

8 Steps to Becoming You

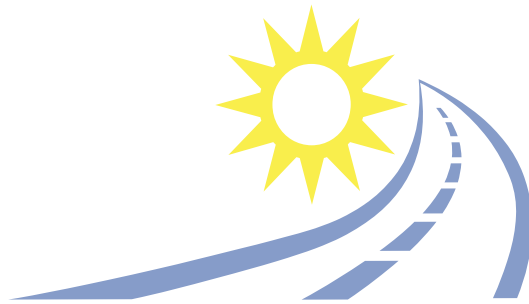
By Laurie Marsden, LCSW



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Available online at



LAURIE MARSDEN.COM



Laurie Marsden is a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist with undergraduate and graduate degrees from Columbia University. As a working mother, breast cancer survivor and former model— Laurie has unique insight into the everyday challenges that women face. She has dedicated more than 14 years to helping women find themselves and improve their lives in one-on-one sessions, group therapy and seminars.

Now Laurie is dedicated to bringing her experience to a wider audience of women interested in self-improvement. It is her hope that women like you will use LaurieMarsden.com and the “8 Steps To Becoming You” program as platforms to connect, reflect, build self-awareness, realize stronger relationships and lead healthier, happier lives.

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8 Steps to Becoming You

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Becoming You: Charting a course for personal growth

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Introduction

Every woman is on a journey. We negotiate our way through life and do the best we can, given our circumstances. Some women have had a good start, raised in a loving, fair and nurturing family. Others have struggled or found difficult relationships and circumstances later in life. All of our experiences shape us. It is all self-defining. And each day makes us more and more who we are.

Life calls us to reach deep and make ourselves the best women we can be. And we do this in a variety of ways. We try to make the best decisions. We try to juggle our responsibilities. We try to give and create love in our lives; to those we have in our lives. We try to make a difference. We work hard. And we try to find meaning in it all.

Women sense the connections in the world. How things create ripples and impact each other. We are all interrelated and women understand this so much more than men.

We are the more social gender and often form the fabric of community and family relationships. Women thrive on the connections they make and want to feel both competent and appreciated. Unfortunately women are under a lot of pressure in today's society to fulfill multiple roles. They often take on more care-giving roles which can drain their energy if they are not looking after themselves adequately enough.

The idea of self-care, of taking care of our selves is on our agenda. We know it's important, but it can get easily sidelined. When we take care of our needs we feel so much better, alive, on track... Why can this be so hard to do then? Why don't we value ourselves more?

Sometimes our culture conspires against us. The media is saturated with so many messages about women that are just wrong. Body types and ideals that

are unattainable, advertisements that are designed to make us feel inadequate, our beautiful creative life force, our sexuality, is exploited and made to look cheap. It can be hard not to let it all creep into our self-image, to have us question our selves and our natural feminine power. But these things can be overcome.

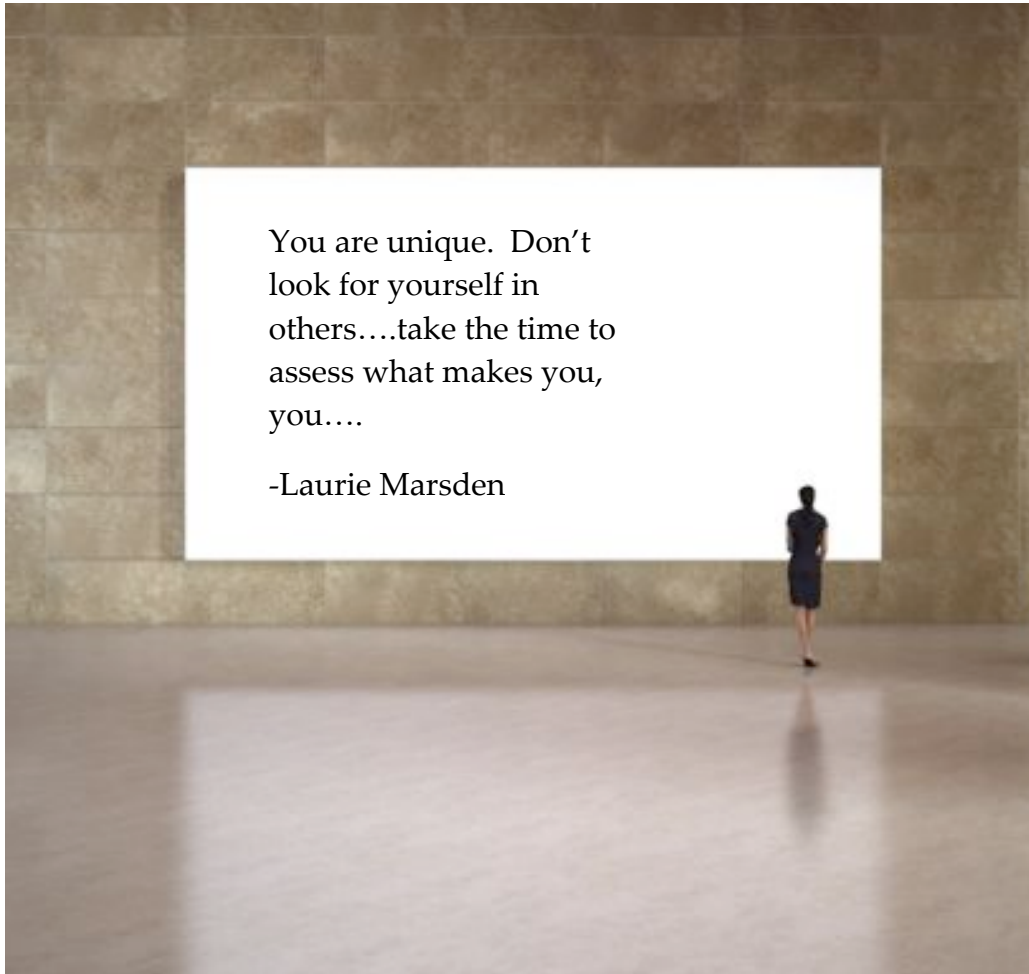
Self-reflection and analysis is the beginning of all change. And all positive personal change starts with self-awareness. From there we just need a few tools to direct us, to guide us, to make that change from what we're doing to what we're meant to be doing.

The 8 Steps to Becoming You program is a tool, an instrument for your journey. It is meant to get you thinking, reflecting and enhancing some of the most important parts of your life. It is divided into 8 sections, the 8 building blocks of self-care, self-esteem and personal power. Read, reflect, write and begin to discover and reclaim your life as it was intended.

This workbook is here to be used; write in it. In fact, **you need to write all over this book**. Use it as you would a journal. Look at it as a diary guided by questions. Use it and work it. The more you put yourself into it the more you will get out of it.

A lot of the exercises in this workbook are grounded in cognitive behavioral theory, a clinically proven psychological therapy. As a psychotherapist, I've seen what works to broaden the mind, improve mood and change behavior patterns. There just needs to be a genuine willingness to change. If this is in your hands you are already showing your willingness. Well done. Let's get to work.

SELF AWARENESS AND IDENTITY



MY LIFE, MY PATH

+PQ+ POSITIVE QUALITIES

ROLES MANY HATS

GOAL READY, SET, GO

? DECISIONS...
YES, NO, LET ME THINK ABOUT IT

FOCUS THE PRESENT MOMENT

+

STEP ONE

KNOW
THYSELF

WHO ARE YOU?

IN THIS BUSY WORLD WE DON'T OFTEN THINK ABOUT WHO WE ARE, WHAT IT IS WE ENJOY IN LIFE, OR WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO ACCOMPLISH. WE JUST GO FORWARD WITHOUT THE REFLECTION NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL GOALS AND BE HAPPY.

YOU NEED TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND KEEP THAT AWARENESS IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. HAVING THAT KNOWLEDGE INFORMS YOUR BEHAVIOR AND DECISIONS.

KNOWING THE SELF IS THE BASIS OF SELF-ESTEEM



Positive qualities

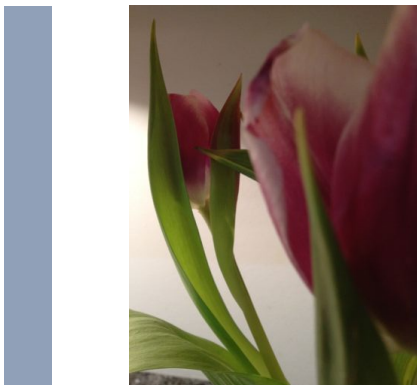
I have competence and talents. I have skills. I have overcome challenges. I have unique, positive characteristics.

Let's take stock of who we are. What are our strengths? What are we good at? What have we mastered so far in our lives? What potential do we have? What have we already achieved?

Let's record them, write them down, and make a list. Don't be shy, just take account of yourself and focus on the positive.

Let's leave all the "needs improvement" thoughts to the side. Immerse yourself in your strengths. Stuck? Think about compliments you have received. Has someone commented on your ability to listen well? Be a good friend? Cook mean lasagna? Be organized? What do you like about who you are? How might

someone who cares about you, describe you? Have you ever gotten an award, a good review, an acknowledgement of a job well done? Don't leave things out because you are not ALWAYS friendly, resourceful or funny....your strengths don't have to be on display 100% of the time.



Think of physical qualities

Think of abilities

Think of your spiritual side

Think about how you connect with others.

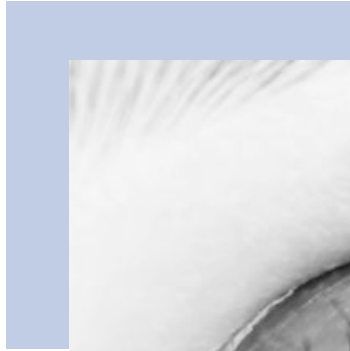
Think about everyday achievements

Think back through your life experiences

I ♥ my....



Fill in the shirt with all your + traits!!



+ ROLES ONE WOMAN, MANY HATS...

The modern woman is besieged with commitments on many fronts. The traditional roles of wife, mother and daughter, are supplemented with countless others. We are work colleagues, teachers, PTA members, on boards, soccer moms, best friends, taxi drivers, fund raisers, bosses, girlfriends, partners, counselors, organizers, party planners, cooks, cleaners and general gals about town!

Some roles are chosen, others just land on our laps. We are a bit strapped for time, but we keep going and take on the responsibilities of our various hats.

Identifying our roles helps to clarify exactly where all our energy is going. So often women do not even realize how much they have committed to.

Let's take the time to document our particular roles. Take a look at the different parts of your life. Where do you derive the most satisfaction? What roles hold the most meaning? Which ones give you joy? A sense of accomplishment? A warm feeling in your heart? Are there any that simply drain your energy without giving back?

ROLES

Roles w/ Family and Friends	Professional Roles and Social Roles	Roles at Home
ie. daughter		

Chose nine of the roles above and in the shaded boxes below list some of the responsibilities associated with that role. What duties does the role entail? What are some of the things you do in that role? For instance as a daughter you might call your Mom once a week, or visit your parents at the holidays. Some responsibilities will be daily, or frequently, some will be

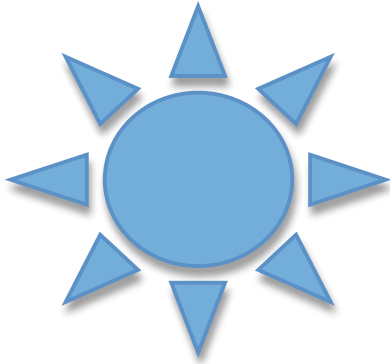
1.	2.	3.
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Setting goals helps you stay organized and moving in a positive direction. Confidence grows with accomplishments and jobs well done. Break your goals down into stages of achievement. Make them realistic and easy to measure. Celebrate each step. Stay on task. Start each day like a fresh opportunity to reach your goals.

Goals

Short Term
Long Term

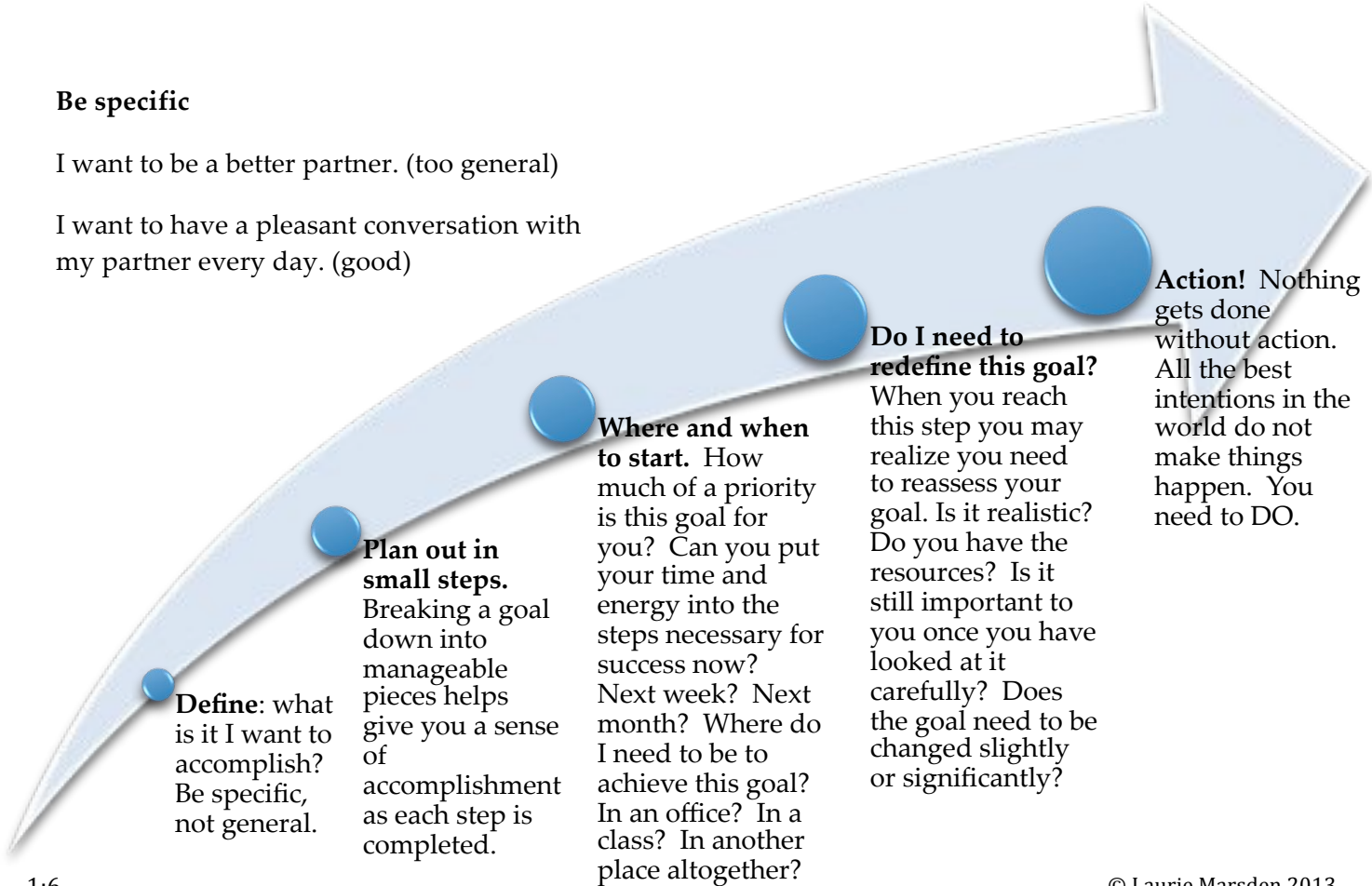


Professional
Personal
Financial
Social

Be specific

I want to be a better partner. (too general)

