

ROADMAP TO SELF-LOVE

**THE MENTAL
HEALTH
COALITION**

Self-love is something we don't talk much about, but it's a major part of mental health. Consider this your guide to the fundamentals of building a loving relationship with yourself. You might just learn how to **fall head over heels in self-love.**

What is self-love?

Self-love is the practice of caring for your own wellbeing and happiness. There are many ways to foster self-love, and doing so is important for everyone at every stage of life. Self-love has nothing to do with self-confidence or arrogance – instead, it is appreciation and acceptance of yourself. To get a sense of what self-love feels like, close your eyes and picture someone you care for very much. Notice how you feel. Now, direct those feelings toward yourself – that’s what self-love feels like!

How do I know that my self-love needs some attention?

Some telltale signs that your self-love could use a boost are: feeling depleted, experiencing mental or physical tension, overall decline in mental health, frequent self-critical thoughts, and a tendency to make self-defeating statements. This scale can help you gauge where you are today so that you can then decide how to strengthen your self-love. Which most applies to you?

WHAT SELF-LOVE IS

a lifelong process

important for everyone

part of mental wellness

maintained with action and effort

WHAT SELF-LOVE IS NOT

a destination

self-confidence

arrogance

dependent on what others think of you

SELF-LOVE SCALE



I can't seem to stop beating myself up. **I struggle to feel love towards myself.**



I've been mostly neglecting myself, but **I have moments when I do appreciate myself.**



I have strong love for myself, but **I don't always practice self-love on a daily basis.**



I fully accept and appreciate who I am. **I make daily efforts to care for myself.**



Why is self-love difficult to foster?

There are many reasons why you might feel it's difficult to practice self-love. One common reason is socialization – self-love isn't often something we're taught to practice, and in fact, many learn to doubt themselves instead. This means that we have little practice building the habit of self-love. Another is the psychological tendency to put ourselves down before others can, in order to preempt potential criticism. While that might allow us to feel protected from others' opinions, it often leaves us criticizing ourselves far more than we deserve.

How to identify and remove roadblocks to self-love

Below are some common roadblocks to developing stronger self-love and ideas for how to sidestep them. Take a moment to reflect on which most apply to you.

ROADBLOCK	HOW TO SIDESTEP IT
<p>Guilt: Believing that you don't deserve self-love</p>	<p>Challenge yourself to release this guilt. Everyone deserves self-love, and that certainly includes you. Practicing self-love doesn't make you selfish – it only makes you caring.</p>
<p>Anxiety: Fear that you don't know how to practice self-love or that you'll be bad at it</p>	<p>Remember there's no "right" way to practice self-love, and it's difficult for everyone, even if others make it seem easy. Take it one step at a time.</p>
<p>Old Habits: Being so used to neglecting yourself or thinking critically about yourself that it feels like second nature</p>	<p>Remind yourself that it's never too late to build new habits. Be patient with yourself and know that self-love can be tricky to foster. Have faith in yourself – you've done hard things before, and this is no different.</p>
<p>Embarrassment: Feeling like there must be something wrong with you for needing to put effort into this practice</p>	<p>Tell yourself that there's absolutely nothing wrong with you! Practicing self-love doesn't come naturally to most people. You are not alone.</p>
<p>Time and Money: Recognizing that resources can get in the way of developing self-love</p>	<p>Keep in mind that while time and money can prevent certain types of self-love activities, some of the most effective ones are free and take very little time. In fact, you can do some of them while you work, eat, or drift off to sleep.</p>



Self-love takes commitment—

Practicing self-love means cultivating a loving relationship with yourself. A good first step is to write down how you define a loving relationship, which will point you in the right direction to what you need for your own self-love. If you could use some concrete ideas, here are some tips for building self-love:

Key ways to foster self-love

EMOTIONS

Savor positive feelings towards yourself. When you feel any bit of self-love, savor it so that it grows.

Build self-gratitude. Find aspects of yourself that you appreciate and allow yourself to be grateful for them.

Practice self-forgiveness. Let go of hard feelings toward yourself for past mistakes or perceived shortcomings. We all have them.

More information from the [Jed Foundation](#) and [Mental Health America](#).

THOUGHTS

Practice compassionate self-talk. Use your inner monologue to say caring, compassionate statements to yourself. Let the overly critical ones go.

Don't believe everything you think. Listen to the negative messages you tell yourself. Then remind yourself that you don't need to believe those thoughts.

Push pause on comparisons to others. This rabbit hole will only leave you feeling worse. It's also not fair to yourself.

More information from [ADAA](#), [Child Mind Institute](#), [Crisis Text Line](#), and [Mental Health America](#).

BEHAVIORS

Practice self-care. Do what brings you joy, and do it often.

Put yourself first. Tune in to your own needs and wants, and seek them out. Care for others only when you feel cared for yourself.

Treat your whole self. Engage in activities that include care for your mental, physical, spiritual, and intellectual selves.

Ask for help. Self-love doesn't need to be developed alone. Maybe you want someone to take something off your plate, or maybe you need a reminder to practice compassionate self-talk – whatever would be helpful, ask for it.

More information from [Active Minds](#), the [Jed Foundation](#), [NAMI](#), and [Mental Health America](#).



YOU'VE GOT THIS.

**THE MENTAL
HEALTH
COALITION**

Self-love takes time, care, and continual practice. Don't worry if it feels like there's a lot of work to do. Take this as a journey that requires one small step at a time.

Check out The Mental Health Coalition's [Resource Library](#) for additional information related to cultivating mental wellness. And remember, **self-love conquers self-hate.**