



# Self-Love Journey

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## Step 12: Love Yourself When It Is Hard

This chapter largely represents one of the important, challenging, and complex parts of self-love. The subject we address here reflects the less glamorous, less sensational, and less enticing sides of self-love. It represents our less pleasant moments, the painful, gray, depressing, and anxiety-provoking moments.

Within those difficult places, where life becomes heavier and more complicated, we will clarify the vital role of self-love. In those harder places through which a person must pass, we will think together about how self-love can change the picture when we bravely draw on our remaining emotional strength.

When we are in hard moments, when reality collides with us and shakes our stability, when almost everything is getting tangled, changing, and breaking down, one of the last things we will likely think about is self-love. In those moments, when pain, fear, worry, and frustration are so dominant and present, it is not simple, and sometimes it is impossible, to find within ourselves points of softness, empathy, and self-understanding.

Yet these are exactly the moments when self-love is needed like air to breathe.

These are exactly the moments when we forget the good, the encouraging, the optimistic, and the successful in our lives. These are exactly the moments when we add to the difficulty an excessive self criticism, a despair that exceeds the boundaries of the event, a pessimism that distorts the picture, and an over-focus on what is problematic while almost completely neglecting other aspects of our inner world that could help us, stabilize us, and provide a healthier perspective around the challenge in front of us.

These are exactly the moments when self-love is so important and becomes reality-changing.

Here is how it works. When we feel very bad or when things are moving toward directions we do not want, there arises within us, alongside the unpleasant experience, an atmosphere of inner distancing up to self-alienation. This atmosphere is not a decree of fate and is not necessarily connected to what is happening around us. Moreover, this atmosphere only intensifies the difficulty, lengthens it, exaggerates it, and reduces our ability to cope with it creatively. Worse than that, such an atmosphere

pushes us toward behavior that closely resembles addiction, toward behaviors that repeat the errors of the past, toward a tendency for self-harm, and toward an excessive wallowing in pain.

When in such moments we manage, even briefly, to stop the surge, face a mirror, smile lightly, and say something like, “Yes, it is hard now, yet nonetheless I love you,” we create a highly significant long-term shift. Over time, this shift is expected to equip us with tools that can take us out of the repeating circles of pain, frustration, and the return to behaviors that inevitably lead us to unwanted places.

It is important to note that in most cases, an act of self-love performed in a crisis will not change the feelings in any immediate and dramatic way. Sometimes we will indeed feel a measure of relief and a small addition of a good atmosphere within us. Yet often nothing substantial will seem to happen in response to the gesture. We will smile at the mirror and say something kind to ourselves, but the difficulty and pain will continue. They have their own lifespan and their own pace of fading.

What matters most when we add an act of self-love during a hard time is what happens next, and how the soul builds its emotional future. When we plant elements of self-love into a difficult event, the soul records a positive precedent. It will remember in the future that this event was handled differently than usual. Despite the pain and difficulty, there were also sparks of healthy and positive behavior. This memory will help it later to respond differently when a similar event repeats.

When our memory of an event is entirely negative, the likelihood that such an event will recur in the same form, and even with greater intensity, is high. This is a circle of addiction and a return to the painful place, as long as we do not make far-reaching changes that alter the reality associated with that issue. We human beings have a tendency to return to the places where we made mistakes and where our inner world encountered difficulty and distress. You can see this as a recurring opportunity to correct, and you can also see it as a form of addiction.

By contrast, when we manage, despite the difficulty and the weight, to lift ourselves for a short time, to ignore the commotion, to smile at the mirror, and even to speak words of love toward ourselves, the drama and what remains of it change greatly. We are no longer victims of the event, and we are not fully controlled by it. We found within ourselves the ability to respond, even for a few moments, with tools of self-love. When we act in this way, the soul recognizes that something is changing, that reality is no longer composed of dark and oppressive events only, but of events that simultaneously contain bad and good, pain and courage, sadness and love.

One crucial point about such behavior in a hard event is that it requires considerable courage. Negative drama is a sweeping state, persuasive and uncompromising, that leaves almost no room for doubt, for wondering, or for broad and creative thinking about what is happening. Such drama causes us to feel that reality is absolute and too painful. Such drama distances us from our positive strengths quickly and efficiently. We surrender to it and grant it the mandate to manage us in a negative way. We become addicted to it.

To stand against the surge and against the pain, and precisely then to encourage, to support, and to appreciate is not simple. It means going against what is, rebelling against it, standing face to face before the sharp and sweeping pain, and saying to it, "No." Such action requires courage that emerges from a deep and quiet place that has already met self-love, has known it, has recognized it, and has adopted it as a necessary mechanism for creating a healthier and more meaningful life.

Courage of this kind is greater and more important than many actions and decisions that are usually regarded as brave or daring. There, within the routine of our lives, occur the events that most determine our emotional and physical health. There, inside the irritating and repetitive events that frustrate us so deeply, lie the greatest treasures for personal growth, self realization, and change. Within those hard places also dwell our barriers to a freer, more released, and more satisfying life. We should not understand these situations otherwise. These are exactly the places where our soul gets stuck again and again, and these are exactly the places where life offers us an opportunity for change.

How will the change take place?

The change will take place gradually, through the persistent introduction of self-love into the dark, unrewarding, and unsuitable places in our lives. When we bring self-love into them again and again, the soul will remember and will treat the next event with a little more positivity and creativity. When this becomes a habit, the intensity of the difficulty will decrease, and new options for change and a more balanced perspective on the problem will appear and become more available.

We need self-love in the hard moments and also in the easy moments. When self-love becomes an inseparable part of our lives, everything becomes simpler, clearer, less frightening, and more manageable. Self-love is the foundation of change, and sometimes it is the change itself. Do you have the courage to smile at yourself even when it is hard.

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

1. Name one of the issues that is **particularly challenging or troubling for you these days**.
2. Examine this: **To what extent do you support yourself, stand by yourself, and love yourself** in relation to this issue?
3. Do you remember a situation in which you encountered difficulty and **part of the way you coped was through self love or self support**? Write a few lines about it.
4. How does it feel to **recall the event you mentioned in the previous question**?
5. In which area of your life do you feel there is now a need for a **significant increase in self love**?
6. Any other thoughts or feelings about this step that you would like to share?