I want to have a pleasant conversation with my partner every day. (good)



Goal setting sheet



Use this page to begin writing about your goals. Make sure they are:

Realistic Specific Measurable

Achievable Important to You

Personal Goals	Steps to achieve	Timing
Family/Relationship Goals		
Health Goals		
Financial Goals		
Professional/Educational goals		
Other Goals		



MAKING DECISIONS WITH CONFIDENCE

Steps For Decision Making

Know the problem. Make sure you are not just seeing a surface issue or a distortion of what is really happening. Dig down and see if there are any core issues that may be the real source of the problem.

Look at the choices. Once you have a grounded view of the situation, look at the various options you have. The choice may be a simple “yes” or no,” but there may

be grey areas or a series of choices to make.

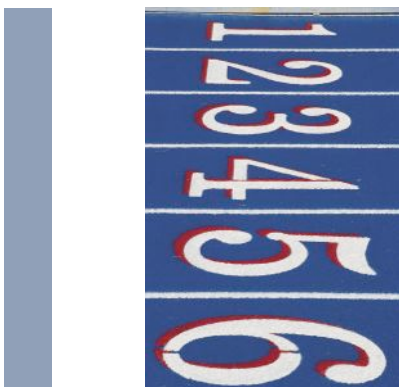
Make sure you are not trying to solve someone else’s problem. This is a sure way to set you up for additional stress and keep you away from looking after your own needs.

Weigh your options. Is there an option that “speaks to you” or will

surely lead you down a good road? Is there an option that you haven’t tried because you are afraid of failure?

Make a decision. Right or wrong it is important to make your own decisions and own them. Realize you are doing the best you can and let go of the results for now.

If asked to do something, reserve the right to say, “Let me think about it and get back to you.”

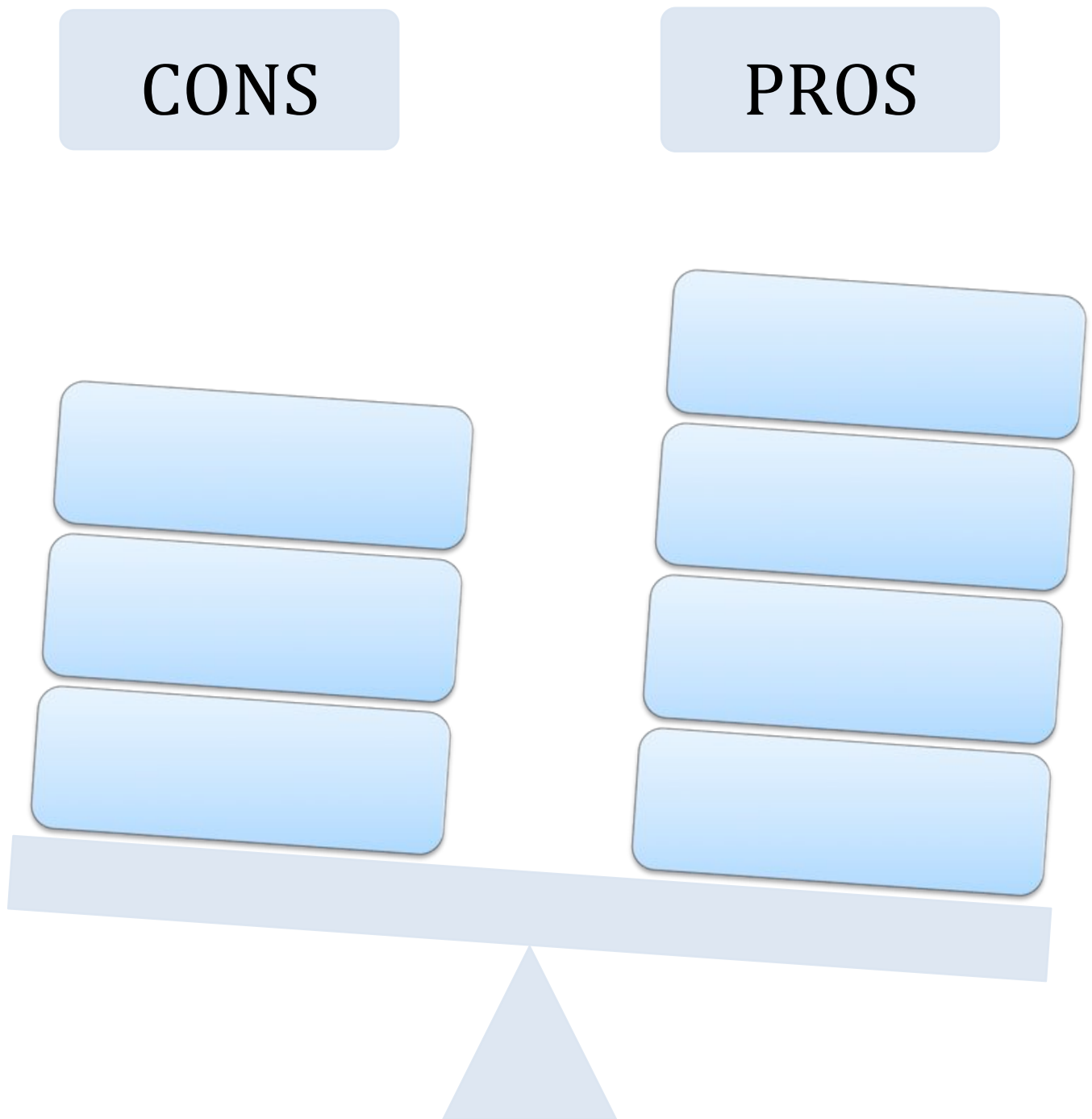


Life is about choices. You are making decisions every day in every way whether you realize it or not. Non-action is a decision as much as change or action is a decision. But actively making decisions is a skill. Becoming good at it helps you make choices that are necessary and right

for you. Embracing the responsibility of making decisions, helps you steer yourself, your life, and ultimately your own happiness. Become good at making decisions that are positive for your life and your confidence will blossom.

Making choices

Use the diagram below to make a simple assessment of the pros and cons of a certain choice in your life. Remember some pros and some cons have more weight than others. It's not the number of items on each side, it is the impact of those items.



Feelings & Thoughts

The core of mental well being and self-confidence



My Emotions = My Thoughts

Thoughts and emotions are intertwined, influencing each other constantly

Feelings play a key role in shaping our lives and the decisions we make. Our emotions and the way we manage them affect our physical selves as well as our mood. Being aware of and expressing our feelings in healthy ways shows self-respect.

Thoughts and feelings are connected,

though it is often easier to control and change our thoughts. If we change our thoughts in a positive manner, our feelings will change for the better as well. Be wary of negative self-talk that does not serve you well. Change those negative statements to positive. Focus on strengths, efforts and accomplishments.

Checking in
What am I feeling?

Thinking, thinking...
What's up in that head of mine?

#####

Staying in the positive
Strategies to wipe away
negative thoughts and replace
them with affirming thoughts

+++++



emotions...

Approach all emotions without judgment. They are neither “good” nor “bad.” They simply are.

Feelings are fluid; they ebb and flow and change. You can even experience several emotions at the same time.

I feel, therefore I am...

We often believe it is our thoughts that dictate our actions. But often our feelings set the stage for what we will or will not do. Sometimes our emotions are strong and we recognize their impact on our lives. When we are depressed or fearful our chance of trying something daring or new dwindles. When we are truly feeling loving with a partner it is no surprise that we give them hugs and kisses. In the same way our more subtle emotions, those we might not even be in tune with, have a big impact on how we run our lives.

Often we are too busy to check in with ourselves and see what it is going on for us internally. Yet this type of awareness is

invaluable. Knowing how we feel at the moment or about people and situations gives us a guide as to how we are doing managing our lives.

Situations that create and maintain negative emotions, (where we feel miserable, depressed, humiliated, discouraged, etc.) call out to us to make a change.

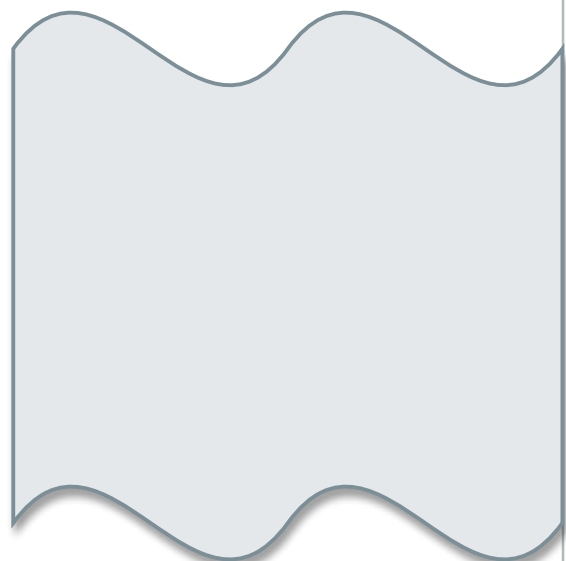
Our positive emotional states generally tell us we are taking care of ourselves and our needs are being met.

Some emotions are neither overtly positive nor overtly negative. You can feel thoughtful and sure, composed or private.

Try not to judge your emotions.

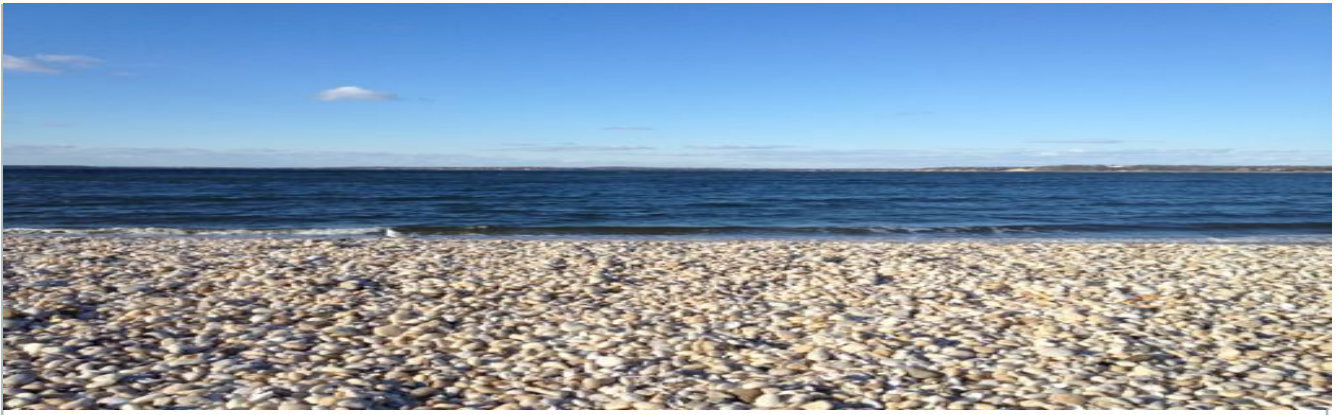
How are you feeling at the moment?

Pick one or more feeling words from the next page to describe how you are at this very moment. Write it in the space to the right. If this is hard for you, tune into how your body is feeling. It will give you clues as to your emotional state.



how are you feeling?





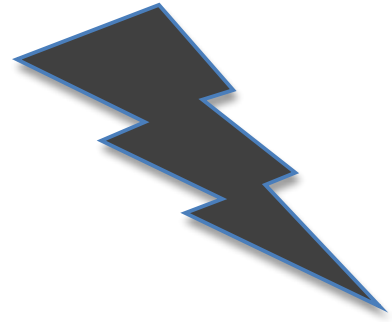
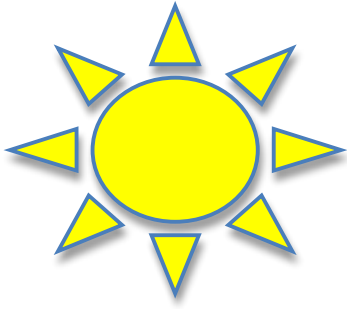
Situations and Emotions

Think of some events that have happened in your life. Write them down in the left column. Then write the emotion you felt during the event in the right column.

