Love Yourself First: A Free Guide to Healing and Wholeness

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Contents

This is a book for those who are struggling to love themselves, love their body, and accept who they are.

Here I share my experience and I hope it will help you in your journey. My wish with this is for you to see how beautiful and unique you are.

I use “inner-stand” instead of “understand” because the first one comes from the heart, it is a profound connection and awareness.

‘Life is too short to spend another day at war with yourself.’

-Rite Ghatourey

INTRODUCTION

The Main points of this eBook

Self-Love

1. Self-acceptance
Accepting yourself exactly as you are, flaws and all, is a fundamental aspect of self-love. Embrace your strengths and weaknesses. Be kind and forgiving towards yourself

2. Self-care
Prioritizing your physical, emotional, and mental well-being is another vital aspect of self-love. Engage in activities that nourish and rejuvenate you, such as getting enough sleep, eating nutritious food, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, practicing mindfulness, and engaging in hobbies or passions that bring you joy.

3. Self-compassion
Treat yourself with kindness, empathy, and compassion, especially during challenging times. Practice self-compassion by acknowledging your struggles without judgment, offering yourself comfort and understanding, and cultivating a supportive inner dialogue.

4. Boundaries
Setting healthy boundaries is crucial for self-love. It involves knowing and communicating your limits, both in relationships and in various areas of life. Establishing boundaries allows you to protect your emotional well-being, prioritize your needs, and maintain a sense of autonomy and self-respect.

5. Self-esteem and self-confidence
Developing a mindfulness, and engaging in positive self-image, hobbies or passions that bring believing in your you joy. capabilities and worth,

6. Self-expression
Authentic self-expression allows you to honor your true self and embrace your individuality. Express yourself through creativity, hobbies, passions, and personal style. Value your opinions, ideas, and desires, and communicate them confidently.

7. Forgiveness and letting go
Forgiving yourself for past mistakes, releasing grudges, and letting go of negativity are acts of self- love. Holding onto guilt, resentment, or negative emotions can hinder your growth and happiness. Remember, self-love is a continuous practice that requires patience, self- awareness, and commitment. By nurturing these different aspects of self-love, you can cultivate a deeper sense of acceptance, contentment, and fulfillment in your life.

Body positivity

Body positivity is a movement and mindset that promotes self- acceptance and love for one's body, regardless of its size, shape, or appearance.

It goes beyond physical attributes and extends to embracing the totality of one's identity.

This inclusive approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing the inherent worth and beauty in every body, celebrating diversity, and challenging society's standards of beauty is. Body positivity encourages individuals to cultivate a positive relationship with their bodies, embracing their unique features and rejecting harmful notions of inadequacy or shame. By fostering acceptance, respect, and appreciation for all bodies, body positivity promotes holistic well-being and empowers individuals to live authentically and confidently in their own skin."

"Speak to your body in a loving way.
It's the only one you've got, it's your home, and it deserves your respect."
ISKRA LAWRENCE

CHAPTER ONE

Here's how body positivity intersects with embracing one's identity:

1. Acceptance of diverse bodies
It recognizes and celebrates the diversity of human bodies in terms of size, shape, color, ability, and more. Everyone feels valued and accepted, promoting the idea that all bodies are worthy of love and respect.

2. Challenging societal norms:
It challenges the unrealistic standards imposed by society regarding beauty and appearance. Like blond and thin. It encourages individuals to question and dismantle the harmful notions of "ideal" bodies. Embracing one's identity involves rejecting these narrow beauty standards and celebrating the uniqueness of one's own body.

3. Cultivating self-compassion
It emphasizes self-compassion and kindness towards oneself. It encourages individuals to focus on their inner qualities, talents, and achievements rather than solely defining themselves based on external appearance. Embracing one's identity means shifting the focus from body judgments to self-acceptance and nurturing a positive relationship with oneself.

