



Self-Love Journey

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Step 3: Pleasure

One of the things that occupies human beings more than almost anything else is pleasure. Freud wrote extensively about the decisive role of pleasure and the search for it in human life and in our sense of emotional stability. He saw pleasure as a force connected to the fulfillment of basic drives, especially in the realm of sexuality. Yet the human being is far more developed than the animal, and can receive and generate pleasure from diverse and profound sources that do not include the satisfaction of bodily appetites.

For the human being, one of the purest, healthiest, and cleanest sources of pleasure is found in the full and powerful experience that arrives with an inner connection to the feeling of love. There is probably no pleasure more important and meaningful for a person than the pleasure connected to the most sought-after feeling on Earth. From this perspective, self-love is a unique capacity within the individual to connect with sources of pleasure that live within the person, even before they join with another person, even before they touch or are touched, even before they speak, connect, taste, feel, or kiss.

There are not enough words to describe the exceptionally high, satisfying, and healing pleasure that accompanies those moments in which a person succeeds, truly and sincerely, in a clean, simple, and direct way, to love themselves. In such moments, the person relaxes from the hunger for other needs that are tied to the search for pleasure and inner peace. In such moments the person connects with themselves and separates from any sense of lack, worry, fear, or distress. The pleasure of self-love is immeasurable, unprecedented, and incomparable with any other type of pleasure. To receive this pleasure, however, one must walk a meaningful path that places self-love in its rightful place and encourages its practice and cultivation.

When a person begins to recognize the love that exists within them toward themselves, there are no limits. This feeling of self-love is like a pleasant and sweet air that expands from within, warms body and soul, comforts every corner of pain, and makes one forget any frustration about not receiving love or attention from the environment. When a person begins to realize the natural ability to love themselves, without wasting resources on the need to please others or to share parts of their private pleasure, they become the owner of their own pleasure, a person who feels a positive sense of control in their capacity to strengthen their life and to create joy out of seemingly nothing.

It is important to state already in the early stages of the process that self-love does not separate or isolate a person from their surroundings and does not render unnecessary the wonderful sources of pleasure that the environment gives to a person, such as contact with another person, loving relationships, and sensual pleasure of all kinds. The opposite is true. Self-love can allow a person to experience all of these from a more stable and powerful place, one that can contain greater pleasure and satisfaction without addiction, dependence, alienation, or fear.

The more a person practices self-love and the more they are able to experience it fully, the more they learn to recognize it as a kind of source and foundation for all other forms of pleasure. Self-love teaches a person to experience fully, to lose boundaries in a precise way without losing control, and then to return to a stable and mature base after the intensity of pleasure has passed and faded.

This is the place to emphasize the importance of smiling in the mirror. Smiling at the mirror is an action that seems simple, an action that contains immense portions of pleasure if we surrender to it and repeat it despite cynicism and fear, despite doubts and despite prejudices.

A mirror smile can immediately and unequivocally show a person the current level of self-love that exists or the degree of ability to cultivate and strengthen it. It is important to note that smiling at the mirror can also develop this ability regardless of its current measure. Smiling at the mirror can greatly help us become people who truly love themselves. A simple smile, without great difficulty, toward ourselves, through the mirror, and great pleasure.

When one smiles at the mirror for a few seconds, one may feel a slightly pleasant sensation, but not much beyond that. When one smiles for 15 to 20 consecutive seconds, the resistances begin to fade. It is that simple. When one smiles at the mirror for 30 seconds, and even more, excessive self-criticism, the need to run away, and other fears subside, and at a certain moment, streams of pleasure from self-love begin to appear. The person begins to remember emotionally that love exists within, and then can connect to the fact that this love is a vital current that renews optimism, hope, self-compassion, humor, and inner peace.

When one smiles at the mirror for at least a full minute without interruption, including returning the smile if it tires, an authentic and very meaningful excitement can appear, the kind of excitement that people search for over long periods in many places without much success. In the end, this is what we are looking for without noticing it. We are searching for those moments of whole and perfect connection in which the soul feels that it has arrived home, that it is full and stabilized and has no reason to be anxious, worried, or restless.

As the art and skill of self-love become a principled and practical commitment in a person's life, the person understands the high importance of pleasure and the ability to reach it more frequently and with higher quality.

A person who loves themselves asks, rightly, for frequent and available times of pleasure. A person who loves themselves does not become entangled in guilt for enjoying life more than before and does not calculate within their soul how much

pleasure others are experiencing. A person who recognizes the place of self-love in the experience of pleasure finally understands that depriving themselves of pleasure will not serve others, and that the best thing they can do for others is to encourage them to find their own self-love.

Many people struggle to internalize the sharp, simple, and profoundly important message that it is essential to increase positive experiences of pleasure in daily life as a condition for healthier, more satisfying, and more empowering living. When a person experiences positive pleasure, their body reorganizes, heals itself, calms itself, balances itself, and renews itself. A person who cannot grant themselves increasing measures of pleasure suffers more, contracts more, and becomes more vulnerable. When choosing the path of self-love, which is a demanding path that requires a mature and consistent decision to give to oneself and to cultivate oneself, one also chooses a way that includes less pain, less suffering, and many more possibilities for joy and for the release of long-standing conflicts.

This is the task: to find within us and within ourselves the special pleasure that comes from reviving and realizing the love that exists in us, regardless of the presence of another person, regardless of what is given to someone else or what we receive from someone else. Self-love emerges from within us, grows stronger thanks to our own initiatives of self-love, fills us with the right kind of pleasure that does not allow collapse or heartbreak, and teaches us how to experience the positive parts of life in the right and nourishing way.

Human life is filled with possibilities for negative pleasure that are connected to addictions and to harm. Many times we will discover that the tendency toward negative pleasure is closely linked to a lack of self-love. This lack causes a person to feel constantly dependent on the environment in order to experience pleasure and to feel devoid of self-confidence in their ability to feel stable and lasting satisfaction. Mirror smiles, repeated and lengthened, begin to return the person to their abilities for positive pleasure, a pleasure that will always be available and that can be improved and intensified from time to time. This is self-love, and this is the reason for every effort we will devote to attaining and developing it from now and forever.

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

1. How do you feel about the word “**pleasure**”?
2. Do you recognize within yourself experiences of “**spiritual pleasure**” that are not connected to a physical situation at all?
3. How do you currently connect the **increase of self love** with the **expansion of possibilities for pleasure** in your life?
4. As part of the **mirror smiling practice**, you are invited to practice a particularly long smile right now. Stand in front of a mirror and hold a full, wide smile for **20 to 30 seconds**. There is a chance that at some moment during this practice you may experience pleasure. If not this time, then another time. It is a matter of practice and repetition. **Write about the experience you encountered there.**
5. What do you think about the possibility that connecting to the pleasure within you is **one of the important keys to your growth and development in general**?

6. Any other thoughts or feelings about this step that you would like to share?