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FEELINGS

Healthy	Pleasant	Dissatisfied	Selfish	Cross
Competent	Private	Peaceful	Gratified	Powerful
Confined	Forsaken	Fatigued	Disappointed	Puzzled
Capable	Deserted	Sluggish	Agitated	Strained
Disgraced	Trapped	Pleased	Wicked	Vain
Dormant	Censured	Dishonored	Weak	Perplexed
Regretful	Active	Amused	Appeased	Harassed
Free	Wanted	Plagued	Miserable	Determined
Closed	Useless	Indifferent	Drained	Wasteful
Cordially	Active	Cheerful	Abandoned	Composed
Peppy	Involved	Isolated	Serene	Discouraged
Irritated	Restored	Embarrassed	Blessed	Selfish
Accommodating	Exhausted	Ignored	Alone	Playful
Confident	Worried	Cranky	Passionate	Energetic
Resentful	Shamed	Troubled	Encouraged	Lively
Docile	Scorned	Melancholy	Sentimental	Helpful
Vicious	Forlorn	Ignorant	Infatuated	Delighted
Lucky	Vivacious	Empty	Hurt	Despised
Abused	Bashful	Spry	Isolated	Fearful
Imprisoned	Modest	Alarmed	Extravagant	Cowardly
Mortified	Withdrawn	Infuriated	Pretty	Blue
Elated	Overworked	Worried	Lost	Contented
Idle	Strong	Inactive	Gloomy	Competent
Placid	Limited	Adequate	Stimulated	Vengeful
Exasperated	Gentle	Moody	Tired	Envious
Sulky	Timid	Hopeless	Charitable	Dignified
Charitable	Rested	Excited	Overbearing	Flustered
Distant	Ecstatic	Solemn	Troubled	Restless
Betrayed	Discarded	Tranquil	Arrogant	Depressed
Ridiculous	Devoted	Defeated	Rough	Successful
Blissful	Robust	Unwelcome	Tempted	Elated
Stimulated	Weary	Miserly	Angry	Jealous
Qualified	Attracted	Generous	Provoked	Inspired
Heavy-hearted	Eager	Sick	Happy	Holy
Impatient	Bold	Antsy	Invigorated	Preoccupied
Interested	Hindered	Thrilled	Bitter	Honored



Keep track of your thoughts one day and write them in the “sunny” positive side, or the stormy negative side. Take a good look at them. Are these thoughts that recur daily? Do they serve you well or hold you back?





Self-talk

What am I saying to myself?

We all have an inner dialogue, a stream of thoughts that go through our mind throughout the day. Our thought processes are a bit like a conversation we have internally.

Those thoughts or dialogues can be affirming and positive or negative and drag us down, making us feel less competent or confident. Some of these thoughts are core beliefs that we have adopted about ourselves. Negative core beliefs go back to early experiences that somehow registered that we were lacking in some ability or trait.

Some thoughts criticize us for being imperfect.

Changing negative thoughts into positive thoughts

Interrupt negative thoughts in your head and turn them into positive thoughts.

Be your own thought police! Here's a good strategy:

1. Write your thought down. It can be a thought about your self, a situation or someone else.
2. Look at it in black and white.
3. Think about it for a minute and ask your self. Is this really true? Is it something out of my control? Is this thought helping me? Is this thought productive?
4. If you've identified a negative thought, then be committed to changing it into

a positive one.

5. On the piece of paper cross the thought out.

6. Now write an alternative thought that is less critical, more affirming,

7. Make sure your new thought is true, so that your critic does not automatically dismiss it and keep you in the same negative mindset.

i.e. (-) "I can't get this computer to do what I want! I am hopeless on them!"

(+) "I am struggling with this new program. If I get some help to understand it, I will be able to use it more effectively."

(Not) "I am good on computers."

Some unhelpful thinking styles

Tunnel vision: Only seeing the negative, ignoring the rest.

Black and White: Only seeing one extreme or the other. Good or bad, wrong or right. No shades of grey.

Over-generalizing: "You always," "I never," "Everyone...."

Demanding: "I must." "You should"

The Catastrophe: Blowing things out of

proportion. Making small problems terrible or awful ones.

Personalize: Blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong, even if you have a small or negligible role in a problem.

Mind reader/fortune teller: Making assumptions about what other people are thinking/ what will happen.

M&M: Magnifying others + qualities, minimizing yours.

Would've, Could've, Should've

Critical statement about myself

Supportive + statement

Sometimes we are our own worse critic. We second-guess ourselves thinking we should have done something, or would have done something different if.... Most times we make the best decision we can at the time given our circumstances.

Write some of your should statements in the column on the left. Then rewrite it from a loving perspective, acknowledging yourself for having done your best.

Let go of your need to be perfect....

Changing negative core beliefs

Negative self belief	Origin of belief	More balanced view of self

A negative core belief is something you have come to believe based on some early, negative experiences. ie. "I am not that attractive," because you were made fun of in grade school, or "I am not that clever" because your brother was the math whiz growing up and always got a lot of praise and you struggled.

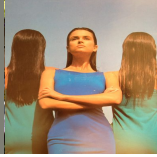
Write some of these negative core beliefs in the column on the left. Then write their

origin in the middle column. Consider how they got ingrained in you and challenge their validity. Is it really fair or accurate to say you are not clever now based on comparisons people made between you and your brother years ago?

Finally in the last column write a more balanced view of yourself.

Communication & Assertiveness

Respect



Communicating effectively and asserting yourself requires and demonstrates a high degree of self-respect.

*

“I” statements



Using “I” Statements empowers individuals as they take responsibility for their feelings.

*

“I” statements also short circuit arguments as they share facts; they do not accuse or put another on the defensive.



Being assertive



People have different styles of relating. Main types include passive, assertive and aggressive.

*

Self Expression

Communication is the ability to express to another one’s thoughts, feelings, needs and wants. People communicate through speech, writing, art, body language and behavior. Subtleties like tone and volume of voice, manner of speech, posture and facial features also communicate to others.

Technology has transformed and expanded the ways in which we communicate with each other. But basic communications skills can still be used in all manner of interaction.

Whole Messages



R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Dignity

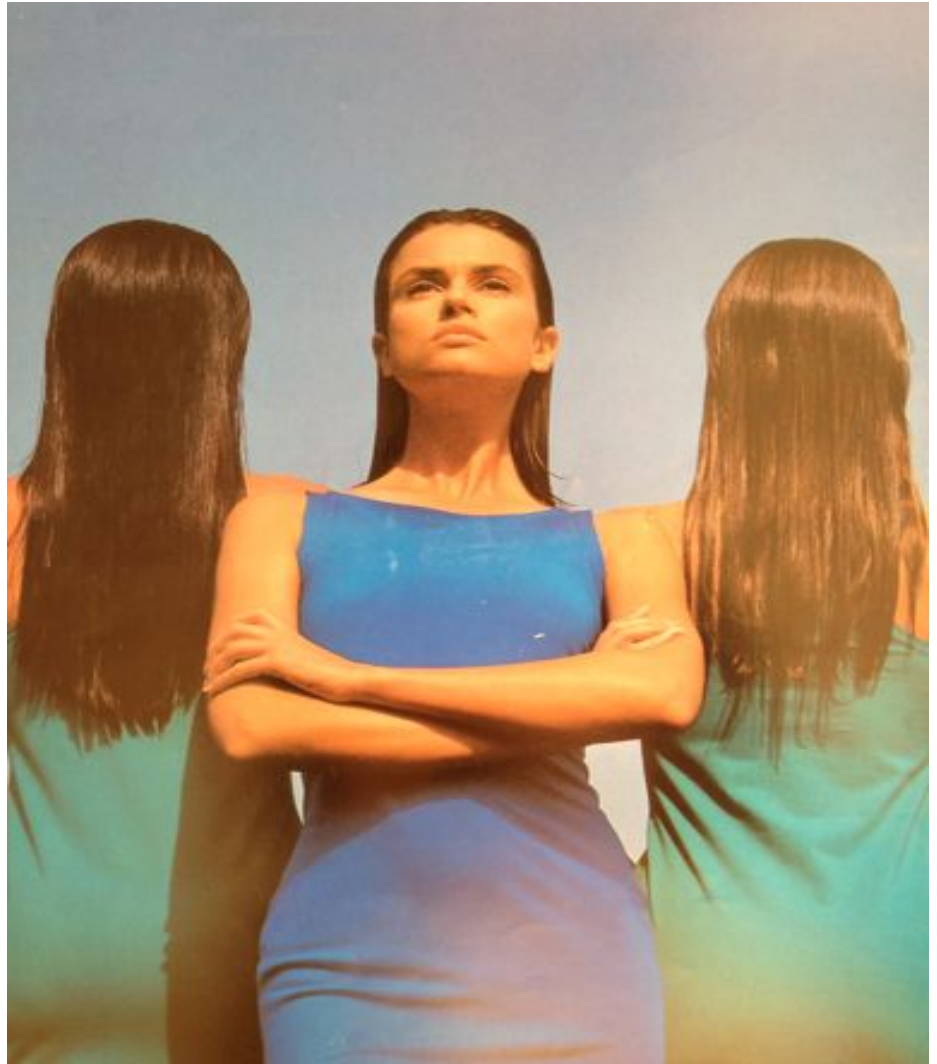
When we have dignity we present ourselves with poise. Our self-respect is on display. We embrace who we are with a healthy sense of pride.

Worth

Our worth as human beings is significant in itself. Add to this our abilities, skills, talents, insights, and spiritual power and we are worth becomes simply priceless.

Value

Like worth our value is great, and can often be measured in how we contribute to others' lives and through our work. How valuable are you to your partner? Your children? Your colleagues? Your parents? What would their life be like without you?



Considered

Are you considering what you need and what you want in your life? Are you giving yourself the time needed to consider, to really think about yourself?

Are other people considerate of you? Are they considering your needs and wants in their interactions with you? If not, do they know what you require? Are you making your needs and wants clear to them?



“I” statements

Taking ownership

If you are speaking to someone and you use the words “You make me feel” you are giving away your power and not taking ownership of your feelings. No one makes you feel, you simply feel different feelings based on what’s happening and your internal interpretation of the events around you. That does not mean you cannot confront people with how you feel about their behavior or a situation.

“I” statements simply point out the behavior or situation and then disclose how you feel about it. This gives the person you are speaking with information without being accusatory or giving them power over you. It also reminds you, you have options...

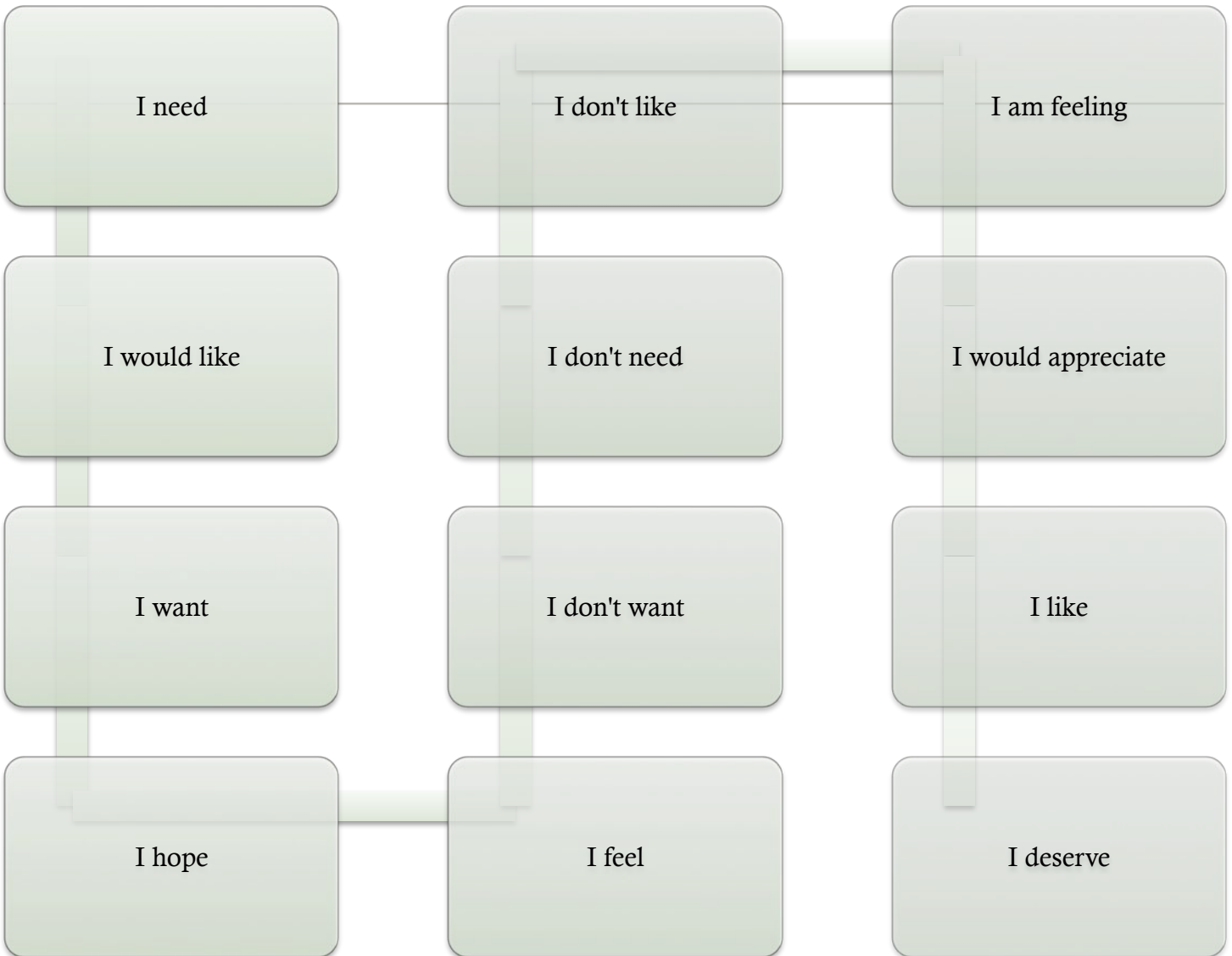
Practice changing some “You make me feel” statements to “I” statements. What are some options you have once you recognize you are in control and not dependent on other people to change?

