

21 Tips to Release Self-Neglect and Love Yourself in Action

By Tess Marshall

“To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don’t need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself.” ~Thich Nhat Hanh

The most important decision of your life, the one that will affect every other decision you make, is the commitment to love and accept yourself. It directly affects the quality of your relationships, your work, your free time, your faith, and your future.

Why, then, is this so difficult to do?

Your Family of Origin

I grew up with nine siblings. I had two older brothers, three older sisters, three younger sisters, and a younger brother.

I never fit in. My sisters were tall and thin with beautiful, long, lush hair. By eleven years old, I was short and very curvy. My hair was fine, thin, and wild.

For the most part, my siblings did as they were told. I was outspoken, out of control, and rebellious.

I wore my sister’s hand-me-down school uniforms. I rolled up the hems on the skirts and popped buttons on the blouses. My look was unkempt.

I was teased and bullied at home and at school. Yet I didn’t go quietly into the night. I fought for my place in my family. To protect myself, I developed a good punch and grew a sharp tongue.

I was twenty-seven years old and married with four children when I became desperate enough to seek out my first therapist. I felt alone, stuck, and unlovable. I was determined to change.

After six months of working through my childhood issues, old thoughts, beliefs, and events, I felt alive again. It was like stripping off several layers of paint from an antique piece of furniture. I found myself restored to my original beauty.

Cultural Influences

We’re taught by society that our worth is found in the idols of our culture—technology, status, youth, sex, power, money, attractiveness, and romantic relationships.

If you base your self worth on the external world, you’ll never be capable of self-love.

Your inner critic will flood you with thoughts of “I’m not enough, I don’t have enough, and I don’t do enough.”

Feelings of lack are never-ending. Every time a goal is reached or you possess the next big thing, your ego will move the line.

Shift Your Self-Perception

Feeling worthy requires you to see yourself with fresh eyes of self-awareness and love. Acceptance and love must come from within.

You don’t have to be different to be worthy. Your worth is in your true nature, a core of love and inner goodness. You are a beautiful light. You are love. We can bury our magnificence, but it’s impossible to destroy.

Loving ourselves isn't a one time event. It's an endless, ongoing process.

It begins with you, enfolding yourself in your own affection and appreciation.

Read on for steps to discover your worth and enfold yourself in affection and appreciation.

1. Begin your day with love (not technology).

Remind yourself of your worthiness before getting out of bed. Breathe in love and breathe out love. Enfold yourself in light. Saturate your being in love.

2. Take time to meditate and journal.

Spend time focusing inward daily. Begin with five minutes of meditation and five minutes of journaling each morning. Gradually increase this time.

3. Talk yourself happy.

Use affirmations to train your mind to become more positive. Put a wrist band on your right wrist. When you're participating in self-criticism, move the band to your left wrist.

4. Get emotionally honest.

Let go of numbing your feelings. Shopping, eating, and drinking are examples of avoiding discomfort, sadness, and pain. Mindfully breathe your way through your feelings and emotions.

5. Expand your interests.

Try something new. Learn a language. Go places you've never been. Do things you haven't done before. You have a right to an awesome life.

6. Enjoy life enhancing activities.

Find exercise you like. Discover healthy foods that are good for you. Turn off technology for a day and spend time doing things that make you feel alive.

7. Become willing to surrender.

Breathe, relax, and let go. You can never see the whole picture. You don't know what anything is for. Stop fighting against yourself by thinking and desiring people and events in your life *should* be different. Your plan may be different from your soul's intentions.

8. Work on personal and spiritual development.

Be willing to surrender and grow. Life is a journey. We are here to learn and love on a deeper level. Take penguin steps and life becomes difficult. One step at a time is enough to proceed forward.

9. Own your potential.

Love yourself enough to believe in the limitless opportunities available to you. Take action and create a beautiful life for yourself.

10. Be patient with yourself.

Let go of urgency and fear. Relax and transform striving into thriving. Trust in yourself, do good work, and you will see results.

11. Live in appreciation.

Train your mind to be grateful. Appreciate your talents, beauty, and brilliance. Love your *imperfectly* perfect self.

12. Be guided by your intuition.

All answers come from within. Look for signs and pay attention to your gut feelings. You'll hear two inner voices when you need to make a decision. The quiet voice is your higher self; the loud voice is your ego. Always go with the quieter voice.

13. Do what honors and respects you.

Don't participate in activities that bring you down. Don't allow toxic people in your life. Love everyone, but be discerning on who you allow into your life.

14. Accept uncertainty.

Suffering comes from living in the pain of the past or the fear of the future. Put your attention on the present moment and be at peace.

15. Forgive yourself.

Learn from your mistakes and go forward. Use this affirmation, "I forgive myself for judging myself for _____ (fill in the blank i.e.: for getting sick, for acting out, for not doing your best).

16. Discover the power of fun.

Self-love requires time to relax, play, and create face-to-face interaction with others. Our fast-paced world creates a goal setting, competitive craziness that doesn't leave room for play. Dr. Stuart Brow says, "The opposite of play isn't work, it is depression."

17. Be real.

Speak up and speak out. Allow yourself to be seen, known, and heard. Get comfortable with intimacy (in-to-me-see).

18. Focus on the positive.

Go to your heart and dwell on and praise yourself for what you get right in all areas.

19. Become aware of self neglect and rejection.

Become conscious of your choices. Ask yourself several times throughout the day, "Does this choice honor me?"

20. Imagine what your life would look like if you believed in your worth.

Dedicate your life to loving you. Make it your main event.

21. Seek professional help.

Self-rejection and neglect is painful. You deserve to be happy. You have a right to be accepted and loved. If necessary, seek help from a support group, counselor, or coach. It's the best investment you can make.

Because we are all interconnected, when I love me, I also love you. Together through our love, we can heal ourselves, each other, and the world. Love is our purpose, our true calling. It begins with and *within* each of us.