

Ep #12: Why It's So Hard to Love Yourself and How to Do It



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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When you are covered with a lens of self-hatred or not liking yourself, that is partially being covered up by a lie or an old story that no longer applies. So when you heal the story, you have the opportunity to see yourself for who you are and what you are capable of, and that makes decision-making astronomically easier.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

What's up, everyone? Welcome to the show. Today, we are going to be talking about self-love. And that is probably one of the most triggering topics that comes up in therapy, actually. And you wouldn't think so because unless you have traumatic experiences or you've been hurt in this area, it's hard to kind of get your head around why someone would have such difficulty loving or accepting themselves, especially if they're great people.

And it's always so fascinating to me because I think us, the people who are hardest on ourselves, that are actually contributing to society in positive ways, we question and second-guess ourselves relentlessly. However, stupid people who are adding no value to cultural society seem to have no problems blazing forward. So I don't know, guys, I think we might have to get a little bit more confident out here and make our voices a little bit louder. So, my hope is that this episode will do just that for you.

So, again, right off the bat though, my friends, this is a triggering subject, so if you have some pain in this area and as you're listening to this podcast and you notice that you're feeling triggered or overwhelmed or that it brings

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something up for you, just make notes of it as you're going through the podcast and bring it to your therapist or use it as a launch pad for you to start therapy.

Anything that comes up for you in this episode is going to be a great conversation piece for you and your therapist because the only people that are going to get triggered by this episode are people that need to work on some deeper issues that they have within themselves. And again, no shame, no blame. There is absolutely nothing wrong with recognizing inside of yourself that you need some additional help or support.

So, normally I don't say these kinds of things, but because I specialize in trauma and anxiety disorders and I talk about this stuff all day long, I know that this has the potential to be a triggering subject and I want you to empower yourself enough to take care of yourself should that arise. So just keep in mind, it's just information. Anything that comes up for you today is just information. And at the end, I just hope this is an empowering message for you and supports you on your journey.

Alright, my friends, let's dive into it. Let's talk about self-love. There is a huge, huge, huge – yes, I said that three times because I want you understand it's a, what? Huge difference between self-love and being self-involved or self-absorbed, and we all know those people, right? We don't like to be around them. We certainly don't want to be them. And we don't want to act anything close to that.

So, we really need to set the record straight on what self-love actually is and what being self-involved or selfish or self-absorbed actually is, because I think when we can separate these things out, it opens up an opportunity for us to have a healthy sense of self-esteem, a healthy sense of confidence, and a healthy sense of self-worth, when we're able to really embrace what self-love actually means.

And so I think self-love, again, is one of these things that people get really apprehensive about for the reasons I just said. There's a lot of bad

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examples of it. But not only that, I think there's actually a lot of reasons and I'm actually going to go through several of those reasons as to why we get kind of apprehensive around this whole self-love thing.

So one of the reasons could potentially be, as kids, somewhere along the way, someone may have told you that you were selfish. Maybe you didn't mean to be selfish, but somehow, something you did was construed that way and maybe you were criticized for it, maybe you were punished for it. And that feeling maybe still lingers.

And as a way to resolve that painful feeling, you may have gone the opposite direction and are no longer interested in loving yourself because you don't want to be perceived as selfish. So it's always important to look backwards, where did these messages start? Did it start as a kid? Did it start as a teen? Did it start in adulthood? Where did this show up?

Because, number two, another reason some people have some apprehension against self-love is you may have had a parent, a caregiver, or another adult figure who actually was selfish or maybe they were narcissistic and they only really cared about themselves, and so you learned, at a young age, to detest that kind of behavior, like hate it with every fiber of your being. And so you may have decided, I'm going to be nothing like that. And you might have gone completely the other way.

Another reason, you may have had a traumatic experience or experiences, plural, that maybe made you turn against yourself in a self-saboteur self-hatred kind of way. A lot of people that turn against themselves is because they couldn't be angry at the person who was actually hurting them. So actually, as children, it's actually very difficult to be mad at your parent, even if they're hurting you.

And so a lot of times, kids will turn against themselves or they will turn all that rage internally and be mad at themselves for not being enough or not being able to fix dad's bad mood. And sometimes, these traumatic relationship experiences can be frozen in time in our nervous system, and

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so any time some says you're lovable, all that does is trigger that traumatic experience of feeling like you're not and you can't hear what people are actually saying.

Do you guys see why I did my disclaimer at the beginning? This is a little bit of a deeper issue than you might have thought.

We want to support them in the healing process to come to discover that they had nothing to do with their parents' outbursts, that it wasn't their fault that their parents couldn't emotionally regulate themselves or that they were angry all the time. So we want to support people. We don't want to make them feel bad because they can't generate a feeling that they've never had an opportunity to generate.

Number four, you might have an anxious brain. Okay, all my anxiety people out there, you know this well. Anxiety creates loops of thoughts. It's like obsessive thinking and it doesn't do the highlight reel of everything you've done right, by the way. It does everything you've done wrong or everything you're second-guessing or everything you're worried about that could go wrong, that shit gets put on repeat, okay.