“You make me feel statements” I have made.	Changed to “I feel _____ when you _____”	Choices I can make to about the situation
i.e. You make me feel so unloved when you work late every night.	When you work late every night I feel unloved.	I can: fill my evenings with something that gives me joy, read a book, go out with friends.....



I.....

Imagine you have the freedom to say anything and truly express your needs and wants. Fill in the boxes below with "I" statements that are true to yourself at this moment in time.



Styles of Relating

Who am I most like?

How do I relate to others?

Pamela Passive



I get tongue tied when I should be speaking up for my self and my rights. Sometimes I don't even know what my rights are. I let people walk all over me. I am very accommodating of others, even at the expense of my own needs.

Angelina Assertive



I know who I am and what I want and need. I talk to people in a direct and firm manner. I respect others but know I have rights too. I am confident expressing myself. I expect to be liked, but don't need to be.

Audrey Aggressive



I dominate and intimidate others. I don't care about their needs or wants. I'll do whatever it takes to get my way. I'm bossy and like it that way.

Do I Relate Differently to Situations and People?

Identify the people with and situations where you are passive/assertive/aggressive.

I am passive with/when.....

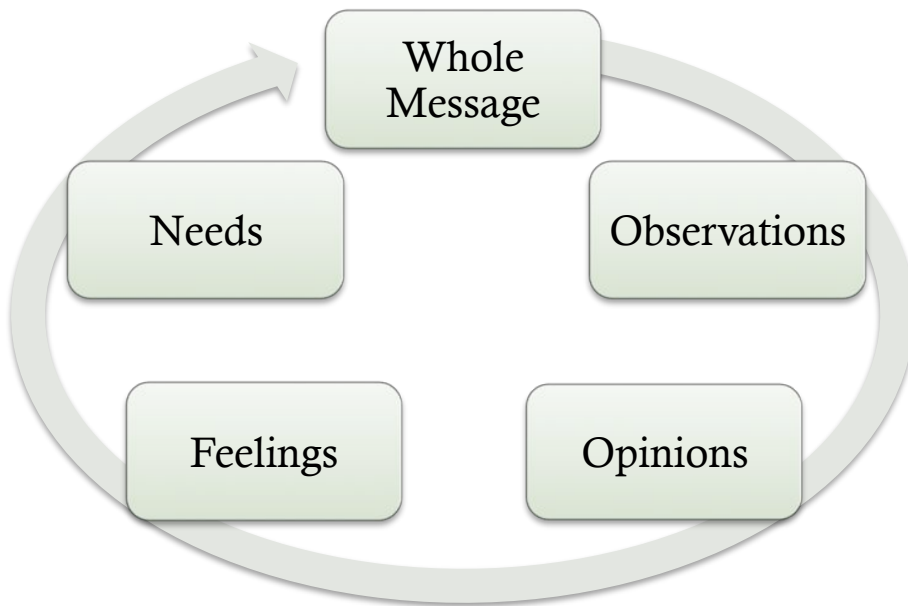
These are people and situations that somehow make you feel inadequate. You lose your voice; you are unable to express yourself adequately. You often feel the need to please or overdo, compensate, and please. Often at the expense of your own needs.

I am assertive with/when...

This is your powerbase, where you feel most comfortable and where you can most be yourself. These are balanced relationships and areas of your life. Your needs get met and you are willing to give. These situations and people have a give and take, an equal standing.

I am aggressive with/when...

These people and situations push my buttons. I fly off the handle. I feel the need to control and do not much care how I do it.



Whole Messages

Elements of a Whole Message

1. **Observations:** What is it you see, and hear? Or taste and smell or touch? What is your basic sensory experience?
2. **Opinions:** What conclusions do you make about what you are observing? This is often a personal judgment.
3. **Feelings:** How do you feel about what you observe? Give your emotional response to what is happening.
4. **Needs:** What do you want to happen? What do you think you must have given the situation?

Example of a Whole Message

“All the dishes you used last night are piled in the sink this morning. The food is dried on them.” (Observation)

“I think it’s just a mess to wake up to and not a very good way to start the day.” (Opinion)

“I’m disappointed that you left them there and a bit angry as we have agreed to keep the kitchen clean.” (Feelings)

“I’d like the dishes to get cleaned and put away so I can use the sink.” (Needs)

Are You Communicating Fully or Just Partially?

Sometimes we are not clear in our communications with others. Confusion and resistance from others often arises when we do not communicate fully, when we give people only partial messages.

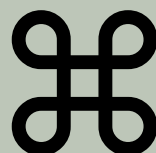
Whole messages contain four main elements. These include letting others know what it is we observe, our opinions about what we observe, our feelings about what we observe and our needs arising from the situation. Communicating fully gives people information about what is happening, our perception of it, our feelings about it and what it is we require now.

Partial messages only give some of the elements, not all of them. This can lead to misunderstandings. If you are only giving your opinions about a situation, and your opinion is negative, a person may only hear a criticism or feel attacked. Or a person might not understand what your needs are and your discussion becomes a debate about a situation as opposed to a dialog leading to a resolution.

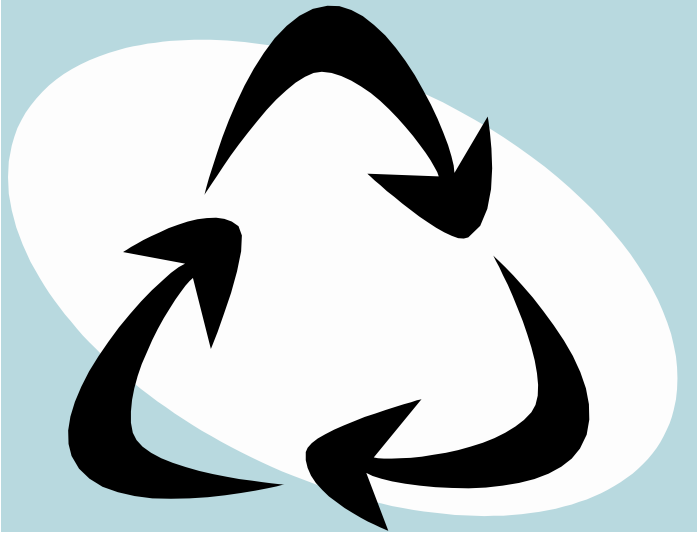
Fully communicating with others leads to mutual understanding, cooperation from others, having your needs met and often a sense of increased intimacy.

Should I always communicate fully?

Not every relationship or situation requires whole messages. The man at the deli doesn’t need to know how you feel about the turkey you are ordering. Sometimes only information is needed. Choose when and with whom you need to use whole messages



Practicing Whole Messages



Whole messages help build relationships

Identify the elements of whole messages in the dialog below. Julie is talking to her neighbor after finding out her garage door is stuck:

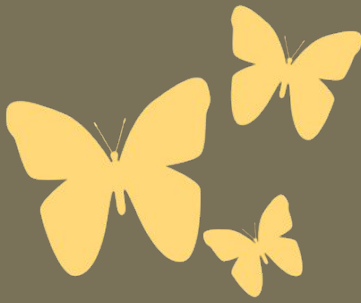
"I'm so frustrated" _____ "My garage door is not opening again!" _____ "It's probably just old and done for, so I'll need to get a repairman in or replace it." _____ "I have to get to work though and was wondering if you have the time to help me get it open now?" _____.

Julie shares information about her situation including what she observes, thinks, feels and needs. She doesn't just say "My door is stuck. Can you open it for me?" Whole messages help build relationships.

Think about a situation that happened in the last few days. Write a whole statement to someone about the situation. Include your observations, opinion, feelings and needs.

Think about something important to you that you want to communicate to someone. Write a whole message including all 4 elements.

Imagine you are in a restaurant and your main course arrives overcooked. You ordered it rare and it is clearly well done. What could you say to the waiter using all the elements of whole communication?



Social Beings

+
My relationship to myself

Balance



negotiation

satisfaction

mutually beneficial

support

saying "No."



Relationships and Boundaries

We are social animals by nature, depending on each other for interaction and support. Yet no two people are alike. People are different, with varied expectations and needs. Therefore relationships are full of negotiation and work as well as comfort and satisfaction. Relationships permeate our lives with work colleagues, family, friends and acquaintances. Being skilled in dealing with others leads to healthy supportive relationships.

Sometimes people with lower self-esteem have difficulty saying "No." to requests. Women in particular have been socialized to take care of others and so drawing boundaries with people may be hard. Since relationships place demands on our time and energy, being able to set reasonable boundaries is essential for a balanced respected self.

Healthy supportive relationships require boundaries



Women often equate “relationship” with partner. But a variety of relationships affect our lives. Some relationships are balanced and healthy where both parties’ needs are met. Some rob us of our energy and offer little in return. It is important to be aware of the various relationships we engage in and how they affect us.

Identify your relationships and evaluate their impact on your life

(Are they affirming? Draining?
Supportive? Frustrating? Wonderful?
Challenging?)

Current Connections

Who am I in relationship with?

Most significant other:

Friends

Family members:

Work colleagues/Associates

HOW GOOD ARE YOUR FRIENDSHIPS FOR YOU?

Sometimes women develop friendships that are one-sided or lop-sided. They are the ones who listen more, help out more, or constantly cater to their friends' requests and needs. While you may think this is "what friends are for" if there is not give and take then your friendly relationship is unhealthy. Lop-sided friendships can drain you of your energy. They also unwittingly send the signal that your needs are not important or that your life doesn't count.

Pick 5 friendships to evaluate and write your friends' names below.

Check the boxes in the chart below to determine if your friendships are balanced.

My friend... (i.e. Mary)	Friend 1	Friend 2	Friend 3	Friend 4	Friend 5
Calls me to talk about his/her problems, but quickly gets off the phone when I start to talk about mine					
Asks me for favors regularly					
Has been unavailable to help me in the past when asked					
Seems so busy, I am just lucky they make time for me					
Usually decides what we will do when we get together					
Needs to be the center of attention					
I am always the one keeping in touch					
I feel tired after being with them					
I wonder if they value me as a person					

If you have many checks under your friend's name, you may need to reconsider that friendship



Physical
emotional
intellectual



What stage is
 your
 relationship
 in?

My current relationship is in the _____ stage.

Other relationships I have been in have gotten to the _____ stage.

The biggest problems I have moving through the stages are _____.

Yes or no.

My partner is aware of how relationships evolve _____.

I can talk to my partner about relationship stages _____.

Relationship Stages

Even the relationship veteran among us can lose sight of relationship stages when romantic love kicks in. The promise of a new relationship seems limitless. Perhaps this is the person who can give me what I need!! Finally I have found THE ONE. But even the best relationships go through stages, so there is nothing to be gained by pretending yours will not. The romance stage IS just #1 and sooner or later his/her dirty underwear will be lying on the floor.

If you have been in a committed relationship for a while you will most likely find yourself past the infatuation stage and into one of the next ones. Working through the stages is what a long-term relationship entails.

5 Stages of Relationship

- 1. Romance/Infatuation:** Constantly thinking about the other person, idealizing the other, focus on similarities, ignore differences, high degree of passion, body is intoxicated with endorphins, testosterone and dopamine which increase energy, elevate mood, and switch on sexual desire. No wonder we don't want it to end!
- 2. Disillusionment/Power struggle:** The gloss is wearing off and reality sets in. Your partner is not perfect or perfectly similar to you. Arguments start and the real work begins. You may feel your partner has changed, but both of you are now beginning to see what was always there.
- 3. Knowledge and Awareness::** Time to reevaluate. Sometimes partners go quiet or isolate while they process the changes that are occurring. They might put their energies into other endeavors like work or children.
- 4. Transformation/New Commitment:** If in the last 2 stages you learned the skills of problem solving, negotiation, and active listening and are still interested in being with the other person, your relationship becomes redefined and transformed.
- 5. Real Love/Intimacy:** Each person takes responsibility for their needs and supports the other. Conflicts resolve quickly. You are team players on the same team! You know and accept each other. There is respect, warmth, satisfaction and genuine love.



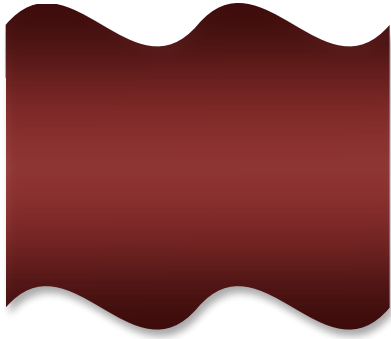
Yes We Can!

No one has a perfect relationship. But knowing what one looks like helps us. We can see what areas of our relationship are spot on and which ones need work.

What Makes a Relationship Healthy?

Make a check next to the statements below that apply to your current or most recent relationship with a significant other.

- There is a balance of giving and receiving.
- Individuality and personal identity is supported
- Having fun together/“play time” is common
- Acceptance of each other for who you really are
- Feelings and needs are openly expressed
- Conflict is addressed directly and resolved
- There is a willingness to be vulnerable
- Personal growth and positive change is encouraged
- Each person takes responsibility for their behavior
- There is continuity, consistency and commitment
- Communication is open and spontaneous
- Each has self confidence and strong self-worth
- Rules and boundaries are clear, with some flexibility
- A balance between togetherness and separation
- Negotiations are fair and common
- There is tolerance and forgiveness of faults
- Mistakes are taken in stride and learned from
- Each trust the other
- Each can be alone and privacy is respected
- Other relationships and interests exist
- Neither tries to “fix” the other
- Each enjoys doing things for themselves and for the other



“I saw the red flags and thought ‘What a pretty color’...”

COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility plays a large role in determining the durability of a relationship. Two people do not have to like all the same activities or be the same in character or temperament; but if they are not compatible, their relationship is not likely to succeed.

