



Self-Love Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 17: Love the Unlovable Parts in You

This part of self-love is among the most challenging, difficult, and controversial. Many people succeed in applying quite a few principles of self-love, yet when they want to face this particular part of their personality, they encounter a solid wall separating them from one of the most important and life-changing qualities of self-love, the ability to love precisely what they find hardest to like within themselves.

In vain we will try to cleanse ourselves or to ignore it. In vain we will try to present ourselves as moral or enlightened beings. In vain we will distance ourselves from bad or unworthy people and separate ourselves from anyone who represents what we see as wrong, abnormal, dirty, repulsive, inferior, or not of our culture or our neighborhood. In vain we will try to purify ourselves through what we perceive as good deeds, helping others, contributing to society, or speaking beautifully. None of these will ever change the true reality that resides in the depths of our psyche and that sometimes emerges in ways that may shame or sadden us.

In every person, without exception, there are parts that repel them. In every person, without exception, there are parts they will do everything not to express or even share with themselves. Every person has parts that contradict their own basic beliefs and norms. In every person, there is a potential criminal, even if they are certain that such a thing is not possible. In every person dwell dark, difficult, and irritating elements, sides that they would prefer, if only possible, to keep forever locked away in the closed basements of the soul.

That is why the human psyche developed the marvelous mechanism of repression, to try to forget, to make others forget, to divert attention, and to live along a path that constantly bypasses the silent monsters that exist within every human being.

This way of living carries a high price. To keep these negative parts quiet and contained, a person must recruit great mental energy to silence and suppress the hidden and unwanted drives and desires. The energy we invest in maintaining this state is very expensive, and when it is devoted primarily to keeping the internal prisons of our “ugly” parts locked, it is missing from other areas where our inner forces are needed, for flexibility, creativity, and openness to handle challenges and focus on growth.

The equation is simple and indisputable, if too many resources are mobilized to keep large portions of ourselves that we consciously or unconsciously perceive as negative, forbidden, or dangerous under control, it comes at the expense of other situations where we could achieve more, realize more of our potential, and experience greater satisfaction, joy, and frequent moments of calm and fulfillment. The person who invests great energy to maintain this suppression is more tense, more anxious, and more vulnerable to emotional and physical disturbances.

This is the price we pay for the accepted lifestyle. But this price can be significantly reduced when we bring into the picture, with courage and honesty, self-love as a way to cope more effectively with the parts we usually see as unnecessary or unworthy. Self-love can connect us to places we could hardly approach without it. In the end, self-love offers us a deal that is hard to refuse, to save ourselves from ourselves.

As enlightened, intelligent, sensitive, and caring people, the last thing that comes to mind is that there are dark, threatening, ugly, unpleasant, or even slightly malicious sides within us. We do not want to believe that somewhere inside us there exists the potential to harm ourselves or others. We refuse to accept that we share certain elements with great criminals or master deceivers. We do not want to believe that part of our humanity includes elements that the mind cannot tolerate and will do anything to push away or erase. But in vain, we all have these parts, and we can never truly escape them.

If human beings, mortals like us, are capable of committing atrocities, causing harm, pain, and destruction, then it is clear that the potential for such actions exists in every person. Most normative people choose and prefer not to harm or to suffer from harm, and therefore they are not criminals. Usually, life rewards them reasonably well for that choice, the choice of a moral, considerate, and tolerant lifestyle. Society embraces these normative people and presents them as normal, sane, and belonging to the healthy segment of humanity. It prefers to confine, silence, remove, or eliminate criminals, the mentally ill, and others considered useless or harmful, in order to see itself as clean, enlightened, and healthy.

But no distancing, exclusion, imprisonment, or denial can hide the truth, from society or from its individuals. Within every person dwell violence, fears, and thoughts they prefer not to contemplate. They will do everything to avoid expressing some of their urges. Sometimes one feels like killing someone but calms down and regains proportion before doing harm to oneself or others. Sometimes one feels like stealing, but chooses not to do so, even though the “inner thief” still exists within, wishing to take everything for themselves without limits or restraint. That thief remains part of us. It is not as terrible as it sounds. In fact, it can be amusing and even beneficial to get to know the unwanted parts of our psyche, to befriend them without fear, and to transform them into something positive and useful. Such a process is called *emotional transformation*, and it helps us live fuller lives instead of constantly running away from ourselves.

Self-love can help us bring about a profound change in our attitude toward the difficult parts within us. Self-love can help us develop compassion and understanding for the fact that we carry within us deep, primal fears that also create quiet and inactive tendencies toward aggression or other harmful expressions, and that these are

part of who we are. We may succeed in restraining these negative sides, but this does not bring us peace or balance, it only brings constant tension and the need to stay on guard to maintain that balance. Only when we dare to look inward through the eyes of self-love can we make peace with these parts and discover that it is better to have a relationship with them than to invest so much energy in repressing or ignoring them.

So instead of running away from ourselves and paying the high price of not knowing who we are and not being able to realize our true potential, because ignoring essential parts of ourselves limits our capacity for expression and growth, we can love. Love fearlessly. Love it all. Love everything that exists within us. Love everything that is repulsive, disgusting, unreasonable, immoral, inhuman, unkind, and inconsiderate. Because whatever we do not love within us will continue to drain our strength and resources as a reaction to our neglect and alienation from it.

To love ourselves is a kind of habit, a kind of muscle that must be strengthened. Many times, this marks the beginning of a revolution that causes a person to transform their relationship with themselves, to reach a state where they no longer feel anger or aversion toward their negative parts and are ready to work, to learn, to observe, and to transform. All of this can happen only when self-love becomes an inseparable part of our regular attention. Then we will learn to embrace what is difficult within us until it begins to soften, until the fears that created it begin to dissolve and disappear. This is one of the miracles of self-love, one of the most important ones.

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

1. How do you feel about the expression **“to love what I do not love in myself”**?
2. Do you agree with the possibility that the **weaker parts within us need love more than any other part of us**?
3. What happens when you try to be with **compassion, listening, and understanding** toward the less pleasant and less developed parts of yourself?
4. Do you recognize that there may be **some potential level of aggression within you**, even if it is never expressed in a concrete way?
5. What do you think might happen if you **wrap the aggressive part within you with gentleness, love, listening, and compassion**?
6. Any other thoughts or feelings about this step that you would like to share?