



Self-Love Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 10: Inner Relationship

One of the important and essential ways to understand self-love, and the reason for the attention we wish to give it, is the recognition that a person always lives in a kind of inner partnership. I live with myself. Each person lives with themselves.

Whenever such an expression, or one similar to it, is mentioned, the reaction tends to repeat itself, because in many respects these actions can seem closed off and without meaning. A person speaks with themselves. A person lives with themselves. A person reports to themselves. A person listens to themselves, is angry with themselves, goes for a walk with themselves, reflects with themselves, and more.

Regardless of our spiritual or psychological outlook, it seems that almost every person will eventually admit that they exist emotionally in a space that feels like two, if not more. Whether these are two parts or two aspects of the human personality that can, in one way or another, communicate with each other, or whether it is simply that we cannot live otherwise than in the form of inner communication between two sides, the bottom line will be the same. A person is in a relationship with themselves.

Surprisingly and even movingly, many aspects of what we regard as the right way to conduct a partnered relationship apply very much to this relationship of a person with themselves. Almost everything required to sustain a meaningful, stable, and flourishing partnership is also required when cultivating a person's relationship with themselves, a relationship that should likewise exist in harmony, in dialogue, in mutual enrichment, in cooperation, and in growth.

Before we deepen the comparison between relationships with an external other and the relationship with ourselves, it is worthwhile to clarify this conception, the fact that within us, there is always communication. We like to talk to ourselves, although socially it is not considered very normal to speak to oneself out loud. In many ways, we hide the fact that we are in a complex relationship with ourselves. We hide from others the inner arguments, the disagreements, the negotiations we conduct with ourselves, and our reactions toward ourselves in certain situations, at certain events, or among certain people.

For the purpose of discussion, we can view every person as a kind of pair, a duo, a two. From the outside, each person appears as a single individual, yet deep within this person is in unceasing contact with themselves. They are in a relationship, in

communication, in ongoing reference to themselves, and very often also in a state of escape from themselves.

At times when we say that we are truly running away from ourselves, what do we mean? Who is running from whom? Are there two figures here? With which of them do we identify more? Did we forget for a moment that these two figures are in fact both us?

If we take this a step forward, we can safely estimate that a person lives with themselves in a kind of ongoing partnership, and more than that, that this partnership often generates restlessness, inner noise, worries, fears, hindrances, complications, and pains. It is not for nothing that it is often said that the person one fears most is oneself. There is the person and their pangs of conscience, the person and their guilt, the person and their excessive expectations, the person and their excessive self criticism. It is the person facing various forces that dwell within, in the other side, in the other figure that lives within the person and whose existence cannot be ignored. Never.

Let us now return to the important connection between what we regard as right partnership and what occurs within a person, between the person and their partner, which is themselves. Self love enters exactly into this space and comes to bring about a profound, fundamental, and long term change unlike any other. This can occur only when we understand that we are always within a relationship with ourselves. There is not a single moment in which this relationship goes to sleep or takes a break. It happens at all times, perhaps from birth. It is alive, present, and very influential. We must acknowledge this and examine whether we have fears about engaging with this matter.

When we agree with two principles, the first being that a person is always within a partnered experience with themselves, and the second being that this relationship has many points of contact with what we regard as happening or as supposed to happen in a relationship with another person, then we can understand and implement the self love within us and act in a way that will change the essence of our emotional system, our ability to meet challenges, and our level of creativity.

Let us begin with the mirror. It appears to be a banal, daily, and non-essential event. It is the encounter with oneself in the mirror.

Why do most people not see themselves in a positive way when they meet their image in the mirror? Is it because it is difficult for them to look honestly and directly at their relationship with themselves? Is it because it is uncomfortable to be reminded, through the gaze of the present moment, that their relationship with themselves is not good? Why is it so complicated to be gentle, kind, patient, and containing when we see ourselves? Why is it hard for us to tolerate our appearance, who we are, and our truth? Why do we feel embarrassed when we smile at ourselves in the mirror? Why do so many prefer to look for flaws in their reflection instead of granting themselves a sense of security, faith, support, and appreciation? Why do so many prefer to maintain a grinding relationship with themselves and become alarmed at the possibility that essential peace and quiet could dwell within?

The deeper we enter this subject and try to understand what is happening between us and ourselves, we will likely discover a quiet, behind the scenes ache. It is a vague, old, and constant emotional pain that awakens when we deepen our gaze into ourselves and try to come a little closer to ourselves.

As we continue to deepen, we will likely discover emotional memories from which we have been trying to escape for most of our adult lives, because it is too difficult for us to engage with them and to feel them again. We probably fear that these memories could harm our functioning and our quality of life. Looking at ourselves in the mirror and smiling can cause us to stop avoiding, to stop hiding, and to stop circumventing ourselves and what we feel. This means that we must be ready to experience challenging feelings that may flood us, especially at the beginning period when we train ourselves to restore love to the partnered space within us.

Therefore, your partnership with yourself, which is about to undergo significant development as self-love begins to operate regularly within you, now stands at the center of attention and calls you to reexamine it, to touch it, and to approach it just as we expect of ourselves within a relationship with someone who is especially important to us.

Self-love will therefore require you to consider yourself more. Self-love will require you to take your own side, to support your version first, and never to speak negatively toward yourself, exactly as with someone you love very much. Self-love will require you to appreciate yourself more and to grant yourself more quality time with yourself. Self-love will require you to be more deeply honest with yourself, as in a partnership with someone especially beloved. Self-love will require you to pause, to sit with yourself, and to breathe. Self-love will require you to say in the middle of the day for no particular reason, “I love you.” Self-love will require you to court yourself, to buy yourself flowers, and to hug yourself.

This is self-love. When touched and activated, it is irreversible. Once more, a reminder. What we perceive as I is in fact we. This we is something we want to make better, more delightful, and more satisfying.

Practice Questions (Answer in handwriting or share in a practice group):

1. How do you feel about the expression **“inner relationship”**?
2. In what ways do you know how to **be your own best friend**?
3. In which areas would you like to **improve your ability to be your own best friend**?
4. When was the last time you **took yourself on a “date” or on an interesting outing**?
5. What is the **next thing you would like to do just with yourself** that might improve your **inner relationship**?
6. Any other thoughts or feelings about this step that you would like to share?