People are compatible if:

- They share values and life goals.
- They have a disposition, attitude or willingness to make it work
- They are more similar than different

Look for patterns in your partner choices and relationship dynamics

Resolving Conflict

Conflicts I've had	Strategies I've used	Outcome of Conflict	Alternative strategies I can employ

Partner Appreciation

It's too easy to focus on problems and shortcomings in your significant other. Cultivating appreciation for your partner's positive qualities helps build and maintain good relationships. Complete the sentences below.

I appreciate my partner being...

I love the way he...

One time he just amazed me by...

I can count on him to...

I appreciate his...

My partner's best traits are...



I can set
Limits

*Feeling guilty is a sure sign
you are taking care of yourself*

Boundaries I will
make.

1

2

3

4

Boundaries with



“No.” is a complete sentence.

Boundaries

-----The line in the sand-----

Protecting your personal boundaries

Personal boundaries come in various types: physical, emotional, intellectual or sexual. Comments about your weight, or physical touching cross physical boundaries. People who belittle you or put you down cross your intellectual or emotional boundaries. Partners demanding sex or asking for sex you are not comfortable with cross your sexual boundaries.

Boundary violations are common as people often have their own agendas, pursue their own interests, or do or say things that are offensive. Sometimes people are unintentionally boundary crossing, sometimes they are. Either way it is up to you to inform people they have crossed the line. If you don't say something you allow yourself to be victimized and in some way lose a piece of yourself. When you speak up for yourself you train people how to treat you. People might not embrace you for your stand, but you will be being true to yourself. And your power rests in your

Embracing your power

Some people have legitimate power over you, such as boss, a landlord or a teacher, although that power has limits that are usually clear or negotiated beforehand (i.e. When you took your job you knew what it entailed and you have to answer to your boss for the fulfillment of that job; a teacher you defer to as you accept their instruction). But many women enter into a submissive interaction with people, preferring to "go along with" rather than speak up and be true to their own needs. (i.e. the wife who remains quiet when her husband dismisses her ideas at a dinner party). Some women are afraid of the fallout from standing up for themselves. But conflict is not always inevitable.

The simplest way for handling boundary violations is to **State the obvious**. It can be as short as "You are being dismissive." in the example of the husband. Or if a co-worker is being too friendly you can say, "Your hand is on my waist." Whatever the situation is, say it and then be silent. Wait for the response. If there is none you can either leave it there or repeat your observation until there is a reply.

If the boundary violation is long standing and is a behavior pattern of the other person involved, set aside the time to have an assertive conversation with them. Prepare and rehearse if necessary. Use whole messages and stick to your script.

Identify 3 situations where your boundaries were crossed. How did you react? How did you feel?

Physical boundary

Emotional or intellectual

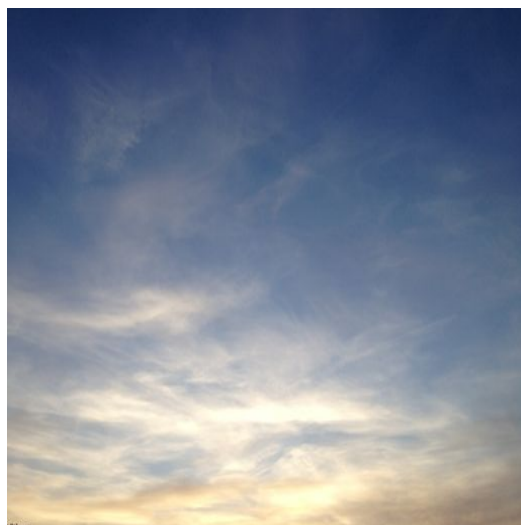
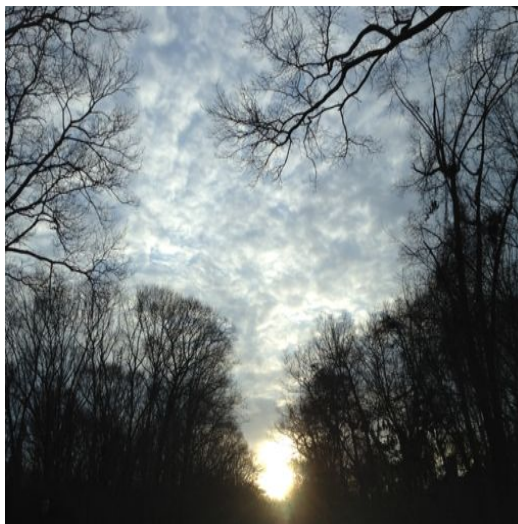
Sexual boundary

Getting Through Tough Times



Bumps in the road

There is no endlessly smooth path, no road without bumps, no street without bends...



challenges

- losses what I had is now gone
- grief normal and natural response to loss
- recover/renew the light comes back into our lives
- change a fundamental shift
- survivor my loss is part of my history, it does not define me



Overcoming obstacles

“Each positive step forward you take brings you closer to recovering from a loss, closer to your renewed self and integrated life script.”

Laurie Marsden

The ebb and flow of life

Life involves fluctuations, change, growth and death. We change jobs, split with a partner, lose a loved one, experience illness, deal with violence, become a victim of a crime, etc. Many of these experiences we cannot control, yet we must deal with them, whichever ones come our way.

Life is not static. Even positive change involves loss.

How we deal with the tough times in life impacts our mood and determines how long we will experience the negative feelings that rise in such situations.

Understanding the stages of loss as well as the stages of healing can prepare you for these times and help you recover your sense of balance and motivation.

Remember, if it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger.

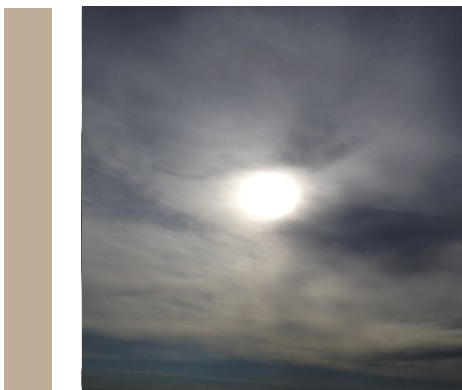


Losses

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Significant losses that people can experience in their lives.

Death of a partner	Retirement	Career change
Divorce	Change in family member's health	Marital arguments
Marital separation	Pregnancy	Mortgage issues
Death of close family member	Sexual difficulties	Changes in work
Personal injury or illness	Addition to family	Son or daughter leaving home
Marriage	Business readjustment	Trouble with in-laws
Job loss	Change in financial status	Partner begins or ceases working
Marital reconciliation	Death of a close friend	Change in living conditions



Why do good events sometimes feel like losses?

Even positive change brings loss with it. A marriage may be a happy event, but it is also the loss of the single lifestyle and all that is associated with it. Having a new child is wonderful, but it also

involves the loss of freedoms the couple took for granted, like going out at night whenever it suited them, or getting a good night's sleep.

It is OK to have the feelings associated with loss even when a positive event is happening in your life.

In the ovals below write the losses you have experienced in the last year, the last 5 years, the last 10 years and in your lifetime.

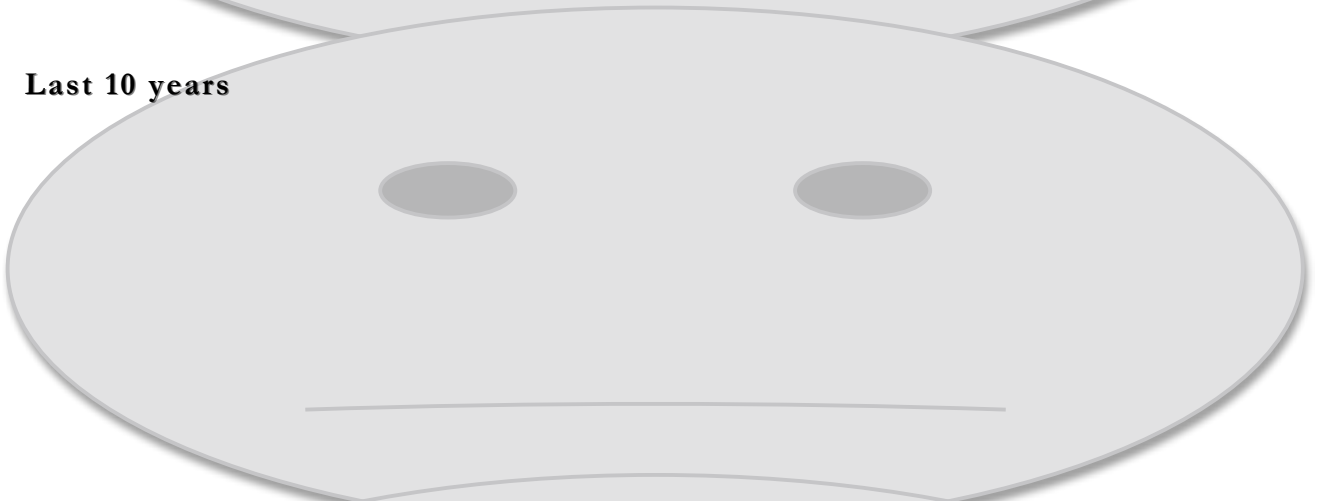
Last year



Last 5 years



Last 10 years



**Prior to
10 years**

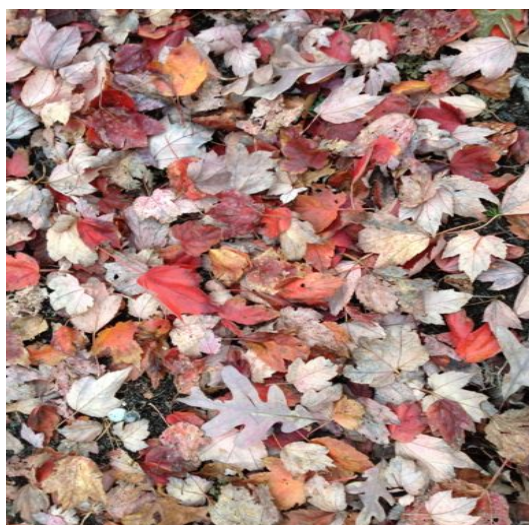


Stages of grief

+
grief

“Intense sorrow, cause of intense sorrow, trouble, to suffer misfortune”

loss



Stages of grief		
Denial	✘	This isn't happening. I don't believe it. It can't be. There must be some mistake. It's not true.
Anger	#<?:!!	How could this be? This is outrageous!!! Someone will pay for this!
Bargaining	?	Maybe if I pray harder things will be back the way they were. How can I fix this? What can I do?
Despair	↓	My life is over. I can't go on. Nothing is worth anything anymore.
Acceptance	★	This has happened. It is a part of my life script now, but it does not control my future. I accept it and move on.

*These do not occur in the same order for everyone.

+
loss

“fact of no longer having something”

When God closes a door She opens a window.....

What does it mean to resolve your loss?

When you resolve your loss you claim your circumstances. You say, “Yes, this is what is happening/has happened. This is mine to deal with.” You don't let your circumstances rule your life.

When a loss is resolved you are able to enjoy fond memories without them being swallowed by intensely negative feelings like guilt or regret.

Often people find new meanings in their

lives, and move on without fear.

When your loss is resolved you are still gentle with yourself and admit it is OK to feel down once in a while. The bad feelings pass...

Resolving grief often brings with it the ability to forgive others, either those who have caused the loss or those who may say things to you that are not well thought out

My stages of grief

Chose a loss that you experienced in the last few years. See if you can remember the stages of grief you went through around the loss. Write a little bit about each stage you went through? How did it manifest for you personally? What are some of the things you said to yourself? What did you feel in each stage? How was your life affected as you were in a particular stage? How long did you stay there? What are the things that kept you from moving on? Remember not all the stages occur nor do they necessarily go in order. Your path is unique. What did you learn?

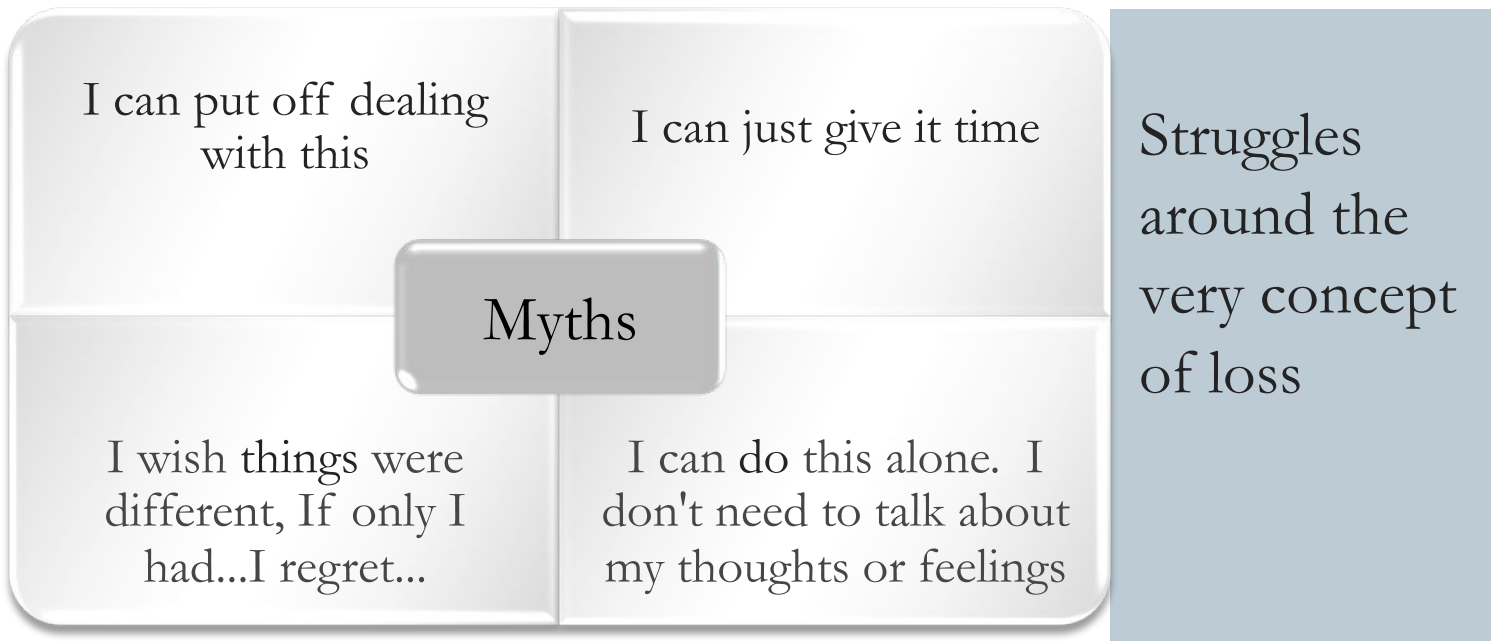
denial

anger

bargaining

despair

acceptance



In today’s society, with so much focus on acquiring things and “gains,” people are less prepared to deal with loss.

