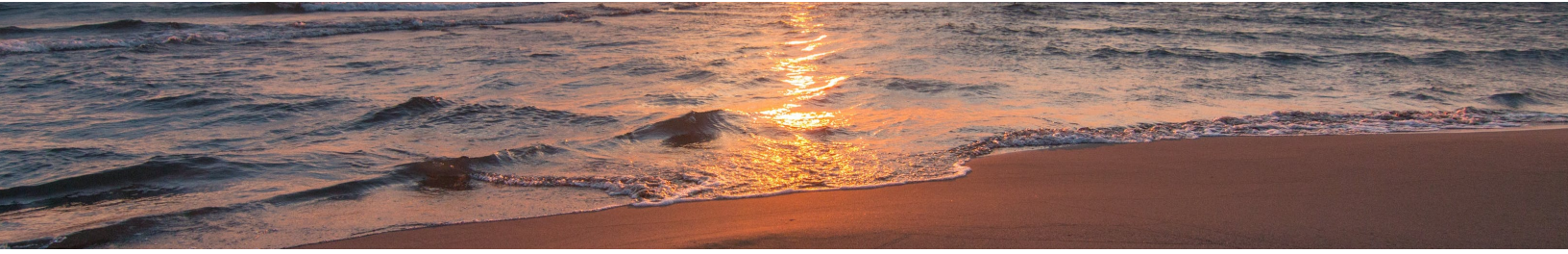


What Does Self-Love Look Like?

By Debbie Carsten LCSW

Often I get a blank stare when I ask clients about loving themselves. Our culture preaches indulgence and selfishness and since we know that can't be right, the whole idea gets dismissed. But self-love is not about placating our ego or getting our way or being self-obsessed. It's about treating ourselves the way God treats us. So what does that look like? Try asking yourself the following questions:

1. Can I acknowledge that I messed up without telling myself I'm a mess? This means letting go of shaming and blaming myself and seeing myself with compassion.
2. Can I practice regret without falling into an abyss? To do this, I look at myself as a learner and value my past, even my mistakes, for what they have to teach me.
3. Can I take responsibility without blaming myself? Rather than beating myself up over past wrongs, can I accept my humanness and look for any action I need to take now?
4. Can I apologize for a mistake instead of hoping everyone will just move on? If I can't, it's a chance to notice it and ask, why is my self-worth so attached to being right?
5. Can I acknowledge a time when I could have been a better leader in my own life? And can I mourn the loss of could-have's and should-have's and let go of them so something new can emerge in me?
6. Can I release myself from the shame of having not responded sooner to someone? I can only be where I'm at. I have to start here. Can I focus on what I am being asked to do now to reach out?
7. Can I accept that I will be okay even if someone who hurt me—a parent, former partner, friend, or stranger—never acknowledges the pain they caused? I am the only one who can say: They have already caused me enough damage. I will not give them the power to cause any more. That someone has been controlled by their own pain and fears and lack of love, but I will not do the same.



8. Can I let someone treat me for a coffee, dinner, or movie without feeling guilty? Learning to receive is a process and I must allow that process to stretch me where it needs to in order to develop reciprocal relationships where two people relate as equals.
9. Can I accept help from another without jumping to the conclusion that they want something from me? I can question this, notice my resistance, and assess whether that is coming from the situation I'm experiencing or from a past relationship that still haunts me.
10. Can I hold my point of view without being validated for it? This requires that I love myself enough to stand up for the truth of my convictions, in order to maintain my integrity, even if makes me unpopular.