4**. Celebrating individuality**
It celebrates individuality and uniqueness, honoring the diverse identities and experiences ~~within each~~ person. It encourages individuals to appreciate and express themselves authentically, without conforming to societal pressures. Embracing one's identity involves embracing and celebrating all aspects of oneself, including physical appearance, personality traits, cultural background, and more.

CHAPTER ONE

Here's how body positivity intersects with embracing one's identity:

In summary, body positivity promotes embracing one's identity by fostering self-acceptance, challenging societal norms, cultivating self- compassion, advocating for inclusivity, and celebrating individuality.

It encourages individuals to love and accept themselves holistically, recognizing that their bodies are an integral part of their overall
identity but not the sole determinant of their worth.

CHAPTER TWO

Accept and Love who you are

Accepting who you are can be challenging, especially during your teenage years.
It can be difficult when others judge you based on your appearance, whether it's your weight, skin color, or any other physical attribute that makes you different from others.
You can feel the eyes of the other teens on you,
the pressure and judgment from peers can lead you to withdraw and feel isolated.
However, it is important to remember that you are not alone in feeling this way. Many teenagers go through similar experiences and struggle with self-acceptance. You will have one person who will
be there with you because he/she sees you for who you truly are, rather than focusing on your "differences".

Often, that same person will be alone as well, or not many people are talking to him/her. That person will become your best friend and you will see that your friendship will last a long time. While having a best friend who accepts you can provide comfort and a sense of belonging, it's essential to also work on accepting yourself. It's not easy, but learning to love and appreciate yourself for who you are is a journey that everyone goes through. It's important to recognize that your worth is not determined by your physical appearance but by your unique qualities, talents, and inner beauty.

CHAPTER THREE

My first struggle with my physical body

As an overweight teen, I didn't like my body at all, I wanted things to change. I was into sports, basketball, volleyball, and running. I was good at those sports and I enjoyed each one.

One day I decided this was enough, I needed to take action. I decided to do a drastic diet and I lost 20kg. I was happy about that and I did love the new body. I have to say I haven't gone back to the weight I had. I gained some with age but I'm up and down depending on the time or situation I'm living.

In my adult life, I was happy with my body. I changed my diet, I stopped eating meat, and I was eating vegetables, because I just love them and find delicious recipes. I was going to the gym at least 4 to 5 times a week. Exercises is something I love as well so
no effort there.
By eating well and exercising I was taking care of my body. For me the fact I was aware of what I was putting in my body was important. A few years later, I realized there were still a few parts of my body I didn't like so I was exercising more in those areas.

In the meantime, something happened in my life that one ~~of my friends sug~~gested that I start Reiki healing. I didn't expect anything from it but I say why not. The way I see life and myself has changed.

"This body has carried me through a hard life. It looked exactly the way it was supposed to look." - Veronica Roth

I was struggling with my body for years because I wanted to be thinner. I got thinner but felt it could be better.
So, I wasn't treating my body with kindness and love. I guess my body decided she had enough with the fact I wasn't nice to her, with my words and she showed me that now you will have a reason not to like your body. I lived an experience that gave me a shock and my body reacted. Before I knew what I had, I started going to the gym six times a week and working out for hours hoping to reduce what I was seeing on my skin. Some parts of my body didn't have elasticity anymore.

With all that, I was still on my spiritual journey and energy healing. I was doing a lot of reading and research. I wanted to feel better and I knew what I was doing mentally with my body was wrong. So, I was conscious and wanted to change. Finally, something triggered in my head, I am a soul who is living in a human body. This human body is my vehicle to drive me here on earth in this incarnation. If I want to do what I came here to do, I need to be gentle, take care, and love this body. I did the shift in my head, I started to talk to my body by saying I love you, thank you for supporting me today.

I keep doing my gym to this day, four times a week without affecting my body but allowing it to go as far as she can. I feel more comfortable with my body, no complaints. If I gain some weight, I will lose it more easily with no pressure. I'm not competing with anyone. By accepting and loving my body, my body seems healthy and drives me everywhere with no complaints such as sickness or pain

CHAPTER FOUR

Why Self-love and body acceptance are essential?