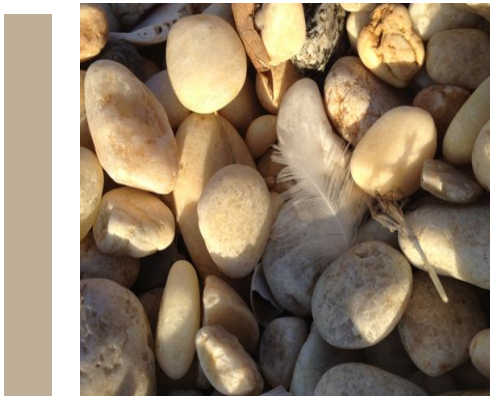
We are a consumer society. We acquire, collect, need the bigger house, more toys, more stuff. We have been conditioned to expect to gain things, not lose them. That is part of the definition of success that the modern world has given us.

We have been taught that acquiring things will make us feel better, whole, or

complete. There’s even a nickname for it. We go for “retail therapy.” We feel better, at least momentarily. But how long does that ever last? And what is the message we are feeding ourselves? Isn’t it that getting things lifts our spirits and fills an inner void? Do we expect the same result with our more significant life losses?

We have this notion that if we replace something, that our loss will be easier. But often this serves to just bury our feelings.

Nothing serves as a substitute for processing loss and going through the stages of grief to arrive at true and deep acceptance. That is when you can move forward with your life in a healthy direction.



Other ways to avoid dealing with loss

Staying in your head
(intellectualizing, not dealing with your feelings)

Faking it (pretending you are fine to those around you.)

Acting out (taking your anger out on others, refusing to do anything because you are in so much pain—for an overly extended period of time)



Do you identify with any of the Myth Statements at the top of the previous page?

Write about your experience and why you hold onto the myth. Are you trying to avoid painful memories or feelings? Are you trying to forget?

I recognize these less effective ways of dealing with loss.

I am a survivor and will thrive



Celebrate surviving

If it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger

I can....



S
U
R
V
I
V
O
R

I am

strong I did not break, I changed. I am stronger than ever.

capable I can do more than I thought possible

resilient I am back on course. My life has evolved and is moving forward

imperfect It is really OK that I am not superwoman.

myself I am unique and special. I am on my own journey, distinctly mine.

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5:8



From victim to survivor

“My traumas and losses no longer define me. They are a part of my history, my life script, but they are just a part of the whole. There's a lot of light in my life as well.”

Let go of being a victim

There comes a point in the process of getting through tough times that you feel less of a victim and more of a survivor.

Sometimes we feel victimized because we are. We can be the victim of a crime, or suffer greatly from an unhealthy or violent relationship. Maybe someone's hurt us, harmed us or duped us in some way. Maybe we have felt totally helpless in the face of some event. When we get out from under

such extreme conditions we can then process the event and the loss we experienced.

Sometimes we feel like a victim even if negative events are well and truly over, because we continue to victimize ourselves with bad choices or by replaying the trauma over in our minds. We need to let go, not by burying things, but by working through the feelings. Sometimes we need professional help. And that is OK.

Health & Relaxation

Taking Care of You



Be healthy, be confident

How we treat our bodies impacts our self-esteem

A physically healthy person has good energy, feels free from sickness and is generally in a stable positive mood. Poor health or the mismanagement of stress can affect mood and mental states, often leading to feelings of

depression, inability to accomplish goals or low self-esteem. The three major lifestyle components contributing to physical health are eating well, exercise and relaxation (keeping stress at bay!)

Eat

You are what you eat

sensibly

Move

Use it or lose it

often

Relax

Whenever you can

ahhh



Your mood and food



Good food choices

What we eat

Fresh fruits and vegetables

Proteins

Grains

Water

Avoiding processed food

How much we eat

Moderate proportions

In balance with our energy output

When we eat

3 meals

No regular snacking

No late meals

A balanced diet with the proper nutrients keeps your body and mind healthy. A good eating regime will provide you with energy to get on with your day. If you are not eating properly you can feel sluggish and tired. This can cause you to fall behind on important work and household duties, which in turn can lead to negative feelings about your abilities.

Eating well will also help keep you in shape. Many women are insecure about their bodies and wish they were more fit or carrying less weight around. If you are eating properly you have a better chance of having a body you are proud of.

Food also quite literally affects your mood on a chemical level. Carbohydrate foods boost levels of serotonin in the brain, a chemical known for its calming effect. (Exactly why pasta and potato mashes are typical “comfort” foods!) Foods rich in vitamin B and C are known to reduce our stress levels. Dairy and eggs help relax the brain and encourage good sleep. Protein helps you to think faster and feel more mentally energetic. And of course we all know chocolate helps us feel content, even euphoric. This is because it contains the chemicals phenylethylamine and salsolinol.

Reasons we don't eat right, it's not that we don't know how....

Eat for comfort: many women use food to make them feel better or self-soothe

really good.

We eat what's available: many times we have to choose from a limited menu, or perhaps the cupboard is getting bare.

Failure to cook food in a healthy manner. Overuse of sauces, butter, oils and overcooking food are the culprits here!

Slaves to our taste-buds. Let's face it, some things that are really bad for us taste

Failure to self-regulate. Portion in proportion

We eat without thinking. Did I eat all that ice cream?

your eating habits

Write a few paragraphs honestly reflecting on your eating habits. What are you doing well? What habits do you need to break or re-evaluate?





Move

Hurray for exercise.

It can also:

1. Get your mind off negative thoughts. It can serve as a form of distraction, to give your mind a break from ruminating or thinking in negative patterns.
2. Create social interaction. Many forms of exercise take place in gyms or involve contact with others
3. Give you a healthy coping strategy. Relieves stress much better than for instance, alcohol.

Exercise and physical activity boost confidence

Physical activity gives us not only physical benefits but also psychological benefits. Research has shown exercise is a big mood-booster, with the power to fight even clinical depression and anxiety. On a chemical level exercise releases endorphins, which combat stress and pain and enhance your mood. They are the “happy chemicals” your brain responds to with an increased sense of well-being.

Exercise can also make us feel more in control and confident in ourselves. We can feel empowered and motivated as we derive a sense of accomplishment from setting a work out goal and achieving it. And the great

thing is, it is not all that hard. Work out goals or physical activity goals are relatively easy to achieve if the time is set aside for the activity. (It's not as hard a goal as changing jobs, completing studies or changing relationship patterns!)

Workouts also relieve stress and the worries and mental preoccupation that accompany stress.

Not sold yet? As a bonus, you can even get a revived sex drive when you start exercising more regularly.

There is no quicker or easier way to boost your confidence than to do some physical exercise.

Physical health benefits of moving your body and staying active

Our bodies are designed for movement, not for the sedentary lifestyles we have fallen into. Here are some physical benefits of exercise:

- Increased energy flow
- Weight loss
- Good for your heart health
- Protects from stroke
- Lowers blood pressure
- Protects from diabetes

- Curbs obesity
- Helps with back pain
- Helps bone density
- Can increase longevity
- Aids brain function
- Aids sleep
- Increases libido ;-)

With all the positive results of exercise, there's no reason to delay! Make your commitment today.

Current Exercises/Exercises I am Interested In

Review the list below and mark the activities you currently do with a C. Mark the activities you are interested in with a star *. What will it take for you maintain your current exercise schedule? What will it take to get you started on the activities you are interested in adding?

WALKING	WEIGHT LIFTING	DOWNHILL SKIING
JOGGING	GYM MACHINES	CROSS COUNTRY SKIING
YOGA	SPIN CLASSES	PADDLEBOARDING
PILATES	RACQUETBALL	HIKING
SWIMMING	SQUASH	COMBAT TRAINING
BICYCLING	BASEBALL/SOFTBALL	CANOING
BOWLING	HORSEBACK RIDING	OTHER AQUATIC SPORTS
GARDENING	SOCCER	OTHER ACTIVITIES (LIST)
STRETCHING	VOLLEYBALL	_____
GOLF	BASKETBALL	_____
TENNIS	WATER SKIING	

Write below what your Action Plan might be....

1ST STEP

2ND STEP

3RD STEP

My Exercise Goal



GREAT WAYS TO RELAX

Finding calm and peace in an all too busy world

De-stress your body

Take a bath

You can truly soak your cares away. A bath relaxes the muscles and relieves tension. Add some bubbles or aromatherapy to further calm the senses

Get a massage

The knots a bath can't take care of a good massage will. No longer considered an indulgence, massage is recognized as a complementary therapy to many physical ailments.

Breathe

Deep breathing induces a state of calm, slows blood pressure and dispels nervous energy. Deep breathing is easy to do anywhere, anytime.

Eat well

As discussed, proper nutrients and a well balanced diet create a multitude of benefits. Stay away from alcohol and caffeine, which can actually exasperate stressful times.

Exercise

Also getting star treatment here. Our bodies in motion help shake off stress

Stretch out

Simple stretches of the neck and shoulder instantly relieve tension in those muscle groups.

De-stress your emotions

Laugh

Laughter has been documented as curing illnesses. It releases dopamine, serotonin and endorphins, which is basically a happiness cocktail for the brain. No wonder it feels so good.

Cry

Yes, there is nothing like a good cry. It cleanses the mind and releases pent up tension and anxiety.

Read

A great diversion, an immersion in another world. Books take you out of your situation and put you on a mini-vacation from your life. What stress?

Talk

Talking to someone about your feelings has a very therapeutic effect. That's what psychotherapists and psychoanalysts mainly do. You can talk to a friend, a partner, a trusted family member.

Journal

Keeping a diary or journaling is like talking to yourself and can have the same benefits of talk therapy. Journaling can clear your mind and alleviate your stress simply by putting it on paper.

Going Within

Turning off the noise

Connecting to our inner selves

There is a voice of wisdom within us, a place that truly knows our needs and who we are. It is the kernel of our very selves that gets caught up in all the responsibilities and busy-ness of the world. There are things we can do to reconnect with ourselves. Check the activities below that you have done or enjoy doing, those things that help you reconnect with you.

day dreaming

being in nature

meditation

artwork

leisurely walks

writing poetry

prayer

long car rides

photography

visualization

inspirational books

affirmations

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation, also known as PMR is a way to release stress from tensed up muscles. The great thing about PMR is that it's relatively easy to do, plus it's a bit of fun. It essentially involves tightening up different parts of your body and then letting go of any tension in those parts. The overall effect is one of deep relaxation

Time Effective

PMR takes about 15 minutes to learn and less time to put into practice once you are able to tighten and relax several muscle groups at once.

Easy to do

PMR is easy to learn and easy to do. It doesn't require any gadgets, just a quiet place.

PMR In Practice

Find yourself a quiet place. Choose a time when you can be still without interruptions. Sit or lay down in a comfortable position.

As you do this exercise you should hold your muscles tight for 5 seconds or so and then relax them for 10 seconds or so.

Begin by breathing deeply. Feel your breath cleansing you. With each inhale take in golden light. With each exhale, let go of any grey, dark smoke.

Move your ankles. Scrunch your toes. Now release.

Tighten your leg muscles. Inhale. Hold for 5 seconds. Now release and exhale deeply. Feel the tension dissolve from your body.

Feel your buttocks and tighten those muscles. Feel their strength and hold. Release and breathe.

Inhale and tighten your stomach muscles. Hold; then exhale and relax. Keep all previously worked on parts of your body relaxed as well.

Move onto your arms. Repeat the tightening and loosening.

Now do your shoulders

Now do your neck.

Lastly do your face, tightening all the muscles you can in a grimace. Now release, exhale. Relax and enjoy the feeling.....



Let the tension go...let the stress dissolve...let go of the world

Stress is the elephant in the room. It's always there, but not often talked about. It's our constant companion. It manifests in our to do lists, our responsibilities, our endless duties.

Stress saps our energy, makes us sick, ages us. Research shows most illnesses

including headaches, backaches, heart disease and countless others can be caused or influenced by our stress levels.

Take the time to combat this killer. Use the techniques at your disposal to relieve your tension and give your body and your mind the break you need.



Guided Imagery

Use your imagination to help you relax

What it is In guided imagery you use your imagination to transport you somewhere beautiful and relaxing. You use your mind to place yourself somewhere with calm scenery or where you are doing enjoyable activities. You focus on your sensory experiences and imagine the sound, smell, taste, sights and touch of a place. It is truly like being on a mini vacation—in your own mind!

Schedule it into your day As with any positive activity you do for yourself, you have to set aside the time to do it! Be realistic. Don't try to sit for an hour or even a half hour your first try. Try to do it for 5-10 minutes a couple times a week to start out.

In the beginning find a place that's quiet

Start out sitting comfortably and close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Begin by imagining yourself in a relaxing place: by a riverbank, on the beach, in the forest surrounded by farmland. Where you imagine is a personal choice depending on what is relaxing for you.

Here's an example of a guided imagery

- Imagine you are on a long deserted beach
- The waves are crashing in a rhythm and you can hear them as they fall onto the shore.
- You can feel the sand between your toes. It is a warm nice feeling. It feels like a massage on your feet.
- You can also feel the warmth of the sun on your body.
- You hear a few seagulls and watch as they land close to you.
- You look out onto the sea. The color of the water is a deep blue, and it looks clear, like you could see the fish underneath if you looked close enough.

