

## Discover Your Treasure

The other day someone told me this would be the first Valentine's Day she would be "alone" and how much she was dreading it. Her definition of "alone" meant not currently being in a romantic relationship. As we continued to talk, I learned that her self-esteem was determined by her status in a romantic involvement with a specific person. As I reflected on our conversation, I was reminded of the years when I was single and experienced similar feelings of loneliness and self-doubt.

Over the years, I have expanded a much broader definition of my self-worth. I attribute my growth to the many teachers in my life who helped me separate my longing for a healthy significant relationship from my own sense of worthiness and loveability.

My first and foremost lesson was to learn how to embrace myself through self-discovery, acceptance and self-love.

The most brilliant and wisest lesson I have learned came from the words of Jesus who said, "Love thy neighbor, as thyself" and "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It seems to me that the message means that I must love myself before I can fully love another and the more I can accept myself, the more I can be a positive presence in other people's lives. Interestingly, Buddha had a similar teaching when he said, "You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserves your love and affection."

Nathaniel Branden, PhD. who has written books on and is an expert in developing healthy self-esteem says, "Positive self-esteem is the immune system of the spirit."

The following are suggestions to create a healthy, loving self.

- **Celebrate your strengths and achievements.**

I suggest to others to compile a list of at least 10 positive characteristics and add to the list everyday. If they cannot think of anything, I encourage them to ask their closest friends to help them with the list.

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- **Have compassion and forgive yourself for mistakes.**

To help with self-loathing, I ask people to think of a friend who may have made a similar mistake. Would they be able to show compassion and forgiveness toward their friend?

- **Practice interrupting negative self-talk.**

Rather than repeating a litany of negative thoughts; praise or validate something you like about yourself. If that seems impossible, recall a compliment given to you by someone else.

- **Create reasonable expectations.**

Often we judge our self against unreasonable or impossible standards. Allow yourself to be fully human with limitations and insecurities.

Dr. Laura S. Brown, professor of Psychology, recommends to the millions of people who are not in a romantic relationship, "Love is not about a particular day, or about cards, flowers, or even being in a relationship. The illusion that coupled people are happy can evoke feelings of loneliness and isolation." It is important to remember that love begins with self. The following are a few tips for singles to enjoy the holiday.

- **Have a party.**

Get together with people who love you.

- **Treat yourself special.**

Think of how much money you are saving by not being affected by this commercial holiday. Give your time and money to something for yourself.

- **Get physical.**

Go to the gym, a dance class, yoga or something in which you can increase your energy level in a social setting.

The song, "Greatest Love of All" recorded by Whitney Houston, captures the theme of self-love. One of the verses reads,

*"Because the greatest love of all  
Is happening to me  
I found the greatest love of all  
Inside of me."*