·It will improve your mental and emotional well-being as you can see from my experience.

When you practice self-love and body acceptance, you cultivate a positive and compassionate relationship with yourself. This leads to improved mental and emotional well-being, as you are less likely to engage in negative self-talk, self-criticism, and comparison to others. Instead, you can foster a sense of self-worth and develop resilience in the face of external pressures and societal expectations.

It can boost your self-confidence. When you start to acknowledge and appreciate your unique qualities and physical attributes, you become more comfortable in your skin. This confidence radiates from within, allowing you to navigate various aspects of life – relationships, work, social situations – with greater self-assurance.

Self-love and body acceptance contribute to healthier relationships with others. When you love and accept yourself, you are less likely to seek validation and approval from external sources.

CHAPTER FOUR

Why Self-love and body acceptance are essential?

Accepting and loving your body can positively impact your overall well-being. It encourages you to prioritize self-care and engage in activities that promote physical, mental, and emotional health. Because now you know. Instead of focusing on harmful practices such as extreme dieting or excessive exercise, like I used to do you can adopt a balanced approach to well-being, nurturing yourself holistically.

When you recognize your worth and embrace your body, you become more likely to stand up against discrimination, body shaming, and unrealistic beauty standards. It empowers you to advocate for inclusivity, equal representation, and social change, benefiting not just yourself but also others who may be experiencing body image struggles.

In essence, self-love and body acceptance are essential because they contribute to your mental and emotional well-being, boost your self-confidence, improve your relationships, enhance your overall well-being, and empower you to become agents of positive change. They allow you to live authentically and embrace your uniqueness, leading to a more fulfilling and joyous existence.

CHAPTER FIVE

The second part of my struggle: the shape of my body

There is a time when you don't accept your identity. It is when we learn that our parents are human like us, they have qualities and weaknesses. When people start to point out those attributes you took from your parents, negatively, that is when you wish to be someone else, a child from another parent for example, who has better qualities.
At that point you reject everything, and you start pretending to be someone else. You act like a different person; you hide your identity.

You become in disharmony with your soul and one day everything backfires. You start to be depressed, and lonely, you don't feel you are at your place and feel something is wrong, but you cannot pinpoint or figure out what it is or why you feel the way you do. Like I mentioned several times, when we are not aligned with our soul, our body reacts to let us know, because that is the only way it can talk to us and we can inner stand.

For example, people who are mixed with different cultures could be White and Black or White Asian, Black and Asian or Latino and Black, and so on. If you get a complex with one of your identities, trust me you won't be in peace within you, because you will be pretending to be someone you're not.

CHAPTER FIVE

Even though I was born in Canada, my origin is Belgian-African. So just from African origin, I won't be thin or with no shape. It's rare. I never look at myself with my skin color, the same way I never saw people I met with their skin color. From childhood until today when I meet someone, I communicate with his/her soul. That's come to say that struggling with my body was me struggling with my identity.

The identity I'm talking about is related to your parents, grandparents, your personality. Here I would like to emphasize your identity through your parents. People like to say, we don't choose our parents, even though I don't agree with this as we choose them before incarnated, but it will be for another time.
So, your identity is one part from your mom and one part from your dad. That includes appearance, genetics, character, and some mimics from your parents adding to your attributes.

You need to accept both sides of who you are, learn about the culture, the good quality and bad on both sides because in every culture you will find good and bad. It is just how you choose to live and behave, that matters.

Once, I meditate on that, I learn from the culture, I talked to my parent and learned so much about the culture, and how rich it is. I then realized for the first time the value of my parent; how lucky I was to be their child and I was able to know so much about the world and the people from different continents. I was so grateful for all of this and I started to embrace my identity with no complexity.

Today I won't change my parent for anyone else in this lifetime. I accept my body with his identity because I'm unique. I love my curves and the traits of my African heritage. I am more balanced in my mind and with myself.

CHAPTER SIX

What are the benefits of embracing your identity?

