

## **PERSPECTIVE: Learning To Love Myself**

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Learning to love myself was a very difficult thing to do. Raised in an environment of ignorance, sexual abuse and mental abuse contributed greatly to my low self-esteem. As a teen, I tried to commit suicide various times. At 19, I became pregnant and was physically and verbally abused for the next four years.

After the birth of my second child, I did muster the strength to leave the relationship. Shortly after that, in 1985, I was introduced to this practice.

Still unable to love myself or even understand this concept, I continued to make bad emotional choices. I would pour out my heart and soul on my mate without asking or getting anything in return.

Never able to find the love I needed, I soon became addicted to crack cocaine, and all my self-loathing came out.

I would do anything for anybody to get crack! I hated myself more than ever but was still unaware of the concept of self-love. I could find nothing about myself worth liking, let alone loving.

Faced with certain death from drugs, I moved myself and my children to the country and chanted to end my misery and change my life. Occasionally, I would have a set back on drugs and be high at least four hours. I determined to sit in front of the Gohonzon, until I was no longer high.

As a result, I ended one addiction. But a year later, I became very depressed.

In 1995, I began being treated for depression. Even though I was feeling better, I had not learned to love myself any more than before.

After a recent painful breakup with someone special, I became determined to love myself and put myself first. I look in the mirror and give myself pep talks, telling myself, "I can do it!"

I have never had anyone in my immediate environment to tell me of my self-worth, so I must do it myself. In my mind, when I feel negative thoughts, I chant in my mind to push those negative thoughts away. I have started walking one hour every morning, followed by one hour of determined prayer. I do this for my self-esteem. I really want to love myself, so that I will not allow myself to be treated in degrading ways.

SGI President Ikeda has always made me feel worthy of love. Now I must constantly and consistently tell myself I am worthy of love. If any person treats me in a degrading way, then I must leave that situation and continue to encourage myself.

I want to help others to love themselves, to have great self-esteem, and I cannot do it if I lack self-esteem. I chant daimoku to love myself, to bring out all the love I can from inside myself.

It's there, it's all there, all the love we need to elevate our lives and our self-esteem. All we need do is consistently, constantly and sincerely bring it out. Then we will never rely on dysfunctional, co-dependent, empty relationships or drugs to fill any emptiness we may be feeling.

Faith in our chanting is the key. I am convinced that true happiness comes from learning to love myself.

**WT**

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