



Self-Love Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 31 :The Child Within You Needs Endless Self-Love

We all agree that children need a great deal of love in order to develop properly. Children and young people are nourished by love no less than by food. Love is what plants in them security, develops within them a positive self-image, moves their creativity, and grants them a sense of belonging and the power to face a variety of challenges.

So too the child within you. The primal and basic parts of your soul, those parts in your personality that have remained as they were, with the spirit of a child, with the innocence of a child, and with the sensitivity and needs of a child. These children are within us, and they are our direct access to the sources of inspiration, creativity, vision, dream, and revolution. Without a connection to our inner child, our life lacks the color, the taste, the passion, and the playfulness that are so necessary in order to realize goals and to heal what is stuck, irritating, and uncomfortable.

Yet the inner child, for various reasons, also carries the wounds of the past, their traumas, and their moments of helplessness in which arbitrary decisions were made about them that did not match their needs and wishes. This child experienced in one way or another judgmental response that blocked their vitality and originality. This girl experienced in varied situations a lack of social belonging, insults, losses, and disappointments. The inner children within us often encountered unpleasant situations, and they did not have the tools or the ability to change their influence and the way in which they harmed them.

The inner children within us, who can lead us to the highest and most fascinating places in life, who are very connected to intuition and imagination, carry within them the quiet scars that remind them of the places where the world did not know how to recognize them properly and even exploited them for its needs in an improper and unhelpful way. These inner children of us all can receive a new opportunity to address what was lacking, irritating, painful, and humiliating. They can receive from us endless love that will grant them the right, healing, and nourishing space to dissolve traumas one by one in a creative and original way.

This is the task of the adult, to recognize the inner child that exists within and to grant that child endless, boundless, abundant, and increasing love. It is not always easy to take these two steps, and the purpose of the process of learning and increasing self-love is to make these challenges more practical, available, and clear.

In fact, the best way to understand what self-love is, is by likening our feelings to our feelings toward small children, whether they are our children or nieces and nephews, grandchildren, or the neighbors' children. Small children, even animal cubs, awaken in us pure love, breathe into us the peak of compassion and the summit of empathy. We have the ability to feel elevated and clean emotions toward small children, and this is one of the great contributions of these tiny beings to the life of the adult human.

When we want to understand deeply what self-love is, it is advisable to recall the feelings we have or had toward a small child or toward a baby to whom we were connected in the past or to whom we are connected in the present. The warm and strong feelings toward these children are those same feelings that awaken within us when self-love increasingly takes a larger place in our awareness. Self-love means those very feelings we feel toward small and sweet children. Self-love means recognizing that small and sweet child within us and the love that automatically wells up within us when we see a particularly beloved child.

Here we can recognize the place where we have moved away, as a general humanity, from the sources of love within us, while we encourage people to grow up and get over things too quickly. We run upward, we learn to operate and to manipulate, to meet tasks, to postpone gratifications, and to meet the expectations of society, family, workplace, partners, and more. The child within us we quickly forget and abandon, because that child is supposedly too childish, too naive, too innocent, and of course too sensitive and vulnerable, and that does not suit us when we so want to advance and to attain what is expected of us to attain. We learn to restrain ourselves, to wait patiently, to please, to respond only when permitted, and not to disturb the neighbors' rest. We learn to be adults and at the same time we very quickly forget that there is within us a child who needs a slightly different kind of attention.

In this sense self-love is one of the efficient and practical solutions that bridge the need to meet the expectations and demands of society with the need to maintain a healthy and beneficial connection with the inner child within us. To give the child within us the rightful place and the correct space for continued growth and contribution to our life as adults, all we need to do is cultivate toward that child a deep and endless love that is not conditioned on good behavior. We must learn to be our own loving parents, who will always receive us warmly and with understanding, who will not judge us for our mistakes, and who will embrace us even if we deviated from the right path.

Every day in which there is no reference, even symbolic, to the child within us and to that child's need for endless love is a day in which life grants us much less than it could have given. We can live our life and perform our routine actions without giving attention to the fact that there are within us childish parts that need a hug, containment, recognition, and a place to return to and be received there in welcome. We can forget the inner child within us, but so we may also forget the realization of many dreams we carry with us, dreams that without the energy of the primal child have no chance to be advanced toward practical implementation.

Again it is important to emphasize the simple message, all that the inner child within us needs is to know that the child is loved. Always. This sounds basic and not complicated, but it is not so at all. We learned to be angry at the child within us, we learned to dismiss that child or to attribute to that child characteristics that supposedly interfere with our growth or existence. We learned to move away from the childish needs within us because we were educated that to be childish means to be undeveloped, unworthy, and perhaps even retarded or crazy.

The art of self-love is also the art of connection with the child within us. This is the reason that many people still relate to self-love with dismissal or with alarm. Self-love revives those primal parts, clean and untouched, those that are not biased or influenced by prejudices and can see the good in every person and the hope in every situation. The inner children grant us the optimism that was forgotten and the vision for change that is often hidden behind walls of cynicism and excessive doubts.

The inner child within us can grant us many gifts, some of them priceless. These gifts can be received almost without payment and almost without great investment. All that is required is to focus our capacity for love inward, toward the child within us, to stop coming to that child with complaints and demands, and only to grant that child a friendly and containing space, exactly as it is right to give to any baby we love. When we do this and the inner child feels sufficiently loved and safe, that child will stand on their feet, join the adult parts within us, and contribute that child's unique contribution. But for this, as has been said many times here, love is required. Self-love that can be applied through practice, attention, another smile at the mirror, and another self-hug. The inner child feels this and is nourished by all these actions. Our role is to continue to grant that child what is needed, beginning with once a day and continuing with an increasing quantity of gestures that will help the child recover safely.

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

1. What would you like to write right now to the child within you?
2. What kind of ongoing communication, if any, do you have with your inner child?

3. Can you see the connection between self love and the way we love young children?
4. What are some things your inner child would like you to do, but you tend to do less often?
5. What kind of special gesture or surprise could you offer soon to the child within you?
6. Anything else you would like to share? Feelings, thoughts or questions about this step?