



Have you ever felt unloved or yearned to be in the centre of someone's universe, or stayed in an unhappy relationship too long, just for the occasional doses of affection? Many people glibly say that loving and affirming yourself is the path to happiness, but it's a tricky one to stick to. Catherine Wilkins, Director of the Institute of Metabiotic Medicine, recognises that this is an almost universal problem and offers these ...

## Practical Exercises to LOVE YOURSELF BETTER

**M**any of us seek love in all the wrong places, we seek love outside ourselves. We 'fall in love' with others, not because of who they are, but because of who they help us to be. The truth is you are love - you are a beautiful, eternal, infinite, powerful, magnificent and magnanimous Being.

When we don't understand this we begin to believe that the love we feel and crave, comes from outside ourselves. In fact, it is inside ourselves and the other person has simply helped us to access it. When we believe that love comes from outside us we often try to achieve love by making ourselves more lovable. We think to ourselves: "If I were only thinner . . . or blonde . . . or brunette . . . or more tolerant . . . or more forgiving . . . or tidier . . . or taller . . . or . . . [fill in the blank] . . . then he or she would love me." This is doomed to failure.

If you have to become someone other than who you really are in order to get the love you crave you will never feel satisfied - it puts you into a lose:lose situation. If it doesn't work, then you have more 'proof' that you are unlovable.

But, if the other person does return your love when you change? Surely that is a winning situation? Well, no, because the person they love is not really you, so your inner self continues to feel unloved and to believe it is unlovable. This is the price we pay for selling out on ourselves in order to gain love. But what else can we do?

### Love Yourself

You've heard that many times before and it is easier said than done. Still, it is worth it. It has far-reaching benefits,

from increased health to increased self-esteem, happiness and confidence. The problem is that most people don't know how to do it.

Loving yourself is a skill that needs to be practiced. Many people try to beat themselves into a state of unconditional love. Every time they have an unloving thought they give themselves a hard time about it. This is simply adding insult to injury. If you want to love yourself more you have to practice being loving towards yourself.

Here are some practical exercises to do just that. Pick whichever one feels most appropriate to you, and would be the easiest and most fun for you and do it for at least a month. By the end of that time you will notice a difference, and then, if you want to, you can try another one.

### 1 This is YOUR Time

One of the most important, and easiest, ways to learn to love ourselves is to spend time with ourselves. Any relationship will continue to grow and thrive only as long as those involved continue to spend 'quality time' with each other. So when was the last time you spent 'quality time' with yourself?

Try sitting in the garden with your tea or coffee instead of with everyone else. Or you can stay up for a while after everyone else has gone to bed.

Find opportunities to explore things with yourself. Listen to your own thoughts and emotions and acknowledge them. Get to know who you are. Become your own best friend. Many people, stereotypically women

especially, can spend their whole lives considering other people's thoughts and feelings. Some people can die without ever really getting to know who they are. This is a tragedy. You are unique in all the Universe. No one can take your place, and if you do not take it, your place is vacant and the Universe is diminished.

### 2 Find Your Own Love-Style

Think about the people in your life you love or have loved. Write down all the things you do or did for that person to convince them you loved them. What was it? Cards and chocolate? Flowers? Trips away? Did you write them sonnets? Sing them songs? Hold them?

There is something important to be learned here. We all take in information differently. Some people are 'visual', which means it is easiest for them to take in something if they can see it, others are 'auditory', so they learn best through hearing, and others are 'kinesthetic' and comprehend touch more than anything else. This works in the area of love as much as any other.

Figure out your love 'style'. Think back to all the things you do for your lover or partner. How do you let them know you love them?

Once you know your 'love style' let yourself know you love yourself in the right 'style'. Do something every week to show, tell or sense your own love for yourself. If you are visual show yourself your love; buy yourself flowers or take yourself out to the art gallery. If you are auditory tell yourself of your love or listen to beautiful music or sing

to yourself. If you are kinesthetic sense your love for yourself; wear clothes which caress you or 'hold your own hand' or give yourself a scalp massage.

### **3** *The Perfect Lover*

Have you ever imagined your perfect lover? Write down a list all of the beautiful and touching things he or she would do.

Don't hold back because you think it is too expensive, too weird, too time consuming or too anything. Write it all down.

Now comes the fun part. Practice being your own most perfect lover. Each day pick one thing from your list and make sure you get it for yourself. Buy yourself flowers or chocolates. If your lover would massage your feet get yourself a pedicure or a massage. Pick something and do it or arrange to provide it for yourself. If your list contains expensive items save up for them. Your lover would plan for those special surprises. Do the same for yourself!

### **4** *Love Your Total Self*

As children we learned that there are certain parts of ourselves that are unacceptable. They are the parts that the people around us disapproved of.

Begin by making a list of all the things you don't like about yourself, the things you do your best to hide. Perhaps you are too noisy or too quiet, too outrageous or too conformist. Whatever it is, write it down.

Now, take each one in turn and allow yourself to feel that aspect of yourself. Imagine yourself allowing it full expression. What effect does it have on you and on those around you? I am not talking about the fact you feel uncomfortable or others don't like it, that is a given, otherwise it would not be in your shadow. Rather, look for what difference it creates in yourself and others. This is the effect it exists for - this is the reason you have that aspect.

Now, think about how can that effect be used appropriately? In what circumstances would it have a

constructive, rather than a destructive effect? How can it assist you in your journey through life? When you realise all these disowned parts are really some of your best assets you will love them, and yourself - unconditionally.

Sometimes reintegration of your shadow can be a long process, involving emotional release and painful memories. Part of loving ourselves better is being quicker to ask for help. There is no reason to make the journey harder than it needs to be. If you feel you would like assistance please do not hesitate to contact us at the Institute.

**A fuller explanation of the process of loving yourself better, the significance of your own 'integrity and the workings of Metabiotic Medicine will be given in Catherine's upcoming book (keep an eye on our bookshelf pages for details). In the meantime, if you need to know more you can contact Catherine Wilkins at the Institute of Metabiotic Medicine on (08) 8232 2882 or write to 263 North Terrace, Adelaide, SA, 5000, Australia. The Institute offers correspondence courses.**