So if you have an anxious brain, chances are it's difficult to feel loved because your anxiety is so high, it almost works as like a wall. Like it goes up and you really can't feel positive emotions because you're so blocked off with negative anxiety emotions. And so again, that's a whole healing process, getting your anxious brain to calm down so you can actually step into the truth and reality that you are lovable.

Number five, you may have been socially, culturally, or spiritually conditioned that self-hate is a virtue. Okay, I've got to blast that one right out of the stratosphere. It is not a virtue to hate yourself because, you know what, my friends, this is just simple emotional math; hate breeds hate. If you don't like yourself, how are you going to show love to another person? It's just not how human behavior works.

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And so we have to learn to have a healthy balance perspective of self-worth, otherwise we run the risks of carrying all this resentment and all this anger, and what ends up happening is it shows up as judgmental, critical, and unkind behavior, whether or not we intend to. So your self-talk is incredibly important because it impacts how you show up in your relationships, whether you think it does or not.

So, to be honest, there are so many more reasons why you might be consciously or unconsciously favoring this negative mindset. But those five tend to be the most common. I'm sure a lot of you listening today were able to identify with maybe one of those five. And so again, that gives you information on an area of what you have, what kind of work you might need to be doing in therapy to kind of heal those wounds, because when you heal those wounds, it opens you up to a different perspective, and that is something we want, especially if the current perspective you're holding is full of anxiety and trauma. It's not a fun place to live.

So, this whole idea, as I'm sure you're gathering from just the little bit that I've said at the beginning here is that self-love is quite a bit more involved and complicated than most people realize on the surface. And it's incredibly important to get this one reset in your brain because how you view yourself will impact everything you do. It's going to impact your job. It's going to impact your relationships. And it's going to impact your overall sense of happiness and contentment.

And this is why; if you don't value yourself enough, there's a bigger chance you're going to get taken advantage of because there are people out in the world, AKA narcissists – you knew that that personality type was going to show up in this episode, right? It's the biggest opposite. But those personality types prey on people who don't know who they are and don't know how to stand up for themselves and don't really value themselves that much because they swoop in and they fill in the gaps and you kind of just become part of a very vicious cycle and you never really get to use your own voice.

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And so this whole cycle sort of perpetuates itself. If you feel like you're someone whose voice doesn't matter, and now you're in relationship with a narcissist who makes sure that they tell you your voice doesn't matter, okay, do you see how this cycle kind of perpetuates itself? It's just playing off of each other. That's why it's so critical to do your own work and get your own help and support, so that you're not as vulnerable to these kinds of people.

It also impacts you because if you don't value yourself enough or have a healthy perspective on what you are capable of from an ability standpoint or don't think you're good enough, this is going to impact your job because you might not be as likely to apply for a promotion or you may not be as likely to start a business. Or you may not be as likely to take on a leadership role because, truthfully, you don't believe in yourself enough.

And so when you heal out these emotional patterns, these emotional things that are keeping you in a stuck pattern, it just gives your eyes a chance to be open to the truth about you. So what do I mean by that, the truth about you?

When you are covered with a lens of self-hatred or not liking yourself, that is partially being covered up by a lie or an old story that no longer applies. So when you heal the story, you have the opportunity to see yourself for who you are and what you are capable of, and that makes decision-making astronomically easier, so much easier, because you can finally see yourself for who you are and what you're capable of.

So maybe you decide to apply for a promotion because you're like, this is a really good fit for me based on my talent, my abilities, and where I see myself going in my career. That starkly different than just applying for something because you're like, well I just want to make more money, and then be miserable at your job because you're not really doing something that really honors your abilities.

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This is why mental health and achieving your goals are not separate, my friends. They all play into each other because the way you see yourself is going to inform the way you show up in the world. And the way you show up in the world is how you're going to get responded to by the world. And you need to be equipped and strong inside of yourself to be able to handle both criticism and positivity. You need to be able to handle both. So this is, again, why some of this is really, really important.

Alright, so let me get into my second point; you cannot wait for other people to see you, compliment you, and make you who you want to be. You have to do that for yourself. And this can be painful if you have unresolved trauma as a child.

You may not have had a caregiver who did this for you in healthy ways. And so you are constantly looking to other people to do it for you and fill in the gaps where your primary caregivers didn't. And let me tell you, my friends, this is again why I did a disclaimer at the very, very beginning of this episode. This is deep work; meaning you can't talk your way out of this one, okay.

I don't know if you guys have heard me talk about the difference between talk therapy and trauma therapy, but there is a difference. When you're talking about some of these early, early childhood wounds, you need to work with a trauma-informed therapist, not someone who just wants to talk to you because there is so much more to the healing process than just talking about it and just acknowledging it. That's step one, but there are lots more steps that come after that to truly heal and move forward from this one, okay.

