

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Hey you! How are you, “really”? If you ask everyone but yourself how do you “really” know? Did you know that you’re very special? There is no other person in this world like you. You deserve to be loved not only by those around you but by the most important person in your life — YOU. We’re so busy waiting for someone to love us that we’ve forgotten about the one person we need to love first—ourselves. Practicing self-love can be challenging for many of us, especially in these unforeseen times. However, it is especially important right now. After all, you can’t socially distance from yourself. So, let’s make this “lockdown a “lovedown”.

It’s not about being self-absorbed or narcissistic, it’s about getting in touch with ourselves, our well-being, and our happiness. We practice self-love so we can push through our limiting beliefs and live a life that truly shines. When people start to take the time to embrace and love themselves, it’s amazing how their lives improve. They feel better, their more confident, their more positive, their relationships become stronger, the negative ones dissolve and new ones begin. Unfortunately, when it comes to self-love, we often put conditions on our love. We will love ourselves once we lose the weight, or get the raise, and the new car, the new boyfriend, and the list goes on... But the good news is, we can change! We can love ourselves just as we are, right here right now starting in 2021!! It’s time to take the time for you! As Oscar Wilde once said, “to love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance”. So how do we begin that love affair?

Hello, me – is that you? Love is something we choose, just like the choice to feel hate, sadness, resentment, anger etc. and slowing down to take the time to face these uncomfortable emotions rather than pushing them aside gives them less power, which in turn allows for positive affirming emotions. Allow yourself to embrace these emotions without judging yourself for them. Be willing to embrace your imperfections and excuse your bad days. I’ve found that especially during these times, I have been viciously self-critical

and have torn myself down at times. I have gained weight, been lazy, gotten impatient with people I love, wasted hours mindlessly scrolling social media, and have still not been able to successfully bake the perfect apple pie... lol. I have felt like a failure. Looking back at the last several months, I could punish myself for what I did or did not do to properly cope with the stress of this pandemic. But the fact of the matter is wallowing in self-loathing thoughts will do me no good and it will not do you any good either. So, don’t set crazy high standards for yourself emotionally and mentally. It’s normal to feel frustration, anger, sadness, and pain and to hit some low points in life. You’re not perfect. No one is. You don’t have to be at the top of your game every day. Learning to love yourself is key to accepting who you are and building self-confidence and self-esteem. We are all a work in progress. Think positively and avoid perfectionism. Focus on your positive attributes and reflect on them daily.

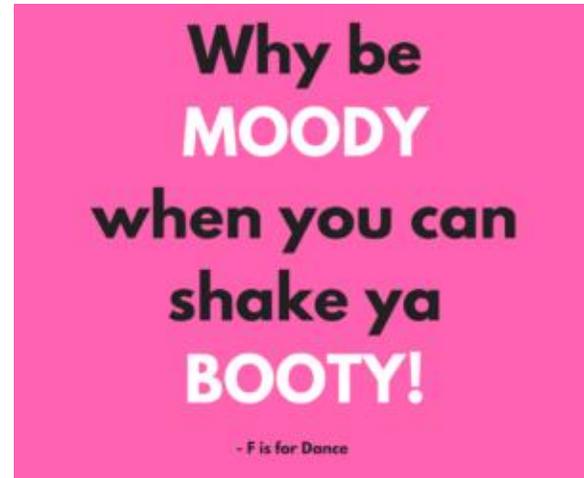
It has been proven that just by writing down a few things that you’re grateful for each day, you can train your brain to be more positive, treating yourself to an overall feeling of happiness. It is a key tool when it comes to practicing self-love because it has us step into an attitude of gratitude. There’s no wrong way to keep a gratitude journal. Pick up a pen with the same love and fondness you’d use to write to a dear friend. Start by writing down just five things for which you feel grateful. The physical record is important, don’t just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance (“The tasty soup I had for lunch today.”) or relatively large (“My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy.”). The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your day, then enjoy the good emotions that come with it. Once you see it on paper and accept all of the positivity in your life, it will make it that much easier to love yourself.



We are often our own worst critics. It can be overwhelming to feel like our accomplishments don't stack up or that our daily lives are somehow not as interesting as others. Right now, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, those comparisons are amplified. Few of us are accomplishing what we had planned to these days. While some of us are struggling to get out of bed at a decent hour, and organize our lives, others are posting their incredible work outs, organizational accomplishments and/or DIY successes. Even though we might not feel obligated to be productive during isolation, it can be hard to feel like we are doing enough with the free time we've been given. That inner voice can tear you down if you let it. Or you can practice self-love and retrain that inner voice to cheer you on. It's time to grab your pom poms. Take a minute and think about what you've said to yourself today. Was it critical? Or was it kind and helpful? How did you feel after you engaged in this inner discussion? Your thoughts are the source of your emotions and mood. The conversations you have with yourself can be destructive or beneficial. They influence how you feel about yourself and how you respond to events in your life. Positivity breeds positivity, and negativity breeds negativity. Choose the positive for yourself and others. The more you work on improving your self-talk, the easier you'll find it. It's kind of like practicing an instrument or training for a marathon: it won't be easy to start with, but you'll get better with time.

Turn off from the world just for 5 minutes to get centered. Massage your skin with intention. As you massage your feet, thank them for getting you to where you need to go; as you massage your hands, love them for all the introductions they've helped you with throughout your life. For a moment, stop taking your body for granted and shower yourself with love. Treating your body like a loving vessel will boost not only your self-love but also your energy. Be intentional about what you put into your body, not because you want to look good but because you want to feel good. Feeding your body nutrient-rich foods

will have you pouring love out of every pore. (no pun intended)



Get in your self-care and your cardio all at the same time. This one is so effective because when you dance or do anything that gets your heart rate up, your brain starts releasing endorphins, those chemicals that can make you feel happier. Physically dancing is one of the best forms of exercise you can do. You're moving your whole body and using muscles you haven't used before to move that booty the way you want! Cognitively dancing shifts your minds focus. It helps you to tune out and take a step back from the daily rise and grind. It's an uncomplicated happiness that improves your spatial awareness and is the best thing to add to your day. Don't be shy: put on a few of your favorite tunes and have your own personal dance party.

These times may be tough, but so are we! Our new reality poses a unique set of challenges for all of us. Now more than ever, practicing self-love is essential when it comes to taking care of our emotional health and well-being. We can get through this together. Self-love is pivotal in creating a passionate, fulfilled, and joyful life. When we make ourselves our priority and take the time for ourselves, we let down our walls, we open ourselves up to give and receive the love we deserve. So, do yourself a favor, take a deep breath, and give yourself a little hug. I feel better already 😊.

Stay safe.

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