Embracing your identity allows you to be true to yourself and showcase your genuine self to the world. It frees you from the pressure of conforming to societal expectations or trying to be someone you're not. By embracing who you are, you can live authentically and align your actions and choices with your true values and beliefs.

When you fully embrace your identity, you develop a sense of self-confidence. Accepting and celebrating your unique qualities, talents, and experiences helps you recognize your worth and value as an individual. This confidence shines through in how you present yourself to others and it shines within as well, allowing you to navigate life's challenges with courage and resilience.

Embracing your identity can foster a deep sense of connection and belonging. By honoring your true self, you attract like-minded individuals who appreciate and accept you for who you are. This creates opportunities for genuine connections and supportive relationships that are built on understanding and acceptance.

Embracing your identity empowers you to take ownership of your life. It allows you to make choices that align with your values and pursue your passions, goals, and dreams. By embracing your identity, you gain a sense of control over your narrative, empowering you to create the life you desire.

Embracing your identity contributes to the celebration of diversity in society. Each person's unique identity adds to the richness and fabric of our communities and cultures. By embracing and sharing your identity, you play a valuable role in promoting inclusivity and fostering an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. There is so much to learn from your diversity. I will say it is never boring.

Embracing your identity is a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. It allows you to explore different aspects of your identity, uncover hidden strengths, and challenge limiting beliefs. This process leads to personal transformation and fosters a sense of fulfillment as you continue to evolve and become the best version of yourself.

In summary, embracing your identity brings authenticity, self-confidence, connection, empowerment, diversity, and personal growth. It is a powerful way to live a fulfilling and purposeful life, honoring the unique individual that you are. Embrace your culture because there is a reason you choose to incarnate in that culture. I know now that I choose and I making the best of it every chance I can.

Once you reach that point you will see how happy you will become, in peace and harmony within, you will be yourself and you will attract people who will appreciate you for you, and not someone you pretend to be. Your life will be much more fun. You won't feel like something is missing in your life and won't be in search of something you cannot pinpoint and be miserable.
Be yourself, there is nothing more peaceful than that. Authenticity is the key to happiness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Here are some different aspects you can learn to transform in your life and improve self-love.

1. Start to understand self-love because it is an essential aspect of personal growth and well-being. So, it would help if you accepted your strengths, weaknesses, and imperfections.

2. Practicing self-care: treat yourself with kindness and compassion. Be gentle with yourself when facing challenges. Taking care of your physical, mental, and emotional well-being is practicing self-care. Find time and activities that nurture and recharge you such as meditation, mindfulness, exercise, eating well, and hobbies.

3. Setting self-boundaries: boundaries are important in self-love. Learn to say no and honor your own needs and values. Remove yourself from relationships that drain your energy. This will help you put limits on your time, energy, and emotional well- being.

4. Positive self-talk: pay attention to your words, and how you talk. Replace the negative self-talk with positive affirmations. You need to find a way to uplift yourself, encourage yourself, and remind yourself about your achievements.

5. Embracing mistakes: you need to inner-stand that mistakes help you grow. Without them, you wouldn't know your growth.

6. Surrounding yourself with positive influence: you must surround yourself with positive people who will lift you. Build a relationship that will accept you for who you are. I know sometimes, you cannot avoid negative people but limit your time with them.

"Embrace each challenge in your life as an opportunity for self-transformation." Bernie S. Siegel

CONCLUSION

Remember, self-love is a continuous practice that requires patience, self- awareness, and commitment. By nurturing these different aspects of self-love, you can cultivate a deeper sense of acceptance, contentment, and fulfillment in your life.

You can find interesting articles about how to find peace and transform yourself for a positive and harmonious life at www.peaceandhealingharmony.com

Quotes:

“ Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armor yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you.” — George R.R. Martin, A Game of Thrones

“Perhaps it's impossible to wear an identity without becoming what you pretend to be.”
— Orson Scott Card, Ender's Game.
“When I discover who I am, I'll be free.”
— Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man

The Art of Self-Love