- A soft breeze blows your hair
- You breathe in the fresh ocean air. You can almost taste the salt coming off the water.

Stay in this place as long as you like. When you are ready to return, gently count to 10 to give yourself time to readjust. Open your eyes. With practice you will be able to do guided imagery on a bus, in a waiting room or

Sexuality & Body Image

Sex Lives Desires



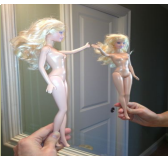
We all have, have had or will have a sex life. From little girl dreams about the boy or girl next door or some teen band star, to our first kisses, first bases and first babies, we are programmed to respond to and have sexual desires.

Fulfillment Intimacy



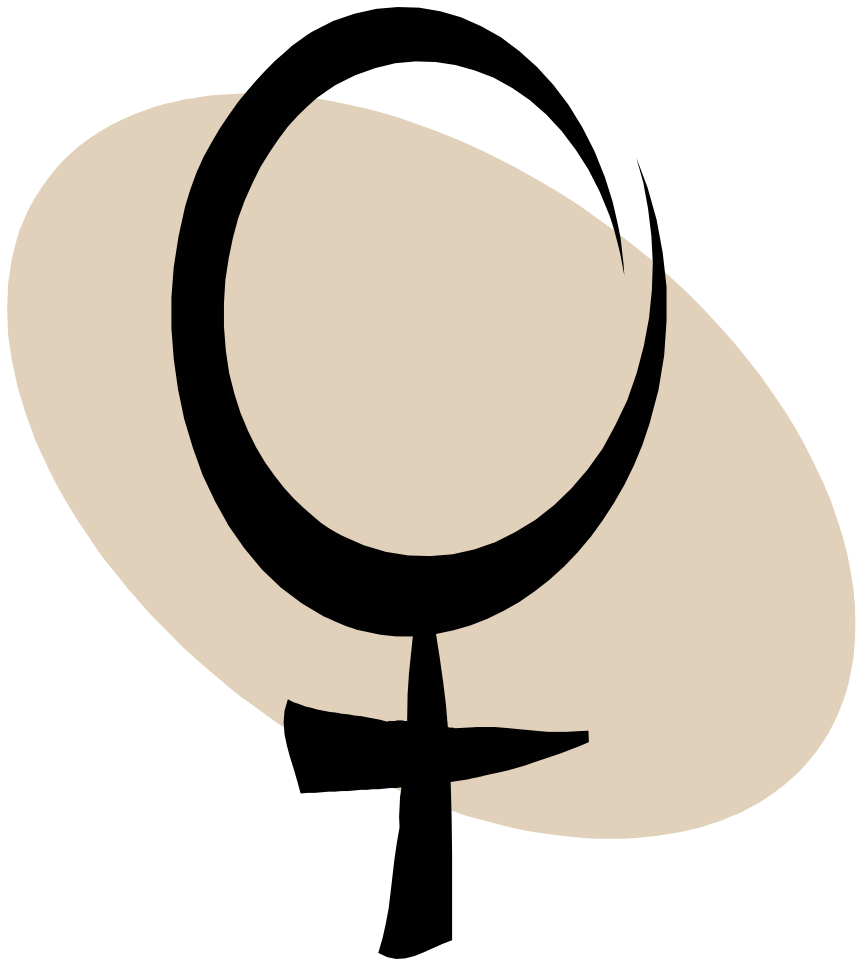
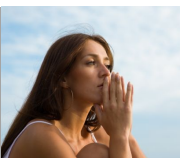
How do we discuss sex with our partners? Do we? How do you get past your inhibitions and communicate your needs? Set the stage for intimacy...How do you get more, or less of the sex you want?

My body Reality vs. the media and its images



There is the way real women's bodies look and the way idealized bodies are presented to us. With technology, the lines of reality can get blurry.

Comfortable in our skin



Let's celebrate our selves, our bodies!

Whether we choose to be sexually active or not, we are sexual beings. Feeling comfortable with our sexuality is part of healthy self-esteem. Sometimes we receive messages and attitudes from other sources about sexuality. We need to recognize these influences, but make our own decisions about our own sexuality.

The media is constantly giving us messages about what body types are desirable and acceptable. There is nothing wrong with striving to be more fit or healthy, but placing unrealistic demands on our selves is self-destructive. We need to be gentle and loving with ourselves, feeling proud of the assets we do possess. Great women come in all shapes and sizes.



Sexual Messages and Attitudes

What sexual attitudes did I learn from my family of origin? What messages did they give me verbally or through their behavior?

Early experiences around sex, whether it's discussed or not within the family, what a teacher said about it or what we learned from friends had an impact on our sexual development.

What did I learn about sex/sexuality in my school?

What messages did I get about my body during adolescence?

How do I feel about...

What are my feelings about sexual relationships at this point of my life?

If I could change one thing about my sex life it would be...

I would have a more active sex life if...



If I had 3 chances to describe my sex life in one word, my list would be:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)



Keeping your candle burning

Make your bedroom a relaxing haven.

Clean, simple, soft sheets, no clutter, a place where your mind can turn off and you can relax

Ambiance and amour go hand in hand

Have music in the bedroom. Make sure it smells great with some perfume or essential oil. Let your senses indulge in respite.

Candles light fires

Nothing like candles and that flame dancing, throwing off beautiful light and making your heart warm

Upgrade your nightclothes so you feel sexy

Dump the frump clothes. Be a goddess.

Talk and connect with your partner in the bedroom whether you have sex or not

It's what makes intimacy.

Recognize desire discrepancy and discuss it with your partner. Work toward mutual goals.

Be true to your real desires

“The normal female sex drive is notoriously fragile, delicate, distractible and linked to emotional connection-which is why it is so easily dampened by everyday hassles, tiredness, stress and relationship problems.”

-Bettina Arndt author of The Sex Diaries

Some evolutionary biologists think women's sexual desire can fluctuate so dramatically (from being on fire during the courtship stage, to cold embers a few years on) because the female has to be responsible for so much during child rearing. Distractibility, away from her own sex drive, enables the female to focus on her young.

These days, women have so much to do in their multiple roles that it is easy to see how we can remain distracted for longer and more often than even our ancestors. But we are still sexual beings. We lose out when we let our roles and busy-ness overpower and distract us from our natural, healthy urges. Resentment in our partner's lack of help, in for instance household chores, is another barrier to good sex. But we lose out if we can't communicate and find ways to be sexually fulfilled.

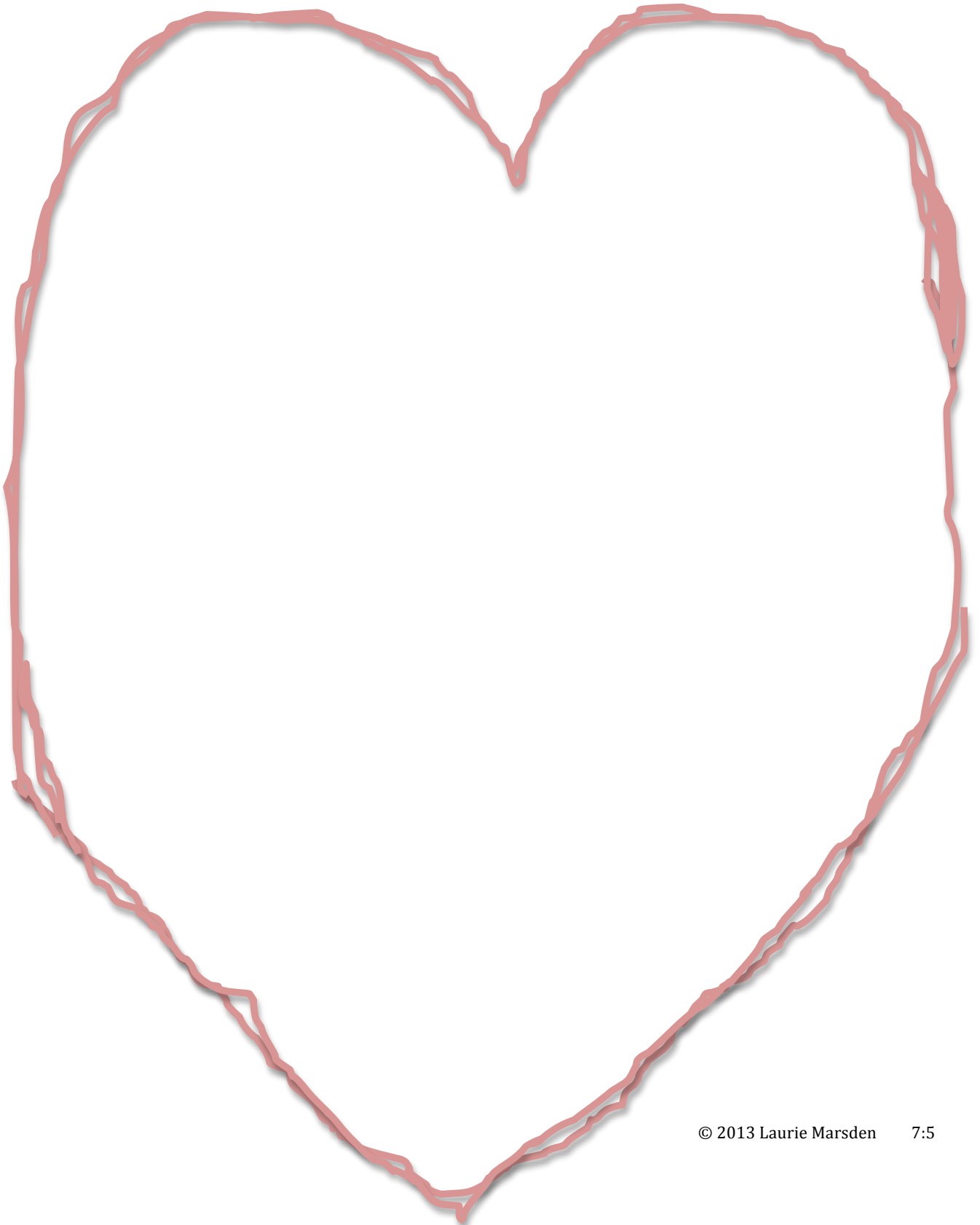
“Once the canoe is in the water, everyone happily starts paddling...”

There is one school of thought that says if women are willing to be receptive to sex initiated by their partner, they can often find themselves having a fabulous time....



When dreams come true. Making love.

Describe your ideal conditions for having a beautiful sexual encounter with a partner. Use your home or their home for the place you will connect. How does the environment look? What is happening in the room on a sensory level? What do you hear, see, smell and feel in the room. What are you wearing? What are they wearing? What is said, what is not said? Is there any food or drink there to add to your experience? How much time do you spend talking? Touching? What happens after you make love?



My Body Image

What is body image?

Everyone has a body image, whether you consciously think about it or not. Body image is essentially the way you view your body. It's the way you see yourself, how you imagine you look. This may or may not correspond to reality. Some people who are thin, think they are overweight, some people see facial imperfections that are not noticeable to others or flaws in body parts that are subjective at best. But your perception of your body is what defines body image. It is also how you feel in your body. Do you feel strong or weak, capable and in control or weary and struggling. Body image is often what we pay attention to. It can also be how we imagine others see us.

How does it develop?

Our parents or caregivers begin the process of teaching us about ourselves. They are our original mirrors. If they gave us positive messages about our bodies, we would have incorporated those into our self-image. If they were critical of any aspect of the way we looked we would also incorporate that into our self-view. In addition, other members of our family of origin would have given us body messages that we took to heart and believed. Friends and peer groups, particularly in adolescence, continue to influence us as our bodies grow and change. Finally, the culture in which we live impacts our body image from a young age by presenting ideals of beauty and physical types. Princesses with long hair and button noses and Barbie dolls with unattainable proportions are all part of the world in which we developed.

Other factors influencing body image

In general, many life experiences impact our body image. Relationships reinforce our thoughts and feelings. The natural aging process is always giving our bodies a change to adapt to. Major periods of change include puberty and menopause. Our body image might change as changes happen to or bodies. How do we view our bodies if we get a serious disease or get in an accident and become disabled? And again, countless media messages from magazines, commercials, films, music videos, TV shows and celebrity hawking leave us looking at how we measure up to them. The media today is the mouth-piece for our modern cultural ideals about body and beauty. And it is not doing us any favors.

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Positive vs. Negative

Body image is not permanent. It can fluctuate. Sometimes we struggle with seeing our bodies in a positive light. People with a negative body image feel awkward, self-conscious or full of shame about their body. This can interfere with many things in daily life. But people can develop healthier more accurate views of themselves. People who accept the way they look and feel good about themselves most of the time, have a positive body image. They understand that the way they look does not determine their worth.

Reflecting on my body image.....

When I look in the mirror I feel...

When I see pictures of attractive people in the media I feel....

I think other people think I look...

When people complement me on how I look I usually say...



Stifle the body police.
Count your blessings not your blemishes.

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Clues you may have a negative body image: Check which statements apply:

- I am usually critical of the way I look.
- I often feel jealous of other people and the way they look.
- I often avoid activities like going to the gym or going swimming because I don't want to wear revealing clothes.
- I sometimes avoid sex because I don't feel comfortable with my body.
- I don't like going to the doctor or having a physical if I need to get undressed or show my body.

Body Honor: Changing how we think, feel and react to our body.

1) Pick one aspect of your body that you don't like. Think about all the reasons you don't like that part of you. Write them down on a scrap paper. Let your negativity flow.

Now think about all the things that part of your body does for you, what it gives you, its function in your life. What would your life be like without that body part? Begin to cultivate a gratitude for what that part of your body does. Be grateful.

Burn the scrap paper and let your negativity be cleansed with its ashes.

2) Challenge your distorted beliefs.

