new positive *neural pathways*.
- ♥ *consciously* acknowledging that we’re present in the moment in having identified an unwanted behaviour that we intend to change.
- ♥ honouring our commitment to Self-Love and affirming—in a joyful way—that we deserve better.



If you’re in a public place like a grocery store, a boardroom meeting, or on the subway, it’s probably best that you get jiggy with it inside your head. Otherwise, it’s significantly more powerful to get up and physically bust out a **BIG⁵** move to anchor the new habit.

4. Let Love Lead

Swap out unloving, harmful thoughts, words, and behaviours with acts of Self-Love.

Here are just a few practices to get you started:

- ♥ **Return Home to Your Heart Centre...** again and again and again...
Ground yourself in the present moment. Recognise that most suffering is caused from entertaining upsetting thoughts about the past or worrying about the future.



⁵ Amy Cuddy’s research shows how “power posing” influences how we feel about ourselves and how others perceive us. So dance **BIG!** http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are.html



- ♥ **Stop *shouldin'* on yourself.** Get still and quiet to enable you to hear your True Heart's desire that's being shushed by tyrannical *shoulds*. Then ask:

“Love, what would You have me do, say, or think about this?”

And then honour your heart.



- ♥ **Give yourself an ever-lovin' break** by compassionately acknowledging the truth:

You did the best you could in the moment.

And now that you're in a better place,
you're *able* to do better in this moment.

- ♥ **Make peace with you, your body, and what-is** because it already is what-is. Embrace Abraham-Hick's⁶ teaching:

“I am where I am
and it's merely the jumping off point to where I want to go.”

Loathing ourselves for so-called faults or criticising our 'crooked stitches' is a cruel and ineffective way to motivate us to change. In fact, offering ourselves compassionate acceptance empowers us to more easily change. Counterintuitive, eh? But think about it; hating ourselves for the habits we despise, such as over-eating, over-shopping, over-imbibing... are what caused us to *use* those very habits to *soothe* ourselves in the first place.

- ♥ **Set Loving boundaries** for your benefit AND for the benefit of others. Look, we teach people how to treat us and it's not fair to them (or you) if you're angry and being snarly because they've overstepped one of your limits without even knowing you had a limit.
- ♥ **Say a Loving, kind, compassionate *no*** when you don't want to do something—even if it may hurt or upset the recipient of your *no*. Their feelings are theirs to own, soothe, and tend to, not yours to *fix* by going against yourself and denying your needs and desires (Remember, this is what got you here, in the first place. Sigh.)

⁶ Without a doubt, the teachings of Abraham-Hicks (www.abraham-hicks.com) have been *the most* influential in guiding me to create the life I now live and is the basis of what I teach in all my workshops.





When you're about to do something that you don't want to do, remind yourself:

- ⌘ I was not born to sacrifice myself for anyone else.
- ⌘ Sacrificing myself is not a gift to the other person involved. I want all my gifts to be given with pure Love, without any strings attached, and without resentment
- ⌘ It's not my job to make the other person feel good by going against myself
- ⌘ I will Love myself through any backlash from the other person
- ⌘ All is well and getting even better as I take care of me!

♥ Soothe your *inner mean girl* with sweet, encouraging self-talk. When you hear that harsh, critical voice inside your head:

STOP! Kindly and compassionately tell that scared little voice, "Thanks for sharing. I'll take it from here, sweetheart. I've got this!"

START talking to yourself like you would to a beloved because **YOU are the Beloved.**

"To find the Beloved, you must become the Beloved."

~ Rumi

♥ Forgive yourself knowing that this is a true gift to yourself and those you Love. Let go of grudges, resentments, and hurt as soon as you're able and move forward knowing that the quickest and most efficient way to do this is through Loving yourself.



Love Practice: Eye Spy Things to Love

1. Open your eyes and look for all that is good and wonderful about you, your body, and your life. Record at least 3 Loves in a notebook, or on your phone or your computer every day.
2. Generously share⁷ with others (in a non-superior, non-smug way 😊) what you Love and appreciate about anything at all. This is a beautiful practice that increases more to Love and appreciate and sharing your Loves with others invites them to do the same.

And if I were to ask you to list all the things you Love, how long would it take to name yourself?

⁷ The opening exercise of this workshop, "Share a Brag" and the practice of sharing what we Love was inspired by Regina Thomashauer, founder of Mama Gena's School of Womanly Arts, who starts many of her interactions with, "Tell me a brag."



This is NOT Love

Identify ways that you:

- ☹ are not Loving, kind, gentle, generous, and compassionate toward yourself.
- ☹ make yourself bad, wrong, and not enough.
- ☹ disrespect, punish, dishonour, and diminish yourself.

