



HOW'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF?

The relationship we have with ourselves is one of the most important relationships to nurture. How long has it been since you had counselling – with yourself?

Many people spend an awful lot of time dissecting, thinking about and working on their relationships with other people. Make sure you have enough quality time with your husband? Check. WhatsApp your girlfriends at least once a week? Check. But with all the time you dedicate to making sure your external relationships are thriving, are you neglecting the one relationship that ultimately matters the most – the one with yourself?

If you want to be a fulfilled, balanced, well-rounded woman, you need to nurture the relationship you have with your own emotions, mind and body. Or you risk facing a lot of inner conflict.

“If we cannot have a positive, healthy relationship with ourselves, it will affect our relationships with others. Acceptance and love for oneself first, will allow one to accept and have understanding and compassion for others more easily,” says Deanne Plunkett, Master Neuro Linguistic Programming Coach.

Because many of us don't pay a lot of attention to the relationship we have with ourselves, we might not even realise the effects it could be having on us, physically, emotionally and spiritually, if the relationship is indeed negative.

“Physically, we would not treat our bodies with respect and it would show in being unhealthy; being overweight or underweight, lacking in energy, or suffering from (mostly) preventable lifestyle illnesses like diabetes and hypertension,” says psychologist and life coach, Claire Newton.

“Emotionally, we may have aspects of ourselves that we need to repress, deny or block. We'd have an inability to control or express our emotions rationally, resulting in angry outbursts. Perhaps we need to be busy all the time, or have an aversion to silence or alone time,” Newton adds. “And, lastly, if your relationship with yourself is not strong, you may not have found meaning and purpose, resulting in destructive behaviour.”

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU

If you're not solidly connected to yourself, you run the risk of being affected by external factors such as the inevitable my-life-is-better-than-

yours messages. “Social media is often used to ridicule, criticise and humiliate. Only those with high self-esteem and emotional/psychological wholeness can withstand such attacks. For most others, it destroys the sense of self and can even cause severe emotional and psychological damage,” says Newton.

The good news is even if your relationship with yourself has been neglected, you can turn it around and cultivate a positive connection to yourself.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE IN YOUR PERSONAL-RELATIONSHIP COUNSELLING

1. Take a personal inventory

“Identify and write down your feelings towards yourself, positive and negative,” suggests Plunkett. “Look at what you need to do to constantly improve any negative thoughts you have. Then create a positive identity (picture) for yourself: How would you like to look, sound and behave?”

Once you know that, you can take the necessary steps and be closer to being a person you’d be proud of. Keep the items to personal challenges and achievements and not those reliant on other relationships, such as getting married.

2. Give your feelings a name

“Learn to feel and label *all* your emotions, instead of blocking them off with distractions,” Newton suggests. A great way to do this is to identify each feeling you experience, and the reasons behind them, as they happen. When you feel off about something, work out what the emotion is (fear or jealousy perhaps?) and then try to work out where it comes from. Being this self-aware will help you understand and love yourself a lot more, which will mean you’ll cut yourself slack when you need it.

3. Learn to be assertive

Newton says, “When you are assertive, you treat both yourself and others with respect and expect to be treated with respect in return. If you want to have a healthy relationship with yourself, you must be assertive.”

“*Never blame anyone else for who you have become. Look back on the past with gratitude for the lessons learned and choose to take responsibility for who you become in the future.*”

4. Ditch the comparisons

Truth? There will always be people who are richer, thinner and more successful than you are. And there will always be people who are less fortunate in every category. Frankly, it doesn’t matter.

“You are you. Accept your uniqueness and strive to be the best you can be,” says Newton. “Change the things you can and accept the parts you cannot change. You cannot have a healthy relationship with yourself if you do not accept all aspects of yourself.”

5. Take responsibility

We are who we are, and we must take responsibility for that. “As a child, you are powerless to stop abusive or damaging relationships, but as an adult, you are not powerless,” says Newton. “Never blame anyone else for who you have become. Look back on the past with gratitude for the lessons learned and choose to take responsibility for who you become in the future.” This will give you a sense of control and power over yourself, which can result in an affirmative connection to your abilities.

6. Talk to someone

If you find yourself struggling to accept and love the person you are, you could see a psychologist for psychotherapy. “We all have issues and gaining insight into your own issues will help you grow mentally and emotionally,” advises Newton. “Knowing and understanding your own issues will enable you to meet your own needs and ensure you do have a healthy relationship with yourself – and others.” E

Share what you do to keep your relationship with yourself healthy and happy?
#EOASelfLove