Is your nose really that big? Your breasts that small? Your bottom so fat? Can't big noses be regal, distinctive, set you apart? Can you wear clothes easier because your breasts allow a variety of styles? Is your round bottom a bit sexy? Would it be better flat?

3) Practice saying "Thank you." To compliments.

Cultural Norms and Media Madness



Statistics to raise your eyebrows

The average young person views more than 3,000 ads per day on television, on the Internet, on billboards and in magazines. Ads are also creeping into schools, where marketers have cleverly placed them in “Educational” posters, textbook covers, bathroom stalls, scoreboards, daily news programs, and school news networks.” (American Academy of Pediatrics)

By the time adolescents graduate from high school they will have spent about 15,000 hours with the media, while only having spent 12,000 hours in school. (American Academy of Pediatrics)

By age 13, approximately 53% of American girls are “unhappy with their bodies.” This number increases to 78% once girls reach 17 years of age. (National Institute on Media and Family)

Although women control 60% of the wealth, and influence 85% of buying decisions, they have only 11% of the roles on TV and film. (Women in Film)

“At 5’9” and weighing 110lbs, Barbie would have a BMI of 16.24 and fit the weight criteria for anorexia. According to research by the University of Central Helsinki, Finland, she would lack the 17-22% body fat required for a woman to menstruate.”

Women are about 37% of prime-time TV characters (they are 51% of the U.S. population) Women 45 and older are 15% of prime-time TV characters (American Association of Retired Persons 1996)

In a music video, when a man is shown in the background, they are most often fully clothed. But when women are shown in the background they are dressed in ways to focus on their breasts and bottoms 50% of the time. (Children Now, Boys to Men: Media messages about Masculinity, 1999) .

Twenty years ago the average fashion model weighed 8% less than the average woman. Today she weighs 23% less.

80% of US women are dissatisfied with their appearance (NOW, National Organization of Women)

The body type presented in advertising as the ideal is possessed naturally by less than 5% of females (Social Issues Research Center)



clothing

Skin

Hair care



Posture

Appearance and Grooming



Inside/Outside

You've done all this work on the inside; let it show on the outside

It takes 7 seconds for a stranger to form an opinion of you.

Making the time

The way we present ourselves to others affects how people respond to us. There is a natural attraction all of us have toward people who put themselves together well. Whether they are big or small, tall or short, no matter what someone's features are, if they are well groomed they instantly have cache. It is our human appreciation for aesthetics that focuses us on that person.

In many ways our appearance indicates how we feel about ourselves, what level of self-respect we have. A confident person is clean and well groomed. They make the time to take care of their appearance, signaling they respect themselves. They dress in an appropriate and often stylish manner without being overly concerned with fashion.

Head high, shoulders back, let your self shine!!!!!!



Love the skin you're in

Cleanse, protect, pamper

Behind fabulous skin is a fabulous caretaker

Skin is an organ, a truism most people tend to overlook. It is in fact the largest organ and weighs about 9 pounds. The epidermis is the uppermost layer of the skin organ, the one we see and touch, and is about as thick as a sheet of paper. Here the skin is constantly renewing itself by generating new cells. It takes 2 weeks for these new cells to complete their journey to the surface.

Drinking plenty of water, keeping your energy flowing, not overindulging in drinks of diversion (alcohol and caffeine), exercise, proper sleep, reducing stress and a good diet all reflect in your skin. These habits address skin health from the inside. There are also many ways to take care of your skin from the surface.

Moisturizing is one of the most important things you can do for your skin on the outside. It helps seal in the natural oils your skin produces (which form a lipid film on top) and the 10 to 30% water

content underneath. Use a generous amount of regular body lotion after a shower.

Sun has become skin's enemy. It ages your skin and destroys collagen, the fabric holding skin together. So using sunscreens is no longer optional. You can spend 10-15 minutes in the sun, absorbing vitamin D from sunshine. But from there, the benefits of sun plummet into the negative.

Always wash and moisturize your face at night. Never climb into bed with a full face of make up and the day's grime. A cold water splash and moisturizer in the morning is OK if you don't want to re-cleanse.

Try not to touch your face as your hands pick up all kinds of dirt and bacteria in the course of a day and touching your face just deposits it there.

Be smart with your skin. Treat it well.



CONSISTENTLY taking care of your face, neck and décolletage is more important than using expensive creams or going to salons for treatments. It is the daily maintenance of skin, the daily pampering and nurturing that will make a difference.

Skin Sense

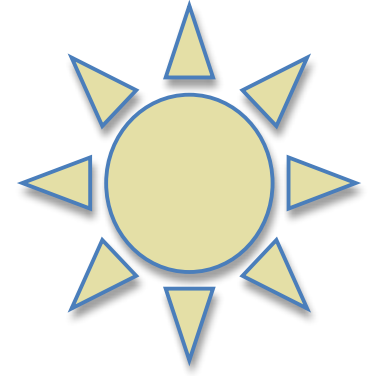
Sunscreen is a skin savior
I put mine on:

(Check one or more)

- First thing in the morning
- Before I go outside
- Only on sunny days
- Only in summer
- All year long
- When I go to the beach
- When I go swimming

* Did you know the American Cancer society suggests wearing sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF of 15 or higher and to avoid the sun for prolonged periods from 10am to 4pm.

How I remember to use sunscreen _____



What is my facial skin care regime?

Am I happy with the products I use? Do I need to upscale or downscale my products? (Upscale if you can afford it and feel the products don't get the results you want. Downscale if your products are so expensive you hardly use them or don't use enough of them.)

How good am I about my 2x/day regime? (Do you sometimes slip up if you are tired or after a night out?)

My body has skin too! I take care of it by...



Yes, you can!

Components of a great hairstyle

- 1) **Something easy.** Who has the time to fuss and primp in the morning? A great hairstyle should be easy to maintain and look good without too much attention given to it.
- 2) **It doesn't damage your hair.** There is nothing attractive about overworked, over-processed, over-styled hair.
- 3) **It's flattering and enhances YOU.** Hair is a great place to be stylish and a bad place to be fashionable. Let yourself shine!

If a woman complains about any one feature more than another, hair is surely the culprit. We dislike our hair, usually with some degree of passion. Most women who have gorgeous poker straight hair long for natural beautiful curls that cascade down her back. Most women with natural beautiful curls that cascade down their back, long for gorgeous poker straight hair. Perplexing.

My hair is naturally.....

If we take the time to honestly look at our hair, the hair we were born with, we might find out we didn't do so bad after all.

Hair Care

I feel like my hair is ...

I like these things about my hair...

I want to change these things about my hair....

I do these things to take care of my hair.....



Beauty time & Spa time

How often do I treat myself to a....	Weekly	Monthly	Every 2-3 months	Other
facial				
manicure				
pedicure				
massage				

It's all about making the time...

I can find more time for these activities by.....

What type of person am I?

Put a star next to your approach to beauty.

The Do-It-Yourselfer

My bathroom cabinet is stocked with scrubs, rubs, oils and creams....

The Outsourcer

I love going to beauty therapists and day spas

Easy beauty tips and habits

Nails

Well filed and clean a must!

A manicure is an easy pick-me-up.

It's also an easy do it yourself job. Just file and paint!

Makeup

2 rules

- 1) Minimize the negative
- 2) Accentuate the positive

Keep it natural 90% of the time

Glam it up 10% of the time.... Just for fun!!

Comfortable in your clothes

Getting it right (for you)

Clothing is expressive. Think about what looks good on you; what compliments your body while minimizing its quirks. Buy clothes that fit great, look good and are made well.

Shopping

Stores are the largest closets in which to experiment and have some fun. You can learn so much about what suits you by simply trying clothes on. Try heaps of them and don't feel pressured to buy anything that doesn't look absolutely fantastic on you.

Building a wardrobe

The idea behind buying clothes is to develop a healthy wardrobe. A healthy wardrobe is functional. It has all the bits and pieces to cover all of your work and leisure activities. You should have the basic components to cover any occasion you may need to go to in the near future. Each thing you buy must either create a basic structure to your wardrobe or add to it. Never shop for an occasion, shop for your wardrobe. Resist purchases that are way out of your norm or with which you have nothing to pair up. Your wardrobe needs to all work together, like a puzzle the pieces must have a place and fit in with 2 or 3 other pieces. Avoid buying on impulse!

Looks and Style

A "look" in its most basic definition is very simply how you look. It is also a combination of everything about you, your hairstyle, make-up, clothing choice and accessories.

If you are not sure which way to go, master the look of classics. Keep it simple; keep it basic. Classics are classy. They will last long and make you look timeless and elegant.



Style

Style is a difficult thing to define, it is illusive yet when it is present one can't help but notice it. A person with style is a head turner and usually comes with a confident attitude. Style is the way we put ourselves together, the total look we have. Then what is the difference between style and look? We all have a look, whether put together or not, no matter who we are, how we dress or what we do to ourselves. But we don't all have style. Style can mean wearing lots of jewelry or none at all. Style can put 3 different prints together and have them look incredible. Style can wear one color from head to toe. Style is taking a scarf from a second hand store and throwing it through the belt loops of a designer pant where it looks like it belongs. Style is wearing pearls under a blouse where they are barely noticeable. Style transcends fashion.

Style does not have to do with money; it has to do with not following the fashion herd. It has to do with truly mastering the art of expressing yourself through what you wear.

I would define my style as:

- ◆ Classic
- ◆ Artistic
- ◆ Preppy
- ◆ Eclectic
- ◆ Bold
- ◆ Rock n roll
- ◆ Hippie
- ◆ Modern

On Being Stylish

“I wear my sort of clothes to save me the trouble of deciding which clothes to wear.”

-Katherine Hepburn

“Over the years I have learned that what is important in a dress is the woman who is wearing it.”

-Yves Saint Laurent

“Fashion is not necessarily about labels. It's not about brands. It's about something else that comes from you.” -Ralph Lauren

A woman's dress should be like a barbed-wire fence; serving it's purpose without obstructing the view.” -Sophia Lauren

Classic Wardrobe Basics

- ◆ Gorgeous black dress
- ◆ Flattering jeans
- ◆ White collared cotton shirt
- ◆ Medium heel boots (brown or black)
- ◆ Classic pumps
- ◆ Black and cream button down cardigans
- ◆ A well tailored suit, preferably with pants and skirt
- ◆ A cream silk blouse
- ◆ Navy blazer
- ◆ Khaki shorts
- ◆ Work out clothes
- ◆ Running shoes
- ◆ A couple polo shirts
- ◆ 1-2 summer dresses
- ◆ Sandals
- ◆ A couple neutral v-neck pocket t-shirts
- ◆ Leather purse

I know I look good in these colors.....

My wardrobe could use these pieces.....

I probably have too many.....

*Donate clothing that no longer suits or fits you to a good cause. Someone can always use something you don't use anymore.



Good posture

Greeting the world straight and tall

One of the areas all of us can continuously work on and improve is the way we stand, sit and walk. For health, appearance and communication, good posture and carriage is an asset. How you hold your body tells a great deal about the opinion you hold of yourself. If you are slumped over, unable to sit and stand erect or walk stooped over, you are sending messages to people that you are not comfortable in your body.

A person who realizes their worth and is comfortable with who they are will project that in the way they carry themselves. They will stand tall and proud with shoulders back and head held high, they will walk purposefully and direct yet relaxed. They send subconscious signals that read, "I am confident and in charge of my life."

Defeating the slouch potato

Exercises for being aligned

String on head

Good at work

Sit down until you get used to doing this standing.

Pretend there is a string on top of your head. It is being pulled up and you are attached to it. Feel your backbone lengthen and each vertebrae sit on top of the other. Head, neck and back all aligned.

Use a wall

Good at home

Stand with your back against a wall. Bend your knees a little. Your back need not be totally flat against the wall. You should be able to slip one hand between the wall and the lower part of your back. Keep shoulders back. Now slowly straighten your legs.

Book balance

Good for fun

OK, who hasn't seen an etiquette exercise where a book is placed on a young lady's head and she has to walk with it there and not drop it? It requires balance, coordination and a straight back! Give it a try. Have a girlfriend over and cheer each other on!

For your health

Holding yourself in the proper alignment also translates into good health. Few people realize the strain bad posture puts on their body including their internal organs.

The common slouch drives your breastbone into your chest cavity and compresses your heart. It may also hinder your lungs and lower your oxygen supply. Your organs may fall or sag in time due to bad posture as your stomach protrudes and its muscles fail to hold everything in correctly. Organs as high up as your diaphragm may sag. Women are especially susceptible to this.

Bad posture abnormally distributes your weight, which can put undue strain on your legs muscles and hurt the arch of your feet. A curved spine throws your back out of whack and causes back pain. Sway back, strain and spinal curvature can develop. Hunched shoulders result from unconsciously holding them in this position most of your life.

Be healthy. Practice good posture!



I can
Smile

Centered in myself

Greeting the
world

Inside I thrive

Laughter heals the spirit, lightens it, paves the way for happiness to enter and make a residence inside.

Love is the ultimate gift, the ultimate healing force in the world. If you love yourself you will be able to love others. Love is an action word. Take that action.

You will find your search for self-improvement is life long. It is not attained and then forgotten. It is alive and part of your living spirit that must always be watered.



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Happiness comes in many forms and intensities. What causes an individual to feel this emotion depends on the person, their perspective and what's important in their life.

What we usually associate with happiness are peak moments. We have something happen to us, spend time with someone, accomplish something or receive something that gives us great pleasure. Peak moments do not happen every day in every way. What we can achieve on a consistent basis is not the intense happiness we find during peak experiences, but more of a grounded, centered contentment.

This type of lasting happiness, finding it, keeping it and nourishing it is a CHOICE. Practice this program. Focus on the positive. Become you.

OUR GREATEST FEAR

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate,
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond our measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
Talented, fabulous.

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing so enlightened about shrinking so that

Other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is

Within us.

It is not just some of us; it is everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give

Other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our fear, our presence

Automatically liberates others.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

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