

The Greatest Love of All: Go Ahead! Love Yourself

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There are a few things that you can count on this month. February will bring swings in Michigan weather, our fate determined by our friend, or foe, the groundhog, and the day for love. Valentine's Day marks marriage proposals, flowers, chocolates, and an inability to reserve a last-minute reservation to your favorite restaurant. It is a day of bliss for some and a day dreaded by others. No matter your "relationship status", Valentine's Day can be an amazing opportunity to fall in love with the person who needs your love the most – YOU! Married, single, 6 kids or none, show yourself some love this February 14.



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Why does self-love matter?

To fall in love with yourself is the first secret to happiness. - **Robert Morely.**

Oh so true. To really love yourself, to feel comfortable in your skin and understand that you are an original, is not always easy. When you reach that point, you will feel a sense of freedom -freedom from the worries about criticism, freedom from a need to keep up with the neighbors; freedom from self-imposed roadblocks to being your best self. When you are confident enough to free yourself of constraints and live a life meant for you, you are allowing yourself permission to enjoy happiness.

You can't truly love anyone else in the purest sense without first loving yourself.

Every time you prepare for takeoff on a plane, you are reminded that you should place the oxygen mask on yourself before placing it on anyone else, including your

children or others that you love. You must do the same thing with your mask of love. You cannot even understand what love really is and how to execute it for others until you have at least begun to work on doing so for yourself.

Because you deserve it! Enough said.

How can you show yourself some love on Valentine's Day (and every day for that matter)?

Be Grateful. There is nothing like taking the time to recognize the positive aspects of your life. Big and small, take some serious time to be grateful for what you have and for what you don't have. Some ways to do this are to commit to writing down three reasons you are grateful in the morning or at night. Go back and read those whenever you are feeling down or frustrated. Start a gratefulness jar. Get a jar and drop a sticky note with a thought, person, experience that you give thanks for. Open it and read through them when you need a little remind-

er of all that is good. Be sure to document everything from the smallest ("I am grateful for this hot cup of coffee") to the largest ("I am grateful for my children, my home, my job). "

Allow yourself the gift of time. It is so easy to slack on self-care, especially when we can use the good old excuse of not having time. The truth is that we all have the time, we have to allow ourselves to block out the time because we are worth it and we need it. Ten minutes of morning meditation. Stopping for a moment of mindfulness in the middle of a busy day. Give yourself permission to have some quiet moments to yourself without feeling guilty.

The power of positive thinking. You are as you think you are. Instead of falling in to the rut of the automatic negative thought, force yourself to alter your thinking pattern and reframe everything in the positive. There is a lesson to be learned in everything, even when we "fail forward." Retrain your brain.

Re-evaluate your goals. Remember in January we discussed the importance

of goal setting and that realization that many goals for the New Year may be wavering or all out forgotten by mid-February? Well, here we are at that point. It is time to look at your goals again, re-evaluate where you are, and what you need to adjust to make them a priority. A vision board is a great way to give new life to the lists and rewards charts that you may have started.

Spoil yourself. It is okay to spoil yourself. This may include what comes to mind as the typical ideas of being spoiled, like a spa day or buying yourself something nice. You can also spoil yourself without spending a ton of money or even participating in commercialism. Work out, choose the healthy meal, read a good book.

Write yourself a love letter. Have you ever written someone a love letter? Come on, we have all been 12 years old before, we have been there. Take out a pen and paper (yes, I said it, pen and paper is recommended as writing has a different impact on the brain than typing) and write a letter. Tell yourself how much you mean to you, why you are so loved, describe in detail all of the wonderful things about you. Be kind to yourself.

Give yourself a break. Perfection is the enemy of good. Allowing yourself the room to make mistakes, fall short, get back up and keep on moving is love. Be gentle. Forgive others and yourself.

Happy Valentine's Day!