And I want to give you hope because I watch clients do this all the time, like actually heal, actually get their lives back, and actually start to feel better and functioning better in the world. There's not a perfect math to it. It's not a perfect science. It completely depends on the person, but I just want you to know that it is possible for you.

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If you guys haven't seen the movie Rocketman, I highly recommend if you like musical types of movies. This is the story of Elton John, but it focuses on his personal life as he rose to the top and how much he wrestled with self-hate and how much that led to all these bad relationships, drug addiction, and self-destructive behavior, all while he was becoming this amazing musical superstar.

All that fame could not fill the holes that he had inside of himself, and I think the movie does a really good job of demonstrating that. and so even though playing the piano was his gift, it just wasn't enough to make him love himself or to fix what he felt was broken inside him.

And this is why I preach constantly to you guys. It's the whole premise of this podcast. You cannot put your energy into external things and expect that to fix what is broken inside of you. It won't. And I think this movie demonstrates that really, really well because in the movie they show us that he never really felt loved by his parents and that unresolved trauma actually played out in his life constantly.

And no matter how much money, power, and fame he achieved, he still felt unlovable. Can you guys imagine that? He's playing for Madison Square Garden and feels like nobody loves him. This is why taking care of your mental health is imperative, because it doesn't matter what you achieve if you haven't fixed what's broken inside of you. And the good news on that, my friends, is fixing and healing from what's broken inside of you is a possible endeavor. It is possible.

So, anyways, back to the movie. So, of course, as a therapist, my favorite part of the movie is when he's in his therapy group and he finally has his rock bottom moment and he realizes he needs to give up all the drinking and the drugs and the self-deprecating behaviors that he's been engaging in because it's just leading him down to a really bad path.

And so it's just fascinating – and, of course, Hollywood took some liberties here, but overall, what they were trying to demonstrate in his therapy group

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was internal family systems therapy, also known as parts work. And so they pull out all of these negative voices that were in his head and externalized them in order to make peace with them. And, of course, at the end of that he hugs his inner child and it's this beautiful freeing moment for him.

So, anyways, if you haven't seen the movie, you probably have no idea what I'm talking about, but if you have seen the movie, you know exactly what I'm talking about. So it's just a beautiful demonstration of getting to this place of self-acceptance, loving ourselves, and healing what felt broken and knowing that it's possible to move forward.

So anyway, I just used this movie scene as a demonstration to just kind of paint a picture for what I'm talking about when it comes to the healing process.

So, here's the deal; it's not about loving ourselves at all. It's about self-acceptance. The healthiest perspective you can have for yourself is self-acceptance, meaning I am not perfect, I make mistakes, but everything I do in life, I do with my best effort and with integrity. This is self-love, my friends, positive regard for yourself, embracing your strengths, seeing yourself for who you are and showing up in life with integrity.

So, here's some ways to do that. So if I haven't said it enough in this episode, of course, it's going to be number one, if you have triggers around this, get therapy, not coaching, not courses, get therapy and invest in the deeper healing process to get your life back.

Number two, practicing grace and compassion for yourself. And this is going to be in your mindset, so really switching out your mindset from a harsh critical tone to just a grace-based compassionate tone that is really cheering yourself on and embracing a learner's mindset. And this will be really hard to do at first because if you have an anxious brain, you're already in a lot of patterns and a lot of habit loops. And so, in order to break that, you're going to have to make some really conscious time to journal

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this out, to catch the negative thoughts, and to replace them with grace-based compassionate statements instead.

Which leads us right to number three, you want to start switching the self-hate story you tell yourself. And let me tell you, you probably do this automatically at this point. You probably don't even realize it. And so slowing down your thoughts enough to catch yourself in that loop, slowing it down, breathing and giving yourself an alternative thought to think instead.

And again, remember from other episodes how I've taught you, these have to be neutral thoughts. If you try to switch from nobody loves me to I am lovable, you're going to have a hard time. Your brain won't jump that way. So you need to come up with something else that is a little bit more neutral, which is I'm putting forth my best effort, I'm taking educated steps. I embrace the fact that I am taking one step at a time.

So these don't seem like big things, but they are. They are big things because when you start talking to yourself differently and you start showing up in the world differently, that, my friends, is a big thing.

I want to do a little disclaimer here as a way to empower your sense of wellbeing. If you notice things come up for you when you're listening to this podcast, such as strong emotions, feeling triggered, or feeling stuck, I highly recommend you seek support from a mental health professional in your local state of residence.

You have to remember, triggers and emotional responses are just information that something in your emotional world needs support. There is absolutely no shame in seeking out support from a mental health professional in your local state of residence.

And lastly, if you enjoyed today's show and you don't want to worry about missing an episode, you can subscribe on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts and, if you haven't already, I would so appreciate if

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You can visit my website at nicolesymcox.com/podcastlaunch for step by step instructions on how to subscribe, rate, and review. Alright, my friends, I hope this was helpful and I will see you next week.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.